

Rising

Some say life begins at 40, but many PR professionals have already blazed a trail through the communications industry by that time. **PRWeek** profiles 40 rising stars under the age of 40, nominated by their colleagues and peers, who have made a long-lasting impression on the business early in their careers

Matthew Burns

MD, Southwest public affairs market leader, Burson-Marsteller, 34

Matthew Burns has surged ahead in a brilliant career spanning political and public affairs campaigns, state and federal governments, and a *Fortune* 20 company.

Prior to joining Burson-Marsteller in June, he was director of corporate communications for UnitedHealthcare Medicare & Retirement, where he was responsible for leading external communications for a \$36 billion, 3,500-employee business.

He revamped its communications unit, which resulted in a 300 percent increase in media exposure.

“Under Matt’s leadership, I believe our history of excellence in public affairs will continue,” explains Nate



Tibbits, chair of the US public affairs practice, Burson-Marsteller, the firm Burns joined as Southwest public affairs market leader.



stars

JJ Carter

President and senior partner, US West region, Fleishman-Hillard, 39



With his highly successful background in sports PR, JJ Carter is someone you certainly want on your team.

He is currently the head of Fleishman-

Hillard's West Coast region, having previously overseen operations and a significant expansion at the company's San Francisco office.

During his time at the firm, Carter has led growth areas including digital and social media, healthcare, corporate communications, consumer and technology practices, and been instrumental in developing key accounts including EA and Visa.

In 2007 he helped launch the agency's global sports marketing practice, calling on his experience as head of communications for several professional sports teams and leagues such as the Dallas Mavericks and the Detroit Pistons.

Howard Clabo

Corporate media relations & executive comms leader, Hewlett-Packard, 39

Howard Clabo has had a diverse and distinguished career to date and, like his former employer FedEx, always delivers.

For the past three years, he has held communications leadership roles at *Fortune* 500 technology company Applied Materials, increasing the quality of media coverage and helping raise the profile of the firm.

He was key in the launch of the Applied Parts Center, a groundbreaking online resource that enables customers to order spare parts for manufacturing tools.

Clabo is now embarking on a new role with Hewlett-Packard,



where his team will develop an integrated communications strategy to support HP's business goals and reputation, and lead global media relations.

Jesica D'Avanza

Senior director, strategic comms planning, American Cancer Society, 30



Jesica D'Avanza is helping save lives with her award-winning work for the American Cancer Society.

As senior director for strategic communications planning, she plays a key role in the society's mission, directly supervising a team of eight PR professionals and providing advice and support to more than 30 different departments, units, and divisions.

She has helped devise successful campaigns including the More Birthdays initiative. Other achievements include developing the society's DetermiNation program for runners taking part in endurance events, which generates more than \$16.5 million in revenue, and the Great American Health Check campaign to encourage all US citizens to take control of their health and lower their risk of cancer.

Maureen Davenport

VP, corporate communications, Fannie Mae, 37

Maureen Davenport joined Fannie Mae as VP of corporate communications in 2011 and has made a big impact in her first year.

She has helped the government-sponsored company communicate significant progress in conservatism and share its point of view as the leader in housing finance. Her achievements include developing digital strategy, including revamping the corporate website, and increasing the effectiveness of internal communications.

“Maureen is a trusted adviser and strong manager who attracts and develops great talent,” says Kelli



Parsons, CCO and SVP at Fannie Mae.

“She is that rare combination of strategic thinking and execution abilities. The complete package.”

Whitney Eichinger

Senior communications manager, Southwest Airlines, 35

Whitney Eichinger’s career has taken off and, for her, the sky’s the limit.

As primary spokesperson for one of the nation’s most successful airlines, she intimately understands the power of the press and the impact of positive corporate reputation.

Her management role has helped the team win awards including *PRWeek’s* corporate communications team of the year. Eichinger led communications for the launch of flights from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International airport, and played a key role in the airline’s participation in a TLC reality show.



She headed up communications for the Southwest Porch project, which gave New Yorkers a taste of the airline’s hospitality in Bryant Park, Manhattan.

James Davis

Comms director/chief spokesman, 2012 Republican National Convention, 31



James Davis has been at the heart of some of the biggest communications challenges in the past decade.

