Reflections on a Turbulent Year: 2020
The Best of Weekly Columns and Broadcasts from LEVICK
A LOOK FORWARD...

What Happens Next?

The Capitol Is Stormed and American Companies Are Going to Be Front and Center: The “138” Are About to Become Untouchables

January 6th, 2021, a day that will live in infamy.

History moves in waves. The unthinkable becomes commonplace and we are no longer shocked. Not even surprised. By massive political miscalculations time and time again since the Access Hollywood tape surfaced, the events of January 6th were inevitable. As Republican Senator Ben Sasse wrote, “lies have consequences.”

So much history happened in 18 hours that it is hard to digest. The Democrats’ twin wins in Georgia, the first time they have won a Senate seat there in 20 years and the first African-American Senator Georgia has ever elected. With these victories, Democrats have taken back all three branches of government for the first time in a decade. One hundred and thirty-eight members of the Republican Party protesting the certification of the Electoral College, turning a ceremonial act into Congressional infighting we have not seen since the Civil War. The storming of the Capitol Building by armed insurrectionists, an act of violence against our beloved symbol of freedom not witnessed since the British burned it in 1814.

One wonders: What happens next?

Democracy survives this round. The Trump legacy, however, is forever tarnished. The Biden Administration has just been gently emboldened; the likelihood of smooth judicial appointments for centrist jurists has increased, and corruption investigations empowered. More stimulus funding and relief payments, including $2,000 checks, are coming.

The real fight now moves inside of the GOP in an 1850s redux of the dissembling of the Whig Party, the Republican Party’s predecessor. Already, Mitch McConnell, Ben Sasse and Mitt Romney, among others, can be seen on one wing of the party with more than a third – at least until the Capitol was stormed — cementing their position on the far right. In a remarkable — and disquieting — column, Tom Friedman of the New York Times referred to these 138 who protested the democratic process, as the “coup plotters.”

More than one conservative columnist has warned “Do not forget their names,” just as J. Edgar Hoover did with the Ten Most Wanted in 1950. The 138 may convert the party or they may become “untouchables.” Along with Trump, they forever wear the stain of today’s unthinkable but inevitable assault on democracy.

In the shadows of this high-profile political fight for the soul of one of the nation’s oldest political institutions comes the surprise — the battle about to take place in American corporations.

Over the past four years, from the resignations from President Trump’s Business Councils to #BlackLivesMatter, American corporations have been pushed front and center and asked, as the old Weavers’ song goes, “Which Side Are You On?” No longer is it safe, and maybe not even possible, for American companies to look apolitical, especially at a time when CSR and ESG have become indispensable elements of brands.

Little noticed over the past year is that heretofore opaque political donations are now transparent. For the first time in 2020, so called 527 political donations are now, thanks to the hard work of the Center for Public Integrity, transparent. If your company contributes to a political candidate, the public is going to know.

Early on the morning of January 6th, before the results from Georgia were known or the first protestor had broken through police barricades to attack our 220-year-old Capitol, the investigative news site Popular Information, had pinpointed the 20 American corporations that donated a total of $16 million dollars to the 138 elected members of Congress trying to “subvert democracy.”
Before today, smart companies made political contributions across party lines. Before today, smart companies made political contributions to sympathetic politicians regardless of anything else. Before today, there was minimal risk in supporting all but the most outrageous Member of Congress. Before today, it was easy to deflect criticism for political contributions, on the rare occasion that it occurred.

If you are a company who has contributed any substantial sum to these 138, the time to plan is now. You will not be able to use old tropes about bipartisan donations and smart politics. The stakes are far too high.

Grassroots and online protestors are about to publicly ask you if you support democracy or sedition. Stockholders are going to ask if these specific political contributions are worth the risk. Political opponents are going to make these contributions an election issue in the run-up to 2022. The new majority Democrats are going to put pressure on you behind the scenes.

But here’s the kicker — the nascent Mitch McConnell-Ben Sasse-Mitt Romney wing of the GOP is going to put pressure on you as the most powerful way they have of saving their party. If you haven’t included the new math in your calculation, today would be a good time to start.
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“A dragon lives forever but not so little boys…”

*Puff the Magic Dragon*

Peter, Paul & Mary

I don’t think I was much older than 10 or 11 and I was at the community pool on a hot summer’s day. As I looked over the hundreds of people, I saw an old man walking and a young woman wading into the pool that I can still see in my mind’s eye. I had already come to understand death due to its unfortunate and all-too-familiar companionship, but aging and the passing of time were foreign to me.

As I tried to understand under the blazing sun the concept of people growing old, it occurred to me – in what I later understood was a Shakespearean way – that each of us had a role to play, with the old man playing an old man; the young woman, a young woman, and me, a child. This is what we were apparently born to do, forever. What did not occur to me and what I still struggle with – as I suspect so many of us do – is that we will play many different roles – with their changing perspectives – over the passage of time. If we are lucky, we will experience each one of them: boundless childhood; youthful emergence; empowering middle age; seniority and wisdom; and in time, mortality, or as the Dalai Lama says, “Ah, death, a change of clothes.”

Accompanying the illusion of boundless youth is its parallel illusion – that all of history has unfolded just for us, for a new generation (in my case, the Age of Aquarius). And so, my youthful thinking went, but for cancer, we had conquered disease. We had found the nirvana of expanding democracy and enfranchised 18-year-olds. We had ended a war in Southeast Asia, not with violence but with our feet, marching by the thousands. We would save the earth starting with Earth Day. Yes, history had unfolded for us and we would live forever, drinking in its rewards.

But in the blink of an eye, five decades have gone by, and all the joys and boundless optimism that came with landing on the moon, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Glasnost and Perestroika, the Civil Rights, Voting Rights and Fair Housing Acts, the euphoria of the election of Barack Obama and all the rest has been impaled by a very dark year that felt like 1918, 1929 and 1968 rolled into one. Would our institutions hold? Would American exceptionalism make a return in time for the development of a vaccine? Would the post-World War II alliances re-emerge for the international cooperation necessary? Would the federal government re-find its *raison d’être* and provide a social safety net? And what about the deafening echo of nearly 400,000 empty chairs and empty tables?

Over the past year, we have written over 50 columns and recorded more than 200 podcasts with great thought leaders, from civil rights icon Andrew Young to Watergate hero John Dean. Men and women who have stood up at the moments of history and shown so much courage and vision that we still stand on their shoulders.

In the columns it seems we have found our voice. No click bait, over-hyped headlines promising “Ten Crisis Lessons” or “Five Things to Prevent a Cyberbreach,” but instead columns suggesting we “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may” combining deeply personal stories with the news and guests of the day. The idea of this year’s annual eBook is to provide a reflection of the difficult journey we all just took with an eye on what we might be able to do next.

When we were preparing this volume, one of the team members reflected (hence the name of this year’s eBook) on how much has happened in so little time. Few of us imagined in January of 2020 that we would spend the year at home, that offices would become an albatross and Zoom our Jetson-age wristwatch, necessary and miraculous, but overused to the point of carpal tunnel eyeballs from watching too many hours of *The Great British Baking Show*.

Tragically, we will soon lose more Americans to the pandemic in just over a year than we did in all of World War II. It’s no longer “over there.” And that is where our pre-2020 illusions come crashing down. Pandemics were always caught just in time and if they weren’t, they were far away. Diseases were conquered. Democracy and the peaceful transition of power were taken for granted. Our differences ended at the waters’ edge. The federal government had a purpose that included common defense and a social safety net. Mortgages, access to credit and education offered the hope of collective upwardly mobile movement.

With our illusions shattered, we all now wonder what it will be like to re-emerge some time in 2021. While we spent many columns and broadcasts on getting prepared for the pandemic, we ended the year focusing more on hope and the better angels of our nature.
We had Toni Brinker of One Community USA, the charity that is bridging Black and Blue communities. Seenaa Jimjimo, the Executive Director of the Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association (OLLAA). She was born and raised in Africa under an Ethiopian regime that had banned her native language, Oromo, for 50 years. She helped inspire House Resolution 128 on human rights in Ethiopia, which passed in 2018. Freddie Ravel, who played with Earth Wind & Fire, Madonna, Carlos Santana, Prince and so many others. Using the power of music in business to help us find our humanity, be more team-oriented, customer-focused and productive. Serial entrepreneur Dr. Kyshun Webster, founder of Compassion Society Benefits, a company which innovated and provides caregiver family leave insurance. Bestselling author Martin Lindstrom, who always writes and speaks about common sense in a world suffering from a shortage of it. And, of course, hundreds more.

We are the country of the massacres at Wounded Knee and Mỹ Lai, and the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. We are also the country that pioneered democracy, freedom of worship, the melting pot, the principle of federalism, the consent of the governed, the public school system and so much more. We are who we choose to be.

If we learned anything in 2020, it is that those that came before us, not the least of which were our great grandparents, grandparents and parents, who suffered World War I, the 1918 flu pandemic, the Great Depression, World War II and McCarthyism, were made of hearty stock.

We’ve got this. Together, with abundance. It’s in our DNA. We will get tougher and more resilient. No better time to start than in 2021.

Keep faith and hope alive.

Richard S. Levick, Esq.
Chairman & CEO
Nine Corporate Communications Challenges for 2020

BRINK, the daily eNewsletter for Marsh’s 77,000 risk officers asked me to predict the near future and what we are likely to see in 2020. Expect more changes in cyber risks, ERM, mercantile activism, litigation funding, FARA enforcement, and an evidentiary backlash to #MeToo, among others. But the change that strikes me the most is that our children — whether in the US, UK, Australia or other historical democracies — are two-thirds less likely to view democracy as essential as our parents did. Democracy — the idea that The Greatest Generation lined up overnight at their local draft board to volunteer to die for — is now at best an afterthought.

What does it mean for our brands, for how we communicate, for our government, let alone the national defense, if we don’t hold democracy in high esteem?

Perhaps the best place to view both the excelling of democracy and its decline is on social media, which has become a free-for-all for enough shouting and shame to feel like prior restraint. If critics rush to give title to an accusation — “your point of view is racist, sexist, homophobic, fill in the blank” — you never get to speak, explain or articulate for fear of even greater onslaught.

Communications is all about context. And democracy is all about the free flow of communications. The difference between mob rule and a democracy is due process and the rule of law.

What’s in store for 2020? Greater challenges and speed where we no longer share a view of even what form of government our country should be or how we should treat our neighbor on the Internet. But forewarned is forearmed. These nine predictions should help you prepare.

Enjoy the read.
Richard Levick

Read: 9 Corporate Communications Changes to Anticipate for 2020
The Debt Relief Industry Is The Wild West

Personal debt, one of the early indicators of the health of the economy, is moving in the wrong direction. This year more Americans than ever before are projected to fall behind on their credit card payments for more than 90 days, with American households averaging $8,700 in credit card debt. Delinquencies are on the upswing. Older borrowers are joining the swelling number of young borrowers who are falling behind on payments. An increasingly complex and accessible array of financial products makes it easier than ever to get into debt while a similarly complex landscape of debt relief options makes it a challenge to get out of debt.

Not all debt relief is created equal.

Consumers are bombarded with manipulative, anxiety-inducing messages from for-profit commercial companies looking to maximize profit. These debt consolidators seldom alleviate debt, instead usually requiring payment up front and making the situation worse and often hopeless for borrowers who want to pay off their debts but no longer can.

Rebecca Steele, President and CEO of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling and Bruce McClary, their Vice President of Communications, join me along with host Jonathan Aberman on the broadcast What’s Working in Washington to discuss what borrowers, banks and regulators can do to make this situation better.

Enjoy the listen.

Richard Levick

Listen: What’s Working In Washington Debt Panel
2019 Year In Review

Today we release our annual Year in Review.

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”
— William Faulkner

In 1790, George Washington referred to the new American government as “...the last great experiment in promoting human happiness.” Through nearly two and a half centuries it has been tested by every generation, sometimes more than others, though one would be hard-pressed to find too many threats to our democracy greater than today. The Civil War, the Great Depression, Pearl Harbor and World War II — this current period will surely find its way to that list in testing this “Great Experiment.”

The United States is the confluence of three great systems: democracy, capitalism and theology (or non-theology, as the case may be). The perfect imperfection of our government — for the longest-lived national constitution in the world — is how it struggles to keep these three systems in balance.

Our rose-colored rearview mirrors make history appear well ordered, while the present is almost always messy. Rather than genuflect daily, we take history for granted. Of course, General Washington would surprise the British at Trenton; General Rommel would run out of oil in North Africa; Senator Joseph McCarthy would be undone; and President Johnson would pass the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts. History's arc progresses in one direction, pointing ever-upward — or so the thinking goes. Yet as the Mayans learned almost 2,000 years ago, an Iron Age can, and often does, follow a Golden Age.

What happens when the federal government largely stops working, as it has in the United States for the past 30 years? When the federal government falters, business leaders historically have stepped in. In 1909, when a period of federal inaction occurred, J.P. Morgan and Wall Street literally created the Federal Reserve. Harriet Tubman rescued slaves; Cornelius Vanderbilt established shipping; Clara Barton founded the Red Cross; John D. Rockefeller built the oil business; Andrew Carnegie gave rise to the steel industry, and Henry Ford mass-produced cars, all changing America dramatically. Crisis abhors a
vacuum; when the federal government is static for long enough periods of time, industry has stepped in. But what now? Who will be the great leaders to step up and provide the vision that the federal government no longer seems capable of supplying?

For our entire professional lives, businesses have largely stayed out of politics. The steadfast rule has been: Focus on shareholders and customers.

There were always exceptions and controversies, but the bright lines between business and government were, well, bright. No more. Nearly 40% of Americans — and two thirds of Millennials — expect their brands to be “woke.” They expect companies to stand for something beyond the product, to take just political positions, to be sensitive and diverse in advertising, to be minimalist in its carbon footprint and to engage in sophisticated corporate social responsibility. What’s a company to do?

Over the past year, the most common theme in our columns was “Mercantile Activism” — the new age of activist corporations. How do companies lead — or follow adroitly — in an age of heightened ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) expectations and instantaneous and viral online judging?

How is it that Modelo can advertise its beer on television with a strong “hire an immigrant” message but Peloton is penalized $1.7 billion in value in a week over a television advertisement that online critics considered sexist?

How can Dick’s Sporting Goods execute a ban on handgun sales nationwide and quickly recover while WeWork — “Do what you love” — crumbles?

How does Uber go from cool to clueless and Lyft, sensing the void, markets “woke” but quickly appears unresponsive and hypocritical over female passenger safety?

Why do people largely forgive Chick-fil-A for their historical anti-LGBT stance while other companies are excoriated for not being diverse enough in a single advertisement?

There are rules and case studies, and we covered many of them in 2019 to help guide companies during this increasingly damning — and judgmental — time. With apologies to William Faulkner, the past may not be dead — but it can provide some prologue.

Good Reading.

Richard Levick

Download: 2019 Year in Review
Cancel Culture: Mob Rules

Having been in Lebanon a few years after the Prime Minister’s assassination and bomb attacks to represent the banks seeking investment from the west; into Sanaa, Yemen, not long before the fall of the Saleh government; followed by spies in the Emirates and sending teams into Islamabad seeking proof of inert fertilizer to reduce the risks of IEDS and into Lagos, Nigeria, seeking a way to help negotiate the release of 300 school girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram, we are often asked, “What is the thing that keeps you up at night?”

It’s the decline of the civil town square and the anonymous “Internet courage” that Twitter and social media have unleashed, which has turned differences of opinion into an echo chamber of horrors, escalating false accusations and using name calling as a form of prior restraint to eliminate the free exchange of ideas. “You’re a racist, sexist, homophobe, carbon junkie, thief, evil doer, etc.” Take your pick: such slander shuts down all dialogue and becomes a monologue for the pious.

I’ve met with countless executives whose careers and families were ruined under the weight of this Deus ex Machina in reverse. Everyone is now elevated to “public figure” status so that they can be insulted without fear of libel followed often by self-justified doxing — the release of personal information such as home addresses — fully knowing it will put the person in harm’s way. Death threats and worse follow.

How do we maintain civil discourse in an age of instant rage and Internet bullhorns? We hosted back-to-back programs on What’s Working In Washington (originally aired on WFED) to try and find out. Hosted by Jonathan Aberman, the first show included me, Alice Stewart, CNN political commentator and communications consultant, and Michael Zeldin, CNN legal analyst with experience stretching back to the Clinton impeachment proceedings. Next week, we include two executives falsely accused by the media and then excoriated in social media. Truth never made an appearance in their situations.
Just a few years ago, even in the Internet Age, we could halt the rise of false narratives before they took hold, keeping them on the periphery of conversation. Today, as Charles Spurgeon said, “A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.”

In the next week we will be releasing a Forbes article recommending Internet etiquette, not so we can all win Ms. Manners awards, but so that our democracy and civil discourse have a fighting chance.

Happy listening.

Richard Levick

Listen: What’s Working in Washington
Can We All Just Get Along?

With countless stories of executives whose careers and families have been ruined under the weight of the new cancel culture, the decline of the civil town square has become one of the most dangerous trends of our time. In my latest Forbes column, I offer 22 rules for the Internet to restore civility and mutual respect. As Rodney King famously said after the LA riots, “…can we all just get along? Can we all just get along?”

I hope so.

Enjoy the read.

Richard Levick

Read: Cancel Culture: New Rules To Replace Mob Rule
“Have You No Sense of Decency?”

ON THE DIAMOND

What would make incredibly well paid, highly respected and locally adored athletes cheat? What would make team ownership unable to pull off a thoughtful apology, undermining it just sentences later? How could you be so unprepared for the obvious question of whether the cheating produced the desired outcome?

With a new collective bargaining agreement on the horizon, Major League Baseball punished only the team and not the players who developed and executed the scheme over a period of years. Shocked, at least two Little League teams in California — and likely more to follow — find the absence of decency so disturbing that they have banned “Astros” from being among their team names. Justice and karma may be slow, but they have a way of finding their marks.

ON CAMPUS

In a protest over global warming, law students at Harvard, Yale and NYU are urging law students around the country to refuse to interview at Paul Weiss unless it drops ExxonMobil as a client. Sympathetic as it might otherwise be, one has to wonder why they have singled out Paul Weiss when many dozens of other blue chip law firms recruiting on their campuses represent high carbon footprint energy companies.

