

Public relations: Best of the best

If lobbyists are known as rainmakers, public relations professionals make the sun shine. That is, they shed light on an issue and put the proper face on it for their clients.

The public relations industry nationwide is now a force to be reckoned with. Fueled by a growing recognition of the value of PR, plus the technology boom, the industry experienced 220-percent growth from 1992 to 2001, says the Council of Public Relations Firms. Just from 1997 to 2000, revenues of the top 50 firms with a U.S. presence nearly doubled. U.S. PR firms grossed more than \$4 billion worldwide in 2001.

Since then, economic conditions haven't put much of a damper on PR companies. Revenues were down only slightly in 2002.

The Washington, D.C., metro area is now the second-largest market for public relations, behind New York, with \$379 million in revenue in 2001.

Certainly, that has something to do with the presence of PR firms in the city that specializes in public affairs, government relations and campaigns. But what exactly does a public affairs firm do? That's a bit more of a moving target, according to Republican

consultant Mike Murphy of MPGH.

He said there are firms that conduct straight PR campaigns and firms that help move public opinion, firms that specialize in issues and firms that specialize in campaigns — and there are lobbying firms that also delve into public opinion. "It boils down to an inside game versus an outside game," he said. "It ranges from straight press relations to more complicated ad campaigns to grassroots and political organization."

He added: "The firms that are able to put together a presidential campaign are few."

When shopping for the right public affairs firm, "size is not the only factor, but it generally connotes that they have the resources" to succeed, said Jeff Lubar, communications director of the Mortgage Insurance Corporation of America. He cautions, however, that it "depends who's in these shops and what they've done, what they're capable of." The overall firm name helps, but ultimately, he said, "it's about the people."

Added Murphy, "The key is to avoid boilerplate."

Below, we look at some of Washington's top public affairs PR firms, the ones that move opinion and in some cases move mountains.

APCO Worldwide: With practice areas in grassroots advocacy, issue management and foreign-government representation, APCO has a diverse portfolio. Its Washington office has represented World Wrestling Entertainment, the National Association of Town Watch and STERIS Corp.
1615 L St. N.W. #900
(202) 778-1000, www.apcoworldwide.com

BKSH: The global public affairs arm of PR behemoth Burson-Marsteller, BKSH is led in Washington by Reagan and Bush 41 adviser Charles Black.
1801 K St. N.W., Suite 901 L
(202) 530-0500, www.bksh.com

Dittus Communications: Former Hill staffer Gloria Dittus has crafted a boutique agency more powerful than its size would indicate. Celebrating its 10-year anniversary, the firm is due to receive the Holmes Report's 2003 Public Affairs Agency of the Year Award. Clients include the Business Software Alliance, Dell, the American Council for Fitness and Nutrition, Business Roundtable and Household.
1150 17th St. N.W., Suite 701
(202) 298-9055, www.dittus.com

Edelman: Recently named the Holmes Report's 2003 Agency of the Year, Chicago-based Edelman's Washington office specializes in research, alliance formation, paid media, direct mail, media relations and grassroots activities. Its public affairs practice is headed by Mike Deaver, former adviser to President Reagan, and former Democratic adviser Leslie Dach.
1875 I St. N.W., Suite 900
(202) 371-0200, www.edelman.com

Fenton Communications: Known as one of the leading advertising and public relations agencies for liberal and "social justice" causes, Fenton has worked for Ben & Jerry's, Amnesty International, the NAACP Voter Fund, Rock the Vote and the Death Penalty Information Center. Most recently, Fenton had a hand in the "What Would Jesus Drive" anti-SUV campaign and the antiwar spots featuring actor Martin Sheen.
1320 18th St. N.W., Suite 500
(202) 822-5200, www.fenton.com

Fleishman-Hillard: With more than 80 offices worldwide, St. Louis-based Fleishman is one of the largest firms operating in D.C., and its public affairs practice is consistently ranked at or near the top by Inside PR and Thomas L. Harris/Impulse Research. Its International Advisory Board includes former Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), former Clinton Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, former Defense Secretary William Cohen and former U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor.
1615 L St. N.W., Suite 1000
(202) 659-0330, www.fleishman.com

Fenn & King Communications: Sixteen years of experience has made Fenn & King one of the premier Democratic communications shops. In addition to scores of candidates, the group has worked for the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, the Humane Society, the National Association of Realtors and the National Education Association.
1625 M St. N.W.
(202) 337-6995, www.fennking.com

Glover Park Group: Headed by Gore 2000 campaign strategist Carter Eskew and Clinton press secretary Joe Lockhart, Glover has handled clients as diverse as the Pentagon, Microsoft and the AFL-CIO.
2141 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Suite G3
(202) 337-0808, www.gloverparkgroup.com

