

# New York's Top Specialty PR Firms, From Travel to Tech and Beyond

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We've got just 50 slots to recognize the city's top PR firms every year, but there are scores of specialist agencies that merit honorable mention. With that in mind, Observer ranked agencies in 10 major categories that define their industries.



## Travel

**Hawkins International PR**—Selective growth is the secret to Jennifer Hawkins' success; her firm's enviable portfolio now includes Paris' Hôtel Plaza Athénée, Loews Hotels & Resorts, the Beverly Hills Hotel and Fairmont.

**The Brandman Agency**—Ritz-Carlton, Qantas, Six Senses and La Mamounia top a client list of luxury travel brands and A-list real estate projects. NYC's Woolworth Tower Residences also tapped Brandman this year. Bonus: Brandman's site lets you sort clients by continent.

**Lou Hammond Group**—Hammond's ably expanded into real estate and tech but still shines brightest with travel; 2017 clients include Antigua and Barbuda and Cinnamon Bay Resort, along with prestige clients retained since the dawn of time. Bonus: The Haunted Attractions Association—who knew?—is a client.

**Wagstaff Worldwide**—Joie de Vivre hotels, VisitDenmark, Promote Iceland, Tourism Western Australia, Beverly Hills CVB and more destinations, airlines and hotels round out a sprawling client list for this six-city firm.

**Finn Partners**—Grownup firm with wide-ranging client list and strong travel and destination focus; think Air France/KLM, Greater Fort Lauderdale, Hilton, Hotels.com, Jamaica and the iconic I (Heart) NY campaign.



### Restaurants and Food

**Baltz**—Philip Baltz’s quietly consistent firm numbers several Jose Garces eateries, Marcus Samuelsson’s Red Rooster Harlem, Rosa Mexicano nationwide and now hotels like Gild Hall and Rosewood Mayakoba among its clients.

**Hall PR**—Industry people on several continents love Steven Hall, which is why his smart, compact firm reps hotspots like Megu, DaDong, Dallas’ soon-to-open Bullion and LES newbie Lil’ Gem.

**Lion and Lamb Communications**—High-low mix of tasty clients, from 16 Handles and Birch Coffee to hot spots Oiji, and Au Zaatar to W Hotels and Cuba Travel Network.

**Colangelo & Partners**—Hindi, Japanese, Farsi, Indonesian, Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, Icelandic, Danish, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, French. Sixteen languages spoken is one reason Colangelo’s the leader in international wine PR with clients from Napa Valley to Spain to Tuscany to South Africa.

**Bullfrog & Baum**—For its first-ever schmear of PR, Katz’s Deli called on Jennifer Baum’s rock-solid firm, which also counts Great Northern Food Hall and its sibling eatery Agern, Bobby Flay’s Gato and Blue Ribbon Restaurants among its clients.



### Real Estate

**Hundred Stories**—Projects across North America for clients like Taconic Investment Partners, El Ad Group, Silverstein Properties, Fortis Property Group and DHA Capital; in its spare time, the agency runs the starry City of Tomorrow conference, which has lured the likes of Harry Macklowe and Ian Schrager to the 92nd Street Y.

**Optimist Consulting**—Smart marketer whose arsenal includes Instagram—client Madison Square Park Tower has 20,000-plus followers. Burgeoning fashion and style arm this year handled Gigi Hadid’s new jewelry line and the buzzy Paul Newman Rolex auction.

**Gotham PR**—Courtney Lukitsch’s firm isn’t about real estate, per se, but the creatives who make it interesting: Groovy Viennese firm Veech x Veech, futurist architect John Portman and hirsute interior designer Andres Escobar are the latest on a long list.

**Risa Heller Communications**—A former flack for Chuck Schumer and David Paterson, Heller knows how to talk her way out of a sticky situation. She represented Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump until August; her current varied client list includes Airbnb, the Metropolitan Opera and NYCFC in a practice that straddles real estate, crisis and high-level public affairs.

**Beckerman PR**—Already a force in property development, Beckerman very sagely established the first real estate technology practice last year, a move that's proving both prescient and profitable. Clients are piling on, including Ten-X, Xceligent, Honest Buildings, WiredScore, Compass, redIQ, Notable and Snapchat's Snaplistings Management.



