

# The LVM Letter



Spring/Summer 2006

Topics,  
Tips, and  
Tidbits

## Introducing Ace AEs

By Rachel Antman



James Kimer and Kristin Olson

Have you met our new account executives, James Kimer and Kristin Olson? If not, let us take this opportunity to introduce them to you:

### (Almost) all about James

James joined LVM in June of 2005, after completing his Master of Arts in journalism and Latin American studies at NYU. Like many of his classmates, he chose to go to the "dark side" (public relations).

James knew what he was getting into, however. Before graduate school, he worked for three years at Fleishman-Hillard Spain on the Rolls Royce and Lockheed Martin accounts, for which he did media relations, media training and event planning in multiple languages. Qué impresionante!

We have no doubt that James worked hard during his time in Spain, but we suspect that he enjoyed his time off, too, since it was in Spain that he met his lovely wife Marina.

James earned his Bachelor of Arts at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, where he majored in psychology. Today, he can draw on his knowledge of this subject by psychoanalyzing his co-workers. We're sure he has some interesting views on David Grant's obsession with Groucho Marx and cocker spaniels. But a family publication may not be the place to discuss them, so we'll move right along to introducing Kristin:

### (Almost) all about Kristin

Kristin joined LVM Group in October, after working at Commercial Property News as an associate editor, the first job she held after receiving a Master of Science in print journalism from Boston University. Her studies included participation in the school's Washington, D.C. program, during which she served as a correspondent for several New England papers and as a contributor to National Journal's daily publication, Congress Daily. She was not, we stress, a White House intern at any point during this time.

Kristin graduated with honors from Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y., in 2001 with a Bachelor's degree in creative nonfiction

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## Please Mr. Postman, Not Another One!

By Bob Rumerman

Jimmy Carter and Bette Midler send me letters now and then. Sure, it's for a good cause so I can forgive the false conceit. But here's a postal note from a lesser known correspondent that really set the coals of my hot head aglow.

"Dear Bob: I'm very concerned. You have been one of our most loyal supporters, and to show our appreciation, we recently sent you a colorful tee shirt. But we haven't heard from you, and I'm worried because we can't afford to lose people like you. - Jim"

I'd like to take this opportunity to respond:

Dear Jim. I'm concerned too. I've long thought your organization worthy of support, and that's why I'd send a check three or four times a year. But lately I've grown tired of the manipulative gimmicks with which you cram my mailbox at alarmingly short intervals. In a given month, I receive more mail from you than balance transfer offers, Jim, and that's really saying something. Maybe it's time to go back to basics and rely on a simpler approach. - Bob

I'm not a direct-mail expert by any means, but I cannot escape the feeling that something counter-productive is going on in the non-profit world. Could I be alone in resenting the fact that charities are adapting Madison Avenue tactics, or in suspecting that more and more of the dollars we send them subsidize increasingly elaborate mailings?

Charities are very important and need our support. But the issue of what really happens to our contributions grows hazier. And since none of us has time to perform due diligence, we rely mostly on instinct in deciding what charities to support. Maybe I've spent too many years in journalism and public relations, but my instincts increasingly are communicating two words to me: toss it.



## What is Word of Mouth and Why Should You Care?

By Rachel Antman

We LVMers don't pretend that we're fashionable people. David Grant, for example, has been known to wear suspicious suspenders and bright orange shirts. And even though our wonderful intern Denise is a student at the Fashion Institute of Technology, we admit that her fashion sense hasn't necessarily rubbed off on all of us.

When it comes to public relations, however, we try to stay ahead of all the latest trends. That's why we and the other firms in our Pinnacle Worldwide network are getting involved in a new area of public relations called Word of Mouth Marketing (WOM).

What's so special about a simple concept that the Word of Mouth Marketing Association defines as "Giving people a reason to talk about your products and services, and making it easier for that conversation to take place?"

For starters, there's the \$25 billion in market share the sector is estimated to capture over the next ten years. Or the high returns on investment. As Geoff Ramsey, the CEO of eMarketer notes, "Word-of-mouth campaigns generate after-effects that can give your marketing programs more 'spin' for the money."

So what are the steps involved in creating a WOM campaign? You need to identify customers who could effectively spread the word about your products and services, give them something



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# The Culture Chasm: A Public Relations Perspective

By Rachel Antman

Anyone who's moved to Manhattan from another part of the country usually adjusts pretty quickly to Big Apple culture – by speeding up his or her stride, cultivating impatience with tourists, and buying expensive grooming products.

Even when it comes to public relations, New York has its own special cultural codes. In Manhattan media relations, public relations professionals and journalists tend to be transaction-oriented. If you call a journalist to propose a story, you'd better keep your pitch much shorter than a New York minute. There isn't usually room for idle chitchat.

