



FIVE QUESTIONS FOR

JONATHAN MORGAN

PRESIDENT, PERRY STREET COMMUNICATIONS



Jonathan Morgan isn't afraid to say no. A former lawyer who now provides corporations with public relations and communication services—often during crises—Morgan aims “to speak a little bit of truth to power in those situations.”

He founded Perry Street Communications in 2006 in New York City. In 2008 he returned to his hometown of Dallas and opened an office here. About a year later, Monarch Alternative Capital LP, one of the Texas Rangers' largest creditors, hired Perry Street to manage its media and public relations challenges associated with the bankruptcy case. Other clients run the gamut from financial firm Duff & Phelps and Caris Life Sciences to Billy Bob Barnett.

1

What's the most common PR challenge North Texas companies face?

The pure number of public companies in North Texas has atrophied because of mergers, creating highly favorable conditions for new companies to step in. As they face new global opportunities and access to new markets, ensuring that their public acts and public deeds are aligned is the greatest challenge.

2

How has social media affected PR and crisis communications?

It decreased the need for a company to communicate through the filter of the media, because social media allows for direct communication to stakeholders. It has also created the need to monitor everything being said about your company.

3

How do you assess a company's communications strategy?

The first question always is, “What are this company's business goals?” They come to us because they need PR help,

but what's motivating that? Once we understand that, we are in a position to say, we think PR can help, communications can help, or we don't think we can help.

4

What's the most challenging corporate crisis strategy you've had to implement?

In the fall of 2008 a lot of traders were blaming short sellers for the financial crisis, just as one of our clients was trying to introduce new technology into the short-selling industry. We had our client testify before Congress. We put together a panel to help fashion new regulations. We wrote an op-ed for the client, laying out the industry and what could be improved going forward. We ultimately showed that the research did not bear out the accusations.

5

What key piece of advice do you offer companies facing a PR problem?

The old Hippocratic oath: “Do no harm.” In the early stages of a crisis, there's a lot you can do to make thing appreciably worse, but if you “do no harm,” you're less likely to do or say something that will come back to haunt you.

—SHASHANA PEARSON-HORMILLOSA

MOLL & McNEILL/AGGIE BROOKS; MORGAN: JOHN GAY