Zealous client representation is a fundamental requirement of a fair and just legal system. I doubt these students would excoriate criminal lawyers for defending rapists and murderers. Energy companies don’t deserve as much?
One hopes lawyers and law students read about their adversary as much as their cause. Paul, Weiss is, of course, the law firm that worked with Thurgood Marshall in representing Oliver Brown in *Brown v. Board of Education*, leading to the desegregation of our nation’s public schools; Edith Windsor in *Windsor v. United States*, establishing a constitutional right to same-sex marriage; as well as leading national anti-gun violence and voter protection efforts in the courts; and on and on. If the protesters can’t imagine working for this law firm, where can they possibly work? To be decent we should not just worry about the future but study the past. It helps us take better aim.

**IN THE BOARDROOM**

The lack of decency is taking its toll. Trust in corporations around the globe continues to erode, with government even less trustworthy than corporations. Only 30% of the general public worldwide trusts their governments to serve everyone’s interests. The greater the perceived impotence of our federal government, the greater the potential societal responsibility of American business. A corporation’s communications and public affairs strategy now needs to reflect these challenging new imperatives.

In the past, businesses have largely stayed out of politics. The steadfast rule has been: *Focus on shareholders and customers.* There was a bright-line between business and public services that is bright no more. Two-thirds of consumers in the U.S. now expect brands to stand for social and political issues beyond their product. Companies can no longer just be about results, they have to be seen as being decent.

Read our take on decency in an interview in the *Houston Chronicle* and in our columns in *The Litigation Daily* and *Brink*.

Enjoy the reads.

Richard Levick

READ THEM:

*Houston Chronicle*

*The Litigation Daily*

*BRINK*
The Coronavirus Becomes a Pandemic

As the coronavirus spreads to Lebanon and Iran as well as South Korea and Italy in surprisingly large numbers, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that the window is closing for containing the disease.

Meanwhile, the U.S. currently has no expert at the National Security Council who specializes in pandemics. In May 2018, then National Security Advisor John Bolton eliminated the office in charge of global health security and pushed out its leader, Rear Admiral Timothy Ziemer.

Fears over the first “viral virus” of the social media age continue to take unsettling turns since the disease was first detected in China’s Hubei province some eight weeks ago. With the economic cost rapidly escalating, risk managers are grappling with questions of how to respond.

As concern rises globally along with the need for governmental cooperation and efficiency, we learn that truth, global cooperation and trust matter.

We don’t have solutions, but we do have a number of recommendations for how best to communicate during the first pandemic of the social media age, in my latest CommPRO column.

I hope you find the article helpful.

Richard Levick

Read: Communicating on Coronavirus: The First “Viral Virus” of the Social Media Era
The Coronavirus Saga is Just Beginning

Want to know how eager people are for reliable information about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and how the epidemic could affect their families, communities, and organizations?

Take a minute to read this story, then take a few seconds to examine the VIX (volatility index) chart below. Financial analysts refer to the VIX as the “fear gauge” — not surprisingly, in recent days it’s been the inverse of the financial markets, soaring straight up as the Dow and all the rest have been plummeting straight down.

On Monday, February 17, my good friend Fay Shapiro, the editor of CommPRO, the industry trade journal that reaches over 200,000 communications professionals across the globe, asked if I would write a column for later that week on the communications repercussions of an epidemic that had the potential to become a pandemic. I immediately contacted our colleagues at Turbine Labs, who have been analyzing COVID-19’s media coverage and market volatility since its outbreak.

Turbine Labs’ AI-intelligence platform showed that not only had earned media volume on COVID-19 increased significantly in the first weeks of February, but that the global media had begun using more emotion-laden terms to describe market reaction. Leigh Fatzinger, Turbine’s founder and CEO, gave us this quote for the column that ran on Thursday, February 20:

To date, the markets have, on balance, absorbed the increasingly negative ‘news’ about the crisis without reacting too adversely. But these latest developments about the lethal spread of the disease could disrupt certain markets, especially given the speed at which stories travel, as well as the impact that social media virality and algorithms have in highlighting and amplifying dramatic content.
Leigh’s comment looks prescient now, but we had no way of knowing on February 20 just how much “dramatic content” would unfold over the next week: a sharp increase in the virus’ global death toll; the epidemic spreading to new countries; social media exploding; Japan closing its schools for a month; rising fears that Germany could be entering a recession; projections that the virus may wipe out corporate growth in 2020, perhaps completely; an unexposed person in California suddenly coming down with the disease, et al.

And above all, an administration contradicting its own experts, alleging conspiracy when what is needed is leadership, confusing and scaring people, and sending financial markets into a tizzy.

When Fay told us on Monday, February 24, how many thousands of communications professionals were clicking on our column — with more being added by the minute — we knew that the markets would be in for a rough ride. Decision-makers in C-suites all over the world were clearly desperate for information they could trust and worried they weren’t getting what they needed.

The fact that the people around the world don’t trust information they get from their governments is not exactly news — the Edelman Trust Barometer has been hemorrhaging for years. The fact that Americans don’t trust the information they’re getting from the current administration is very big — and very disquieting — news. By the time our column had been posted for a week, it was CommPRO’s most-read column of 2020 — not because it contained brilliant insights (trust me, it didn’t) but because it satisfied a need.

Indeed, this whole episode reinforces some basic tenets of crisis communications.

1. **Provide a port in the storm.** In a chaotic environment, your constituents will turn to things that appear credible and trustworthy.

2. **Keep it simple.** We didn’t put forth any fancy recommendations. We just urged organizations to be straightforward, transparent, put the protection of their people ahead of profits, and use simple language to communicate with their key constituents and the public.

3. **Rely on scientific experts.** People wearing white lab coats and “Dr.” at the beginning of their name should be front and center on any health-related crisis — especially an epidemic. It’s why the single best thing in our column was the link to epidemiology and health specialists. It’s Health Crisis 101. But it’s a lesson this White House doesn’t seem to know.

4. **Provide fresh data.** The update media/market analysis from Turbine Labs rooted the piece in empirical data, which could at least inform an organization’s deliberations and actions.

The spread of the virus appears inevitable, though there are some early signs as we go to press that there may be a decline in new cases out of China. How big and how widespread this becomes is anybody’s guess. But it is certainly an unexpected crisis at a time when the United States and many other nations — authoritarian and democratic — are unprepared.

Organizations can’t wish it away. They need to redouble their efforts to be open, transparent, and responsive, to get credible information and smart 1-2-3’s out to their key audiences, etc. As documented by the VIX, organizations need to understand that people are now scared — and they’re likely to stay that way for a while. During the first few days of the market decline, many financial professionals saw the share price drop as an opportunity. Now they are not so sure.

This is all about trust. The White House is flunking its trust test — at least so far. Organizations cannot afford to stumble down that path.

Normally I say “Happy Reading” at the end of these things. But that seems a little flip under the circumstances.

How about “Stay calm and follow the sound health advice.”

Richard Levick
Coronavirus Is a Pandemic, Not a Plague

We will survive the novel Coronavirus. But it is going to challenge us.

Leadership during up markets is relatively easy. “Buy low, sell high and follow me.” It is during crises where leadership mettle is tested.

The late winter and early spring of 2020 — the season of the Coronavirus and subsequent market freefall — has already earned its place as an historic global crisis which is going to test our individual leadership. It shocks the conscience to write this, but it is a test, tragically, the federal government has already largely failed. Confidence in the ability of this federal government to lead us out of this downward spiral of physical and fiscal fears has at best waned. Here is praying they find this as an opportunity not to blame others but calm fears.

How do we, as business leaders, show courage to our employees and customers during a leadership vacuum?

1. **Recognize reality.** The situation is going to get worse before it gets better. Today’s revelation that the head of the New York Port Authority has tested positive for COVID-19 is not good. It means that many people and many things could potentially be infected throughout the east coast. It’s a microcosm of what we’re going to be experiencing over the next few weeks and perhaps months.

2. **This is a pandemic, not the plague.** Fortunately, this virus is not the plague. It is not likely to kill us. This is a disruption whose greatest significance should last weeks, not years. Plan accordingly. What are the short term sacrifices we need to make to get through this at the lowest long term cost?
3. **Show courage.** Your employees, your stakeholders, your supply chain people, et al., are all counting on you to be forthright. Err on the side of caution. Your brand will survive this rough patch by staying calm and being transparent. It won’t if you panic and go opaque.

4. **Remember your Jack Welch — “in a crisis overcommunicate.”** Don’t assume people “get it” the first time. Repeat it and repeat it some more. And drive people to your website to repeat it again.

5. **Recognize the “unknown unknown.”** No one knows how long this crisis will last, or how lethal it will be. Don’t pretend you do. It’s likely that the virus will be with us for a while. That doesn’t mean the world will stay in crisis mode forever. Send your people to WHO, Johns Hopkins CSSE, and other expert websites — don’t be caught making predictions yourself.

6. **Working remotely is a viable solution.** Have everything in motion now for your employees to work from home (WFH) at a moment’s notice. That important document on your desk? Right now is the time to scan it or take it home. The chances we will be WFH increase daily and are likely to be put in place within a week.

7. **Empathize with your employees.** They’ve got kids and elderly parents to worry about. If working remotely helps them deal with their everyday challenges, then, by all means, encourage it now before it becomes policy.

8. **Testing is limited.** If an employee is sick or feels unwell, they need to stay home. It is not at their discretion. The chances of them being tested for Coronavirus are limited so make sure this is policy, not option.

9. **Look at best practices.** Check out this link to find out how other businesses are dealing with it.

10. **Finally: Step up in the absence of political leadership.** In past crises, we always followed the federal government. Think FDR after Pearl Harbor, George W. Bush after 9/11 and Barack Obama after the Wall Street crisis. Today, with the White House still denying there is a growing crisis, we unfortunately don’t have a national leader setting policy to shine a beacon and calm nerves. We can’t “follow the federal government” as my business and thousands of others do on everything from snow days to other disruptions. Our best advice on WFH, virtual meetings and closings? Follow your local school board.

See you next week.

Richard Levick
Communicating in Isolation

When I was a child my father told me what it was like on Sunday, December 7, 1941. He was at a professional football game and the public address announcer kept escalating calls for military personnel. It was clear that something was wrong. But even in an age of limited communications, the country was all on the same footing and understood what was happening within hours. By the next day, December 8th, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had addressed Congress and the nation.

Today, we live in a world of overcommunications and yet with a six-week notice, we have been caught woefully unprepared. Revelers went to bars to celebrate early St. Patrick's Day in large numbers, despite warnings to avoid crowds — heaven forbid the generation that warns us — correctly, in my view — against global warming would sacrifice a Saturday night for a rapidly escalating pandemic. Airports over the weekend were chaotic Petri dishes of humanity, as travelers came home to no rules and chaos.

Hospitals are flummoxed. They don’t know which visiting rules to apply due to an absence of clarity from the federal government. I can tell you from personal experience how confusing and painful it all is.

In past crisis — 9/11, Wall Street and of course Pearl Harbor, the president and White House have been pillars of leadership. Crisis abhors a vacuum and it is now up to each of us to lead. How do we communicate now?

We know you care: At first, it was helpful to get individual emails from companies saying “we are open for business and we care about our customers.” In most cases, certainly for professional services firms, all of your clients know this. We have been operating with some form of virtual communications for 20 years. Your clients expect you to be in business and work from home. If you are going to send out communications, what information are you adding to the mix?
Your internal communications is critical: Some of your employees are prepared to work in place for weeks or months; others are not. Some will suffer from social isolation more than others. Others need entertainment suggestions in a time without sports, movies and theater. Still others need cooking recommendations when restaurants are closed, grocery stores are often bereft of stock and food delivery is at best long delayed. Our grandmothers knew how to do this. Help your employees feel more comfortable in the isolation. More team calls, Zoom conferences and check-ins. More firm-wide emails. The bad news of this pandemic is its good news. The fatality rate is low enough to allow this disease to spread. We will all be here for a while — now likely eight weeks or more. Focus on each day and know we will get through this. Help your employees see the calm after the storm.

Remind your team about routine and exercise: This is not a holiday. Get up at the same time, exercise however you can. Even during the Holocaust there are stories of athletes figuring it out, even if on a hidden flight of stairs. Going to bed at the same time, being at your computer at 9 am or earlier is important not only for you but for your clients. Routine save our sanity.

Call your clients: “How can I help?” “What do you need?” Letting them know you care is more important now than ever.

No “Coronavirus sales or discounts”: Be thoughtful of your communications. Any communications which strikes you as opportunistic will be poorly received by the marketplace.

All stories have a news cycle: And so will Coronavirus. Already, the stories about celebrities and politicians spouses testing positive are on the wane. The disease is spreading too quickly for these stories to have much residence. Soon, the federal government will start speaking with one voice; stories critical of their response will fade as more individuals and businesses coping and not will become a larger part of the media mix. Start to anticipate the story arc so you can plan for business as usual in this unusual time.

Plan to cancel: If you have a conference, a business trip or are about to launch a new advertising campaign plan to reschedule, go virtual or reconsider. Plan now for the next 60 days.

Reverse engineer your calendars: With activities further out from June forward, reverse engineer your calendar so you can have go/no-go dates so you don’t have to play “whack-a-mole” when the time comes.

Leaders lead: Being a leader when the market is moving up is easy. We are in crisis now and this is when leadership is tested. Check in on people. Sending a text or a call lets people know you care. When in doubt, overcommunicate.

We will all get through this together. It may be strange to say it as we self-isolate, but let’s remember Churchill and our December 1941 forebears: Keep Calm and Carry On.

See you next week.

Richard Levick
The Gift of Time & The Call to Leadership

“When all the ordinary divides and patterns are shattered, people set up to become their brothers’ keepers.”

Rebecca Solnit, Author

The story goes that when my grandmother was a young woman she would get a live, fresh carp and put it in the bathtub around the Jewish holidays and then begin the two-day process of turning it into gefilte fish. I’m 62 and have never tasted anything but store-bought gefilte fish. Who has the time? And while those who have tasted gefilte fish know it isn’t worth the two days of labor, many other things are, from fresh baked bread and home made ice cream to husbanding the log pile and gardening. For all the terrible things this pandemic is, it is also a gift of time. We now have the gift of time, lots of it, to do what our far more resourceful, usually far more isolated grandparents did. You didn’t buy it, you made it.

If humor is tragedy plus time our modern lifestyle is convenience plus money. We have all forgotten (never learned in most cases) how to needle point, make our own soap or fix just about anything we use every day. I am not suggesting we make everything from scratch, but we could. Up until a week ago, we could order almost anything we wanted and knew it would be at our door in 48 hours or less. With convenience came mass amnesia. We are dependent on the app.

In the pre-pandemic age many took to social media with their time, often to mob others who had uttered a syllable, wrote an article or worked for a client they found intolerable.
We are now learning that we are better off learning a new skill other than judging. Who knew that the phone could be used for a genuine person to person conversation?

The arc of history is long and its consequences aren’t always apparent. We must learn from this new normal, including using this new gift of time, to learn and re-learn about independence, and, ironically, community. And each of us must lead.

After 9/11 shattered our sense of domestic invulnerability, we were forever changed but normalized fairly quickly, because we felt future attacks, though possible, would be isolated and still rare. Even in our sorrow and fear we saw the future. Today, we cannot even harbor a guess as to what’s next. The stillness of the night, when we have the time to really think, is the devil’s workshop. Everyone — everyone — has fear and many are fighting panic in their isolation. More than ever, local and company leadership is required. We need our families, partners, clients and employees to know, we will get through this, there will be opportunity and we will be stronger. In the worst crises, we don’t always know the exact road to the promised land, but we know we are going to find it.

We are developing a number of resources — our own, such as a series of articles, webcasts and an infographic on the likely media trends of the coronavirus — but also a list of some great content developed by others. We’ve started a list below and will be adding to it each week. If you have something you want us to share, please let us know. Maybe we can all spread a little hope at the same time.

This week’s resources:

- **Turbine Labs Cue Alerts**: A text and email alert based on curated content that provides much needed instant information reduced to minimal content
- **Business planning for the post-pandemic recovery** by bestselling author Martin Lindstrom
- **Five great instant medical recommendations** developed by the staff of *The Washington Post*
- **Inspirational lessons from the 1918 flu pandemic** by author Kiley Bense
- **The brilliant Marriott video** on leading through a crisis in *Forbes*
- **Author Rebecca Solnit on NPR’s “On Being”** with Krista Tippett
- **Earth Abides**, the 1950 post-apocalyptic radio program that reminds us of the importance of order, hope and love.

Never lose hope. Help one another. Keep calm and carry on.

Richard Levick

View Infographic >>
In Crisis Is Opportunity

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.”
— Helen Keller

The last few weeks have been difficult, made worse by the fact that we know it is all about to get much worse in April. “America First” now means we are first in number of coronavirus infections, rate of infection and soon deaths. We are experiencing a new federalism in which not only do we not have a globally unified approach to a pandemic, but we don’t even have a national one. It is, so far, every state for itself.

During the 2008-09 financial crisis, there was a saying we oft-shared in the war rooms on Wall Street. “Everyone is a capitalist on the way up but a socialist on the way down.” The same is true now on the purpose of a strong and expertly-staffed federal government. “Everyone’s a critic on the way up, but a socialist on the way down.” We need federal government leadership and support. The unanimous vote on the latest stimulus bill shows, well, our uniformity on this newfound reasoning.

In speaking with lawyers, other agency and business owners, our staff, journalists and social and digital media experts, some new revelations and, dare I say, opportunities, are starting to emerge:

Leadership is now local: As you have read in this space many times before, crisis abhors a vacuum. Leadership is as local as your business. Reach out and touch someone inspirationally. In the absence of national “fireside chats” business leaders need to step up and show direction. In crisis, you don’t need to get everything right, but you need to act. Your employees, partners, suppliers and prospects need you. Call them. Have a plan. Execute.

Fear is fine, panic is not: I see it in the eyes and body language (on Zoom, of course) of the business owners and young people I speak with. Health is foremost on people’s minds, but so is payroll and rent. “Will my business survive?” And for younger people who didn’t...
work through 9/11 or the financial crisis, this is the worst crisis they have ever seen. For all of us, this period portends World War II courage and sacrifice. Fear is a healthy emotion. It motivates us and gives us the resolve to fight. It is rational. We have lots to be afraid about. But panic is fear untamed. While we use fear as fuel, panic robs us of everything from rationality to strength. The best solution for fear? Get on the phone. Talk to co-workers and clients. Reach out and help. Work. As the Roosevelts taught us, do not be still for that is where the demons lie.

