



Sommer Hixson

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Diligent and thoughtful leader with a career arc spanning 20 years across corporate communications, media relations, brand journalism, and omnichannel content strategy

Articulate writer and storyteller able to distill complex concepts for specific audiences and influence earned media coverage

Adept at shaping institutional narratives to meet specific goals, enhance perception, or drive change

Focused and decisive problem-solver, especially effective in fast-paced or turnaround environments

Superior organizational skills for managing concurrent projects and timelines

Skills

- Strategic planning
- Engaging stakeholders
- Developing policies
- Crisis communications
- Team leadership
- Content Strategy
- Editorial processes
- Public engagement
- Brand journalism
- Omnichannel marketing

Experience

JANUARY 2018 – PRESENT

Director of Communications / The Shed, New York, NY

The Shed is a \$475 million arts center in New York City defined by Board Chairman Dan Doctoroff as the country's largest cultural start-up. As Director of Communications, I design and implement earned media strategies for promoting The Shed's global reputation as a vital commissioning center purpose-built on the principles of flexibility, invention, equity, and inclusion. In lockstep with my marketing communications colleagues, I direct 360-degree campaigns that succeed in elevating The Shed's institutional brand, cultural programs, and intersectional approach to audience engagement. I supervise a Publicist and Communications Assistant in developing comprehensive press campaigns that reinforce The Shed's identity as a cultural game-changer, and we work with local, national, and international news media for key placement. With my colleagues on The Shed's senior staff, I participate in the ideation and ratification of institutional vision and values. As primary spokesperson in all situations, I develop key messaging, interview briefs, positioning documents, and talking points for The Shed's leadership team, and proactive/reactive statements on behalf of the institution.

APRIL 2015 – NOVEMBER 2017

Director of Communications / Glynwood, Cold Spring, NY

Glynwood is a 23-year-old agricultural nonprofit and working farm in the Hudson Valley. As its first-ever Director of Communications, I identified and implemented agile and responsive marketing communications strategies that improved engagement with constituents who value and benefit from Glynwood's mission to ensure a sustainable and equitable food system. Through content marketing and visual storytelling, I enriched the organization's digital presence and improved online engagement,

including Glynwood's regional food program, farmer training enrollment, and experiential events. Collaborating with a vast network of growers, farmers, and "green" chefs, I developed fun and accessible awareness and behavior-change campaigns to promote agricultural enterprises. In service of Glynwood's earned revenue goals, I built cohesive brand recognition and broadened consumer demand for on-farm experiential programs and ticketed events, including tours, chef dinners, and farm stays.

APRIL 2013 – APRIL 2015

Professional Writer & Consultant / Self, Beacon, NY

While living in the Hudson Valley, I focused my career on supporting the region's local economies. As a freelance journalist, I profiled business leaders and entrepreneurs in the Hudson Valley working in sustainability, arts and culture, and food and farming. As an independent consultant, I assisted local businesses and nonprofits with digital and social media marketing implementation.

SEPTEMBER 2010 – APRIL 2013

Director, Media Relations / New Video, New York, NY

New Video was a 20-year-old independently owned and operated film and television distribution company. Prior to its acquisition by Cinedigm Corp., I directed media relations campaigns for quality, award-winning entertainment content across DVD, digital, and OTT. I assisted filmmakers and producers with the implementation of industry press and awards campaigns for titles acquired by Docurama Films for theatrical release and networked extensively at film festivals and conferences including Sundance, Tribeca, SXSW, CES, and Comic Con to build and maintain strong B2B relationships. I mentored an intern through targeted consumer publicity outreach for releases from New Video's extensive catalogue and successfully transitioned my report to full-time staff.

MAY 2007 – OCTOBER 2008

Acting Vice President, Corporate Communications / AMC Networks Inc., New York, NY

In a contract role for Rainbow Media, parent company of AMC, WE, The Independent Film Channel (IFCtv), and IFC Films, I oversaw key communications for the acquisition of The Sundance Channel and subsequent organizational restructure. I supervised a team that managed Emmy Award campaigns for AMC's TV series "Mad Men" and "Breaking Bad," and oversaw the launch announcement for Rainbow Media's digital content platforms as competitive business initiatives, including IFC Films' In Theater and Festival Direct VOD services and IFCtv.com.

SEPTEMBER 2006 – MAY 2008

Press Director / The Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY

As the primary press contact and frontline spokesperson for The Met Opera, I took part in a radical transition and brand refresh of the country's largest cultural nonprofit. I oversaw global publicity for the Met Opera's mainstage performance season and for its new programming initiatives to attract a broader, younger audience. Notably, I oversaw press for Gallery Met, a prestigious showcase for renowned visual artists, and developed the global communications strategy for the launch of the Peabody Award and Emmy Award-winning series "The Met: Live in HD."

MAY 2002 – SEPTEMBER 2006

Vice President, Public Relations / Rainbow Media, New York, NY

As added value for cable subscribers and to compete with satellite providers, Cablevision launched its first video-on-demand (VOD) television service in 2002 under the auspices of Rainbow Media. In four years, I expanded my role as consumer and trade publicist for originally produced, exclusively on-demand content. I designed and executed national, brand-building communications strategies for digital

networks producing short-form lifestyle and sports programming. To help grow a VOD business model that was still developing, I collaborated with in-house producers and media agencies to generate news stories around revenue-generating concepts for longform branded entertainment for VOD. In service of aggressive affiliate sales goals, I leveraged speaking engagements, trade shows, and conventions as opportunities to increase awareness and brand exposure. (Rainbow Media is now AMC Networks, Inc., which is owned by Altice.)

APRIL 2000 – NOVEMBER 2001

Director, Media Relations / Palm Pictures, New York, NY

Palm Pictures launched its award-winning broadband destinations for film and music at a time when streaming media was a nascent, start-up business. I directed publicity and promotions for groundbreaking entertainment properties acquired by Palm as valuable brands to diversify the company's holdings, including sputnik7.com, RESFEST film festival, and music download site, epitonic.com. I served as communications counsel to Palm Chairman, Chris Blackwell, who was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2001 for his role in discovering Bob Marley and launching Island Records. I drove record traffic to Palm's online portals via creative communications campaigns that combined cutting-edge digital technology with lifestyle brand sponsorships and live events.

Education

MA, Media Studies / The New School, New York, NY

BFA, Dance / Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

Activities

- Participant in the communications working group for the Cultural Institutions Group's "Culture@3," a grassroots effort to catalyze non-profits around a successful re-opening of New York City.
- Certified for a 13-course LinkedIn Learning Path on content strategy (2020).
- Two-term volunteer member of the Board of Directors for BeaconArts, where I contributed to the completion of the 17-year-old nonprofit's strategic plan and helped facilitate member projects and events across the city (2015-2017).
- Certified for series of six Communications Learning Labs at the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York (2017).