



CONSULTING STAR



Marla Malkin McCutcheon: President of Synergy Media & Consulting, Inc.

[By Sani Rajan]

Many eyebrows were raised when Marla Malkin McCutcheon chose the public relations profession over becoming a lawyer in the late 1980s. McCutcheon, president of Irvine-based Synergy Media & Consulting, is a leader in public relations and has always been a trendsetter in the field.

"During law school, while working with several law firms, I realized that I didn't want to continue my work in law. I majored in public relations/journalism and communications," McCutcheon said. "In college, I was interested in the field of public relations, but it was not well understood. Very few people understood that public relations was more about creating visibility through the media and not just going out, meeting people, and shaking hands." Developed during her 15 years in the industry, McCutcheon's client list now includes government entities, corporations selling consumer products, professional advisory firms, and business tycoon Donald Trump.

Trump was a significant client for McCutcheon. "Our agency was hired by the bank during the early '90s to auction off some of Donald Trump's trophy properties. Interestingly, this was at a time when Donald Trump was in bankruptcy. His career has certainly climbed upward since then," she said.

A strategic approach to her work helps McCutcheon achieve objectives and

recognition for her clients. "I have worked on some high-level accounts. It has always been an exciting experience to help business people achieve their goals by using the media as a vehicle to get their messages out. I always get a thrill when an article in a newspaper or magazine or broadcast follows a campaign that I strategized and laid out," she said.

McCutcheon's clients have appeared in network news broadcasts across the nation, including *Oprah*, *The Early Show*, *Good Morning America*, and *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, to name a few.

When she first started in the industry in the late 1980s, McCutcheon worked for an international marketing and public relations firm. In 1991, she started a freelance business. She co-founded Communication Advocates, a marketing and public relations agency, in 1993. Today, she operates Synergy Media & Consulting, Inc., a leading public relations company. McCutcheon works with print and broadcast media globally, including publications like *USA Today*; *The Wall Street Journal*; *The Wall Street Journal Europe*; *The New York Times*; *Time, Inc.*; *Entrepreneur*; and *Fortune*.

McCutcheon invests most of her time in mentoring young talents and counseling clients during times of difficulty. She has been invited by educational institutions, businesses, and corporations to share her experiences and insights. McCutcheon has also completed countless hours of public service through pro-bono public relations work for organizations such as the Orange County/Long Beach Anti-Defamation League, Orange County Works, and Serving People in Need. In addition to all of this, she is also a founding member and the current president of Chapman University's Women of Wilkinson (WOW), an organization dedicated to mentoring and supporting college students and women who work in the community.

McCutcheon earned a B.A. in Communication Arts and attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she majored in public relations. She also completed coursework at Southwestern University School of Law. It was McCutcheon's dream to start her own PR agency and bring change to people's lives. She believes that she is fortunate to be able to choose the clients with whom she works.



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Her advice to young professionals is simple. McCutcheon said, "Only with drive and determination can one achieve what

is desired in one's career. Sometimes it comes with a lot of trail and tribulation." She added, "People respect and admire

those who follow their dreams."

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