Journalists need business stories: With the hundreds of journalists we have spoken with over the past two weeks, they need stories that relate to the coronavirus but are business-and beat-oriented. How are businesses surviving? What unique things are they doing? How are they expressing leadership? What are they doing that is planning for the recovery?

Examples of vulture marketing are next: Journalists and social media will soon pounce on stories about companies and individuals who used the pandemic for vulture marketing — taking advantage of fear and desperation. Usury, false cures, hawkish lawyers, for-profit debt consolidators, unsavory timeshare exit companies, the works. If your business takes advantage of people, you will likely become the fodder for lots of unwanted attention in the coming weeks as people are hungry for targets to blame.

SEO is the opportunity: As businesses worldwide cut their costs, they are minimizing marketing. After all, it’s not business as usual. But in doing this, they are abandoning Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This means SEO costs are lower than they have been in years. Now is the time to push content and SEO. It is cheaper and more accessible than ever. If you act now and implement your content and SEO strategy, you can influence the narrative when we come out of this for far less money and effort.

Zoom press conferences and videos are here: Hold a press conference on Zoom or WebEx. Have a video team record interviews by web cam. Distribute it by a private newswire. New challenges mean new opportunities. The only time news stops is the day after the end of the world; even then there is likely to be a summary edition.

Scrubit of bailout beneficiaries: Regardless of whether it’s called a stimulus or a bailout, journalists are about to start scrutinizing which large companies received stimulus funds, how they spend their money, their history of CEO compensation, stock buybacks and fidelity to austerity pledges. There will be a fight over transparency but companies should expect it to become public information.

New broadcast to reach general counsels: To help our clients, friends of the firm and other readers of this newsletter, we are launching a new daily five-minute audio podcast for the Corporate Counsel Business Journal called In House Warrior, to reach the general counsels at most American companies. We have built a home studio so we can record guests by telephone and computer. If you want to be on the air with us, please email me at rlevick@levick.com and provide the topic. We will do our best to line you up for a show.

Over the past two weeks I have been presenting speeches on multiple webinars and broadcasts, including the one here, produced by our friends at TEK Group (who provide online newsrooms, which are another great resource, especially during this challenging time). They interviewed more than 40 PR and crisis industry executives for our input on how to address the crisis and are releasing today a 24-hour news stream of communications advice. I hope you will spend some time listening in. It’s free and no registration is required.

Where: bit.ly/covidcrisiswebinar (starting at Noon EST Monday)
Webinar URL: bit.ly/covidcrisiswebinar
Hashtag: #covidcrisiswebinar

This week's resources:
Federal and state benefits spreadsheet
An exceptional daily resource in Axios
The importance of cooperation and generosity by author Bob Green in the Wall Street Journal
Latest update on total number of Covid-19 cases and where by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University
Martin Lindstrom on making life long clients out of this
Seth Godin on the new Generation C, one built upon the new isolation
Handling Covid-19 crisis communications from W7 Worldwide out of Saudi Arabia
Never lose hope. Help one another. Keep calm and carry on.
Enjoy the listen.
Richard Levick
Essential Information

“Sarah, my love for you is deathless. It seems to bind me with mighty cables, that nothing but Omnipotence can break; and yet, my love of country comes over me like a strong wind, and bears me irresistibly on with all those chains, to the battlefield.”

— Major Sullivan Ballou, in his last letter to his wife Sarah on the eve of the first Battle of Bull Run, 1861.

What compels us to risk dying for an idea, especially over irresistible love? What has happened to this collective spirit that for most of two centuries defined Americans and patriotic citizens the world over? Perhaps the collective sense of purpose will be one of the long-term benefits of the pandemic tragedy, overwhelming our current state of anger and selfish adoration. We can help each other.

While there are plenty of stories of vulture marketers leveraging this crisis (an issue we will cover soon), heroes are stepping up and need to be recognized and emulated.

Shortly after 9/11, the Washington Legal Foundation asked former Pennsylvania Governor and former US Attorney General Dick Thornburgh and me to speak on a panel to an audience of business executives. I misspoke on that day, when I said that 9/11 represented the most catastrophic casualties on American soil since the Battle of Antietam and Pearl Harbor. No one corrected me on that day or the years since and no wonder. Until I read Tim Gay’s masterful piece in American Heritage magazine this weekend.
I, like most contemporary Americans, failed to appreciate the carnage that took place on America's three coasts at the start of World War II. In 1942 alone, German U-boats sank 233 ships in American waters and killed 5,000 seamen and passengers — more than double the number of fatalities at Pearl Harbor. It was the moment of greatest doubt about the course of the war for the indefatigable Winston Churchill. U-boats had infiltrated the mouth of the Mississippi, the mouths of the Connecticut and St. Lawrence Rivers, and — many suspect — Florida's Banana River near what is now Cape Canaveral and Maine's Kennebec River not far from Brunswick. Talk about close to home!

It was early in the war and the US military did not have the resources to protect the coasts so they called on civilian pilots, mechanics, sailors and others to volunteer. And volunteer they did, with over a quarter-million Americans of all races, religions, sexes, ages and social standing stepping in to protect America, under extreme hardship, including leaving or quitting their jobs, risking their lives, moving far away, usually for free, living in substandard housing and eating even lesser food. Some American companies stepped up too, among them the precursor to CITGO, to provide much-needed funding for these “citizen-volunteers.”

What is this spirit of selflessness, which compels some of us to risk all for others known and unknown? That compelled the “Greatest Generation” to volunteer by the millions to protect an idea? This idea, which we value more than life itself. Inspired by this call to grace, American Heritage addresses other crucial moments in our history in its special “America in Crisis” issue this spring.

Besides sheltering in place, how do we exercise leadership now? Many banks, law firms, insurance companies and others have been doing a great job sending out emails with empathetic and informative messages. With the federal government shrinking in the face of this generation’s World War, now more than ever, we need leadership from companies and institutions. More than three weeks in with many weeks to go, what information can we share that is more than “We are open for business but working from home” or “Here is what the latest stimulus package means for you?”

We have identified four remarkable stories and resources: what one private company is doing to handle the enormous inbound call volume confronting states; how one research facility has gutted its lab and reconfigured it into a massive private testing enterprise; and two non-profits that address our fiscal and mental health needs. One call to each for boundless resources and assistance. Before you send out your next company or client-wide email, please consider including some of these, especially the two nonprofits — NAMI and the NFCC — defined below. Lives depend on it.

**University of California at Berkeley CRISPR Lab** — Using their own labs, volunteer scientists and researchers and funding, they set up a testing lab to process thousands of tests.

**The National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC)** has a toll free hotline 800-388-2227 and website that can assist you with all of your credit and financial concerns. One call to assist with all aspects of your financial situation, including the latest information on federal and state relief.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** offers a toll free number and text for anyone feeling the stress and impact of these challenging times. 800-950-6264 or text NAMI to 741741.

**AnswerNet**, a company providing call centers, has been assisting states under extraordinary pressure to handle unprecedented call levels, assuage residents’ concerns, and set up Covid-19 testing.

They have they been hiring during this financial downturn, remotely training hundreds of new employees so they can work from home and assist the states and other companies under massive inbound calling. CEO Gary Pudles has also been working with “non-essential” companies who have been forced by economics to furlough their staffs, hiring most to all of them so that the states get their trained call center professionals and the distressed companies stay in business.

This is a new age of “citizen-volunteers.” Please help these heroes by getting this information out and let us know of others so we can spread the word. These are the times that define our lives.

Never lose hope. Help one another. Keep calm and carry on.

Richard Levick
Heartache in the Hot Zone

Just over three weeks ago, on the last morning of his life, I couldn't get into the ICU to visit my younger brother, Gary, one last time. We had sat vigil the night before, the entire family, blessed to be there, because doctors, nurses and security felt empathy for us in the extreme confusion of a White House still trying to convince the President that the pandemic would trespass our shores and to shift from his “hoax” mode, along with emerging and contradictory CDC and hospital rules. By the next morning, even the strict rules on visitors the night before had been supplanted by an even more draconian prohibition and now, a total ban. Goodbyes are best said in the present as tomorrow is promised to no one.

When I was in my senior year of high school, I needed a series of operations, none life threatening. I was struck by the pale yellow cinderblock of the room immediately outside the operating rooms, where all of us patients were wheeled in, just prior to sedation and surgery. I knew I was coming out but as I peeked at the man next to me, I knew his age alone made him less certain. If this was the end, then these pale yellow cinderblocks would be the last thing he saw. At 17, I realized death could have no dignity.

And here we are, the greatest country on earth, yet one of only eight, that largely refused to prepare for the pandemic.

While my brother did not die of the coronavirus, its timing just broke our hearts even more. And now the whole world is in mourning for our collective losses. In Israel it is said when one person dies, everyone mourns because in such a small country, it is only a few degrees of separation. We are now all only a few degrees of separation. Not even six.

One who did die of coronavirus complications is singer John Prine, whose music I want so much to listen to as I have for nearly half a century, but find its soothing cords as painful as discovering a long lost love letter that still touches us so deeply that just looking at the weathered stationery turns on a time machine like the smell of Grandmother’s favorite dish emanating by some new cook decades after she passed. Whoosh. Sounds, smells, music and we are back in time.
If you only watch one thing on the pandemic this week, it needs to be this: Nicholas Kristof’s *New York Times* six minute video, “Heartache in the Hot Zone: The Front Line Against Covid-19.” If you want to understand courage, leadership, love and action, these six minutes have it all.

Each week since the pandemic began, I have been giving broadcasts to audiences of general counsels, lawyers, insurance executives, communications professionals and other executives, providing communications recommendations. Today will be no different, when I speak to Blue Cross/Blue Shield executives. Friday it was the *Corporate Counsel Business Journal*. I believe our advice is spot-on, but nothing is as powerful as those six minutes in an age of less than six degrees of separation. Leadership and action is the key.

Starting next week, we launch two new broadcasts, a daily five-minute podcast called *In House Warrior*, distributed to most of America’s general counsels by the *Corporate Counsel Business Journal* and starting the following week, a Zoom broadcast co-hosted with *Turbine Labs*, called *Monday Mornings*. The *In House Warrior* show will provide five minutes each day on essential information for GCs about a topical issue, from cyber and litigation to FCPA and business interruption. On *Monday Mornings*, Turbine Labs will use its artificial and human intelligence capabilities to explore media trends for the week ahead and include guests to give us insight into what’s next. We have built these broadcasts to be able to include guests from their home or office. If you want to be a guest on either one, please let us know and we will do our best to book you soon.

“So if you’re walking down the street sometime
And spot some hollow ancient eyes
Please don’t just pass ’em by and stare
As if you didn’t care, say, ‘Hello in there, hello’”

— John Prine

Never lose hope. Help one another. Keep calm and carry on.

Richard Levick

Read: Richard Levick Discusses Heartache in the Hot Zone
Childhood Lessons

My father was in real estate so when I was a kid I knew his bankers and insurance agents. They either came to the house or we went to meet them on a Saturday morning once or twice a year. Being a one-parent household, I would go along for the ride. The childhood lesson? “The police officer, fireman, teacher, banker and insurance agent is your friend.”

Then came bank consolidation over the next four decades and old-fashioned relationship banking was replaced by a bifurcated system of higher net-worth customers and everyone else. That’s fine during upwardly mobile markets, but in a recession, not so much.

“Everyone is a capitalist on the way up, but a socialist on the way down,” as the old saying goes. When the Great Recession came in 2008-09, banks were the poster children for what’s wrong with our economy.

In the war rooms at AIG during the financial crisis, where the international crisis, law and consulting firms worked 18 hour days for seven months, there was a question we only asked amongst ourselves — “Would the financial crisis last long enough and cut deep enough for the banks to learn their lesson?”

From the looks of the first few weeks of the pandemic, it looks like they may have, as so many of them have announced programs to ease the pain of the average person, from deferred payments for credit cards, auto loans and mortgages to loan modifications and low-rate and zero-rate loans. To be contrary for a moment, reports are coming in that small businesses still cannot reach their banker. It’s a resource larger banks have to fix, even if the spirit is there.

The insurance industry is following the banks’ positive lessons, with all of the top ten auto insurance companies offering some kind of relief. In our lead story, we look at what the property & casualty industry is doing and looking to do in terms of customer relief. They should not be forced to cover uninsured events as some politicians suggest — less they require a bailout themselves — but there are things they can do. We lay out a comprehensive game plan in the Insurance Journal.
In *Litigation Daily*, we look at the increased privacy concerns of employees both prior to and during the pandemic when virtually all of us are working from home. Just because the company owns the device — a second office computer or mobile phone — doesn’t mean the company can retrieve, watch or copy everything. Litigation has been working its way through the courts prior to the coronavirus, most notably *Paul Iacovacci v. Brevet Capital Management LLC*, which will have an outsized impact on the new rules of workplace privacy going forward.

And what pandemic would be complete without cyber thieves trying to take advantage of our vulnerability? LEVICK Cyber Practice Chair Ian Lipner shares his insights from a recent article on the growing threat. As if working around the clock, home schooling and ‘swabbing the decks’ twice a day wasn’t enough.

Finally, this week we launch our new daily five-minute podcast in partnership with the *Corporate Counsel Business Journal, In House Warrior*, providing insights into what general counsels need to know about a topical issue. Our first guest this week is Chrysta Castañeda, a litigator and oil and gas lawyer who is running for the Texas Railroad Commission. She just released her new book based on her successful multimillion dollar verdict, *The Last Trial of T. Boone Pickens*.

Enjoy the listen and the reads. As always, if you want to be a guest on one of our shows or suggest a topic for one of our columns, please just let us know.

Stay safe.

Richard Levick
Speaking to In-House Counsel

When we first started this firm over 20 years ago, law firm marketing was still in its infancy and many lawyers asked, “Is there really any value in law firm and lawyer marketing?” Anticipating the question, we wrote a book, *Inside Outside: How Businesses Buy Legal Services*, interviewing hundreds of general counsels, who ostensibly said, “Yes, of course I’m influenced by what I read and hear about a lawyer.”

Lawyers will always be expected to do great work as the price of admission. But how to stay top of mind?

Wanting to create a direct conduit for lawyers to general counsel buyers, we have developed two new podcasts in collaboration with the *Corporate Counsel Business Journal* and the *In House Community of Asian-MENA Counsel*, collectively to reach 75,000 general counsels. For the CCBJ, we have developed a daily five-minute podcast called *In House Warrior* and for the IHC we developed a weekly program called *The Weekly*. All shows will run on Spotify, Stitcher, Apple Podcasts, and many other podcast services and, importantly be e-mailed directly to the general counsels through CCBJ and IHC. Each show is built around a single lawyer and the crucial things they believe GCs need to know about a single issue. Five minutes for a podcast is magical, just long enough to make key points and short enough to invite the listen.

In the age of isolation we have built a studio out of my home and we connect by Zoom. Guests never have to leave the house.

The concept is already immensely popular and we have a queue of guests for the shows. If you would like to be on air and reach GCs, please let us know by emailing rlevick@levick.com and including the topic you’d like to cover.

Enjoy the listens.

Richard Levick
The Big Pause

When I was a kid I spent a lot of time inside my head, a practice that, unbeknownst to me at the time, would be great preparation for the creative demands of adulthood. One of the “games” I played in my head was imagining what it would be like to spend a year in a confined, isolated space. Could I imagine all the things I would need to survive and how to store them in such a tiny space? I even imagined the endless exercise regime I would undertake to fill my days and stay physically healthy. As I got a little older, I would realize the things I forgot to include, but overall, my lists were pretty good and I got a great sense of a minimalist lifestyle.

The past two months have almost been as if this childhood imaginary game had come true. I thought I was prepared. But I wasn’t.

The one thing I never considered, at least not until the pandemic of 2020 — The Big Pause — was the mental strain. Truth be told, most days are pretty good with business largely operating at the same level (so far), even if every meeting has been reduced to Zoom and every conversation to Covid-19. But then there are those one or two dark moments of the week. A blue Monday; an exhausted Friday night; a Saturday morning without purpose, other than more work. Moments that approach the first stages of depression where all the diversions and joys of real life are absent. I haven’t spoken to anyone in the past two months who can’t relate to that — and deeply.

For the first time we realize — really realize — how incredibly spoiled we have been for most of the past four decades. Sure, there were enormous tragedies — wars, 9/11, the Great Recession and shocks to the market such as Black Monday in 1987. And despite their magnitudes, I don’t think anything was like this with its vast horizon into the unknown.

Now we have an inkling of what it was like on the home front during World War II. Rationing, coupons, War Bonds, shortages, Victory Gardens and that fear for loved ones “over there.”
How dark do those moments get for you? How big do the fears become? For most of us, most of the time, they stay as fears, the things that ultimately motivate us to action, if not today, then likely tomorrow. But what if they elevate to panic, and incapacitate us? Worse, what happens if we rely on professional caregivers for a loved one who already suffers from some form of mental illness and now it’s up to us? Or what if it is us who needs the care?

On our latest Monday Mornings broadcast, we had Dan Gillison, the CEO of NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, as our guest. As fascinating as he is passionate. Spend a little time with us on the issue and learn about the resources NAMI provides. In this challenging time, it is one of the most important resources we can provide for our employees. We all need more daylight.

Enjoy the show and the accompanying read.

Stay safe and healthy.

Richard Levick

Read the Accompanying Article
“I’m Not Messing Around”

Elon Musk is “not messing around,” vowing to sue Alameda County, California, where its main plant is headquartered. Texas and Nevada are aggressively angling to snatch his business. A boycott is threatened against COSTCO over the company’s nationwide mandatory mask policy. Low tax states have relaxed lockdowns earlier than other states and are recruiting for corporate headquarters post-pandemic. Apparently, we aren’t all in this together.

Nursing homes, insurance companies, private schools, colleges and universities, and, of course, cruise ship lines, among other industries, are and will be significant litigation targets in a post-pandemic world. Cruise ships and nursing homes are and will be accused of not being careful enough while COSTCO, the state of California and other defendants will be accused of being too careful. Universities and insurance companies are and will be sued for not providing what their buyers thought they were purchasing. What’s a company (or a state) to do?

There’s an old adage in our business, “Crisis abhors a vacuum.” While clear federal leadership would not have necessarily eliminated many of these lawsuits, the absence of clear guidelines has only added to the confusion. Most states that have reopened to some degree are not following federal guidelines. Confusion reigns and trust abates even further. And we haven’t begun to consider what happens if Covid-19 morphs into an even more lethal disease thanks to restaurants, beaches or meat packing plant relaxing their guidelines too soon.