Various assignments have taken him

from the bowels of the Pentagon, where he spearheaded crisis communications around the closure of military bases in 2004, to the Gulf of Mexico, where he helped BP frame its response to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

In his role as director of congressional research at the Pentagon, he devised and carried out the communications and media strategy to build support for the troops in Iraq.

He is now reprising a role he played four years ago as communications director for the 2012 Republican National Convention.

Nathan Friedman

MD, Chicago, Ogilvy Public Relations, 35



Nathan Friedman is the youngest managing director in the history of global agency Ogilvy PR.

Under his leadership, the agency’s Chicago office has gone from strength to strength, securing major new clients and achieving 100 percent growth in revenue over three years.

Chicago has three thriving practices and three of Ogilvy’s top 10 clients by revenue. Despite the demands of the role, he still scores major wins for the agency as well as nurturing talent, contributing to high levels of employee satisfaction.

“There are very few situations – client, staff or, industry-related – Nathan hasn’t seen and solved in his career, which is impressive considering his age,” says Judy Brennan, EVP, corporate practice, Ogilvy PR.

Dani Dudeck

GM of global communications, marcomms, Zynga, 31

Dani Dudeck has built a career by connecting people online.

At just 31, she is head of global marketing communications for San Francisco-based social game designer Zynga, best known for hugely popular titles such as FarmVille and Words With Friends.

She leads a 15-strong team and her achievements have ranged from promoting a partnership with Lady Gaga to orchestrating the communications strategy for Zynga’s recent \$1 billion stock market launch.

“Dani consistently works to develop each member of her team while lending her expertise to all groups



across the organization and the PR community,” says the Zynga marcomms team.

She also organized the first Zynga press conference.

Catherine Frymark

SVP, communications, Discovery Communications, 39

Discovery is right out there in terms of social media, thanks in no small measure to Catherine Frymark.

Career highlights include the launch and development of Discovery’s centralized US social media practice and revamping communications for Discovery Education.

She has also been at the forefront of numerous network launches, including HD Theater, the Science Channel, and played a vital role in communications and press for joint venture OWN – the Oprah Winfrey Network.

“Catherine embodies the definition of leadership – always willing



to go that extra mile to make sure her team succeeds in every endeavor,” says Michelle Russo, SVP of corporate communications at Discovery.

Chris Fuller

Director, international public affairs and CSR, Yum! Brands, **35**



Chris Fuller is a slice of PR perfection. Until recently he was director of public affairs at Pizza Hut, but in January took on lead global PR responsibilities at parent company Yum! Brands for Pizza Hut, KFC, and Taco Bell.

He also oversees US and international corporate social responsibility strategies. With his commitment, he's cemented himself as one of America's top young PR minds. He was the brains behind the "Pasta Hut" campaign and the offer of an all-inclusive Valentine's Day proposal package to launch the \$10 Dinner Box.

Known to many under the red roof as "the ultimate team player," colleagues say his versatility and leadership make him "one of the top PR professionals in America today."

Jonathan Heit

President and senior partner, Allison+Partners, **39**



Jonathan Heit is one of the most influential PR minds in social media and a trusted adviser to some of today's best-known technology brands.

Among the youngest global presidents at Allison+Partners, he has helped make the MDC-owned firm one of the fastest-growing mid-sized agencies in the nation.

The firm's technology and digital media practice has quadrupled in size since 2008 under Heit's leadership and now accounts for more than 30 percent of agency revenue, with clients including Samsung, Sony, Mozilla, Dropbox, Gowalla, TiVo, and THQ.

In a CV studded with achievements, he launched the original MySpace and also guided YouTube all the way from its startup phase.

Stacy Green

SVP, marketing and communications, Mashable, **29**

Stacy Green is at the forefront of modern integrated communications. She has pioneered the model at Mashable, making the company a standard bearer for the new face of the media business.

She has played a key role in helping the company grow from what was seen as a tech blog to a digital news site for the "connected generation," expanding from a staff of 25 to 70 in under a year.

Early in her career, Green headed corporate communications for all things digital at *The New York Times* and was one of the pioneers of social media at the newspaper.



Her innovative publicity programs at Mashable have included an April Fool's joke that saw TV host Conan O'Brien take over the site.

