

# The shape of things to come in public relations

**BY PHYLLIS APPLE**

*CEO, the Apple Organization*



The public relations industry, like other media-related occupations, has radical changes in store for it over the next few decades. Some things, however, will never change.

Let me begin by explaining what public relations is all about. The purpose of public relations is to increase the public awareness of clients' products and services. There are different ways to accomplish this, including the creation of special events and other forms of social networking. But the essence of the process is to get your client's name out there by winning editorial placement about them in various forms of media. So, to a large extent, the future of public relations is inherently tied to the future of media.

Today, media is evolving at a breakneck pace, splintering into an ever growing array of alternative choices. What cable TV did to the television industry – generating a huge increase in programming above and beyond what the major networks were broadcasting –

is happening to media across the board. The so-called New Media is offering a virtual smorgasbord of new content, delivered by everything from the web sites of major corporations to the daily postings of individual bloggers.

In this brave new media world, it is the challenge of public relations firms to position their clients in more and more media outlets, most of which are smaller than the traditional media venues. The good news is that these multiplying channels of content are far more targeted. So public relations firms, just like marketers and advertisers, are better able to reach the specific audiences their clients want to reach.

Most of the New Media revolves around the Internet. Understanding how to manipulate this new medium will be a great challenge for public relations firms in the coming decades. On the one hand it will require more work, since there will be – and already are – so many more outlets to contend with. On the other hand, it is easier to reach these outlets than ever before, thanks to the Internet itself.

One key advantage for public relations firms plying the New Media is the fact that while there are more media outlets than

every before, they are more willing to accept prepared content from third party sources, rather than produce their own. This is because they have smaller budgets than their bigger brothers and sisters and therefore cannot afford as large an editorial staff. This provides substantial new leverage for public relations firms, since the stories contributed to the press have their clients profiled in the most favorable light.

Having said all of this about the New Media, what I find ironic is that time and again my clients tell me they still want to see their names, their products and their services in print. There is something about words printed on paper that legitimizes ideas in a way that electrons still fail to accomplish. So, while everyone wants the bells and whistles of the New Media, they still very much want the impact and power of the Old Media. They still want to see the ink.

It is not just the permanence of print that makes it so attractive to our clients. Say what you will about how the New Media can craft content to fit a particular audience. It will be difficult to replace the intimacy of print. There is something about being able to curl up in bed or on a sofa with that mag-

azine, or to linger with a newspaper over a cup of coffee at breakfast, that a computer terminal will be hard pressed to replace – even a super lightweight laptop computer.

Nonetheless, the New Media is the future, especially for the younger generations which are more comfortable reading computer screens than hardcover books. Public relations firms must understand how to reach this new audience. It will be a challenge, but it will also be an opportunity. It will be particularly exciting because not only can you create content tailored to a narrower demographic, but you can also interact with your audience. So-called user-generated content is the ultimate word-of-mouth publicity, and a new feedback mechanism for products and services.

How public relations firms deal with this will say a lot about the individual success or failure of a given company, and how nimble it can be in the face of change. One thing that will never change, however, is that all important word 'relations.' Knowing your client, and developing a relationship of trust and reliability with your media contacts, will always remain an inherent and vital part of the business.



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# The future of Miami-Dade's economic development

BY AURELIA VASQUEZ

*Communications Manager,  
Beacon Council*

Over the last 22 years, the Beacon Council has been driving Miami-Dade's economic development initiatives, helping the community grow a vibrant and diverse economy.

Founded by both the public and private sectors, the Beacon Council was created so that the county would speak with one voice on the economic development issues affecting Miami-Dade. Through the years,



Miami-Dade continues to outperform Florida and the Nation economically.

our community's economy has successfully emerged as a global business center, supported by a variety of industries, not solely on tourism or any single geographical region.

As the county's official not-for-profit, public-private partnership, the Beacon Council has been charged with bringing new, job generating investments to the community and assisting local existing companies in their efforts to expand. Since its creation in 1986, the organization has assisted close to 700 companies, helped create more than 50,000 direct jobs, and helped attract more than \$2.3 billion in new capital investment to our community. The Beacon Council has accomplished this feat by focusing its efforts to carry out two major goals. The first is to market Miami-Dade County nationally and internationally to attract new businesses to the area, resulting in economic development and growth. The second is to help local businesses prosper by assisting them in their expansions through a variety of economic development programs, activities, events, initiatives and award-winning marketing and research materials.

