



Susan Finco is owner and president of Leonard & Finco, a full-service public relations firm specializing in issues management, social and traditional media, image campaigns and crisis management. **H. Marc Larson/Press-Gazette**

# PR firm wants to keep companies talking

## Internal, external communication vital for success

BY RICHARD RYMAN  
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The Green Bay Press-Gazette talks with people from a variety of business disciplines each week in its Saturday conversation feature. This week Susan Finco talks about the importance to businesses of communications and looking ahead.

Finco is owner and president of Leonard & Finco Public Relations, Green Bay, a full-service public relations firm specializing in issues management, social and traditional media, image campaigns and crisis management, serving clients throughout North America. Leonard & Finco has 12 employees.

**Q** Even though a new year is primarily a psychological milestone, it does give us all a point for reassessment. Given that, how important is it to know what you want to accomplish in the next 12 months and have a plan for doing it?

**A** When it comes to communications, planning is everything, especially if you want positive results and a return on your investment. Sit down and talk with your communications team or person about what's coming up in the year; share your business focus areas and share your thoughts about desired results and how to measure those results.

That alone is a great first step. Then take it a little further. We map it out with our clients so there is a clear month-by-month, and sometimes week-by-week, plan in writing. It should spell out what you're going to do, who's responsible for it, what the status is and, to make it easier for quick reviews, you need a section for results tracking. Commit to meeting at least once a month to review what's happened to date and discuss what's coming up. Plans can always be adjusted and changed, but without a plan you really don't know where you're going. That's true whether it's strategic planning, life planning or communications planning.

**Q** What are the biggest communication challenges facing businesses today?

### Susan Finco

- **City of residence:** De Pere
- **Title:** President and owner, Leonard & Finco Public Relations Inc., Green Bay
- **Background:** Susan Finco joined the public relations company in 1992, after working as news anchor and reporter for WBAY, Channel 2, and WFRV, Channel 5, television stations in Green Bay. She also worked for stations in Milwaukee and the Philadelphia area. Finco graduated with a bachelor's degree in mass communications from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- **Best business advice received and given:** "Stay focused."

**A** I think there are two big challenges. The first is that no matter what business you're in, everyone seems to be busy these days, bordering on a constant fast-forward. As we do more with less, communications often goes by the wayside. Employees aren't kept in the loop, often getting important information at the last minute or after the fact. Leadership often doesn't learn of challenges until they become problems. Customers are informed of changes at the last minute.

It can be hard to keep up, but in difficult times it's more important than ever to make time to communicate with your stakeholders, be they employees, vendors, customers or the media. E-mails and Facebook are great, but sometimes you need good old face-to-face conversation or a phone call to share information.

Speaking of Facebook, the other big communication challenge facing businesses these days is social media. We're spending a lot of time helping our clients understand what social media is, does, who's using it and why. Then we talk about how it can be a valuable communications tool in their marketing efforts. Yes, there is a learning curve, but when businesses understand that social media offers incredible opportunities to reach their stakeholders and other interested parties, they embrace it. It is

so much fun to work with people who see the possibilities and positive impact of social media.

**Q** You spent a number of years as a broadcast journalist, and now you're on the other side of the aisle in public relations. How has the media changed over the years?

**A** Technology has revolutionized the media and the way all of us communicate. Thirty years ago, most cities had two or three television and radio stations along with one or two daily newspapers. That's how you got your news, information and a lot of your entertainment. You discussed it with your friends, family and co-workers because they were all watching, listening and reading the same things. Cable TV started to change all of that by providing news, weather and more 24/7. Mass use of the Internet kept the changes going, and when you add in cell phones and now social media, there have been very dramatic and profound changes and impacts. It's exciting to think about what might be next.

**Q** As a consulting business, your team works with a lot of different businesses. What's your sense of the economic picture?

**A** We have clients from throughout North America in a variety of businesses and industries, so we do get a good cross-section of information about what's happening locally as well as elsewhere. My sense is that the economy is improving, but slowly. Obviously, some industry sectors are doing much better than others. For instance, our clients in the mergers and acquisition world have been hard hit, but our clients in the energy field have fared better.

We're fortunate to have a diversified client base, so we've been able to weather the economic storm fairly well. I think everyone would like the recovery to move a little faster, but we didn't get into this situation overnight and I don't think a recovery will happen overnight. For the individual business, you just have to stay your course, watch your budget and keep communicating.