

another hiring coup, this time stealing from the nests of Hill & Knowlton and Weber & Shandwick to form its management team. The agency lured Nicole Russell away from her post as deputy GM of H&K's New York office to serve as vice president in its San Francisco office, and snagged seven-year veteran Kathy Wilson to serve as vice president in its Cambridge office. Wilson is new to her position next Monday, while Russell begins December 1.

The moves come on the heels of the agency's poaching of former Fleishman-Hillard executive John Berard, who now heads up FitzGerald's San Francisco office (*PRWeek*, 11/31).

Russell described her decision to leave H&K for the independent agency as "an opportunity from a professional standpoint." Added Wilson, "there was very active recruitment on [Maura FitzGerald's] part, and I'm excited by the opportunity to help shape an organization."

Washington, DC.

Seeking to better service existing Southwest-based clients Motive Communications and drkoop.com, B&O set up shop in Austin late last month, with Mountain View account supervisor Cindi Johnson at the helm. The agency is currently seeking an Austin GM and other support staff.

connected to what's happening there," explained B&O partner Simone Otus. "But as they grew and bulked up their marketing departments, we realized that we needed account people on-site."

Austin is the second new location for B&O in the past four months. The agency, acquired by Hill & Knowlton last February, also opened a

Denver presence and grew its hi-tech policy practice. B&O snagged MCI marketing and communications director Susan Landis as GM for the new DC office. Landis, who oversaw all of MCI's consumer telecom brands, works alongside B&O account supervisor Anna Matz. Current DC clients include AT&T/British Telecom global venture Connect, AccessReady,

and Boston-based Compaq PR pro Theresa Parenteau, who joined the agency's headquarters as a VP in the Internet group.

Parenteau left Compaq last month after more than two years managing the company's \$7 billion global professional services and customer-support division. She also coordinated regional corporate PR support in the Boston area.

non in revenues for its first fiscal year (ended July 1999), which places it in a league with hi-tech players such as Middleberg + Associates and The Hoffman Agency. CEO Will Sullivan projects an increase to \$9 million for the upcoming year.

Sullivan added that the agency will have offices in Boston, San Francisco and Austin by this time in 2000.

# Hi-tech PR question online inflames pros

By Carolyn Myles

**WASHINGTON, DC:** A simple question about hi-tech PR posed to an Internet discussion group exploded late last month into frenzied debate and self-promotion, once again illustrating the do-it-yourself spirit of hi-tech PR.

The question was posed by one of the Netpreneur Ad-Marketing list's moderators, who asked (on behalf of a dot-com start-up that had just received its first round of

financing) whether the company should do its PR in-house or hire an outside firm.

The question brought out a whole slew of responses, including several from PR pros pitching themselves and others decrying the way PR agencies cannibalize young companies.

The entire dialogue can be found on Netpreneur's web site ([www.netpreneur.org](http://www.netpreneur.org)) in its Ad-Marketing October archives. Netpreneur is funded by the Morino Institute, a

**Explosive chat...** from lots of PR people except the hi-tech ones

non-profit organization that assists hi-tech start-ups.

One CEO advised "if you're looking to be bought out by a particular company, see if you can get in the press of the local paper. It makes you seem more worldly." A more serious contributor suggested in-house PR because "the media I know don't want to hear from a PR person."

Underrepresented in the debate were the hi-tech agencies themselves.

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