Miami-Dade's journey to becoming a major global business center has now placed our community on the cusp of a Golden Age. Miami is truly becoming a top destination for the world's business community; from hosting the Inter-American Development Bank Annual Meeting to Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami has the power

to bring together the world's top business leaders and trendsetters. All the signs indicate that Miami-Dade County is on the right path to ensuring that the next twenty years will be a time when great strides are made to positioning the area as a major player in the global economy. The county had a strong economy during 2007 with record low unemployment rates and it led the state in job growth. In addition, both the visitor industry and merchandise trade had record years. Other sectors that performed well include wholesale trade, financial services, healthcare and professional services. Overall, Miami-Dade County continues in out-performing the rest of Florida and the nation due to the diversification of the economy and its emergence as a global business center.

As one looks into the future of Miami-Dade County, the success of our economic development efforts are an undeniable motor which will enable the community to prosper as a global business center, on par with the likes of Singapore, London and New York. By working towards this goal, Miami-Dade will create greater economic opportunities for its residents to support themselves, their families and the community with high paying jobs. The county has been successful in developing world-class connectivity, be it transportation or telecommunications, to all points on the globe, as well as in fostering a multilingual multicultural workforce and in sustaining a high-quality of life for our residents. These are some of the achievements which will propel economic development efforts forward and the Beacon Council's role will be to continue to ensure that the resources and expertise to market the international business assets of this community worldwide are available and in-play.

Our local economy is changing and we as a business community must change with it. There are new economic challenges created by globalization and the Beacon Council, together with its partners, is in a prime position to address them. Among the most prominent challenges which will test our ability to compete in the world marketplace is education. As we evolve in the direction of a global knowledge-based economy, Miami-Dade's efforts to diversify and strengthen the economy are anchored

by both the ability to train a knowledge-based workforce, capable of supplying the demands of and sustaining high-tech and advanced industries. These industries require a higher level of education and if Miami-Dade does not improve the talent skill of its students, the economic disparity will widen the gap and companies will look elsewhere to establish or expand operations.

Currently, we are not producing the talent with the higher level of education that these industries require fast enough to fill the potential positions these companies offer. The contribution of these industries to economic growth and development is essential now and in the future, as Miami-Dade competes with other knowledge-based economies throughout the U.S., Europe, Asia and Latin America. Fulfilling our schools funding needs is a major challenge as we move forward, not only for our County but for Florida. Education and a skilled-workforce go hand-in-hand: without it we will never reach our potential as a diversified economy.

Other challenges our business community face moving forward into the future are the ability to brand and market our area as a global business center, while expanding the current marketing funds. Miami-Dade County remains the business capital of the Americas, but we cannot take this status for granted since other cities such as Houston and Atlanta still vie for the title. In order to maintain the county at the forefront and continue adding to and retaining the 1,200 multinationals already in our area, the Beacon Council aggressively promotes the business assets of the County through the Miami-Dade Marketing Initiative. The initiative is an ambitious marketing campaign, coupled with targeted economic development mission in key U.S. and international markets. The organization's leadership, comprised by some of the most dedicated and distinguished business leaders and officials in the County, directs these marketing efforts, as well as assists in fundraising the money needed to brand Miami as a global business center. Miami-Dade County has unlimited potential given proper leadership from the public and private sectors.

The Beacon Council works in bringing the two together, to address the business challenges and find solutions which benefit the community as a whole.

With the many challenges ahead, also lie opportunities waiting to be seized. The Beacon Council is moving forward in the campaign to market Miami-Dade County's status as a top global business center. Even though the county is still considered the business capital of the Americas by international companies, the Beacon Council maintains its marketing agenda in order to capitalize on the increase in foreign investment due to the strength of the Euro and other foreign currencies.

Recently, key economic development missions to Spain, France, Italy and Israel were held to meet with and recruit potential businesses interested in investing in Miami-Dade. The organization will also participate, in partnership with the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and Enterprise Florida in the BIO 2008 show in San Diego as part of the outreach and development of Miami-Dade's life sciences industry. Increased initiatives such as these will target new business location and expansion and enable a knowledge-based workforce to be cultivated.

Without a doubt, the next step of Miami-Dade's economic future is to further strengthen and diversify the local economy as it takes on a bigger role in the global economy and leverage its business assets and platform to do business worldwide. Under the guidance of the Beacon Council and its public and private members, the work will continue to realize the full potential of Miami as a global business



Beacon Council aggressively promotes business assets of Miami-Dade County.

center. How we as an evolving global community transform challenges into opportunities will be the dominant story for Miami-Dade in years to come.

# El Dorado Furniture marks 40th anniversary

**BY ROBERT CAPO**

*Chief Marketing Officer at El Dorado Furniture*

El Dorado Furniture is one of the largest home furniture retailers in the country, ranking among the top 50. It is a family business with humble beginnings in the 1920s in the Cuban province of Pinar del Rio.

El Dorado Furniture president Luis Capó learned the trade from his father, who learned it from his own father as a young boy.

"My grandfather exchanged farm products for furniture and he restored it," said Capó.