Adrienne Hayes

GM, New York consumer marketing division, Edelman, **37**



Described by colleagues as a professional "who truly has it all," Adrienne Hayes is a highly successful PR champion for dozens of global brands.

She helped eBay reinvent itself, launched a new snack food category for Kraft, and got Microsoft into the music business.

One of her boldest campaigns – the launch of Trojan Condoms' SexyTech range – scooped a PRWeek Award this year for best consumer launch campaign.

Hayes oversees more than 140 specialists in marketing, media, digital communication and content.

She is one of Edelman's "most creative and brave thinkers," according to Christina Smedley, global chair of the consumer practice, who says the company is "lucky to have her."

Sue Hensley

SVP, public affairs communications, National Restaurant Association, **39**

Sue Hensley has had a remarkable career to date and is now giving the whole nation food for thought.

At the National Restaurant Association, she spearheaded highly successful initiatives including the Dine for America program, which saw 17,500 restaurants help raise nearly \$13 million for the American Red Cross, benefiting those hit by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

More recently, Hensley played a key role in the Kids LiveWell program that sets nutrition criteria for restaurants and helps parents choose healthy options.

The launch of the campaign generated nearly 200 million media impressions. After just nine months the program now includes 88 brands and is in 25,000 locations.



Stephanie Howley

SVP, human resources, Cohn & Wolfe, **37**



Stephanie Howley is the beating heart of global marketing communications firm Cohn & Wolfe.

She has helped make the WPP agency a top employer, bursting with some of the best talent in the business.

Perhaps one of her biggest successes to date was dealing with the merger of C&W and GCI Group, a monumental task. But Howley rose to the challenge with initiatives such as a "speed dating" program to introduce staff to each other.

Within its first six months, the merged organization won new business with three *Fortune* 15 companies – Wal-Mart, ExxonMobil, and McKesson. She has also played a key role in training and development, recruitment, and high levels of staff satisfaction.

Allyson Hugley

EVP of measurement, analytics, and insights, Weber Shandwick, 36

In today's bewildering world of "big data," the PR industry would be lost without experts like Allyson Hugley, a guiding force in the field of measurement and analytics.

She has led numerous successful initiatives at Weber Shandwick, including a new measurement model and a measurement steering committee.

An influential and respected figure in the wider industry, her roles include serving on the measurement and evaluation taskforce for the Council of PR Firms.

"Allyson offers leading thoughts, insights, and approaches that reflect



the changing needs of clients and tirelessly strives to advance the field and our industry," says Gail Heimann, vice chair of Weber Shandwick.

Jay Leveton

EVP, worldwide, Burson-Marsteller 36

At 36, Jay Leveton is one of the youngest members of Burson-Marsteller's business team.

The firm's second-ranking executive after the CEO, he has been instrumental in expanding the company's global presence, is a trusted adviser to major clients including GlaxoSmithKline and UnitedHealthcare, and heavily involved in bringing in senior talent.

Career highlights include founding Proof Integrated Communications and managing the \$22 million division and nearly 75 employees.

Prior to that, Leveton was a senior leader at Penn Schoen Berland. He



has a wealth of experience, including in crisis communications such as helping Virginia Tech in the aftermath of the April 2007 campus shootings.

Jennifer Kamienski

VP, Coyne Public Relations, 39



She has crowned the Statue of Liberty, but when it comes to PR, Jennifer Kamienski is queen.

The 39-year-old supermom heads up Coyne PR's lifestyle group, which includes the agency's restaurant, travel, and pets divisions and involves working with clients such as Burger King, Hong Kong Tourism Board, South African Tourism, Heathrow Airport, and Del Monte Pet Products.

Among her many notable campaigns was the launch of the Burger King BK Crown Program for children, which included a Guinness World Record-sized crown made specifically for the Statue of Liberty.

Superb at pitching, she has overseen some of the biggest wins in the agency's history this past year.

Abby Lunardini

VP of corporate communications, Virgin America, 37



Abby Lunardini is a real high flyer. She has piloted corporate communications for Virgin America since before take-off in 2007 and has

always reached for the skies. She has not only overseen all aspects of traditional communications for the airline, but has also piloted the company's award-winning social media presence.

