

Agency Executive of the Year

Winner: John Deveney, ABC, APR,
Deveney Communications



To say that 2005 was a watershed year for John Deveney would be putting it mildly, as well as ironically. At a time when Deveney had just

shifted his agency's focus to the task of promoting travel and tourism in their home city of New Orleans, the perfect storm ravaged the city and

its hospitality industry.

Deveney and three other members of the agency team returned to the city just 20 days after Hurricane Katrina roared through, establishing a media center for the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau a week before the state was able to set up its own media center. The team boiled their drinking water, bathed with baby wipes and ate military rations while manning the center 12 hours a day, seven days a week, to make sure the messages getting out to the world about New Orleans as a travel destination were both accurate and positive.

In addition to protecting the Big Easy's reputation as a wonderful city to visit, Deveney had to defend the careers and health of his staff. He allowed the majority of the team to work from remote locations using laptop computers, while continuing to pay their

salaries without interruption and adding bonuses to lighten the load.

And when the hurricane was followed by the loss of 50 percent of the agency's billings as a result of drastic changes at two prominent clients that were also located in that region, Deveney found ways to push those billings back up to 100 percent with new business.

As a result of his experience in the wake of Katrina, Deveney has become a PR industry expert on crisis response. He now helps PRSA refine its own contingency and crisis plans, and shares his knowledge with other communications professionals with presentations throughout the country on the topic: "Katrina: Lessons Learned."

Of course, we always knew Deveney would rise to greatness. He was among the very first group of young upstart PR practitioners we named to our "15 to Watch" list seven years ago.

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John Davies, CEO and founder of DAVIES, has positioned his firm as a growing powerhouse. Such clients as ExxonMobil and the Tiger Woods Learning Center reassert what industry peers already know: Davies is among the *crème de la crème* of agency executives.

Work/life balance is a specialty of **Michelle Ubben**, mother of six and executive vice president of Ron Sachs Communications. In 2005 she reengineered operations to increase revenue 27 percent while ensuring that no client was met with boilerplate campaigns. And she gives equal attention to in-house projects; her creativity shone through RSC's corporate identity brochure.

Coyne Public Relations owes its stature to president/CEO **Thomas Coyne**, who founded it on principles of innovation and strategy. The client list — from Walt Disney to Goodyear — shows what 10 years can do. Campaigns like Disney's "Magic Your Way" and the Pillsbury Bake-Off demonstrate that Coyne's adaptability is second to none.

Lisa Throckmorton, an executive of SheaHedges Group (SHG), balances traditional client responsibilities — increasing Macromedia's visibility and building awareness for Red Hats' new government group — with attention to industry growth through PR skills curricula and a lunch 'n learn series for SHG employees.

Honorable Mentions