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**Worldcom Public Relations Group Input for O'Dwyers Feature on International Networks  
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What multi-national PR organization has nearly 100 offices in 33 countries on 6 continents, has blue-chip clients in every industry around the world, uses interoffice collaboration to deliver the best domain expertise, offers all its offices group buying discounts and in-house mentoring and training programs, has eight practice groups offering clients access to the world's foremost experts in particular industries or specialized types of service across all geographies? Is it H&K? Weber Shandwick? Edelman?

No – It's the Worldcom Public Relations Group.

The Worldcom Group focuses on helping strong independent agency partners stay independent by delivering:

- Resources to serve clients who need assistance in other markets
- Expertise for competing against multinationals in new business
- Insight, operational resources and best practices from other leading independent firms

Worldcom Group offices are led by local public relations professionals who are opinion leaders in the profession and in their communities. Worldcom firms are staffed with consultants who understand the language, culture and customs of the geographic areas in which they operate and who provide in-depth communications expertise available to those who live and work there.

Combined revenue in 2005 of all 96 partner offices was \$186,000,000 US. 60% of Worldcom firms have annual revenue between US \$500,000 and \$2 million. 30% have revenue between \$2 million and \$5 million. 10% have revenue over \$5 million.

**How can Worldcom Group provide consistent quality and service delivery across all those offices?** Every Worldcom Group partner must use a specified set of management practices that meet the highest standards in agency management. Every agency undergoes a review of its management practices conducted by two other Worldcom Group partners every two years. This peer review covers business planning, financial systems, campaign events, client satisfaction measurement, service delivery, consistent processes, training and development and agency marketing/Worldcom Group representation.

Worldcom requires firms to have at least five professional consultants on staff, bill at least \$500,000 annually and have been in business at least five years.

The group is governed by a world-wide group board and region boards in the Americas, Europe and Asia Pacific. A full-time Chief Operating Officer supports the boards and other volunteer committees in carrying out operations.

**What industries do Worldcom partners specialize in?** Worldcom Group has formed eight practice groups: Consumer; Crisis and Issues Management; Financial Services; Health Care; Investor Relations; Public Affairs, Energy & Environment; Travel & Tourism; Technology

## **How do Worldcom partners share knowledge, expertise and best practices?**

### ***Meetings***

The annual group meeting of all partners is held in the spring and partners in each of three regions – Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe/Africa – meet separately in the fall. These two to three day meetings are rich in partner-led presentations, roundtable discussions, panels and networking opportunities.

### ***Requests for information***

In 2005 Worldcom Group partners used an on-line request form on the Intranet site to send 130 requests to their peers seeking information related to clients or practice management. When firms needed answers they got anywhere from 10 to 50 responses. Firms can't buy that many points of view at any price, much less access the precise information they need in 24- 36 hours. By knowing and relying on each other, partners also can get instant access to the one particular insight a client needs, whether in one specific location or 100.

### ***Employee relations and training***

In 2004 a proprietary training program, Worldcom University, was launched with 16 courses for middle and senior level account managers. For each course firms can download a trainers guide, presentation and course content.

This year Worldcom has launched i40, free 40-minute webinars conducted by partner experts. The first will be conducted in May by Joan Schneider, Schneider Associates, Boston, who is an expert in and published author on new product introduction.

Just last month at the annual group meeting a panel discussion by four firms from the US, one from Italy, and one from Spain shared best practices on what made their firm a great place to work. Programs such as this one are offered at every Worldcom meeting.

### ***Practice Management Information on the Intranet site***

Some 100 practice management topics are explored on the intranet site, covering everything from managing cross-border projects and programs to measuring the value of media placements to succession planning.

## **How many Worldcom partners work together for clients?**

Partners referred \$3,141,000 in business for 74 clients to other partners in 2005.

Annual survey of partner firms revealed that 53 partners worked together on business in 2005.

Examples of partners working together on multi-market client programs: Standing Partnership (St. Louis) working with Bliss Gouverneur & Associates and M. Silver Associates in New York, PCI in Chicago, and OEB in Canada and Kaizo in London for Maritz, using a proprietary on-line project management system. (see case study attached)

Liggett Stashower Public Relations (Cleveland) working on a pan-European program for GrafTech with Yucatan in Paris, HBI in Germany, Business Press in Milan, and Grupo Albion in Spain.