She has secured multiple top-tier placements and major brand partnerships and led PR campaigns that grabbed attention, such as an in-flight wedding officiated by Virgin America boss Richard Branson.

Sharp, creative, and motivated, she is known for staging "incredible events," including a tandem flight by an Airbus 320 and Virgin Galactic Spaceship.

Melody Lee

EVP, Hill+Knowlton Strategies, 31

Melody Lee goes for gold in everything she does in her work life.

In a dazzling career to date, highlights include being a core member of the team that provided international communications, media relations, and research assistance to the International Olympic Committee, both in Beijing and in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Key achievements include coordinating strategic and tactical campaigns for a major airline in Tokyo and managing communications around three high-profile mergers. She also led a team that provided grassroots and government affairs



advice to General Motors in its Washington, DC, office during a year in which the company embarked on the world's largest stock market launch.

Richele Messick

Communications manager, enterprise community banking, Wells Fargo, 31

Richele Messick has been a tower of strength during turbulent times for the banking industry.

She started out at Wells Fargo as an intern in 2002 and has risen to become one of its most trusted and valued associates.

During 10 years at the company she has served as a communications consultant for retail banking, wholesale banking, and corporate, and become a go-to person for the entire communications team of almost 200 professionals.

Messick created and leads a 50-strong team that focuses on proactive PR and joint approaches to



key events. She has helped steer Wells Fargo through one of the top issues facing banks today – the changing landscape for deposit products.

Brent Miller

Associate director, external relations,
Procter & Gamble Beauty, **35**



Brent Miller is a consummate PR professional who knows the beauty business from top to bottom.

He has handled complex communications issues and played a key role in the success of many of Procter & Gamble's leading brands.

Career highlights include the 125th anniversary of the revered Ivory soap brand, sponsorship of Milan Fashion Week, the Secret deodorant "Mean Stinks" anti-bullying campaign, and football star Troy Polamalu's endorsement of Head & Shoulders.

"Brent has a unique combination of communications skills. He is creative and innovative while at the same time being a master of detail," says Nicholas Hotham, external relations director at P&G.

Miguel Piedra

VP, global communications and culture,
Burger King, **37**



Miguel Piedra boasts more than a decade of experience working for two of the most recognizable brands in the world – The Walt Disney

Company and Burger King.

In his career, he has produced award-winning work and groundbreaking campaigns, and been a trusted adviser to management.

Piedra is currently responsible for the strategic development and execution of all communications efforts for Burger King and its network of more than 12,500 restaurants in over 80 countries.

His achievements include leading challenging internal and external communications for the acquisition of Burger King Holdings by 3G Capital, which involved two significant reductions in workforce.

Damien Mills

Communications director, mobility,
The Boeing Company, **39**

In the highly sensitive world of military aviation, Damien Mills navigates a brilliant course.

As director of communications for mobility aircraft at Boeing Defense, he directs a nationwide team providing communications and marketing support for the company's military airlift programs.

Achievements during his 11-year career at Boeing include his deft handling of media relations around the multibillion dollar US Air Force procurement program, which resulted in Boeing winning the contract to supply KC-46 aircraft.

Mills, who is known for his "nonsense" style is particularly adept at building good relationships with the media, despite the demands of his highly conservative industry.



Jorge Plasencia

Chairman and CEO,
República, **38**

Jorge Plasencia began his exceptional career at the tender age of 14 as an intern at a Miami radio group.

That was the start of a meteoric rise that has seen him win countless industry awards and become one of America's most influential Hispanic leaders.

He has held leading marketing and publicity roles at the Florida Marlins; Estefan Enterprises, the entertainment firm owned by Gloria Estefan and her husband Emilio; and the Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation. With Luis Casamayor, he founded República in 2006.

Despite the tough economic climate the agency has achieved double-digit growth every year since then, winning clients including PepsiCo, Nielsen, and Universal Orlando Resort.



Lauren Nodzak

PR manager, Mars Chocolate
North America, **29**



Lauren Nodzak has tasted sweet success at Mars Chocolate North America. Just a few years out of college, this rising star now leads day-to-day PR and social media for some of the world's most iconic chocolate brands, including M&M's, Twix, Milky Way, and Snickers.