The workmanship was excellent and the furniture re-sold. By 1950, the family had opened five stores and their company, Casa Capó, was a thriving furniture manufacturer and retailer in Cuba.

"The first toy my father ever gave me was a hammer," Capó recalled.

When Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, the government confiscated all private enterprises, including the Casa Capó stores.

"My father feared Cuba wasn't safe anymore," said Capó. "In 1966, he decided it was time to go."

His brave father, Manuel, made the difficult decision to leave his homeland, taking Luis and one other son along with him.

"We had to leave my mother and my three younger brothers."

They set sail in a small 24-foot boat they christened El Dorado, after the bull dolphin known as "dorado".

They arrived safely in Mexico and made their way to the United States, where they received political refugee status.

"As I look back over the years, I can

ividly remember the beginning when my father, my brother and I struggled to survive in a new country," Capó said. "But the United States of America welcomed us and believed in us, thus opening the doors to opportunities that were denied us in our own country."

The father and two brothers found strength in their faith, in each other and

\$10,000 loan from the Small Business Administration, which they used to open the first El Dorado Furniture store, named after the boat that had carried them to freedom. That same year, his mother and his young brothers made the journey to Miami, but the family was not completely reunited.

"My older brother was a political

mental in reaching success.

"I am proud to say that each and every one of our employees works with enthusiasm and dedication, making El Dorado Furniture a successful and prestigious organization," said Luis Capó.

The company has a commitment to honest, caring practices.

"We have sincere interest in and respect for our employees, our customers, our vendors and our service providers, who are all part of the El Dorado Furniture family," he said.

It is these practices and beliefs that Luis Capó and his family focus on as the real estate market changes and the economy declines.

"Companies have to be prepared to withstand the downturns," he said. "Those that concentrate on the customer's needs will be remembered most when things get better." Forty five percent of El Dorado Furniture's business comes from repeat customers and that is because of the company's exceptional ability to stay in tune with their customers' needs. Each of their locations is staffed with knowledgeable sales people and they even provide free

decorating services.

Anticipating better health for the economy, the company is building for the future. The 11th showroom, a 17-acre site in Coconut Creek, is expected to open next year.

In 2007, El Dorado Furniture celebrated its 40th anniversary and marked that significant event by donating over \$500,000 in furniture and services to South Florida families in need.

"We don't forget where we came from, nor those who helped us get here," said Capó.

The Capos are proud of their company's achievements, but they don't plan to rest on their laurels.

"God willing, we will continue to grow as we are doing today, providing outstanding customer service, reaching new levels of performance and always remembering that the sky's the limit," said Capó.



El Dorado will open its 11th showroom store later this year.

in their new country. They settled in Miami and returned to what they knew best – furniture.

"The only assets we possessed were the joys of being free, the longing for the family we left in Cuba and a burning desire to succeed," recalled Capó.

Just months later, they secured a

prisoner and remained in Cuba until 1979," said Capó. "My youngest brother Robert was born in the United States. The two met for the first time when Robert was 10 years old."

The Capó family has nurtured El Dorado Furniture since its beginnings in 1967. Luis Capó and his brothers each have a specialized area of expertise. Their father serves as chairman of the board and is actively involved in the company's daily operations. It is a family business and as they look to the future, it is likely to remain that way.

"Our children are already an essential part of this company," said Luis Capó. "The heart of El Dorado Furniture is the Capó family. But, really, the El Dorado family includes the company's more than 900 employees, many of whom have grown with the company and now hold executive positions."

Loyal employees have been instru-



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# Convenient, affordable parking a key to Miami's future growth

**BY ART NORIEGA**

*Chief Executive Officer,  
Miami Parking Authority*



As Miami's urban core continues to evolve, so too do the parking needs and expectations of its residents and visitors. Formerly sleepy Downtown Miami now bustles with high-rise condominiums. Perennially busy neighborhoods such as Coconut Grove strive to accommodate tourists, shoppers and restaurant-goers while maintaining their unique character. And, growing commercial areas such as Brickell, Allapattah and the Design District need additional infrastructure to support expanding business traffic.

The Miami Parking Authority exists to forecast and meet the demand for convenient and affordable parking in all parts of the city. Overseeing more than 30,000 parking spaces – including 11 garages, 78 lots and more than 8,000 regulated street spaces – MPA currently provides parking for approximately 55,000 customers per week. MPA facilities are either wholly owned or managed through government, non-profit, or public/private joint ventures. Operating much like a private business, MPA returns an average of \$2 million in parking revenues to city coffers each year. MPA is also charged with issuing parking citations, but all citation revenues are collected by the city and county; the Parking Authority does not benefit from those revenues.

As parking industry experts, MPA's staff helps shape the future of transportation in the city by employing leading-edge parking technology as well as tracking trends in parking construction to ensure that new

facilities are both feature-rich and cost-effective.