Padilla Speer Beardsley (Minneapolis) working with Kaizo (UK), HBI (Germany), and several others on a pan-European PR program for Rockwell Automation

## **CASE STUDY: STANDING PARTNERSHIP**

**Maritz Inc.**

**Public Relations: Gaining Corporate Brand Recognition**

**Start Date: June 2004**

### **OVERVIEW**

Maritz Inc. is a global \$1.2 billion performance management company that provides market research, learning solutions, incentive programs, meetings and event management, rewards and recognition, travel management services, and customer loyalty programs. Despite its broad reach and enviable list of Fortune 500 clients, the company struggled with lack of name recognition beyond its flagship incentive travel business. Furthermore, an awkward corporate structure that siloed all outreach into seven business units did nothing to build awareness and reputation at a corporate level.

The company recognized a need to build its corporate brand and embraced public relations as the vehicle to drive its corporate reputation and ultimately business growth. Understanding that outreach on an individual business unit level would only get them so far, the company adopted a sector strategy and decided to invest resources to build awareness within specific industry sectors and across geographic regions.

### **PLANNING**

Standing Partnership pulled together a team of Worldcom partners to support the rollout of this major initiative. The sectors and regions included:

- Financial Services (Bliss, Gouverneur & Associates, New York City)
- Pharmaceuticals (PCI Inc., Chicago)
- Travel and Incentives (M. Silver & Associates, New York City)
- Automotive (Franco, Detroit)
- Europe (Kaizo, London)
- Canada (OEB International Limited, Toronto)

From the start, Standing Partnership has provided overall strategic direction for the program, contributed “arms and legs” to implement strategies and tactics as necessary, and managed resources to ensure the client has access to best-in-class services within each sector. Each partner came to the table to deliver strategic planning relevant to its sector and then expert implementation – complete with years of media relationships within its focus industries.

Led by Standing Partnership, the Worldcom partners collaborated with each of the Maritz businesses to develop complementary, strategic media relations plans that supported the Maritz story at the business unit and corporate levels.

### **STRATEGIES/TACTICS**

Strategies/tactics routinely include:

- National media tours with top reporters at important publications like *Wall Street Journal*, *American Banker*, *SmartMoney*, *Money* and Bloomberg News;
- By-lined articles with major trade publications across all target industries;
- The strategic use of Maritz Poll data to generate coverage related to key media trends; and
- Media pitches to position Maritz subject matter experts as thought leaders by sharing their insights related to major news events such as Hurricane Katrina.

## RESULTS

Two years after the program was launched, Maritz is making great inroads within the various industries. Key successes have included:

- **National media coverage** on an ongoing basis featuring in-depth, strategic Maritz business messages. Key placements have appeared in top consumer and trade outlets nationwide, including: CNBC-TV, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *American Banker*, *U.S. Banker*, *Pharmaceutical Executive*, *Med Ad News*, *Sales & Marketing Management*, *Incentive*, *Meeting News*, *Workforce Management*, *Net Assets*, *HR Executive*, *Selling Power* and *Motivation Strategies*.
- **New business opportunities** born out of public relations. This was demonstrated in the launch of an innovative new service (Maritz Travel Insight) that effectively transforms the level at which incentive travel can mobilize an employee base and add tremendous value to a company's bottom line. The launch at a major industry press conference yielded coverage in 15 major trade publications for the travel/incentives industry so far. (We are particularly proud that the concept to roll out this new product emerged out of strategic public relations discussions in which our team was facilitating the identification of key differentiators.)
- **Important business relationships** as demonstrated by a highly strategic partnership with pharmaceutical industry publication *Pharmaceutical Executive*. Maritz now supplies *Pharmaceutical Executive* with branded content in the form of poll data, by-lined articles and conference speaking engagements. The relationship has been so successful that Maritz has termed it the "*Pharmaceutical Executive* model" and plans to apply the approach in every industry sector they reach out to.