In 2011 she oversaw more than 30 campaigns, delivering a total of nearly 1 billion media impressions. This year she led the largest PR program in Mars' recent history – the launch of M&M's new "spokescandy" Ms. Brown.

Nodzak has routinely shown how PR and social media can deliver cost-effective results. In one year she delivered the top two ROIs on key brands and has a reputation as a champion for responsible marketing.

Patrick Sandusky

Chief comms and public affairs officer,
US Olympic Committee, **38**



He may not be a competitor, but Patrick Sandusky is a true Olympic champion.

He oversees the United States Olympic Committee's communications division in Colorado Springs and its government relations office in Washington, DC.

He is spokesman for the organization, a key adviser to its leadership, and responsible for the Olympic Visitor Center and US Olympic Hall of Fame.

He has played a key role in creating a stronger image for the committee as a global ambassador, not only of Team USA, but also the Olympic movement as a whole.

Prior to his current role, Sandusky was VP for communications and chief spokesman for the Chicago 2016 bid committee.



Leslie Schrader

SVP and director, Well-Connected, Ketchum Washington, DC, 39

Leslie Schrader's commitment to client service sets her apart from the pack. Her career is characterized by hands-on leadership of award-winning consumer health campaigns for *Fortune* 500 companies.

In her current role, she oversees Well-Connected, the dedicated health speciality practice she helped establish, working with some of the agency's biggest clients.

She has led her more than 20-strong team through five straight years of growth. The loyalty of Schrader's clients is testament to the fantastic service she provides.

"Leslie provides exceptional and innovative client service that set her apart from others in our field," says Nick Ragone, partner and director of Ketchum, Washington, DC.



Christina Steed

SVP, Flowers Communications Group, 35

Christina Steed is "one of the strongest PR professionals of today" with a diverse career spanning journalism, PR, marketing, and international communications.

As SVP at Flowers Communications Group in Chicago, she is the strategic lead for key accounts including AT&T, McDonald's, and Wells Fargo.

A leader in multicultural communications, achievements include developing the local, award-winning jobs campaign for McDonald's in the Chicago area and north-west Indiana.

"Christina is representative of the type of PR practitioner that will usher the future of our industry," says Flowers Communications Group president Rashada Whitehead.



Jon Schwartz

Senior director, brand and business communications, NASCAR, 39



Jon Schwartz is a driving force behind the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing.

In just under a year, he has played a key role in enhancing the sport's reputation, having been brought in to transform communications for NASCAR with a new integrated marketing communications model.

He has helped generate powerful headlines and build positive relationships with the media and played a key role in championing NASCAR's green credentials and use of ethanol as an alternative fuel.

Previously, as VP of global media relations at Bank of America, he helped the bank rebuild trust through volunteering programs with Major League Baseball and the National Football League.

Eve Stevens

VP, insight & analytics, WE Studio D, Waggener Edstrom Worldwide, 36



Eve Stevens is a woman with her finger on the pulse of analytics and measurement.

For five years straight she has driven double-digit growth of Waggener Edstrom's insight and analytics business, building it from just five to more than 50 analysts with established practices across the globe.

A true innovator, she has been a key player in the development and execution of the agency's successful research and measurement tools.

"Eve is a leader and recognized for her incredible passion, market-leading innovative approaches and 'get in and get her hands dirty' mentality to solving the biggest challenges in research and measurement," says Jennifer Houston, former president of WE Studio D.

Sonia Sroka

SVP, director of Hispanic marketing, Porter Novelli, 35

Sonia Sroka is not only a high-achieving PR professional, but also a trailblazer for diversity and inclusion in the field.

During her six years at Porter Novelli, she established the Hispanic marketing practice and under her leadership it has seen double-digit growth across clients such as Bayer, Gillette, Timberland, and the Internal Revenue Service.

In 2011 Sroka led the development of the highly successful "It's All in the Numbers" multimedia initiative, based on the 2012 census results. Previously, she was a founding member of Weber Shand-



wick's leading multicultural firm The Axis Agency.

She is also a member of the Omnicom Diversity Development Committee.

Ben Stringfellow

VP, communications, McDonald's USA, 38

He's the golden boy of the golden arches. Having been promoted to the post of VP of communications in April 2011, Ben Stringfellow has already made a big impact, creating brand-defining PR strategies including National Hiring Day, and a public announcement of McDonald's nutrition commitments.