### Tech

**Clarity**—Tech startups swarmed Clarity this year, but the firm shone brightest in its work for Jewish news organization the Forward, including a digital rebrand and global coverage around history-making exposes—like the one that lost Sebastian Gorka his White House job.

**Kite Hill**—Nearly 50 percent jump in revenue at Tiffany Guarnaccia's feisty little firm with projects from BuzzFeed and Genius, new clients like content creator Deluxe and major growth at its Experiences division and content studio. Guarnaccia still leads Communications Week, too—bigger than ever this year.

**Affect**—A pioneer in the world of blockchain PR—she's worked the space for two years—Sandra Fathi is also ahead of the curve on artificial intelligence, AR and other things we don't understand.

**SourceCode Communications**—Greg Mondshein and U.K. expat Rebecca Honeyman left Hotwire PR to start this smart, scrappy firm that's making waves with "scale-ups"—as opposed to startups—like Hinge, Buzzweb and Supportful. Relationships with European media give the pair a leg up.

**Moxie Communications**—This year's client wins for Taryn Langer's well-liked operation include CollegeHumor, StadiumGoods, Daily Harvest, Hourglass Cosmetics and Trivago—so get ready to see that ubiquitous "guy" in a lot more commercials.



### Fashion

**Mode PR**—Downtown movers and shakers with indie roster: Bing Bang, R13, Walk of Shame, more. Paparazzi often snap celebrities like Kendall Jenner, Jennifer Lopez and Natalie Portman sporting clients' attire. Founder Amanda Carter, one of the queens of New York Fashion Week, also gets top placements in industry bibles like Vogue, InStyle, W, Glamour and Elle.

**Berns Communications Group**—Equally adept at traditional media and influencer schmoozing, Stacy Berns' 15-year-old firm counts Hudson's Bay, Fred Segal, Alibaba Group and DXL among its wide-ranging clients.

**LaForce**—Any agency whose roster spans Omega watches, Andy Boy lettuce, NexCare bandages, Fiskars scissors, NYC's Seaport District and LinkedIn is doing something right. We think.

**Factory PR**—From NYC and L.A., Factory throws its weight behind cool midmarket brands like ASOS, Brandless, Eugenia Kim, Happy Socks and Rebag.

**Black Frame**—Insider's insider Brian Phillips actually shapes the brands he works with. Though it met with some sneers, Helmut Lang's relaunch as a "magazine" with rotating "editors" was apparently his idea.



### Beauty

**Red PR**—Julia Labaton's mighty little firm remains a favorite of industry insiders and the go-to for foreign companies growing U.S. business; clients include Morgan Taylor Lacquer, Ouidad, Natura Brasil and Alcantara.

**Marina Maher Communications**—Venerable firm that bills itself as "artfully persuasive" in service of big brands from CoverGirl to Gillette Venus to Clairol to...Depends.

**Lippe Taylor**—Staked a claim to power-of-women marketing with Nestle's Differin skin care brand, Botox, Yellowtail wine, and Gwen Stefani for Revlon.

**BOLD**—Big names like Pat McGrath Labs, Prada Parfums, Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, L'Occitane and Marc Jacobs Beauty are marquee clients at this “deliberately small” agency with strong chops in both content and digital.

**MBA Partners**—Ex-Dior Beauty PR mistress Bryn Kenny and Place PR founder Matthew Snyder merged into MBA Partners in October; 37 Actives, Recipe for Men, Room & Board and Zelens Skincare top the inaugural client list.



### Finance

**Prosek Partners**—We know Prosek makes powerful new-business pitches; in fact, they sent us their deck for Citi, a prospective client, instead of a Power 50 submission. We think they’ll recover; Prosek still manages \$10 trillion in assets, and revenue is up 30 percent. The firm broadened its ranks this year with clients like UBS, IBM, the Ford Foundation and of course Citi.

**Sard Verbinnen**—Sard celebrated its 25th anniversary with a new Hong Kong office and fresh clients like Tiffany, Ralph Lauren, Snap, the Nordstrom family, Wells Fargo and Nelson Peltz’s Trian. But more than a third of its partners have bolted since a piece of Sard was sold last year. And Gasthalter, a new firm run by former staffers, eclipsed the old masters in repping U.S. hedge funds, according to Absolute Return.