In other U.S. cities, there is a little more leeway for niceties and relationship cultivation. Old-boy networks are still prominent in many areas. Yet these differences are minor in comparison to the differences between the practice of public relations in the U.S. and other countries.

Two LVMers have had the opportunity to experience these differences first-hand. I worked for Weber Shandwick in London for two years after transferring from the firm's Washington, D.C. office. And James Kimer worked for Fleishman-Hillard in Madrid for three years.

According to James, "Spain has a totally different model for the practice of public relations. It took a lot of patient work to establish relationships with journalists, but once they knew they could rely on you, they would go out of their way to help you."

In the UK, I found that visiting pubs with journalists was an essential component of my job. Wining, dining, and "beering" were the fail-safe methods for ensuring that journalists paid attention to our pitches.

This culture gap can pose a serious dilemma for PR practitioners in the U.S. who represent Europe-based clients. LVM's Bob

Rumerman knows the problem well:

"We had a Scottish technology client who came here to do an account review and complained that our expenses were too low," he recalls.

"Only weeks before we had scored a major hit in the Sunday Boston Globe – the primary print medium for New England's important high-tech colony – and still the client wanted to know why we hadn't gone to Boston to wine and dine the reporter. I tried to explain that the young reporter was of a breed that responds to a good story angle and useful information, not a steak dinner and a martini. There was no value added in this case by my spending the client's money on a visit to Boston. But I doubt the client understood."

These examples underscore a key component of cross-cultural theory – the categorization of rules-oriented versus relationship-oriented cultures. In rules-oriented cultures like the U.S., "what" is more important than "who." Contrastingly, "who" is paramount in relationship-oriented cultures like Spain, the UK, and many other countries.

It is because of such enormous differences in cross-cultural perspectives that public relations strategies often require local implementation. For this reason, LVM is fortunate to have partners in every major city in the world, through Pinnacle Worldwide, our 30-year-old network of independent public relations firms.

Some would argue that the need for local implementation extends to regions within the same country. Would you approach the media in Chattanooga, TN in the same way you'd approach the New York media? Probably not. If you take a long time to get to the point and engage in a lot of small talk with reporters in the Big Apple, you'll be lucky to get a single bite.



## Introducing ACE AEs

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and French.

Like James, Kristin has successfully incorporated her multicultural interests into her personal life. In August, she will marry her fiancé, Tom, who is from Sligo, Ireland. The wedding will take place in Sligo, but Kristin and Tom will return to New York after their honeymoon. We're sure that she'll miss us terribly while she's away.

Kristin and James look forward to speaking with or working with you in the near future, whether in English, Spanish, French, or even Gaelic. Until then, au revoir! Hasta luego! Slán! Basta!

## Word of Mouth

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substantive to talk about, and then facilitate this process of information sharing.

The theory seems basic; putting it into practice is much more complex. That's why Pinnacle has created a WOM task force, which is providing training for members. Several LVMers have already participated in these training programs.

We may not be fashionable, but we are committed to keeping abreast of public relations industry trends. So we're putting our money where the word of mouth is. With a \$25 billion market share for the taking, we think we'll get our word's worth.

## Out To Lunch

### Intern Goes International: My Lunchtime Trip to Avra

By Denise Kreft

Nestled in the heart of Midtown is Avra Estiatorio, a first-class Greek restaurant that transports you to Greece without the expensive plane ticket.

When you step into the big wooden doors of this establishment, you are greeted with warm smiles from the waitstaff. As my companions and I walked to our table, we could not help glancing at the fresh seafood on display, as well as the assortments of olives and hummus.

Our server greeted us the minute that we sat down. Throughout the lunch, he was very attentive to our needs and checked on us frequently.

The menu had such interesting appetizers as carp roe spread and octopus. And the three-course prix fixe actually had a lot of choices. Usually prix fixes feature bland menu items; this one had lamb and arctic char!

As tempting as the prix fixe was, I decided to go a la carte when I discovered that Avra served a crab cake burger. Although I am not a crab cake expert, I can say with certainty that the amount of crab far exceeded the breading. In fact, I don't think I even noticed any breading!

The fries that were served with my sandwich were caked in oregano and melted in my mouth. My companions enjoyed their food, which they ordered from the prix fixe menu, as much as I did.

My only criticism is the restaurant's baklava. Instead of being flaky and chewy, it was stiff and hard. Needless to say, despite that flaw, this restaurant is definitely worth a visit. The food, as well as the ambiance, is so exceptional that you almost want to break a plate!

**Avra Estiatorio**

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## The LVM Letter

A publication of LVM Group Inc.,  
a public relations, investor relations  
and marketing firm.

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