We are going to see a rise in lawsuits against many defendants. We try and get at a few of these industries, starting with the cruise ship industry and expanding to the insurance industry next. What should cruise ship companies be considering now and what should they be doing to reduce liability and increase trust?

Safe reading.

Richard Levick
“Show Me the Money”

Did Homer ever want to turn back? Was the Unsinkable Molly Brown tempted by exhaustion at the oar of Lifeboat No. 6 as it navigated the frigid waters of the North Atlantic Ocean after the sinking of the Titanic, awaiting rescue? Did Louis Zamperini have days of hopelessness, lost at sea for 47 days and a prisoner of war for two years? Did Frederick Douglass grow doubtful of his dream of freedom and equality?

Over two months in, we are well past the moment of over-confidence that the pandemic would be a thing that would pass like a bad blizzard. While some states are opening up, the fear of a recurrence or an even worse fall flu / Covid-19 season are hanging over our collective consciousness. Wall Street is jumping on some days and the sales of some luxury goods are finding upticks. But airlines are cautioning that it may be 2023 before air traffic returns to pre-pandemic norms and some economists believe that we are two years away from recovery.

We are past the point of corporate communications just being about camaraderie, stimulus plan analysis, and our guesses about what’s next. We also need to share with our employees, clients, and vendors what to do when the money runs out. For that reason, we devoted our Monday Mornings broadcast last week — a show called “Show Me The Money” — to a discussion with National Foundation for Credit Counseling’s (NFCC) CEO Rebecca Steele and General Counsel Matthew Ribe and asked them how the NFCC can help people — millions of us — in financial distress. It’s a half-hour you won’t want to miss and will likely want to share with someone you know who could use the help. The NFCC can literally change lives with just a phone call. With hundreds of chapters nationwide, the help is always local.

Enjoy the show.

Richard Levick
Man & Superman

“When the first Superman movie came out, I gave dozens of interviews to promote it. The most frequent question was: ‘What is a hero?’ I remember how easily I’d talk about it, the glib response I repeated so many times. My answer was that a hero is someone who commits a courageous action without considering the consequences...Now my definition is completely different. A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”

— Christopher Reeve, from his autobiography Still Me, 1998

We are all learning about perseverance, hope and resilience during this pandemic, and despite our wishful thinking otherwise, we are in for a long haul, most likely a long series of small “w’s” as we work to return to a new “normal.”

I’m not sure why I tear up during the unexpected scenes from Hoosiers, Working Girl and even Rocky. I’m sure some of it has to do with age and the speed of time. Where did those four decades go? That’s enough to bring tears on most days. But there’s more. Is it the loss of the every-person — Julie Andrews in The Sound of Music and Mary Poppins; Dorothy Gale, from Kansas (you didn’t know she had a last name, did you?); Denzel Washington in The Equalizer and Gary Cooper in just about anything? It’s not just the loss of the archetypes, but the belief that we saw a little of ourselves at our best in these characters and, in turn, we believed we could become a little of that hero in real life, when our moment came. These weren’t just archetypes, they were raison d’être.
In our newest podcast, *The Weekly*, in partnership with *In-House Community*, the publication for Asian-MENA Counsel, we interviewed Dr. Charles Keller, the Scientific Director of *Children’s Cancer Therapy Development Institute*, the selected charity of *In-House Community*.

Every year, the FDA approves on average 12 drugs to treat adult cancer, but has only approved eight drugs to treat childhood cancer since 1978. That’s two a decade since about when Rocky was released. Most childhood cancer discoveries never make it past the research labs — there just isn’t enough profit in it. CC-TDI is trying to change that.

One man and a small team of every-persons trying to improve our future. It seems like a message of heroism that we all need to hear at this time.

We now have two regular podcasts, *In House Warrior* with the *Corporate Counsel Business Journal* and *The Weekly* with *In-House Community*, collectively reaching their 70,000 general counsel members. Take a listen to Dr. Keller. You’ll be glad you did. If nothing else, it will make you feel better.

*In House Warrior Episode List*

Stay safe and be at your best.

Richard Levick
The Future of Litigation Finance

More than 30 years ago, I started working with a young partner named Richard Fields at a law firm then known as Howrey & Simon (its tragic demise is its own story), who went from defense lawyer to plaintiffs’ lawyer to litigation finance pioneer with co-founder and lawyer Tim Scrantom. Together they developed one of the first firms in this nascent industry — Juridica, which pioneered the concept of investing in litigation, initially out of London. Since that time, they have both gone on to other things with Tim starting Legis Finance. This past week I caught up with Tim in a special episode of In House Warrior, our podcast for the Corporate Counsel Business Journal. We spent a half hour looking at the history, the current state of affairs and the future of litigation finance. Equal parts historian, philosopher, lawyer and investor, Tim provides extraordinary insight into an industry that has quickly gone from not being understood or imagined to increasingly flooding the market.

Listen to the podcast

Richard Levick
“Show Me, Don’t Tell Me”

“When you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity ... then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.”

— Letter From Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr., 1963

That same year, when I was almost six years old, I was listening to AM radio and on came the news. White political commentators debated the merits of Martin Luther King, Jr’s civil disobedience. It struck me at the moment because it was the first time, at that tender age, that I thought “How come everyone is not in support of these changes? Maybe adults don’t always know what they are doing?” Less than five years later I was struck by the outpouring of adulation of white pundits after the tragic assassination of Reverend King. Even at ten years of age, I thought, though I didn’t know the word, “Where were you before martyrdom?” Support, it seemed, was always safer after the fact.

This past week is monumental in a year of endless historic moments. But make no mistake about the blinking signpost we have just passed. The corporate community can no longer remain neutral.

I’ve spent the past week and through the weekend speaking with publicly traded and private companies all asking, “How can we be good corporate citizens in an age of civil unrest?” It’s hard today and it’s going to get harder.

Study Sony’s $100 million dollar commitment “to support social justice and anti-racist initiatives around the world.”
Study AT&T Chairman Randall Stephenson eloquently calling for corporate action on CNBC’s “Squawk Box.”

Study Nike’s move last year with its ‘Just Do It — Dream Crazy’ ad campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick. They analyzed the risks and benefits, understood they were going to spark controversy, withstood the initial sharp criticism, and subsequently experienced a 10% increase in revenue to $9.4 billion after it heroically used advertising to address social injustice issues. ‘This is what our brand stands for.’

The solution is not about advertising, donations or tweets, though they will play a role. It is about reviewing and reimagining your organization’s values, culture, corporate and brand purpose. It’s about having the courage to walk the walk, or in this case, taking a knee and meaning it for the long haul. If all you’re going to do is issue some variation of “We support Black Lives Matter” without more, you might as well keep standing.

Companies need to look at their leadership, their CSR, ESG, core purpose, history, future markets, political donations, internal and external brand and re-evaluate with fresh eyes. We are at the stage where companies need to show, not tell, who they are and what they stand for.

Make no mistake, when the NFL admits it was wrong in its handling of Colin Kaepernick’s bended knee protest — four years after the fact — it means that some of America’s most conservative, white, flag-waving corporate titans are saying that they recognize the moment. Suddenly, they are acting as if they want to be near the front of the train, not the caboose. As if to underscore the point, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell’s PR guru is none other than White House communications counselor Hope Hicks’ father, Paul.

Patience is no answer to injustice. Corporate America is going to have to lead the way.

In the coming weeks we will be producing a great deal of guidance for companies in these challenging times. We look forward to speaking with you.

Richard Levick
The Changing U.S.-China Relations

Not too long after 9/11, LEVICK was asked to defend the Kuwaiti detainees at Guantanamo. As staunch U.S. allies, the Kuwaitis wanted to distinguish their detainees who had been swept up in the U.S. dragnet that had detained many hundreds of Arab men, in some cases, with little or no information connecting them to terrorism. The U.S. Supreme Court would rule on behalf of these detainees’ rights on three separate occasions but it would take a sustained media campaign to change the will of the U.S. government.

In the shadow of this historic tragedy, it is understandable why initially few American politicians, editorial boards or citizens were concerned about due process and the presumption of innocence. It would take several years, but in time, a majority of Americans and nearly all major editorial boards recognized that you could have justice and due process. There would be some uncomfortable moments — the recognition that we were being followed and recorded or when the Wall Street Journal devoted its entire Op-Ed page (the only time I know of in the past 40 years) to severely criticize our work and that of the lawyers defending these detainees. Through back channels the Bush Administration made it clear that, “We have a job to do; you have a job to do. We think we have the better argument, but let’s see.” Through the courts and media the two sides made their arguments. In time, all but one of the Kuwaiti detainees would be rendered and released. It was a difficult but fair fight.

Today, when we represent Chinese companies, it feels much different. There is more fear among Chinese companies and their American consultants. In recent conversations with journalists, lawyers and others, we have been discussing why it is so much more challenging now for Chinese companies already in and trying to enter the U.S.

Many of the press releases and allegations I have read from U.S. regulators against Chinese companies are a combination of extreme vagueness and extraordinary histrionics. Traditionally, they have been written the other way around.
U.S. companies — even those competing in China — as well as lawyers and academics no longer want to comment on the record in defense of Chinese companies for fear of getting crosswise with the U.S. government.

Threats of criminal charges reduce or eliminate the desire by Chinese companies in the U.S. to lobby or communicate on what just a year or two ago felt like business as usual in Washington.

The silence is deafening and it means that most of the debate on Chinese companies in the U.S. is now one-sided.

There is no question that technology raises all sorts of questions about national security. Chinese companies should be thoroughly vetted for these purposes. But now the power of the federal government is so draconian that Chinese companies are increasingly skipping the American market; those that are here are not participating in the public debate.

I had a fascinating conversation with Robert Lewis of docQbot — which aims to improve the delivery of legal services in China with advanced technology — that ran on The Weekly, our podcast for Asian-MENA general counsels in partnership with In House Community. We cover a lot of ground, and his views on U.S.-China relations are well worth the listen.

Enjoy the listen.

Richard Levick
Into the Breach

We have a lot of articles and podcasts this week, so we thought we would keep our note fairly short. Take a listen to a special edition of In House Warrior, the daily podcast of the Corporate Counsel Business Journal, as John Mullen, of the law firm Mullen Coughlin, which handles approximately 2,500 cyber incidents a year, provides insight into best cyber practices. It’s 25 minutes well-spent.

Please also take a look at NewsWhip/Axios’ analysis of social media conversations since the murder of George Floyd. Online engagement is greater than the five other leading social conversations in the Trump era, combined, and 15 to 120 times greater than each of them at their respective apex. This includes discussion of gun control after Parkland, backlash to the president’s policies on immigration, abortion, global warming and #MeToo. Anyone who thinks this isn’t a seminal moment is missing the signposts of history.

In a somewhat related story, American Heritage magazine, a journal about history and therefore seldom if ever one to make news with an exclusive, does just that with a story of how many Confederate likenesses are actually in the U.S. Capitol, nearly twice as many as widely reported.

Kudos to our friend Ed Grosvenor, the publisher and editor of AH, for his methodical review of congressional art and architecture databases. Is it any wonder that this country has systemic racial issues when fully 16 percent of the men honored in Congress’ Statuary Hall championed white supremacy and led an armed insurrection against the Republic?

In case you missed it, Ross Douthat, columnist for the New York Times, makes a remarkable point about the judicial arc, arguing we are now a juristocracy.

It was quite a week. Don’t expect it to slow down.

Enjoy the listen.

Richard Levick
Almost exactly 56 years ago, on July 2nd, 1964, after Lyndon Johnson’s Herculean triumph, passing the Civil Rights Act, he allegedly told aides, “We have lost the South for a generation.” How is it that a conservative, white southern President, never known as a champion of Civil Rights, would rise to the moment, risk everything, including his party’s majority, to seize the moment not once but twice, following it up in 1965 with the Voting Rights Act?

Johnson was a remarkable student of power, politics and personality and understood the uniqueness of the moment — made possible, in part, by the tragic assassination of President Kennedy (those same two years saw nearly 250 pieces of legislation pass in the greatest Civil Rights era since Reconstruction). We are entering a similar moment today, which comes but once every few generations, if that.

Over this past weekend, in a stunning series of reversals, Mississippi suddenly announced that it was removing the Confederate icon from its State flag. It is easy to lose sight of why this happened while trying to just digest the news. This is Mississippi. The GOP dominates both state houses and the Governor’s mansion. The legislation passed overwhelmingly. Governor Tate Reeves not only reversed his position, but called for immediate action, not just another referendum, saying it’s time “to resolve that the page has been turned.” When was the last time you saw a politician do a complete reversal over the course of one weekend and call for immediate action. This. Is. History.

Mississippi’s dramatic reversal, of course, did not happen because suddenly there was a change in philosophy. The legislature and governors had been ignoring calls from the African-American community for generations. It happened now because of a growing mercantile activism. If this can happen, let alone this quickly, in Mississippi, power has shifted from government to the boardrooms and the C-Suites.
In a brilliant analysis, James Hohmann in the *Washington Post* provides a step-by-step account. Leadership came from Walmart, the NCAA, the Southern Baptist Convention, NASCAR, the Mississippi Economic Council (the state’s leading *business lobby*), the list goes on. Power is not about philosophy, voting, or marching in the streets — though all play a critical role. Power, at least for the time being, rests in the boardroom. Facebook (a company that has been playing from behind for years and still doesn’t understand its moment) is now feeling the same heat from its advertisers, as a Fortune 500 list of advertisers sign on for the #StopHateForProfit campaign and begin their boycotts of Facebook.

In the 1960s when we marched we thought — simply and naively — that business and the military were never to be trusted. Today, both have risen to historic moments with business leading in ways it hasn’t in well over a century. We have written for the last four years about the rise of this new mercantile activism. It is now growing at a pace even we did not predict. It is a brave new world of corporate activism, leadership and responsibility and represents the largest percentage of the conversations we are having with companies these days. Each conversation is remarkable with corporate leadership asking us a version of, “We want to do the right thing but we need help in knowing what that is and how to do it.”

We have begun a series of extraordinary broadcasts, the first is with Primerus, a global alliance of law firms, getting to the heart of this issue. More are scheduled in the coming weeks.

Enjoy the listen, ask the hard questions, and lead into the void.

Richard Levick

[Watch the full webinar](#)
“We Want to Do the Right Thing”

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”
—Laozi

Last week we ended our lead article with the question we are so regularly asked by companies in this new Civil Rights era — “Can you help us to do the right thing?” Weighed down by historical actions or inactions or simply overwhelmed by the enormity of the task before us, many companies and institutions are seeking guidance to get this right. We have started putting together a series of resources, some already published or broadcast, others forthcoming. As we work through these, we will provide a compendium of best practices to assist companies and organizations in building a more equitable present and future.

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden captured in a weekend op-ed the right tone that applies conceptually as well to companies as it does for our country:

“Our democracy rose up from the ground when we ended slavery and ratified the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments. It rose higher when women fought for suffrage — and won. It was fortified when a lawyer named Thurgood Marshall persuaded the Supreme Court to strike down ‘separate but equal’ and blaze a trail for opportunity in Brown v. Board of Education. And when our nation opened its eyes to the viciousness of Bull Connor and the righteousness of the Freedom Riders — and responded with outrage, and a new Civil Rights Act and a Voting Rights Act — we built it stronger still.”

In the Winston-Salem Journal, I join Christina Elson, Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Capitalism at Wake Forest University, to outline the importance of honest and transparent communications from brands during the Black Lives Matter movement and beyond.
In a webinar hosted by Primerus, I discuss what lawyers need to know to be highly effective crisis and litigation communications members in the age of transparency and division.

Barrett Avigdor and Duc Trang of Major, Lindsey & Africa Transform Advisory Services, one of the nation's leading consultants to law firms and legal departments, provides insights into diversity, inclusion and leadership on our podcast, In House Warrior.

This Thursday, July 9th, I join bestselling author and one of the world’s leading experts on brand and culture transformation, Martin Lindstrom, along with Christina Elson of the Center, to discuss “The End of Brand Neutrality: How to Be Good Corporate Citizens in an Age of Civil Unrest.”

On July 15th I join a panel of communications and legal experts to discuss “Doing the Right Thing: How Companies Lead in the New Age of Diversity & Inclusion.”

Come take the next step with us.

Richard Levick
The Human Cost

Since the murder of George Floyd, we have been writing about what companies can do to embrace #BlackLivesMatter and the new Civil Rights movement. We have hosted podcasts and webcasts, such as the one below with bestselling author Martin Lindstrom. Today, we take on the agony of being trapped in a prison reentry and probation system that clearly doesn’t work well.

It’s tragically clear that Rayshard Brooks shouldn’t have died in the parking lot of a Wendy’s in Atlanta. But what’s not being discussed enough is that his encounter with police that night in June should never have occurred at all.

Mr. Brooks had been incarcerated and was on probation. And he took his freedom seriously. He had a family, a job and was committed to doing better — not just for those in his own life, but for others trying to return to life after incarceration. In a brief Instagram video filmed four months before his untimely death that is both hopeful and ultimately heartbreaking to watch, he spoke out on the need for more guidance, more mentorship. It makes it that much more painful that he himself fell through the cracks.

Mr. Brooks was part of America’s tremendously overburdened system for community supervision. According to Pew, in 2016, one in 55 American adults was on probation or parole. Sadly, the United States represents less than 5% of the world’s population, yet has almost 25% of the world’s incarcerated population. Our overcrowded jails are a big problem, but the paltry resources we dedicate for offenders’ reentry into our communities may be an even bigger issue.

It’s not even controversial to point out — community supervision and law enforcement leaders agree. They know that providing support around employment, housing, mental health and substance abuse is vital to rehabilitation and that we need to do better. Making it happen is the hard part.
But it’s getting easier. Technology is evolving well beyond ankle bracelet monitors, toward platforms that deliver tools for helping offenders in each of these categories. Apps that use evidence-based rehabilitation methods such as cognitive behavioral therapy can reduce recidivism and create better outcomes for the individual. Solutions from companies like TRACKtech and Cisco can build an immediate bridge between the science and the street (in full transparency, we have a relationship with TRACKtech).

Whether a probation officer or a law enforcement officer, community professionals should be equipped with the right tools and focused on appropriate missions to do their jobs properly. They need Congress and state legislatures to pass laws that add fresh budget lines focused on social services.

Enhancing public safety starts with focusing on the causes of criminality, which quite often come down to mental health, substance abuse and the effects of poverty. While tackling these challenges from an abstract perspective may seem daunting, Mr. Brooks’ story reminds us that the opportunity comes one person at a time.