GMMB: A subsidiary of Fleishman-Hilliard, GMMB is a Democratic-leaning shop that specializes in public education campaigns, political consulting and media relations. It has conducted campaign work for Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Gov. Frank O'Bannon (D-Ind.) and Gov. Mark Warner (D-Va.). It was behind Rob Reiner's Proposition 10 victory in California that taxed cigarettes to fund childhood development programs.
1010 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Suite 800
(202) 338-8700, www.gmmmb.com

Hill & Knowlton: More than 50 years old, Hill & Knowlton has a presence in 38 countries. Thomas Hoog, the firm's chairman in charge of the U.S. public affairs practice, has worked on the campaigns of Robert F. Kennedy and George McGovern and spent five years as chief of staff for former Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.).
600 New Hampshire Ave. N.W., Suite 601
(202) 333-7400, www.hillandknowlton.com

Kamber Group: A boutique firm recognized as Inside PR's "Hot Public Affairs Shop" three years in a row, Kamber is helmed by former AFL-CIO operative Victor Kamber. The group has made its name representing governments, associations and labor unions. Notable clients have included the Democratic National Committee, the AFL-CIO, the League of Women Voters, the Department of Energy and the Children's Defense Fund.
1920 L St. N.W., Suite 700
(202) 223-8700, www.kamber.com

Ketchum: With nearly \$175 million in revenues in 2001, Ketchum is one of the largest PR firms in the world and won *PR Week's* Agency of the Year award in 2002. In 2001, Ketchum acquired The Washington Group, a well-respected and established bi-partisan lobbying firm, to help complement its existing government relations and grassroots capabilities. Among the group's specialties are federal budgeting, appropriations and procurement, technology, energy, environment, healthcare and defense.
1201 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
(202) 835-8800, www.ketchum.com

MacWilliams, Cosgrove, Smith, Robinson: A media-consulting and advertising firm catering primarily to Democrats and liberal causes, MacWilliams et al's clients have included the Bradley 2000 campaign, Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), Handgun Control and the Pro-Choice Public Education Project.
1150 17th St. N.W.

Murphy Pintak Gautier Hudome (MPGH): Led by McCain 2000 campaign guru Mike Murphy, MPGH is a full-service issue-advertising and political-consulting firm. It is an independent brand of Chicago-based PR shop Golin/Harris International.
6231 Leesburg Pike, Suite 100, Falls Church, Va.
703-532-6200, www.mpgh.com

National Media: The brainchild of consultants Robin Roberts and Alex Castellanos, National Media is one of Washington's top public affairs advertising agencies. It provides service from strategic planning to media planning and all the way to speechwriting.
815 Slaters Ln., Alexandria, Va.
(703) 683-4877, www.nationalmediainc.com

Ogilvy: In January 2003 Ogilvy PR formed a strategic alliance with the Dutko Group Cos. (DGC), a local independent public policy management firm. Ogilvy's 200-strong public affairs division has represented the Chlorine Chemistry Council, Ford Motor Company, the Council of Chief Risk Officers, United Way of America and MasterCard International.
1901 L St. N.W., Suite 300
(202) 466-7590, www.ogilvypr.com

Policy Impact: The PR arm of the Barbour, Griffith and Rogers lobbying shop, Policy Impact provides everything from media relations to grassroots organization. Clients include the Coalition for Affordable and Reliable Healthcare, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.
1275 Pennsylvania Ave., 10th Floor
(202) 737-5339, www.policyimpact.com

Porter Novelli: Thirty-year-old Porter Novelli has a presence in 52 countries worldwide. Clients include the American Council of Life Insurers, Duke Power and the Mortgage Insurance Companies of America.
1919 K St. N.W., Suite 400
(202) 973-5800, www.porternovelli.com

Powell Tate/Weber Shandwick: Recently ranked the top Washington PR firm by the *Washington Business Journal*, D.C.-based Powell Tate is an affiliate of Weber Shandwick, one of the world's largest PR companies, with 3,000-plus employees (other affiliates include the lobbying shop Cassidy & Associates and Sawyer Miller Advertising). Clients include the Air Transport Association of America, American Public Transportation Association, Cisco, Hershey Foods Corporation, Partnership to Protect Consumer Credit, NASCAR and the U.S. Golf Association.
700 13th St. N.W., Suite 1000
(202) 383-9700, www.powelltate.com

Smith & Harroff: A one-stop integrated political shop, Smith & Harroff offers issue advertising, campaign consulting, media training and Internet development. Clients have included the Nuclear Energy Institute, American Petroleum Institute, BellSouth, Boeing and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.
99 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 200, Alexandria, Va.
(703) 683-8512, www.smithharroff.com

Widmeyer Communications: Washington-based Widmeyer offers full-service PR, media relations and public affairs capabilities. Clients have included Coca Cola, Ford Motor Company, United Auto Workers, UPS, McGraw-Hill, the Kellogg Foundation, the College Board and the Kennedy Center.
1825 Connecticut Ave., Suite 500
(202) 667-0901, www.widmeyer.com