Previously, he devised and implemented a communications process and protocol for McDonald's USA's 22 regions, three divisions, and close to 14,000 restaurants.

"Ben understands everything that goes into communications – from the orchestration, and the plan-



ning, to the relationships, the messaging, and positioning – which is why he is terrific at his job," says McDonald's USA president Jan Fields.

Heidi Sullivan

VP, global media research, Cision, 34



Self-proclaimed media metrics nerd Heidi Sullivan is the youngest member of Cision's executive management team.

She has transformed the company's approach, including updating Cision's vast media database to reflect the increasing importance of social media.

She has played a key role in developing products and services such as the Social Influencer Search and Cision Influencer Lists. Sullivan is heavily involved in Cision's Seek or Shout online community.

"Her passion for exploring new contacts and channels for delivering stories has allowed Cision to be on the forefront of the convergence of social media and traditional marketing," says Cision North America CEO Peter Granat.

Denise Vitola

SVP and director, personal care practice, MSLGroup New York, 37



Denise Vitola has taken the PR industry by storm.

In the short time since joining MSL New York she has "blazed the trail of a rock star," nearly tripling the size of her accounts and winning fistfuls of national and global awards.

Creatively brilliant, Vitola has contributed substantially to agency growth, bringing in new clients such as Safilo's Armani brand, and in the last year alone, she grew the Procter & Gamble digestive wellness portfolio by 173%.

"Denise is loved by both staff and management and her energy and passion for her business and agency are infectious," explains Michael Echter, director of marketing and corporate communications for MSLGroup Americas.

Melisa Tezanos

Senior director, brand Pepsi communications, PepsiCo, 38

Melisa Tezanos truly has the X Factor. Leading Pepsi's extensive communications around the hit talent show is just one of many achievements in a career that has seen her work all around the world and across all major facets of communications.

In her current role, Tezanos drives all communications for Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, Pepsi Max, and the newly launched Pepsi Next. She also leads PepsiCo Beverages' Hispanic communications efforts.

One of her innovative marketing programs was the Pepsi Refresh Project grant program, which earned



more than 3 billion impressions in 2010 across media, which *Forbes* named one of the top five social media programs of all time.

Daphne Wang

Associate director, APCO Worldwide, New York, 31

Daphne Wang joined APCO Worldwide's New York office early last year and was swiftly identified as a rising star.

Described as an "outstanding" PR professional by colleagues, she focuses on corporate communications for companies from the food, beverage, healthcare, and financial sectors.

She also handles media relations for a diverse range of clients and is known for her deft handling of extremely sensitive issues.

The fluent Mandarin speaker plays a leading role in the firm's Chinese-USA relations team,



where she assists Chinese businesses in expanding overseas and also helps multinational companies understand the Chinese market.

Dustee Tucker Jenkins

VP, communications, Target, 34



Dustee Tucker Jenkins describes her role as VP of communications at Target as a "pinch-myself exciting job" and her passion shines through.

Since joining the company in August 2010, she has changed the PR department, championing innovative approaches to telling the Target story.

She has played an integral role in launching partnerships with designers such as Missoni and Jason Wu and led the launch of Target's first online magazine *A Bullseye View*.

Described by colleagues as someone who "never settles for standard, cookie-cutter communications campaigns," Jenkins oversaw announcements such as Target's planned expansion into Canada and the launch of smaller CityTarget stores.

Yanique Woodall

VP, enterprise public relations, 1-800-Flowers.com, 35



Yanique Woodall is a rare bloom who has helped her company thrive in a tough terrain.

Since joining 1-800-Flowers.com, she has reshaped the company's approach to PR, establishing it as a core business function and helping to drive sales in a volatile market and in the face of increased competition.

In addition to the core brand, she also oversees communications for all the company's other brands and her efforts have led to marked increases in sales for The Popcorn Factory, Fannie May chocolates, and Cheryl's cookies.

She has also led the way when it comes to social media, with 1-800-Flowers.com becoming the first brand to open a store within Facebook.



Interested in nominating someone for next year's **40 Under 40?**

E-mail 40under40@prweek.com for more information.