



SARD VERBINNEN & CO ACQUIRES UK STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS FIRM, OAKHILL COMMUNICATIONS

***Oakhill Founders Craig Leviton and Lee Petar Join SVC as Managing Directors,
Co-Heads of SVC Public Affairs UK***

SVC Providing Fully Integrated Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Across All Nine Offices

London, New York and Washington, D.C., September 8, 2020 – Sard Verbinen & Co (“SVC”), a leading global strategic communications consultancy, today announced it has acquired the UK based communications and public affairs firm, Oakhill Communications (“Oakhill”). Oakhill provides public affairs and crisis communications advice to FTSE 100 companies, corporates in Europe and around the world, high net worth individuals, leading UK non-profits and trade groups. It adds significantly to SVC’s growing capabilities in the UK and Europe. Led by founders Craig Leviton and Lee Petar, the Oakhill team will co-locate in SVC’s existing London office and fully integrate into the SVC Public Affairs practice.

“Throughout their 20-plus year careers in public affairs and communications, Craig and Lee have distinguished themselves with intelligent counsel, deep relationships with clients, and the ability to execute on complex assignments,” said SVC Co-Founders and Co-CEOs George Sard and Paul Verbinen. “We welcome them and the entire Oakhill team to SVC.”

Sard and Verbinen continued, “Oakhill is a natural expansion of our integrated public affairs practice, which is increasingly critical to achieving our clients’ objectives around the world. The team adds quality as well as scale and brings a vital new dimension to our London offering and the broader firm.”

SVC Public Affairs is a fully integrated offering comprised of over 30 experienced professionals across the firm. SVC Chairman of Public Affairs Bruce Haynes said, “We are excited to continue growing the SVC Public Affairs practice and welcome Craig, Lee and their team to SVC. Craig and Lee have built a highly respected business with a great client base. They are known for their strategic thinking, government and regulatory expertise, and diligence in client service. Many of our US and Asia based clients are seeking our counsel for their operations in the UK, and likewise we have been advising UK and European based clients on their interests here. Oakhill increases our ability to provide seamless counsel and execution support to them all.”

Craig Leviton said, “SVC is one of the most respected and trusted communications consultancies in the world and will provide broader capabilities for our clients and the next phase of growth for our team. Their global public affairs team is well placed to advise clients that need to navigate the US, UK and Asian markets and wider geo-political trends.”

Lee Petar said, “Becoming part of SVC provides a first-class platform to create a leading UK public affairs business. That, coupled with SVC’s market leading expertise in providing trusted, senior level corporate

counsel, will lead to growth opportunities for our team as well as for our clients. We are excited about what the future will bring.”

Jon Aarons and Charlie Chichester, Managing Directors in SVC’s London office, said, “We have known and respected Craig and Lee for years. They share the same qualities that are essential to SVC’s unique culture and success, and they will align seamlessly with our existing presence here. Together we will provide clients an integrated offering of strategic communications and public affairs for ongoing corporate positioning and in specific situations affecting value and reputation, including M&A, crises, litigation, activism and other special situations.”

Leviton and Petar join the SVC Public Affairs leadership team which, in addition to Haynes, includes:

- **Ambassador Miriam Sapiro**, Vice Chairman of SVC Public Affairs and Co-Head of the Washington, D.C. office, former Deputy U.S. Trade Representative.
- **Trent Duffy**, Vice Chairman of SVC Public Affairs and Co-Head of the Washington, D.C. office, former Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy White House Press Secretary.
- **Michele Davis**, Senior Counselor, most recently Global Head of Corporate Relations and a Management Committee member at Morgan Stanley, and formerly U.S. Treasury Department Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning.
- **Karen Boykin-Towns**, Senior Counselor, previously having held leadership roles in government relations, public affairs, global policy and diversity during a 22-year career with Pfizer, and currently Vice Chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors.

Craig Leviton Background

Craig Leviton has over 25 years’ experience in public affairs and corporate communications and has advised a wide range of clients from global firms to leading UK PLCs. Craig is a trusted adviser to CEOs and Board Chairs and has advised clients on some of the most high-profile issues in British politics in recent years on matters from Brexit and political risk to regulatory inquiries.

Craig first worked in Parliament as an adviser between 1993 and 1996. In 1998 he joined LLM Communications, a new public affairs consultancy which grew to become one of the largest public affairs consultancies in the UK.

Craig became Managing Director in 2003 and two years later oversaw the sale of LLM to Financial Dynamics. He then became the Managing Director of the Financial Dynamics Public Affairs practice.

In 2007 Craig was appointed Director of Corporate Affairs at the Gala Coral Group, one of the largest private companies in the UK. Craig sat on the Executive Committee and was responsible for the Group’s communications, Government Relations and CSR strategy.

At the end of 2009, Craig set up Heathcroft Communications, a public affairs and communications consultancy. Craig sold Heathcroft to Teneo in February 2013. In September 2015, Craig left Teneo and jointly established Oakhill Communications.

Lee Petar Background

Lee Petar has over 20 years' experience advising Governments, FTSE 100 corporations, high net worth individuals and industry wide campaigns on communications. A veteran leader at some of the best-known PR companies in the communications industry, Lee co-founded an agency in 2007 and built the company into one of the best-known public affairs and strategic communications firms in the UK. Today Lee serves as a market leading adviser in the fields of litigation communications, the professional services sector, public interest campaigns and corporate reputation issues. He is known for advising on issues that require a complex and multi-disciplinary approach.

Lee started his career at LSA, before working at BSMG and Weber Shandwick. In 2001, he was the founding director of a newly created political and media organization dealing with high stakes, international relations issues. He joined Good Relations in 2005. He co-founded Tetra Strategy in 2007 and led its growth over the next eight years. He spearheaded some of the agency's most complex assignments including its international work advising Governments and high-profile individuals and advising industry across sectors at a senior level. In September 2015, Lee jointly established Oakhill Communications.

About Sard Verbinnen & Co ("SVC")

SVC is an independent strategic communications firm focused on supporting companies through complex, high stakes situations affecting reputation and value, including transactions, proxy contests, IPOs, litigation and crises. Headquartered in New York, SVC has offices in Washington, D.C., Boston, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, London and Hong Kong. The firm has over 200 employees, including more than 20 partners. SVC has been widely recognized for its leadership in its focus areas. In 2019, Mergermarket ranked SVC the #1 Global PR Firm by deal count and value for the third consecutive year. The Holmes Report named SVC 2018 Financial PR Agency of the Year, and SVC is ranked by Chambers and Partners as a Band-1 PR Firm. For more information, please visit sardverb.com.

About Oakhill Communications ("Oakhill")

Oakhill Communications is an independent public affairs and strategic communications consultancy. Oakhill's partners and consultants bring a wealth of experience across all aspects of strategic and crisis communications and public affairs. The Oakhill Communications team has provided senior counsel to governments, FTSE 100 companies, high profile individuals and industry bodies. Often operating as a close extension of their clients' operations, Oakhill provides tailored advice and support that helps clients effectively negotiate and manage issues and pursue critical objectives.

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