Ian Lipner
Senior Vice President, LEVICK
Speak Truth With Love, Not Anger

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.”
— Nelson Mandela (born July 18, 1918)

The anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s birth would, by minutes, have been the same day as John Lewis’ death, separated by 102 years. As one light goes out, others must rise.

It was the last thing I remember reading before falling asleep late Friday night, the sad news that John Lewis, the conscience of a generation, had passed away. A few hours later at 3 a.m., I read the daily essay by the brilliant Boston College historian, Heather Cox Richardson, commemorating Congressman Lewis. Her daily essays are as powerful as she is indefatigable, and this one, as always was well worth the read, made all the starker by the early hour.

In a Washington Post interview, after Congressman Lewis’s last public appearance at Black Lives Matter Plaza across from the White House on June 7, just over four miles from my home, he summed up the #BLM movement by saying, “I can do something. I can say something.” So can we all.

As if on cue, nearly 12 hours later, as I sat in a rocking chair in the backyard, facing Rock Creek Park reading, the passionate New York Times editorial board remembrance, “John Lewis Risked His Life for Justice,” on came “When,” from the late Richie Havens, a soft but powerful song about a deeply challenged future (“I don’t have a future, cried the children in the streets”). God does indeed work in mysterious ways, even if it means Pandora finding exactly the right song — one out of roughly 100,000 possible songs — at precisely the right moment.
We are at a crossroads, again. America’s original sin; 1855-64; 1963-72; and right now. We are in the midst of another great Civil Rights movement. For those on the far right who would deny it and claim it is anarchy; for those on the far left who want to intimidate through cancel culture and cultural appropriation shaming; and for those in the middle who would choose to ignore it, this is it. The great arc of history will judge us by what we do next.

A path forward

Over the past week, we recorded three broadcasts to provide companies and executives with insights on actions we can take to lead:

For companies investing in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) efforts (if not now, when?), Paul Anderson-Walsh, co-founder of The Center for Inclusive Leadership in London, in a powerful broadcast, reminds us to “speak truth with love, not anger.” This is a time for “radical acceptance, not judgment.” So many of us are entering the conversation on race as if we are in a bad marriage, fearful of every word so that we stutter rather than embrace, we judge rather than listen. I could have spent the day with Paul, with his voice radiating acceptance and his wisdom providing pathways. We will have him on again but these 40 minutes help us on the journey. We all need to listen.

For those reviewing their CSR through fresh eyes, we interviewed DC SCORES and America SCORES (the official charitable partner of DC United and the Washington Spirit, respectively), including recent alumni and Morehouse College rising freshman DeAndre Walters, whose poem, “Letter to the Movement” he reads on air and will cut you to the quick. He concludes with these lines:

“I don’t wanna be hashtag
I wanna be remembered”

DC Scores calls them “poet athletes,” teaching the most beautiful game at the same time they teach how to nurture a beautiful mind.

CSR can make a difference in people’s lives — lives that enrich and empower.

In a broad ranging conversation via Wake Forest’s Center for the Study of Capitalism, called Doing the Right Thing: How Companies Lead in the New Age of Diversity and Inclusion, a panel including former Monsanto GC and Akerman partner Bill Ide; Neil Foote, CEO of Foote Communications and President of the National Black Public Relations Society; Kurt Bardella, a contributor to MSNBC, USA Today and NBC; Chris Jackson, of the global polling company Ipsos; and Derede McAlpin of LEVICK, explore specifically what companies can do. We will follow this soon with more articles and checklists to help companies build long term, institutionalized efforts.

Later in this newsletter, historian, author and LEVICK consultant Tim Gay writes a beautiful remembrance of John Lewis.

All of us need look as much in the mirror as we do with judgment. We need to be the change we want. This is a moment about holistic justice, not personal power. For those still insistent on blaming the “other” rather than embracing the other, remember the futility of ostracism and that it often backfires. Emperor Nero blamed an obscure religious cult for the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD. That obscure cult? The Christians.

“You have to have the capacity and the ability to take what people did, and how they did it, and forgive them and move on.”
— John Lewis

Embrace the journey.

Richard Levick
The Age of Transparent Political Donations Is Upon Us

On this day in 1974, the House Judiciary Committee recommended that Richard M. Nixon be impeached and removed from office. By January of 1975, there were 93 new members of Congress, including 49 seats in the House and Senate which had flipped Republican to Democrat.

In the mid to late 1960s, when I was in elementary school, I would play with Chase Church, whose house was just a quick shortcut through the woods from our elementary school. Too young to think much of the fact that his father was the United States Senator, Frank Church, I would just hang out at his house after school, say hello to his mom and, on the rare occasion, hear his father’s sonorous voice. A few years later, while in high school, I couldn’t avoid the recognition as Senator Church would become one of the “Watergate Babies” ushering in remarkable transparency reforms — Sunshine laws — that would become part of the national fabric, though increasingly whittled away over the decades.

The Great Experiment — the American system of democratic rule — is only fully appreciated when viewed through the lens of the 18th century. Authority was the exclusive domain of royalty and self-rule was utterly inconceivable. For all its limitations, American democracy largely self-corrects through Hegelian transitions, like a pendulum in a slow moving Grandfather clock that takes years to go from side to side. Watergate led to Sunshine laws. So too — if our democratic process still works — will the current environment lead to reforms. Companies engaged in the political process need to prepare for it now.
In light of the recent unrest, many companies have been calling for diversity, equity and inclusion but are unsure of how to lead and what to do. There is a dawning realization that corporate responsibility is not just to the shareholders but the stakeholders as well.

We have been suggesting that this is a complex wave of change, not healed through symbolic efforts, and that every component, from recruitment to advertising, public affairs to Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainability to investments, and more, need to be reexamined through fresh eyes. Corporate political donations play an outsized role. Already, many companies have been embarrassed after being lauded days earlier for powerful and righteous tweets and statements only to be revealed to have been financially supporting opposite actions.

On Friday, I interviewed Bruce Freed, co-founder of the Center for Public Integrity, on our daily podcast In House Warrior, for the Corporate Counsel Business Journal, who has just released a new report entitled Conflicted Consequences which follows corporate donations to “527” organizations (527 is the IRS designation). Among the advantages that 527s provide over traditional political spending is that they are opaque. If companies and individuals want to fund someone or something, how much better to do it than in the dark, without accountability? Or so the thinking went for years.

The Center provides maps of which companies spend how much through 527s to fund campaigns and candidates that fuel racial gerrymandering, attack the Affordable Care Act (20 million Americans still rely on it for their health insurance), fight climate change reform, oppose LGBTQ and more. In other words, if you are a company that wants to do the right thing and tweets, advertises or speaks on #BLM, climate change, LGBTQ, DEI or other social issues, now is the time to get your house in order. Companies need to review their entire political spend, not just donations made through PACs and other more transparent methods, but the entire legislative agenda. Support whatever you think is in the company's interest, just make sure you know it will see the sunshine. A note about the Center. They work with companies. Imagine when others figure out how to trail the breadcrumbs?

During the financial crisis of 2008-2009, AIG brought in an outside expert to review and remake their entire public affairs division. That in itself is a fascinating story, but for today, just a short circuit to the conclusion. AIG recognized it was a new day, with new priorities and, for them, blinding transparency because the whole world was watching. They remade their entire department, leaving few idols standing. For companies wanting and proclaiming to do the right thing, now is exactly the time to put your house in order because, as Abraham Lincoln said at his party’s acceptance speech for United States Senate in Springfield, Illinois, “A house divided against itself, cannot stand.” He lost that election in 1858 to Stephen A. Douglas, but, of course, won a bigger office two years later. This transparency change is coming. Time to take the lead.

Listen to the podcast
It’s Complicated

“Human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but...life obliges them over and over to give birth to themselves.”
— Gabriel Garcia Marquez

In the 1940s, my grandfather Lou loved baseball so much that he not only went to Washington Senators’ games at old Griffith Stadium, but when the Senators were on the road and the Homestead Grays of the old Negro League played there (splitting their time between Washington and Pittsburgh), he would go to those games, too. Years later, I would buy a reproduction of their old warmup jacket for my father. It looked so good, I bought one for myself.

Belief in fairness and equity were always a huge part of the value system my grandfather and father passed on to me. Yet there were limits, for even Jewish liberals who suffered antisemitism and saw so many parallels with Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. In 1968, when my parents returned from the Mexico City Olympics, my father said, “I support the message of Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their fists, but did they have to do it there, on the medal stand at the Olympic Games?” Even at age ten I remember thinking, “Well, perhaps not, but where else would they get the world’s attention?”

Bigotry is easy to spot when it is intended. It’s a half century later and I can’t get the photos of Bull Connor, the Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety and other anti-civil rights thugs out of my mind. The dogs, the fire hoses, the chewing tobacco, the smugness, daring you to integrate “their” city. But unintended and unconscious acts of bias and exclusion? Those are harder to spot because they often occur in the synapses of our minds and take the form of omission or compliance with existing policy, not evil intent.
Over the years we have done an immense amount of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion work under a variety of names, #MeToo, anti-Arab and anti-racist work, LGBTQ rights, religious liberty, not to mention all the times we have represented foreign companies and countries and had to confront all the biases — and often regulations — which made their lives and opportunities much more challenging. We also have come to see some patterns, in those who seek cultural change and those who resist it. Not to mention in the thousands and sometimes millions of observers who, in the age of social media, weigh in with everything from support to false narratives to doxing, which has, I might add, resulted in risks to life and home.

We have a new eBook coming out next week on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, comprised mostly of our own observations, recommendations, broadcasts and best practices, along with a few guest columns, and we also have a series of DEI infographics ready to release today. So far there are three in the series: one for corporations trying to figure out if now is the time to lead; one for people inside companies who lean on something between fear and an excuse when they don’t embrace the need for cultural change; and one for each of us. You and me. Mirrors if you will, that call upon us to “speak truth with love, not anger” as Paul Anderson-Walsh, Director of The Center for Inclusive Leadership, suggests. They call on us to not only embrace the change but also recognize that while we are almost all victims at one time or another, we can also all be victimizers. Make “good trouble” as John Lewis so adroitly told us through the decades, but also do it with love, not violence, anger or self-righteousness.

What did we miss? What did we get wrong? Please let us know and we will update the infographics. Please stay tuned for the eBook in a week and let us know if you want to contribute.

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”
— Mahatma Gandhi

Richard Levick

LEVICK presents Barriers to Entry: This is designed for those inside companies — who lean on something between fear and an excuse — when they don’t embrace the need for cultural change. If any of these doors look familiar to you, it is time to reconsider and work on evolving your view.

LEVICK presents the History Meter: The risks have evolved. It is now far riskier to do nothing, do almost nothing or to take only symbolic actions.

LEVICK presents the Judgment Free Zone: A reminder for each of us on our journeys to practice grace and humility.
What’s a Director to Do?

“Are directors even relevant anymore?”
— Fortune 150 Board Member

Today we release the fourth eBook in our series on challenging issues facing companies and institutions, this one on our thoughts about Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. We are planning a number of additional broadcasts soon, including a new series we have developed with CommPRO and the Museum of Public Relations entitled Conversations with America’s Legends, kicking off with Ambassador Andrew Young, which will be added, along with others, to the eBook.

Over the years, I have had the honor of working with and speaking to many boards, public and private, and with many individual board members. Never was I simultaneously impressed and surprised by a question more than the one above. And that was three years ago. The world has only gotten faster, transparency more weaponized, political challenges more divisive. Into the breach, though always there, come sexual and racial issues. Certainly, there is no going back, nor should there be. There’s not even hiding. Leading is the only option.

The number of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion speeches, matters and meetings we have participated in has only escalated in the past number of months, resulting in this new eBook. At each meeting, executives and, particularly, directors, are asking, “What should we be doing?” I find that when I speak about history, trends and what’s next, it all seems too big. Understandable, as we have reduced so many of our board responsibilities down to lists, so here is one to make it more tactical, though these actions all require wisdom, grace and indefatigability, as DEI is not a destination but a journey that never ends.

Crisis Abhors a Vacuum — There are three notable periods in American history prior to the current pandemic where the federal government has utterly failed to assert leadership (James Buchanan, et al., on secession, Andrew Johnson on Reconstruction and Herbert
Hoover on the Great Depression). When leadership is absent, others will or are forced to fill it, among them governors, mayors, city councils and CEOs. Companies are now expected to lead on the public health and social issues of the day. Covid-19, #MeToo, #BLM, climate change. As in 1909, corporate neutrality is dead and mercantile activism is expected.

**#BLM is Here to Stay** — As a director, do not think “this too shall pass.” The Black Lives Matter and associated new Civil Rights movement inspired the largest series of demonstrations in the history of the United States, with 12 to 26 million Americans taking to the streets — during a pandemic — in over 500 cities, far overshadowing the street protests of the anti-war movement in the 1960s and 70s. Activity on social media is 12 to 120 times greater than any of the other high-profile political issues of the day such as climate change, #MeToo, immigration and abortion. Inactivity in the face of an immovable object is a miscarriage of responsibility.

**Prepare Rather Than Respond** — As challenging as this moment is, it is far easier at this very moment than it will be when the klieg lights are on your company, board or you. Prepare now for leadership.

**It Is Not About Symbolism** — A diverse advertisement, hire or CSR donation won’t work anymore. Instruct executives to conduct an audit of the full spectrum of the company’s engagements, all the things that make up its profile. This includes political donations, advertisements, brand and social activities, IR, CSR, ESG, legislative priorities, etc. Failure of consistency in one area (e.g., financially supporting a hostile politician) will overwhelm much if not all of the corporate good works.

**527s Are No Longer Opaque** — Companies have long enjoyed a more neutral approach to political funding activities and, in more recent years, “527” funds (so named for their IRS designation) when a funding position is more likely to be controversial. Until very recently, 527s were hard to track. No longer. When you are doing your corporate housecleaning, fully appreciate that 527s will become transparent.

**Ask Simple Questions** — I am always amazed at the amount of code used in large companies for critically important decisions. Rather than engage in an open discussion about risks, acronyms and buzz speak takes over and everyone assumes all is well. Digital is but one example. It speaks its own language that few board members understand yet most are reluctant to ask for clarity for fear it will expose what they don’t know. The same is true for other enterprise risks, and this sea change, if not addressed, will certainly turn from opportunity to risk. Ask simple questions and demand simple answers. “Why is our DEI recruiting healthy and yet fails to dent our executive ranks in any meaningful way? How do we fix that with a long-term, institutionalized approach?”

**Offer Real Help** — Tweets about DEI commitment are powerful and useful, but hollow when not combined with more. Ask executives how they are leading through this challenging period. Are we recommending meaningful financial and mental health recommendations? Have you conducted the audit recommended above so that the company commitment is consistent? Are we showing, not telling?

**This Is Going To Get Personal** — Change activists — Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Saul Alinsky — never wasted their time in jail. Gandhi wrote My Experience with Truth; King wrote Letter from a Birmingham Jail, and Alinsky wrote Rules for Radicals which, whether they realize it or not, has become the rule book for a new generation of change activists. “Make it personal.” Doxing, call-outs on social media and protests at the homes of executives and board members. You are likely to get called into the public fight one way or the other. If you are standing on the right side of history, bolster your courage and stand firm; if you are standing in the way of history, similarly bolster your courage and lead the change.

**It is Now About Stakeholders, Not Just Shareholders** — Whether you are publicly traded or not, you have shareholders and stakeholders. Measuring profit through maximization is a great strategy for the quarter, but it increasingly leaves companies antiquated in the future — likely the very near future. What investments, financial and otherwise, can companies make in their expansive view of communities to empower the brand and its evangelists, which build for the future? An expansive view of this is provided below in an article I co-authored with former Monsanto general counsel and private attorney Bill Ide.

**Don’t Rush In With “Fixes”** — Don’t rush in with the thought of a “fire sale” on DEI. These problems took hundreds of years to get to where we are today. They will not go away with instant fixes, command authority and a few hires. This will take time. And you will get it wrong along the way. Plan for an institutionalized approach that is as sensitive to people who fear they will be displaced as those you are welcoming. This is really difficult stuff where even the language is so loaded and trust so low that missteps are easier than modest leaps forward.
Recruitment and Advancement — We will not fix the DEI challenges with hiring opportunities alone. Saying you recruit from the “Ivies” is a brand, it’s also exclusive. Look at the world differently. Challenges are historic and deep rooted. Look to form close, deep and long-term relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and develop training and support programs for years. As directors, don’t just ask about diversity numbers, break them down and study the patterns, then lead.

Silos are Dead — For over 70 years companies have operated as silos — HR, GR, PR, Legal, Brand, etc. But problems, particularly social justice challenges, are fully integrated. Activists look for the weakest point and leverage. As media coverage escalates a recruitment problem, heretofore assigned to HR alone, is now a legal, brand, GR and PR problem, to name a few. Directors should be looking for ways for their companies to integrate their silos so companies think holistically, just like their critics.

If Biden Wins — I am not going to prognosticate, but it is a scenario well worth considering as there is at least a 50% likelihood this may happen. If there is a sweep and the Senate turns over for an entirely Democratic alignment, it creates a moment that occurs only once or twice in a generation. I am not speaking of political power, but the historical kind. Change comes in waves. Prior to 1964, Lyndon Johnson was no Civil Rights leader. Yet, in the wake of the Kennedy assassination and the televised Civil Rights movement, the mood of the country changed radically and quickly. It became Johnson’s raison d’être. The 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the 1968 Fair Housing Act. Over 240 new laws were enacted during the first few years of the Johnson Administration because the country was ready. We may be entering a similar moment; as directors, you should be considering it, if not expecting it.

No Company is Exempt — Business-to-Business and Business-to-Government companies luxuriate in the opaqueness of what they do because their customers aren’t usually also activists-citizens. If Takata and Foxconn taught us anything, operating in this sector is no longer a shield to citizen activism. Expect to be in the limelight and act now to do the right things.

Have a Strategy, Not Whack-A-Mole — Think long term and proactively. Develop an approach that will put you in a leadership role. Responding to one problem after another without the systemic approach leads to bad decisions and weaker boards. Activists — unions, #BLM, plaintiffs, etc. — need the Internet to build alliances, support and to communicate direction. Ask questions about how the company is tracking these trends and, just as importantly, how they are evaluating it. Are there potential allies? Thoughtful critics who can provide opportunities? Nascent but critical information that can be corrected before it passes for “truth”? The Internet is where social movements are born. Why wait until they are adults to address them?