Miami's most recent advance in parking technology occurred just this month, when MPA introduced a convenient new payment option, "Pay by Phone," at all on-street spaces and more than 20 parking lots throughout the city. To use the service, motorists must first register their mobile phone number, tag number and Visa/MasterCard number by calling toll free 866-990-7275 or visiting <www.payby-phone.com>. Once signed up with a free pay-by-phone account, users simply call the toll-free number from the registered phone and key in the location number (posted on the meter or on nearby signs) and the amount of parking time desired. The appropriate total, plus a 35-cent service charge, will be charged to the credit card.

We expect Pay by Phone to continue to reduce the number of parking citations we issue, much as our Pay and Display meters did when we introduced them a few years ago. When there's no need to search for coins or currency to feed the meter, most people tend to pay what they owe.

MPA has an eye on the future in the design of its new garages as well. Our new Courthouse Center facility, now under construction in Downtown Miami, incorporates an 852-space garage into an 11-story, mixed-use structure that also features nearly 40,000 square feet of office space on top, plus retail shops at the street level. The entire development is packaged in an architecturally appealing design that complements the new Federal Courthouse across the street. Multi-use structures such as Courthouse Center fit more comfortably into the urban fabric than monster garages,



Downtown Courthouse Center is a multi-use facility slated for completion in late 2009

and they create a more attractive impression for the community. As an added benefit, the parking-payment function at Courthouse Center will be completely automated. Users will pay on foot at a kiosk before returning to their car, so that there is no longer a need to wait in line to pay a cashier at the exit.

We at the Parking Authority view parking as an integral component of Miami's economic success and revitalization. In the future, we will maintain our focus on providing clean, safe and affordable parking in order to ensure that we are an engine for the city's continued growth.

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# Fifty years of family, inspiration, technology and other changes

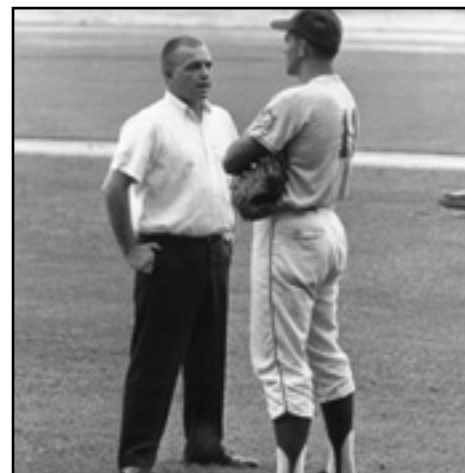
BY JACK CRITTENDEN AND JENNY  
MCLAUGHLIN

Our Miami family has come a long way over the past 50 years. We have grown from writing about and being written about in the Miami News and operating Saunders Hardware to high-speed printing and Internet financing.

Our dad, John Crittenden, moved to South Florida from Virginia in 1958 to marry our mom, Patricia Saunders, the daughter of long-time native Floridians. Mom's grandmother, Ester Saunders, was the first female police matron of Miami and her great grandparents were native Indians.



John sorting through photos of stories he covered for The Miami News.



John with a Florida Marlins player in 1962.

Dad was the sports editor of The Miami News until his retirement in 1986. His daily writing in those days came from routinely visiting athletes, driving to games, and making a lot of phone calls. He always jotted his notes down in little spiral notebooks that fit into his pocket and then typed them using a manual typewriter. As kids, we spent many nights at Mark Light Field sitting along the fence behind home plate. There was no such thing as the Internet, cell phones or even a personal computer at the time.



John is at the right of Muhammad Ali in this 1970's photo.

Mom was the daughter of Dexter and Irene Saunders, the owners of Saunders Hardware, which was created in 1938. Saunders was your typical large, local, friendly hardware store that sold items ranging from tools to gardening supplies to sewing needs. Cash was the name of the game back then, unless you were known and had an account, and there was very little use of credit cards. We also spent a lot of time at the store counting cash and weathering hurricanes. Today, using the inspiration and support of our parents and grandparents, we run our own companies using high speed technology and the Internet.

My sister, Jenny McLaughlin, owns and operates Covered With Ink, a high-speed printing company. She produces large format digital printing, including posters, banners and outdoor signs by using technology that didn't exist even five years ago, let alone 50 years ago.

My brother, Jack Crittenden, created and operates Eboatloans.com, a nationwide finance company that uses the Internet to provide boat, RV and aircraft loans. Computers and the Internet are the lifeblood of my business.

However, we actually do have one manual typewriter.

We both have our own children now and remember when our dad taught us how to type using "the quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog" method. We laugh as we have both used it to teach our children how to type.

Some things do change and others don't, but either way, "It's