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# WANDA WHITSON

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## SUMMARY

- Passionate leader with proven internal/external communications, executive coaching and writing experience within diverse and dynamic agency, corporate and consulting environments
- Respected advisor with a demonstrated understanding of business strategy, organizational dynamics and change management having guided and actively participated on executive teams and leadership committees
- Influential and effective change agent with proven success guiding organizations through challenging public relations situations, organizational changes and cultural transformations, including a major company restructuring impacting over 25% of employees
- Trusted communicator skilled at building, aligning and conveying relevant messaging through key internal and external stakeholders, including senior executives, employees, top tier media, investor relations and sales teams
- Insightful and creative problem solver capable of quickly assessing and resolving complex issues and barriers to success having advised and coached more than 50 challenged, transitioning and emerging leaders

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## EXPERIENCE

### **W CONSULTING, Founder/Consultant, Chicago, IL, 2012 – Present & 2002 – 2005**

- Built a boutique consulting firm specializing in executive coaching, public relations, corporate communication, marketing and leadership/professional development growing the business through targeted marketing and networking
- Established trusted relationships with over 50 executives facilitating the resolution of complex and challenging professional issues, including conflict resolution, career transitions and leadership gaps
- Led an eight-month project with *JLL*, a \$6B global real estate investment firm, assessing, streamlining and optimizing regional public relations service delivery processes – fostered a strong spirit of excellence and innovation across a team of seven consultants
  - Collaborated with the Director of Research to develop messaging and pitch market research to top tier and trade media outlets throughout the U.S.
  - Developed and implemented social media programs and digital communication tools, including a highly visible “Most Expensive Streets” campaign
- Built and grew a multi-year freelance relationship with *Outlook Agency Services* developing high impact internal and external communication marketing collateral for *CDW*, including direct mail, sales tools, eMagazines and infographics and white papers
- Wrote a motivating and compelling opening speech delivered by the Committee Chair at the 2014 Liberty Gala for the *Pritzker Military Museum and Library*
- Pitched, a memorable and engaging “innovation lab experience” event attended by 30 executives – support quarterly events as a contributing member of the *Executive Club of Chicago’s* Innovation Committee
- Design and lead workshops and present as a key thought leader at events attended by up to 100 for leading organizations, including *Goldman Sachs* 10,000 Small Businesses, *Illinois Diversity Council*, *Executive Women Network* and *Community Health Chicago*
- Engaged by *Heartland Alliance*, a global non-profit organization, to assess, develop and lead targeted leadership development and transition plans for four key female executives
- Created and facilitated a half-day change management workshop for *Community Health Chicago* providing over 50 attendees with tools and resources to refocus and confidently manage through a major company transition

### **HARRIS PRIVATE BANK (NOW BMO PRIVATE BANK), Senior Manager, Corporate Communications, Chicago, IL, 2010 – 2012**

- Oversaw the development and execution of communication and public relations strategies, programs and activities for the wealth management division with assets under management of over \$33B – managed a team of four consultants
- Influenced and supported business strategy as a core member of the division’s executive team reporting through a dotted line relationship to the CEO of the wealth division
- Built and implemented an aggressive media strategy facilitating key introductions to prominent top tier media organizations, including the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times*
  - Trained and advised four primary executive company representatives, including the division CEO on messaging and media strategies
- Partnered closely with the CEO to rebuild trust and foster open communication across a decentralized staff of over 800 planning and facilitating bi-annual town hall meetings and quarterly “In the Spotlight” calls

- Proactively researched and analyzed industry news sources daily pitching and developing relevant and timely learning forums in partnership with the Head of Investments – built and managed an informal news service for the executive team
- Established a solid understanding of complex technical and regulatory concepts working closely with compliance and legal teams to ensure the accuracy and relevance of all related internal and external communication

**NATIONAL AMUSEMENTS (PARENT OF VIACOM AND CBS), Director of Corporate Communications, Deedham, MA, 2006 – 2009**

- Oversaw all internal and external communication, public relations, media relations and project management during a period of rapid growth for a privately-held global leader in the motion picture exhibition industry
- Strategically advised and reported directly to Shari Redstone, the company's President and heir apparent to *Viacom* and *CBS*, playing a key role in improving the company's visibility and strengthening the President's executive image and branding
- Wrote a pivotal and media-grabbing keynote address for Shari Redstone presented at the 2006 Bank of America Media, Telecommunications and Entertainment conference, her first major public introduction
- Built communication plans and led the successful launch of more than new luxury movie theaters, real estate developments and innovative partnership deals advising and collaborating with executives and top tier media
- Wrote and produced first-ever corporate video showcasing the company's charitable programs through compelling storytelling and impactful content
- Spearheaded the launch of a company intranet platform and built executive sponsorship influencing a vital transition to a more trusting and open corporate culture for a U.S. population of over 1,200
- Skillfully managed over 50 public relations events annually, including lawsuits, theater evacuations and local market incidents, advising and training theater managers on messaging and media interactions
- Wrote press releases, by-line articles, media responses and speeches for Shari Redstone, including a keynote presentation at *Google's Zeitgeist* annual conference attended by influential industry leaders, customers and advertisers

**AMERICAN SUPERCONDUCTOR, Public Relations Manager, Westborough, MA, 2005 – 2006**

- Quickly developed a public relations strategy for a publicly-held wind and power grid energy solutions helping to drive their business
- Facilitated communication and change management for two major staff reductions representing over 25% of the U.S. population partnering closely with the HR Director, CEO, CMO and VP of Investor Relations
- Proactively collaborated with the Investor Relations team ensuring the timely integration of all internal and external messaging, including press conferences, press releases, shareholder/analyst meetings and trade shows
- Managed all media relations establishing strong relationships with key trade publications improving media presence and overall quality of press content

**KEY3MEDIA EVENTS, INC., Public Relations Manager, Needham, MA, 2000 – 2001**

- Collaborated with a PR team of seven to promote and market *COMDEX*, the world's largest high-tech trade show attended by over 230K attendees, nearly 4K international media analysts and over 2K exhibitors
  - Developed and led the marketing and management of the 2000 "Best of COMDEX" award program generating the highest number of entrants in 27 years
  - Managed media, access and security for high-profile, prominent speakers, including President Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, Larry Ellison, Meg White, Kirsten Dunst and Toby Maguire
- Oversaw public relations and exhibitor relations for more than five studio shows, highly entrepreneurial events designed around leading edge technology innovations – interacted extensively with show leads, the Division President and exhibitors
- Identified and recommended streamlined processes and reduced exhibitor redundancies facilitating savings of over 5%

## **EDUCATION/CERTIFICATION**

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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE – Portland, ME**

- Bachelor of Science in Education

**INSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE IN COACHING, Certified Professional Coach (CPC) and Energy Leadership Index™ Master Practitioner (ELI-MP)**

**CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE, Certified Practitioner in Corporate Responsibility (CSR)**

## **ACTIVITIES**

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- International Association of Business Communicators, Consultant, set up the association's first social media program, 2009
- American Marketing Association (AMA), Social Media Consultant, 2009
- Executive Club of Chicago, Committee Member – Innovation, Talent Acquisition and Civic Affairs Committees, 2013 – Present