Read — This may sound passive, but understanding the historical swings — the Hegelian Dialectics — of business and politics, gives us both understanding and vision. We are in 1918, 1929 and 1968 all at once. We might as well learn from them — reducing errors along the way — and have them serve as our guides.

Courage — Patience, vision, integrity, honesty. These are all needed to exhibit courage. Be willing to question and if necessary sacrifice the board member who stands in the way; the short-term profits that will lead to future exposure; the self-righteous and inflexible leaders; and those that counsel hiding. There is time for reasoned, wise and calm discussion followed by action. Overwhelmingly fear is an emotion which rules us. Fortunately, courage is needed in short supply. But it is, of course, needed now.

Happy reading.

Richard Levick
Download the eBook
American Legend

“The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.”
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In the early 1960s, Birmingham, Alabama, was so dangerous to Black Americans who suffered so many bombings at the hands of White supremacists that it was often referred to as “Bombingham.” There's an old joke from the Civil Rights movement: “A Black preacher in Chicago wakes up one morning and tells his wife that Jesus had come to him in a dream and told him to go to Birmingham to seek justice. His wife is horrified. ‘Did Jesus say he'd go with you?’ The husband replies, ‘He said he'd go as far as Memphis.’” Birmingham was just that dangerous.

We view the heroism of history from a safe distance. Pretending that we would do the same, given the opportunity. Stand up for justice, risk our careers, or even our lives. But few of us heed the call. It's just too hard. You know those moments when we “Go along to get along.” Not to cause even “good trouble” as the late John Lewis would say. Even in protest, we often don the mantle of self-righteousness, which can make change more threatening, rather than advance “truth and reconciliation.”

Imagine not having the safety and security of the rearview mirror, but instead to have lived history-making in real time? What courage and strength of character. At the Edmund Pettus Bridge; on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, with Rosa Parks; at the door at Foster Auditorium when Governor George Wallace attempted to block the integration of the University of Alabama. To run into the burning building rather than away from it?

Enter Andrew Young, among the last of the early civil rights leaders, the former executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and a close confidant to Martin Luther King, Jr. Later in his career he served as a U.S Congressman from Georgia, Ambassador to the United Nations and the Mayor of Atlanta. At 88, he is still leading the way.
Ambassador Young was kind enough to offer to kick off a series called American Legends that we are doing with CommPRO and on our podcast, In House Warrior. Sponsors of this historic event — free to the public — include the Museum of Public Relations and American Heritage magazine. Bill Ide, the former General Counsel of Monsanto, a partner at Akerman in Atlanta and a friend of the Ambassador for over 50 years, will join me in moderating this timely conversation on Aug 21 at 2 pm ET over the CommPRO network.

Ambassador Young will provide perspectives on the upcoming presidential election, including the emerging new “birtherism,” #BLM and the impact of COVID-19 on communities of color... please join the conversation.

Register for the event
Download the eBook

Richard Levick
Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

As a young child I always wanted to be taken seriously, especially by my father. What I thought of the ’68 election, the Vietnam War, Watergate...It wasn’t that he and I hadn’t had plenty of good discussions, it was that he had already come to the conversations with opinions largely fully formed. I learned a lot from those discussions and still remember many of the lessons. But the relationship was clear, father and son. Teacher and student.

Then one day, two-thirds of the way through law school, it happened. My father asked me a legal-business question, as an empty vessel, asking me, his son, “What did I think?” Whatever joy I had in this long-anticipated moment was vanquished by the realization that I didn’t really want this adult responsibility after all. That in a small way, the torch was starting to be passed and with it, its weight. The endless rights we envision of adulthood as children are quickly replaced by the endless responsibilities we inherit with maturity. Are we ready for the torch to pass to us?

This past Friday I had the honor to moderate two conversations with Ambassador Andrew Young, the great Civil Rights leader, confidant of Martin Luther King, Jr., who had served as a Congressman, Mayor, brought the Olympics to Atlanta, and so much more. The programs include a webcast with CommPRO on their new American Legends series and a podcast on In House Warrior in concert with the Corporate Counsel Business Journal. I was joined by co-hosts on each program, including the remarkable Dr. Denise Hill, historian and Assistant Professor, Strategic Communication, at Elon College; Bill Ide, a partner at Akerman and the former general counsel of Monsanto and former President of the ABA; and Ed Grosvenor, the Editor-in-Chief of American Heritage magazine. Each of these co-hosts are incredibly interesting guests in their own right and have and will be on future programs.
Toward the end of the CommPRO webinar, an audience question came in too late to be asked, but it struck me nonetheless. “Thank you for the reminiscences of Ambassador Young” but could he talk more about today? “Reminiscences?” This last voice of history from the 1960’s Civil Rights movement? In. The. Room. with Dr. King and so many more. Whose “Andy Young Presents” videos has him in the room with Jimmy Carter, Hank Aaron, Nelson Mandela and on and on.

“How does this affect me?” is a fair question. It also seemed like the kind of dismissive question that in today’s walking-on-eggshells world, would sound like cancelling if it didn’t involve someone older, who are the easiest to dismiss. I know it wasn’t meant that way, but it felt sort of like an “OK Boomer” dismissal. “Yeah, yeah, yeah, but can you get to the good stuff?”

Imagine what it would be like to be in the room?

And maybe that is the lesson all in itself. All of us are in the room. What we do next matters most. History doesn’t always feel like history at the moment. Are we ready to carry the torch?

Watch the webinar
Listen to the podcast
Read “Andrew Young Presents”

Richard Levick
The Devil and Miss Jones

For those of you who don't remember the 1941 fictional business-love story of the same name, it is about the richest man in the world, J.P. Merrick. (Get it? Even the opening credits begin with a tongue-in-cheek reminder that the movie is fictional and asks not once but twice to “please not sue us!”) So private is Mr. Merrick that he hasn’t been photographed in 20 years, that is, until 400 of his employees at one of his smallest investments — Neely’s Department Store — threaten to go on strike, hanging his likeness in effigy, making the front page of the New York Times in a large, above-the-fold photo. For those of you not old enough to know about newspapers, they were the Facebook of their time.

Enraged by this violation of his privacy and fearful that the protest will go viral — such as it was 80 years ago — he decides to go undercover in the store as a shoe salesman (selling cozy slippers), to identify and outsmart the troublemakers. It’s 1941, after all, so even though the movie is decades ahead of its time, it ends with him falling in love with an employee, taking on the workers’ burdens, and making all well.

It may be nearly a century ago, but the fear of unwanted transparency, humiliation, unrest and financial harm is nothing new. It’s always been a part of every economic, government and theological enterprise.

When I speak to directors, as I did this past week (virtually) at the Institute for Excellence in Corporate Governance at the University of Texas, Dallas, or to business leaders, the questions always include this one that’s hard to answer: “How do we deal with the threat of a viral crisis?” Short of a magic wand (often the preferred response), the answer is time.

In The Devil and Miss Jones, though anxious for things to move more quickly, the fictional Mr. Merrick has weeks. In 1982, James Burke, the CEO of Johnson & Johnson during the Tylenol crisis had four and a half days. In 2010, Tony Hayward, the CEO of BP, had hours. Today, if a crisis has happened, we have to go back in time to be ready.

On September 20, 2006, then Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez delivered a speech to the United Nations General Assembly, criticizing U.S. foreign policy and referring to then-President George W. Bush repeatedly as “the devil.” The political reaction was swift but
the business impact even swifter. The Florida legislature voted almost immediately to cancel the highway contract for CITGO, which has a direct relationship with PDVSA, the Venezuelan state-owned oil company. Soon, other state legislatures were considering the idea and the very existence of CITGO, a U.S. owned company, was immediately and fundamentally threatened. No state highway contracts, no CITGO. Over the next two weeks, we were able to work with critical but fair high authority bloggers, traditional media, editorial page editors, activists and lobbyists to build a political wall and help save the other state contracts and, with it, CITGO. Today, that kind of remarkable victory would not be possible without the ability to buy time. Social media and activists move too quickly to respond. You have to anticipate so you can react instantaneously. That means engaging a sophisticated level of information tracking and analysis before matters go viral.

Fourteen years later, when corporate criticism goes viral, it is already too late for all but the largest companies and entities with extraordinary resources, including artificial intelligence. What are smaller companies and organizations to do in addition to intelligence gathering and analysis when caught in the crossfire? Something that happens every day. Threats of boycotts, vitriolic online criticism, ugly customer interactions, media onslaughts. Once the Johnstown flood of criticism is unleashed, no finger in the leaking dike strategy is going to work.

Two weeks ago, a photo of a Goodyear diversity training slide went viral, which showed #BLM and LGBT attire as acceptable but Blue Lives Matter, All Lives Matter and MAGA as unacceptable. Within days, President Trump called for a boycott. Caught in the maelstrom were the independent Goodyear tire dealers on the front lines. I did a lengthy interview with Tire Review (you will be forgiven if you don’t already subscribe) outlining a number of recommendations; we provide additional recommendations below.

We are all public figures now. It’s just a matter of time before we are the target.

**Use your peacetime wisely.**

Prepare now, before you are under the klieg lights. Ask your communications team what they would do if under attack and prepare all of your resources now. Once you are under attack by the angry mob, few if any third parties will volunteer to be in the line of fire; controlling the narrative will be a near impossibility. Since all arguments are largely emotional, not factual, the truth will not set you free.

**It’s not the crisis plan but the crisis DNA.**

It’s not that crisis plans are useless, but they tend to give a false sense of assurance. When airbags were first mandatory in cars, fatality rates didn’t initially go down because drivers felt impervious. Crisis plans tend to leave us thinking we are ready when the only thing that gets us truly ready are the crisis training drills. While not what the late Senator John McCain meant at the time, “Drill, baby, drill,” is wise advice. The more you test your crisis response, the more your teams will be ready when the time comes…and it will come. *Nota bene,* under fire, most people freeze.

**Fiddle before Rome burns.**

You cannot scenario-plan for every scenario. Do you think Goodyear had a plan for a viral HR slide photographed and taken out of context? But you can identify third party supporters now, who you engage and embrace; draft dark web pages which have helpful content which you can post later if and when needed; locate pictures that helpfully tell your stories (people view, they don’t read); describe your narrative, history, diversity, culture and so on so it is already accurately and helpfully on display; produce videos which engage third parties, show your culture, portray your narrative, etc.; implement a strategic optimization campaign so that your messages are at the top of Google (along with your third parties and videos) and on and on. Crisis preparation is a marathon — not a miracle. Preparing ahead of time is the only way to win. In the Goodyear example, there were dealers who avoided most of the criticism, but more so because of how they prepared and instantly responded, rather than how they responded after the fire began.

And one last thing. In the movie, with the CITGO highway contracts and at the Goodyear dealers, the one thing that worked every time was “being local.” That is, J.P. Merrick gets to know the protesters and they him; CITGO’s multifaceted campaign included a years’ long advertising campaign called “*Fueling Good,*” emphasizing local ownership of your neighborhood gas stations; and the Goodyear dealers who were the most successful were the ones who emphasized their neighborhood roots. Being local and a good neighbor, it seems, is one of the swiftest ways to the heart and the ear. When we know someone, even an adversary, is also a neighbor, we usually take the time to at least listen. We are members of many different tribes — religion, nationality, economic strata, political affiliation, brand identity — and one of them is our neighborhood. Mr. Rogers was right all along. “Won’t you be my neighbor?”

Enjoy the read, look forward and drive safely.

*Read the article*

Richard Levick
When the Milwaukee Bucks boycotted game five of their NBA series against the Orlando Magic to protest police brutality, they took sports’ biggest stand since Muhammad Ali — during the height of the Vietnam War — lost everything and was stripped of his boxing crown for announcing he was a conscientious objector and refusing induction into the U.S. Army in 1968.

It doesn’t matter if you don’t follow sports. The earth stood still on August 26th. Already, in the wake of the Jacob Blake shooting, the NBA players have demanded and won from team owners the agreement to convert NBA arenas “into a voting location for the 2020 general election to allow for a safe in-person voting option for communities vulnerable to COVID.”

This is enormously big and forever trespasses the line between sports and reality. However, if you have already looked away, you are making a mistake. There is another lesson and it is huge.

According to an analysis by Popular Information, the major sponsors of the NBA have also simultaneously made political donations of $3.3 million to politicians rated “F” by the NAACP. Can you figure out what’s next?

Increased transparency, including obliterating the opaqueness of 527 political donations, means that companies that have historically donated to politicians independent of their brand but otherwise smart for business reasons are in for a reckoning. Brands and politics are no longer separate and the public linkage is accelerating at, well, an Olympic pace. The heretofore “smart” business strategy of donating to politicians either evenly across political parties or because of their sympathetic positions on corporate friendly legislation and taxation are going to find a much less friendly audience.

As Akerman partner Bill Ide and I wrote a few weeks ago, it is much more about stakeholders not shareholders now. It is also about seeing the world from another point of view.
A little over 20 years ago, when our firm was only a few years old and we were opening up a Los Angeles office, we flew a young woman just out of college, from Los Angeles to Washington, DC to join other new staff in a multi-day training program. Meals were involved, including a dinner with a number of senior staff and raw oysters were served. I didn’t notice it at the time, but this young, African American woman just starting her first job and already intimidated by the former journalists, book authors and other industry luminaries at the table, found herself confronting her first raw oyster. How does one eat this crustacean? It is not a moment I remember, but it was a rite of passage for her and forever emblazed on her memory. Growing up in a non-Kosher household, crustaceans were a gift from God as far as I was concerned, if that didn’t damn me for life. But for this young woman it was just another in so many gateways of trying to succeed in a business world that was, and is, largely white.

Like most of us, despite our sensitivity, there are so many barriers we miss. This past week, Christelyn Karazin, the young staffer now nearly 23 years older and a book author herself, had me on her program, The Pink Pill which is about how African American women succeed in a world largely not of their own making. I was the first man and the first white man on her interactive program, which oversold virtually instantly and had a waiting list of people trying to get on an overwhelmed Zoom channel. I may not know much, but I know demand when I see it. It was as energizing as anything I have done in a COVID-Zoom world.

There’s a world out there of people trying to get in. And though it takes courage on both ends, it can only make us better.

About a week earlier, I also had the honor of giving another online speech, this time to the University of Texas at Dallas Institute for Excellence in Corporate Governance. Similarly, a highly attended event, this one of board members from public and private companies, dealing with a myriad of challenges, one of them, of course, being Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. What struck me most about doing these two events back-to-back is that one is outside-looking-in and the other inside-looking-out. I know it sounds simple, but I think there is a magical opportunity here.

This is the sound of opportunity, where companies can lead this change, not react to it. One thing is for certain. You can hold on to the old way of doing business and making political donations. But the sound you just heard was the two-minute warning.

Enjoy the program.

Watch the webinar

Richard Levick
The Miracle on Pennsylvania Avenue

“When I look at history, literary and social, I find that I side pretty steadily with history’s eccentrics. I don’t mean all the mad astrologists and mystics [...] but simply the mundane eccentrics who have stood on the sidelines with the game in progress, and made frosty remarks instead of cheering.”

—Reed Whittemore, former U.S. poet laureate

On the morning of September 1st, like clockwork, the hummingbirds stopped coming to their feeders. Truth be told, there were two stragglers the next day, probably a little late packing their bags for Central America, but that was it. Their annual migration has begun. Now the morning meditation and prayers are accompanied only by the nuthatches, robins, cardinals, mourning doves, grackles, crows, blue jays and the ever-present sparrows. And, of course, the omnipresent squirrels. All are beautiful in their own way, but none quite as miraculous as the diminutive hummingbird. As for the squirrels, some know me and literally tap on my home office windows when the bird food has run low. Some fight the squirrels in a losing battle. I’ve settled for politeness.

A week later, Tuesday morning, after Labor Day, almost to the minute, the phones started ringing. America was back to work. Pandemic or no, we are all somehow tied to the academic year as our business circadian rhythms. We abide many rituals — from holidays to family functions — as they give us grounding and help us make sense of the passage of time.
When I was a young boy, growing up in the shadow of the dome in Bethesda, Maryland, my father and I would watch the presidential inaugurals on television, and he would comment on the “miracle of the peaceful transition of power.” I was unmoved by this miracle, no more than migration. This was, after all, how it had been for over two centuries. “What’s the fuss?” But as we have come to learn, maybe the past isn’t prologue after all. As William Faulkner mused, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

I’ve been reading a lot lately about the possibility that this may not be a peaceful transition after all — and it isn’t pretty. As CNN’s Fareed Zakaria writes, “It is not some outlandish fantasy, but rather the most likely course of events based on what we know today.”

One of the advantages of hosting daily podcasts is the honor to work with so many interesting people and icons of history. As I’ve come to learn, the pre-show calls are often as interesting as the podcasts themselves, when guests will reveal great truths in passing. Three weeks ago, 88-year-old Andrew Young, who regularly worked and marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., said “These are the most troubling and challenging times of my life.”

This week, while on air, American University Distinguished Professor of History and author, Allan Lichtman, who has correctly predicted the winning candidate in nine straight presidential elections through the use of his 13 Keys to the White House painfully mentioned that what keeps him up at nights is fear about the access to voting and Russian interference. He predicted a Donald Trump victory early in 2016 and in 2020, predicts a Biden victory, but this time, with an unheard-of caveat — “if the elections are free and fair.”

“If the elections are free and fair?” In the United States of America?

We’ve been through a lot — a pandemic, economic and civil unrest. But what happens if November 3rd is no more decisive than the wearing of masks? If election results are delayed for days or weeks? If the confusion of Bush v. Gore is magnified a hundredfold in today’s bitterly divisive environment?

Already, in the absence of a federal response to the coronavirus, businesses have stepped in to fill the void. Is your company ready for election related disruption the likes of which we have never seen, and prepared to provide the needed leadership? First, by providing the time to vote and second, with the internal communications to calm your employees? Let alone the possible need for external communications to quell combustion?

What happens if demonstrations follow? Aggravated social media? An onslaught of political accusations masked as HR complaints? A refusal to work with those that voted otherwise? Activists’ apparel? Unprecedented distraction in the workforce? If employees use company social platforms to pour accelerant on existing tensions? And if, heaven forbid, there is violence in your communities? Among your workforce? At or near your places of business? The time to crisis plan is now. It may be unheard of, but it is no longer unlikely.

There are 49 days until the election. If you haven’t started planning, you need to.