**Stanton**—Remember Dorf & Stanton? That was industry eminence Alex Stanton. Now, his youngish firm reps big-deal clients like Bain Capital and TD Ameritrade; Stanton’s handled 45 M&A transactions this year alone.

**Gladstone Place Partners**—Former Brunswick partner Steve Lipin, a self-described “hack to flack,” made headlines when he launched his boutique consultancy in October. Look out, big guys.

**Dukas Linden Public Relations**—Some numbers on Dukas: Its clients manage more than \$1.5 trillion in assets. It claims to have generated more than 550 broadcast placements this year. And some names: The firm reps Raymond James, Eaton Partners and Brandes Investment Partners among others.



### Arts and Culture

**Motormouth Media**—Any firm whose roster includes Diamanda Galas, Destroyer, Austra, Haxan Cloak, the Horrors, The Soft Moon and Marnie Stern deserves the most serious of props.

**ThirdEye**—Intriguing roster of “partners”—don’t call them “clients”—in blurry space between art and fashion, including Artwalk NY, Socrates Sculpture Park, Patrik Ervell, New York Botanical Garden and Maison Margiela.

**Kubany Judlowe**—Clients at this brainy boutique include Denver’s Contemporary Art Museum, architect Deborah Berke and the Museum of Jewish Heritage, which just launched its pioneering Holocaust holograms education program.

**Grapevine Public Relations**—DKC denizens Chelsea Nachman and Molly Barnett left the firm in October to start this cool new venture. Its clients at launch included Cyndi Lauper and Dear Evan Hansen, so this is definitely one to watch.

**Fitz & Co**—Art Basel. Do we need to say more? How about BMW, Perez Art Museum Miami, Storm King Art Center, Rolls Royce, LACMA, Aga Khan Museum and others, on five continents?



### Nonprofit and Cause

**Anat Gerstein & Associates**—A masterful campaign for the Girl Scouts—whose homeless shelter troop expansion got page one of *The New York Times*, along with features on *Today* and *The View*—emerged as one of 2017’s media coups. With the firm’s help, old-school clients like *The Workmen’s Circle* and the *Alliance for Positive Change* have also become unlikely media stars—we’re talking the *Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Today* and more.

**Phil & Co**—Cutesy name—for “philanthropy and companies doing good”—but serious work for clients like the *American Diabetes Foundation*, *Technion* and *Carnegie Corporation*.

**DG & Co**—Veteran fight-the-good-fight firm’s roster includes *Ad Council*, *Center for Jewish History*, *Math for America*, *Atlantic Philanthropies*, *United Nations Foundation* and *Mississippi Center for Justice*.

**The Tasc Group**—Serious media relations and thoughtful strategy for clients from *David Lynch Foundation* to *Farm Sanctuary* to the *Trayvon Martin Foundation*.

**Fenton**—Along with launching Actio, a corporate social responsibility practice, Fenton this year welcomed back former de Blasio spokeswoman Karen Hinton, who fought hard to recover from a serious treadmill accident.



### The Generalists

**Havas PR**—Industry oracle Marian Salzman continues to lead this hard-charging firm through choppy waters with wins across pharma, food and foundations, and there's more growth in outposts like Pittsburgh and Phoenix.

**Burson Marsteller**—It's been a year of massive change as this storied legacy giant continues its never-ending reinvention; along with a raft of new C-suite talent, Burson managed to attract business from Spotify, General Tire, Avaya and Baidu, among others.

**Nicholas & Lence Communications**—It was a good year for this very New York firm with wins like Citywide Ferry Service, The ARK animal import and export terminal at JFK, Spin and the recently opened National Geographic Encounter: Ocean Odyssey in Times Square. Caesars Entertainment and its 22 properties nationwide came aboard late in 2017 too—a nice cherry on the cake.

**5WPR**—Sprawling client list spans big brands like CheapoAir and Walgreens and midsize companies like Viki's Granola and Santa Margherita winery, as well as plastic surgeons, lingerie makers and the Westminster Kennel Club.

**Goodman Media International**—Industry sage Tom Goodman tacked on the "International" this year as his venerable firm added Alibaba Group, Ink Media and Pelé—yes, the soccer legend— to its eclectic roster.