Enjoy the listen.
Ruth Bader Ginsburg is why I went to law school. Well, that’s not fully accurate. As a formative adolescent in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I did not know her name but I knew her work, at least generally, as a law professor volunteering for the ACLU and arguing before the Supreme Court. I knew what the ACLU was doing, and Thurgood Marshall and Bobby Kennedy and I knew I wanted to be a lawyer. Lawyers had the power to make things better. Equal justice under law, the phrase engraved above the front entrance of the United States Supreme Court, says it all. Using the law degree to write contracts or merge companies never seemed anywhere near as important as the capacity to make the world a better place. And that is precisely what Justice Ginsburg did, before and during her time on the Supreme Court, and, if she has her way, as I am sure she will, in heaven, too.

Some of her most glorious quotes:

“The most effective dissent spells out differences without jeopardizing collegiality or public respect for and confidence in the judiciary.”

“I ask no favor for my sex. All I ask of our brethren is that they take their feet off our necks.” 1973, the first time she appeared before the court, quoting 19th century abolitionist and women’s rights activist Sarah Grimke.

“What is the difference between a bookkeeper in New York’s garment district and a Supreme Court Justice? Just one generation, my mother’s life and mine bear witness. Where else but America could that happen?”
“'We the People' expanded to include all of humankind, to embrace all the people of this great nation. Our motto, E Pluribus Unum, of many one, signals our appreciation that we are the richer for the religious, ethnic, and racial diversity of our citizens.”

“In striving to drain dry the waters of prejudice and oppression, we must rely on measures of our own creation — upon the wisdom of our laws and the decency of our institutions, upon our reasoning minds and our feeling hearts.”

Rest in peace, Justice Ginsburg.

Listen to a Special Report of the In House Warrior podcast with The Washington Post's James Hohmann for an in-depth look at the fight to fill the Supreme Court seat.

Richard Levick
What We Hear

Dig It

The Beatles

Like a rolling stone
A like a rolling stone
Like the FBI and the CIA
And the BBC, BB King
And Doris Day
Matt Busby
Dig it, dig it, dig it
Dig it, dig it, dig it, dig it, dig it, dig it, dig it, dig it, dig it

When the Beatles’ “Dig It” came out in 1970 on the album Let It Be, I digested it like a million other teenagers (I was twelve and a half, well past my pre-teen years!). It was my sister’s album because she was two years older, had a record player (not a stereo, mind you) and a record collection that topped maybe 20 records. I listened to that album until the grooves were so deep they took on water.

I knew every word, or so I thought. Fifty years later I still know most of the words to most of the songs. You measured your hipness in those days not just by knowing the album and the artist, but understanding the cultural references. I knew them all — B.B. King, Doris Day, the FBI and CIA — or so I thought, though only by familiarity, not by detail.

Imagine my shock when I learned after half a century I was mis-hearing one of the references. I thought Lennon, McCartney, Harrison and Starr (if you have to look those up, well, never mind) were once again using a made-up name like “Jojo” (a reference to a loved groupie) and “Jude” (a code name about John Lennon’s divorce) saying “Max Busby,” a reference I figured sounded good but didn’t mean anything.
As an American teenager, eager for but having no idea about British football (it was only occasionally available in theaters by closed circuit or a highlight accidentally making it onto ABC’s “Wide World of Sports”), I had no idea there was a real Matt Busby. I had always thought it was “Max” (and tell the truth, if you are old enough to remember, you likely did, too). This may not be as great a controversy as most people not understanding the worlds to “Purple Haze,” but it is an embarrassment nonetheless. Imagine thinking your entire life that Vince Lombardi’s first name was Lance and that he was a figment of someone’s imagination?

While on convalescence for a few days last week (did you miss our newsletter last Monday?) I watched a movie about Matt Busby and came face to face with my half century of naivety. Matt Busby wasn’t just one of the greatest football managers of all time in England, but an extraordinary human being. Having lost eight of his players in the 1968 Munich air disaster — a disaster he survived but which haunted him to his grave — he made it a point to find time to coach youngsters throughout his life, often disadvantaged ones. Imagine Casey Stengel or Pat Summit coaching your youth team while still coaching professionally?

There was no Internet in 1970. You heard literally a thousand new things a day and if you couldn’t read about them in your local newspaper, ask or look them up, you went on your merry (albeit naïve) way. Not so different from today, really, and that’s the point. We all think we are better informed because we could be, not because we exercise that investigative muscle.

How much of life do we wander around thinking we heard, and as a result, understood? In an age when there is so much instantaneous judgment, that should be the first rule: listen, really listen. Then research and gain perspective. Not just your own perspective but a broader one. Then, as they used to say on “Saturday Night Live,” we should “discuss among ourselves.” I’m wondering that if I misunderstood something I heard 10,000 times for 50 years, then maybe none of us are listening all that well.

So while you are in the listening mood, we have a few programs for you:

A special webcast with Wake Forest’s Center for the Study of Capitalism with Enron whistleblower Sherron Watkins, John Kostyack of the National Whistle Blower Center and Bill McGovern of Kobre & Kim. Whistleblowing, is, after all, the art of listening, really listening, considering, reflecting and, upon believed confirmation that something is terribly wrong, summoning the courage to act. Not letting it be is a long and winding road.

And while there are many other programs from the past week, the other one that struck me was the indomitable Lucinda Low of Steptoe & Johnson, LLP on the FCPA. I’ve known Lucinda for years but this is the first time we spent one-on-one time for so long and it was as much a joy as it was informative, with her delivering a tour de force of what companies and institutions need to be thinking about regarding the FCPA.

Now, ’scuse me while I kiss the sky.

Happy listening.

Richard Levick
The Man Who Ran Washington

Voting for President of the United States seems to be the only position where having “stayed at a Holiday Inn Express” the night before qualifies you. The more of an outsider you are, the more capable many people think you are as a fixer. Imagine this same philosophy being applied to your realtor, stock broker or brain surgeon. No experience? Perfect!

As a young staffer, LBJ brushed his teeth five times every morning and every night. Same with showering. It wasn’t his commitment to hygiene. Like most staffers in those days, he lived in a building on the Hill with many other young staffers and each floor shared a large bathroom. By being in there during high traffic periods he met dozens of staff members of both parties — relationships he used his entire political life, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which both received heavy bipartisan support. If you want to make Washington work, you need to understand how it works. Just ask Jimmy Carter. Washington Street, where the state capitol of Georgia is located in Atlanta, is not Washington, DC.

There are few people who have understood Washington better than James A. Baker III. For a quarter century, no Republican won the presidency without his help. And once they won, he provided indispensable advice. Thomas E. Donilon, President Barack Obama’s national security adviser, called Baker “the most important unelected official since World War II.”

With my co-host, CNN Legal Contributor Michael Zeldin, we interviewed co-authors Peter Baker of the *New York Times* and Susan Glasser of *The New Yorker* on their new book, *The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III*. The co-authors generously spent a half hour with us, sharing stories and talking about the man, who at 90, is as sharp as ever. You will most certainly enjoy the listen.

Richard Levick

Enjoy the Listen
Tell Me Why I’m Stupid

It was a few weeks after a team of us had been stationed on Water Street, in New York’s financial district, for AIG for most of 2008 and 2009, during the financial meltdown. I had gone to Ho Chi Minh City for three days to attend a meeting of the World Economic Forum Partnership Against Corruption and returned to Manhattan for a day, thinking that I might get some sleep, when a call came in from a lawyer I did not know from the law firm Pillsbury Winthrop. It was the first night after the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster and the law firm wanted to know if I could be in Houston in the morning for a competitive pitch.

One of our trademarked tag lines is “Always on” and while it is an honor to fulfill this pledge, it can be tiring at times. Overnight, one of our teams prepared a 70-plus page briefing book analyzing the media over the first 24 hours of the Gulf oil spill. I arrived in Houston in time to print out multiple copies prior to the early morning meeting. The Japanese conglomerate involved by investment in the oil spill needed to make a decision quickly. Within the hour we were hired and went straight into war room footing.

Because this was known as the “BP oil spill,” other involved companies — Halliburton, Anadarko and the Japanese company we represented, among others, had extra hours, even a day or two, to prepare before the lights turned on us. By day two in the war room, Pillsbury’s lead lawyer on the matter, Tom Campbell, had identified all of the possible state and federal liabilities, which at the time, amounted to $2 billion.

He then laid out a legal strategy in which he said he thought could save the company $1 billion and asked if anyone in the virtual war room — investor relations (Tokyo had a shareholders meeting in ten days’ time), government relations, brand, HR, sales, inside legal, communications, etc. — had a better plan, a way to save the company more than a billion dollars in liability. Whoever had the best plan would control the strategy and the rest of the divisions and interests of the company would become secondary.
Knowing how fast crises move and how intimidating and challenging it is to make an argument betting the corporate farm on your perception of the future, Tom didn’t just ask for arguments better than his, he asked the team to “Tell me why I’m stupid?” For a lawyer, let alone an American lawyer, to say out loud to a Japanese company, where shame is so sensitive, to be shown why he could be wrong and to be inviting this criticism in real time, was among the most courageous things I have ever witnessed in high-profile global crises. He knew his view was probably right but was entirely open and inviting contrary views in as humble and vulnerable way as he could.

Often, when brand, communications, GR, IR, PR and legal are at cross purposes, as they almost always are at some point in bet-the-company crises, crisis leaders (often, though not always, lawyers) are fighting for control. But in crisis, the issue — legal, GR, IR, brand, HR — that has the greatest to lose or gain, must lead, with every other division of the company being willing to sacrifice. If legal liability is the most threatening to the company, then short-term stock price, a product, executive or brand value can be sacrificed. If brand is the most valuable asset in jeopardy, then the possibility of an adverse legal ruling can become part of the acceptable cost. You cannot just ask people for contrary views when doing this calculus. You have to invite them with the most sincere and most direct plea. Tom’s “Tell me why I’m stupid” are still my favorite five words ever uttered during crisis response. It cuts through the clutter and gets to the bottom line quickly.

That is why I recently had Tom on In House Warrior. He’s a visionary whose humility ensures that the client’s goals stay uppermost in mind. He puts on his binoculars and takes a look at crisis communications in this challenging age and discusses what’s next. It’s a great half hour and I hope you will enjoy the program as much as I did.

Listen to the podcast
The Cyber Bad Guys Are Getting Worse

“I don’t try to predict the future. All I want to do is prevent it.”
—Ray Bradbury

There have been a few moments of remarkable hope over the decades that I never thought I would live to see and literally took my breath away. The fall of the Berlin Wall. The collapse of apartheid and the subsequent election of Nelson Mandela. The election of Barack Obama. The rise of the Internet.

I remember the first night I had America Online and suddenly found myself in a conversation with someone in British Columbia. It was a “Watson, come here moment.”

In just over 20 years, the unbridled promise of the wild west of the new Internet has been replaced by 21st century robber barons in the form of a half dozen companies with spectacular power over commerce, democracy and thought. Add to this the rise of a criminal class so sophisticated in their enterprise that they now have mission statements. And their mission is not good.

One hundred percent of us will be hacked. Ransomware is on the rise. Nation-state interference is exhibit one in the new cold war. Disruption from cyber criminals is its own significant stand-alone threat even before we get to the disruption caused by AI and the rise of technology.

Over the past few months we have written multiple articles and conducted more than a dozen broadcast interviews, largely for the Corporate Counsel Business Journal, on cyber security and privacy issues, resulting in our fifth eBook, this one on Cybersecurity & Privacy. Leading experts provide their take on what companies can do pre-, during and post-breaches. We have interviews with one of the nation’s leading cyber security
journalists, Brian Krebs of *Krebs on Security*, Jeffrey Rosenthal, Privacy Team chair of Blank Rome’s Biometric practice; and Marcello Antonucci, Claims Team Leader of Beazley’s Cyber & Tech, our co-sponsor of this eBook; and contributions from such leading firms as ThreatConnect, 4iQ, Mullen Coughlin, Carlton Fields, ZwillGen and many others.

We are distributing this eBook to more than 300,000 people through our media and insurance partners, including the *Corporate Counsel Business Journal*, *CommPRO*, Beazley and the many law and cyber firms who participated in this eBook. We are always updating our eBooks, so if you want to propose a topic, we can work you into the next edition.

Stay safe and enjoy the eBook.

Download our eBook
Won’t You Be My Neighbor?

“The house of everyone is to him as his Castle and Fortress as well for defense against injury and violence, as for his repose.”
—Sir Edward Coke

We’ve simplified this over the last 400 years to “a person’s home is their castle,” and here we are, on the eve of the American election, thinking about our national neighborhood and what our proverbial neighbors are going to do.

Perhaps today, the day before the American election, is a good time to think not just about our neighbors but housing, too. Nothing good happens without home base. Not poverty reduction, upward mobility, solid family support, law and order, or education, let alone peace and community. Just think about what Covid-19 is doing to children in homes with little or no Internet connectivity. We cannot build forward without a solid housing foundation.

I always find myself looking backward to look forward, so it got me thinking about John Keats, the 19th century poet. He gave up an early medical career to focus on poetry, only to find his first book widely derided by critics. After tuberculosis — or consumption as it was called then — took his mother, then brother (his father had died when he was eight), Keats, too, found himself suffering from TB, so he moved to the country to stay with a friend. Next door lived a beautiful young woman named Fanny Brawne; Keats fell in love with her. Within months, before he had to move again (and tragically pass away at age 25 in Italy), he wrote most of his now-famous poetry. A heartbreaking story about a life and love tragically cut short, but also a story of a remarkable burst of inspiration that has made us all the richer — and more romantic — for it. FTD and De Beers without Keats? I don’t think so.
As John Keats wrote in *Endymion*, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever: its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness.”

Recently, I met Eugene J. Jones, Jr., CEO of the Atlanta Housing Authority, and prior to that, eight other cities in the U.S. and Canada. If anyone knows housing as the epicenter to all things good economically and familial, it is Mr. Jones. Whatever happens on Election Day 2020, America is going to have to look to rebuild and recover from a once-in-a-century pandemic that has devastated the country and, particularly, communities of people of color. No issue seemed more important to launch our newest weekly podcast, *The Innovators*, with Clark Atlanta University, an HBCU, where W.E.B. Du Bois served as one of the founding faculty and wrote most of his influential works.

The podcast, co-hosted with CAU President George T. French, Jr., focuses on amplifying African-American and minority business-driven innovation and successful DEI business initiatives.

The key to diversity, equity and inclusion is not just the hiring and promotion process, though those are all obviously critically important. The key is starting in the homes, in the communities and in the universities, being partners from the start. Join us, won’t you, for a program that provides a platform to discuss challenging issues, with entrepreneurial leaders who are looking forward and will encourage you to think and act differently.

“Strive for that greatness of spirit that measures life not by its disappointments but by its possibilities.” — W.E.B. Du Bois

[Listen to the program](#)

Richard Levick

"Be less curious about people and more curious about ideas."
—Marie Curie

It’s been nearly 35 years now since my late father and I had taken our seats about eight rows behind the Washington Capitals’ goal when a late-arriving fan, juggling a couple of beers and hot dogs, asked to get by. With the National Anthem about to start, my father politely but in a voice that begged respect said, “In a moment, after we stand at attention.” The other fan stood with us, and as “O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave!” faded into cheers, we parted — and the guest found his way to his seat.

When he was out of earshot, my father turned to me in one of the few moments of instantaneous doubt I can recall in our near 60-year journey together, and said, “I don’t know why I did that. I guess, because no matter how many years have gone by, every time I hear that song, I am transported back to the Korean War, we were firing mortar guns and one minute my buddy was there and the next, he was gone.”

Like so many veterans, he didn’t talk about the war until the second half of his life and by the end, it had taken on a size that said it was among the most important things he had ever done. As I get older, I finally understand the beauty and pain of looking backwards, the tears that well up just behind the eyes, the throat that suddenly feels constricted. It happens a lot these days, such as when I hear a song by the late John Prine, ever-present since my high school days, surviving both neck and throat cancer but not the Coronavirus; or seeing photos of people spontaneously dancing, VJ Day-like, in the streets on Saturday.
We are a non-partisan agency and I count close friends — and of course, thousands of business relationships — on both sides of the aisle, not to mention a battalion of relationships around the globe. But Saturday, for a brief and shining moment, decency won, and it is worth praising...and drying the eye.

When democracy was a theory, by the likes of Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (and had its first social influencer in Alexis de Tocqueville!), they understood that representative democracy needed to not only be explored but explained. It wasn’t monarchy or theocracy, but a radical concept where in 85 essays they explained how and why rule by the people (for the Originalist, this initially meant only 11% of the population) could work. But it took Thomas Paine, the only non-landed member of the Founding Fathers — a delicious irony — to write the owner’s manual, in what would become the thirteen-colonies’ first best seller, *Common Sense*, selling 500,000 copies when our population was 2.5 million. Not to put too fine a point on it, but that would be like selling 65 million books in America today.

*Common Sense* spoke to how the average person could participate in a Republic — participation being the watchword as genuflecting had been the reflex of the day. We needed it, as the leap from monarchy to republic was a broad one. But no bigger a leap than from republic to democracy, which is where we have been for the past 20 years when the Internet changed everything, and everyone is Walter Cronkite, Annie Leibovitz and Cecil B. DeMille.

Where’s our owner’s manual today? How do we civilly engage in a hyper democracy when everyone has a megaphone, the reasoned and unreasoned? The wise and the exploiter? The righteous and the vulgar?

Into this void we wanted to do our small part, providing a series of programming and podcasts in areas where we can provide safe, intelligent and insightful forums for discussion on the issues of the day. For companies seeking to understand how to better lead on issues of interest to the African-American and minority business communities, we have partnered with Clark Atlanta University, launching *The Innovators*; for those trying to influence Washington from foreign shores, we have partnered with *Foreign Lobby Report*, with *The Influencers*; and for those interested in tech and emerging companies, we are launching From Garage to Global, with Silicon Valley sherpa and lawyer Louis Lehot.

As always, we continue to run our daily and weekly podcasts with the *Corporate Counsel Business Journal* in North America and *In-House Community* in Asia-MENA-UK, respectively. A shout out to *CommPRO*, which graciously shares many of these programs to its audience of 200,000 people on a weekly basis.

It’s one small step for humankind, but it seems a good time to provide forums where intelligent, insightful and decent conversations reign.

Enjoy the listens.

Richard Levick

**Want to appear on a LEVICK podcast?**

We’ve had guests like constitutional scholar Alan Dershowitz, Ambassador Andrew Young, former President Nixon White House Counsel John Dean, Enron whistleblower Sherron Watkins, historian Allan Lichtman, former U.S. Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick, James Hohmann of *The Washington Post*, Peter Baker of the *New York Times* and Susan Glasser of the *New Yorker* on our shows. Want to be a guest? Please let us know and we’ll add you to the queue.
The General Counsel’s Dilemma

“When all else fails, follow instructions.”
—Anne Lamott

As this week passed, we celebrated two media anniversaries, including the first stock ticker in 1867, which replaced mail and messenger service, and half a century later, the first radio news broadcast by the BBC in November of 1922. They used to repeat the news twice so people could more easily take notes and share it with their neighbors, who didn’t have wireless. Imagine a world so slow that we had time to take notes, walk to the neighbors and repeat the message? That might even allow for consideration and conversation rather than absolutism and accusation.

They are reminders both that the world is getting much, much faster and that no matter how groundbreaking the technology, it is always replaced by the next technology.

Inspired by the speed of change, all of us, even or especially because of Covid-19, are working much faster and longer but we still seem to be falling behind. Inspired by our Olympic-speed water treading, we recorded a number of podcasts this week designed to make us a bit more efficient:

The General Counsel’s Dilemma

For In House Warrior with the Corporate Counsel Business Journal, we had a conversation with Ingrid Pierce, Global Managing Partner of Walkers, to discuss how general counsels are increasingly squeezed between the demand for a broader remit and a smaller budget, and what they can do about it.
The Next Generation

Also for In House Warrior we were inspired to do a show after the loss of Steve Susman of Susman Godfrey. We interviewed new Co-Managing Partner Kalpana Srinivasan on the next generation of leadership for the iconic firm.

Doing the Right Thing

On The Innovators, the weekly podcast I co-host with Clark Atlanta University President George T. French, Jr. we interview Forward Air Chairman Thomas Schmitt, who shares his remarkable story of coming to America and building a publicly traded company from the ground up, remaking the firm during Covid-19 and his life-long commitment to doing the right thing.

Sovereign Representation

For those interested in sovereign representation at a time of transitioning administrations, Julian Pecquet, editor of Foreign Lobby Report, and I interviewed Mike Williams, President of The Williams Group on our show, The Influencers, to discuss domestic and sovereign representation in today’s Washington.

Emerging Companies

We are about to launch a new weekly podcast with Silicon Valley deal lawyer Louis Lehot, called From Garage to Global, a podcast on hypergrowth companies. Ian Lipner, Chair of LEVICK’s Cyber and Emerging Growth Companies practice and I co-hosted a show as a pre-launch.

Hopefully, some of these shows will inspire you to take notes and share with your neighbors, while remaining socially distant, of course.

Enjoy the listens.

Richard Levick
Beyond Black Swan: Positioning the Law Firm for the New Normal

A few months ago, In-House Community, the magazine for Asia-MENA in-house counsel, asked me to write the forward for its latest White Paper, “Beyond Black Swan: Positioning the law firm for the new normal.” At the time, we did not know that this would also be the swan song for In-House Community, a company making most of its revenue from events for general counsel in Asia, as they become another victim of Covid-19. As epitaphs go, it's a good one, providing a road map for law firms both far removed from, yet simultaneously on the cusp of disruption that will be far more challenging than anything law firms have experienced over the past 40 years. I do hope you will enjoy the read and download the White Paper.

When the American actress Sally Fields’ grandmother, Joy Bickeley, was dying in the hospital, Sally and her mother, Margaret, were at her bedside and asked as she faded between life and death, “Where are you, Joy? Tell us where you are?” Instead of mentioning her heroic mother or any close relative who might have preceded Joy to heaven, she instead said, “I’m with Bynum,” a dashing but irresponsible scallywag who had impregnated Joy’s mother, then an unwed teenager, and skipped town — or more likely was run out of town — as the story goes. We are all, it seems, chasing the love and acceptance that is just out of reach, even when we fade between one world and the next.

And so, it is with law firms, among the most challenged institutions when it comes to crisis and change. Always insecure, lawyers just want to be loved. Loved by our clients, by the market, by laterals with portable business, and our partners, at least once a year, during review. Law firms have never been more insecure than now; when partners are only an elevator ride away from leaving, when PPP and RPP are publicly graded like so many
Premiership teams; evisceration only one complaint away; and deals ever more lucrative but increasingly competitive.

After having worked with and represented more than 300 law firms around the world over the last 30 years, my favorite refrain to hear is some version of, “We want to do something radical and transformative, we just don’t want to get noticed.” If stare decisis is the way to practice law, the unconscious thinking goes, it must be the best way to market and manage. The only challenge with this theory is that following has never been a very effective way of leading.

Since 1977 when the U.S. Supreme Court decided in Bates v. Arizona that state bars could not prohibit law firms from marketing, law firms have increasingly thought like businesses. After decades of merger mania, they are billion- and increasingly, multi-billion-dollar corporations. But they still act like lawyers. Imagine Jürgen Schrempp, the then-CEO of Daimler-Benz who guided the merger with Chrysler, being asked “Just how many hours did you work on the line this year?” Leadership in law firms, at least by many firms, is still considered a part-time job.

Just a year or two ago, among the greatest challenges on the horizon for law firms were nascent AI technology offering the early reward of increased profitability but now it threatens to consume its way up the food chain to, heaven forbid, lawyers! Already AI is participating in minor legal matters such as parking violations. Can the practices of “form lawyers” be far behind? How long after that, when the financial pressures from corporate clients resemble what happened in the medical community? Maybe lawyers aren’t all that different from doctors and most aren’t worth $1000 or more an hour?

The pressure of the AmLaw and other tables to be constantly more profitable cannot go on forever. Adding more lawyers to a call and raising rates each year is a financial strategy that isn’t missed by clients. It is a strategy with a limited future.

Our society is experiencing historic change. It is as if 1918, 1929 and 1968 have all occurred at once. A global pandemic, economic dislocation, civil unrest, and in the United States and increasingly globally, a new Civil Rights movement, born of the #BlackLivesMatter movement that is requiring corporations and law firms to actually be diverse, not just symbolically so.

For a decade or more, law firms have shown their diversity largely through their summer associates and first-year classes, but for most “Big Law” law firms, diversity after year four or five is more aspiration than accomplishment. True diversity is going to threaten the recruitment strategy of seeking out “exclusivity” through law school graduates of Harvard, Yale, Georgetown and the like, requiring law firms to think about recruitment strategies differently. This will require investments in state schools and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and not only at the law school level but at the undergraduate level where many minority students need the pathway — mentoring and financial — to make law school even a possibility. As the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity points out, it is about “grit over grades.” “Exclusivity” will increasingly look like “exclusion.”

I know, I know, we have been talking about seismic changes at law firms since the first transatlantic law firm mergers and the DuPont and Tyco models. Well, here we are. The new mantra is “change, change, change” and nothing is sacred. What about when the client has a public crisis, as is all too frequent these days? As a long-time American expatriate lawyer in the Middle East likes to say, “Lawyers need to be on the bus, but they shouldn’t necessarily be driving the bus.” The first thing to do — with litigation or crisis communications counsel part of the discussion — is to evaluate the risk. If the investor relations, reputational, brand or social risks are higher than the litigation risk, then don't drive the bus. Saving millions in court but losing billions in market share or reputation is not a win. The role of a lawyer, at the highest level, is to be a counselor, not an attorney.

Who better to lead the path to effective change management during this coming period of radical transformation than Paul Smith, an old friend who transformed Eversheds from a “Leeds based firm” to a global powerhouse; Patrick Dransfield, who has worked on all sides of the legal business equation in all parts of the world and works with 20,000 general counsels through In House Community; and Adam Roney, who trained at Eversheds Sutherland and is a leader in digital transformation. You don’t have to read this white paper to manage your law firm effectively through the coming turbulent challenges and certain crises, but why would you risk it? Happy reading.

Richard Levick

Download the White Paper
Keeping Hope Alive

Dateline: Covid-19, Week 36

I won’t lie to you. These past nine months have had their moments.

Who amongst us hasn’t had that morning where getting up seemed inordinately difficult? It’s not the ten-thousand yard stare. I’ve had that a time or two in my life, after crushing blows like an unexpected death, where the order of the universe seems dangerously out of kilter.

The moment I am talking about is the Sisyphus-like weight that greets us some mornings, like the gravity of Jupiter. How is it in our darkest moments that we keep on? How did Nelson Mandela keep hope, let alone lead, through 27 years and three prisons? How different did the walls look between Robben Island, Pollsmoor and Victor Verster? What did Moses say to the people in the Sinai at the 20 year mark? “We’re halfway there, my friends! Keep on walking!”

Viktor Frankl, after surviving Nazi concentration camps, wrote that as long as we had hope — defined as meaning and purpose — we could survive anything, a form of psychotherapy he called logotherapy. We have all learned a lot these past few years about hope and what we have taken for granted.

There are always silver linings, not the least of which is that we will certainly possess a jeweler’s eye going forward. I thought a little hope from those who have seen darker days and shined a light would make for good programming this week.

I had the honor of interviewing Ethiopian-American activist Seenaa Jimjimo and Dr. Karl Von Batten of Von Batten, Montague & York with Julian Pecquet, editor of Foreign Lobby Report for our weekly show on foreign influence called The Influencers. Seenaa is the Executive Director of the Oromo Legacy Leadership & Advocacy Association (OLLAA). She was born and raised in Africa under an Ethiopian regime that had banned her native language, Oromo, for 50 years. She helped inspire House Resolution 128 on human rights in Ethiopia, introduced in 2017 and passed in 2018. What struck me most about Seenaa was her passion, optimism and humor. The spirit to keep on going.
Some years ago, we represented Roger Blackwell, a retired professor from Ohio State University who had taught 65,000 students (likely the most of any American professor); written 39 books; built multiple businesses; donated much of his teaching salary back to the university; and found himself incarcerated in a Federal Correction Institution for alleged insider trading where even the prosecutor admitted he hadn’t benefited in any way, in what most might refer to as “overzealous prosecution.” He used his time to tutor hundreds of inmates to receive a GED and, in his words, “learned lessons about a nation that can only be learned in prison.” His latest book, since his release in 2014, is You Are Not Alone. He appeared on our daily podcast for the Corporate Counsel Business Journal and undoubtedly will again soon.

We did a series of interviews on law firm leadership and diversity efforts, including the inspiring Chair of MoFo, Larren Nashelsky, called We Will Not Be Casual Observers to Injustice; and equally inspiring programs on DEI & Law Firm Leadership with Narges Kakalia, Director of DEI at Mintz; and The Call for Universal Inclusion with Jennifer Johnson of Calibrate Legal, who points out that many law firm diversity efforts begin and end with partners and associates and fail to include staff, an area of vulnerability increasingly being called out by general counsel.

As I write this, a murder of crows came to visit, eating seed side by side with the squirrels. And now a Cooper’s Hawk has come to hang out on the lowest branch. He visits periodically but seldom gets this close or stays this long. Maybe it’s hope paying a visit.

Until next week, keep hope alive.

Richard Levick
Dropping the Mic

“I spent the morning putting in a comma and the afternoon removing it.”

—Gustave Flaubert

In 2015 Forbes magazine, where I had a column for about a decade, asked me to cover the Republican presidential debates. Having followed politics since childhood with the Humphrey-Nixon election of 1968 and, as a university professor, teaching about “political moments” — Muskie supposedly shedding a tear on the back of a campaign truck in New Hampshire; George H.W. Bush looking at his watch, as if bored, during a nationally televised debate with Governor Bill Clinton; Michael Dukakis wearing a gargantuan helmet while peering out of a tank — what struck me about Donald Trump, the candidate — and subsequently as president — was his exclusive focus on scarcity.

Here, in the land of plenty, with amber waves of grain, the land that took democracy off the drawing board and applied it to mere mortals and inspired the French revolution. The country which stopped the world in 1969 and landed on the moon with a computer simpler than in a 2000 Volkswagen; brought the world the Marshall Plan and the G.I. Bill after vanquishing fascism in World War II. That implemented Social Security to give more substance to its beacon, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Here, in the land of abundance, a candidate won an election and almost won another focusing exclusively on scarcity.

F.D.R.: “The New Deal.” Ronald Reagan: “The City on the Hill.” Barack Obama: “Keep hope alive.” For so much of the last 250 years, though tempted otherwise, we have aspired to the better angels of our nature. What would happen if we thought and acted with abundance rather than scarcity? If we lent a hand? Opened the door? Had faith in the future?
Since April, I have hosted regular podcasts and webcasts for multiple magazines, universities and think tanks. Many of them have been exceptional and powerful, having attracted so many extraordinary guests — former White House counsels, civil rights legends, bestselling authors, the nation’s top journalists from the likes of The New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN and the New Yorker, and, of course, near daily, one top lawyer and lobbyist after another. It is wonderful to hear from guests who have appeared and garnered clients as a result. The podcasts are as much about informing as commerce.

The guests are always enlightening, frequently humorous and great conversationalists. But a drop-the-mic moment? What NPR calls “driveway moments,” when you have to stay in the car, despite arriving at your destination, to listen to the rest of the story? Like listening to a Giacomo Puccini opera, when the tears well up behind the eyes? That’s art and inspiration and one could hope for that, but it’s a higher calling best reserved for the likes of Edward R. Murrow and Norman Corwin.

And then this week on The Innovators, the weekly podcast I co-host with Clark Atlanta University President Dr. George T. French, Jr., it happened. We had Toni Brinker and Jamie Malakoff of One Community USA, the charity that is bridging Black and Blue communities. This is a podcast that includes an audience of CAU executives and there we were, recording the show, listening to Toni’s stories, and each one of us was stunned, mouth agape, transfixed. This is a woman, a mission and a charity that imagines the world as it could be. The widow of Norman Brinker, the restaurant pioneer who founded Chili’s, Maggiano’s Little Italy and other famous restaurant chains, and the former wife of billionaire T. Boone Pickens. She is no stranger to extreme wealth and could spend her years as so many of us dream we would if we had that kind of access. I can only imagine the dinner-party conversations with people in her economic strata who wonder why they don’t see her at the country club or collecting yachts. She didn’t start this charity to just give money to the problems that gave rise to the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

She works it, literally nearly every day as if it were a startup, six and seven days a week, not just in the office but in the streets. She will tell you about reaching into the Black and Blue communities, about the deeply uncomfortable moments as a diminutive woman face-to-face with an angry 6’8” Black man in “the hood” and how their conversation went from him yelling and cursing directly at her to a calm conversation about cures. About police chiefs who got it immediately and those that didn’t. If we are going to find answers the first thing we need to do is stop judging and start engaging.

Imagine if we all spent our lives reaching out instead of fending off? If we faced the problems that are tearing us apart first with silence, then listening, really listening, then discussing and learning how to rebuild communities, one person, one neighborhood, one city at a time. And that is what she and One Community USA are doing.

So many companies and organizations have said to us, “We want to lead, but beyond the obvious steps, what can our company or board do?” Here’s a big step.

This is a magical hour. Only a coincidence that it would appear almost to the day of the release of “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner,” the 1967 groundbreaking movie about an interracial romantic relationship. You may take it for granted now, but it was big stuff in 1967. We need to all get used to sharing our table. And if we come to it with abundance rather than scarcity, we would find ways to make it work. The pie can get bigger.

Gustave Flaubert was a perfectionist who wrote masterpieces but could spend a day just moving and removing a comma. What happens if in this life we did more? And what happens if instead of dreaming of living a life of luxury, like Flaubert’s lead character Emma in Madame Bovary, we lived a life dreaming and building abundant communities that work, like Toni Brinker?

Listen to a magical hour.

Listen to the podcast

Richard Levick
Over the River and Through The Woods

When I was in second grade, my teacher died of cancer, but not before she taught the class to sing *Over the River and Through the Woods*, as one of her last acts before a long hospital stay that she would never escape. And there I was, at seven, and had already lost the two most important women in my life, both in their mid-20s. First my mother, suddenly on Christmas Eve when I was four, and now a favorite teacher. It’s been more than half a century, but I’ve never heard that song without thinking of my second-grade teacher, whose name is long lost to me, but not her influence.

Among her parting gifts has been a lifelong love of music. I cannot carry a tune or play a note of any instrument, despite Mrs. Knoll’s best efforts — my octogenarian grade-school piano teacher (I know, practicing might have helped). Despite these shortcomings, the sound of music has always filled me with awe. In every home I have ever had, the first order of business was setting up the stereo, something far easier today than a bygone era of room-sized speakers. Even as I write this, I am listening to Paul Cardell’s *Gracie’s Theme*. I challenge you not to be moved.

Music is a part of every culture on earth and has been since we stood upright. It has the power to move us so quickly to joy, tears, romance or recollection faster than just about anything. Who hasn’t heard a song and been instantly transported back in time? What is the Psycho shower scene without Bernard Herrmann’s haunting theme, “The Murder?” It has been 60 years, and we can still hear it pulsating.

This week I interviewed a true “Music Man,” Freddie Ravel, who played with Earth Wind & Fire, Madonna, Carlos Santana, Prince and so many others. The gift of music has been an inspiration for Freddie his entire life, but he also wondered, what if there is more? What if I can take this common interplanetary language (there are 27 songs on the Voyager “Golden Record” sent into space in 1977 to see if we have neighbors who are intelligent enough to have built a turntable) and use it in business to help us find our humanity, be more team-oriented, customer-focused and productive? And thus was born *Life In Tune* where Freddie keynotes
conferences for Microsoft, Walmart, Toyota, NASA and so many others. Madonna said Freddie is “brilliant” and IBM said he was “By far the best motivational performance we have seen.” All my life I have wanted to quote Madonna and IBM in the same sentence.

Freddie’s mission is to get teams and individuals “in tune” with their sustainable peak performance. Music applied to business. We speak at 150 words per minute, but we listen at 600 WPM. No wonder we don’t listen very well. If we are going to move forward with empathy and partnership it has to start with really listening.

Freddie speaks on the Rhythm of Success, The Music of Leadership, Teamwork and Getting in Tune with ESG. Truth be told, I’ve never been an audience member to one of his performances, though I have worked with him for a year now, watched many of his videos and, most importantly, never spent a moment with him when I didn’t feel better, happier and more abundant. Exactly the place we need to be to lead.

Enjoy the melody.

Happy holidays, everyone.

Richard Levick
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