

Application at a glance

Business Awards – Agency

Outstanding Boutique Agency

Title: Bospar: Virtual Agency, Real Results

Company: Bospar



Bospar toasts their PRWeek “Outstanding Boutique Agency” win: the agency shipped champagne to each staff member for a virtual toast.

Revenue, profitability figures and details for the entry period*

- U.S., global (where applicable), and organic growth
- Provide U.S., global (where applicable), and organic growth figures from prior financial/calendar year
- Include breakdown of how much growth was organic versus new business

After launching with just two people in 2015 Bospar has exceeded \$11 million revenue and \$1,350,718.55 in net profit. The Bospar team as of October 2, 2017, numbered 20, and by October 1, 2018, is 28.

Here's our report card for 2018.

- Revenue figures from October 2, 2017, until October 2, 2018: \$4,664,329
- Revenue figures and details from October 2, 2016, to October 2, 2017: \$3,495,080
- Revenue growth from October 2017 to October 2018: \$1,169,249 or 25%
- Organic growth from October 2, 2017, to October 2, 2018: \$62,500
- Client accounts that grew the previous year (October 2, 2016, to October 2, 2017): \$80,500
- New business from October 2, 2017, to October 2, 2018: \$1,537,733 total new business
- Organic growth + new business = \$1,600,233
- Client retention from October 2017-October 2018: 95%



George Takei with Bospar principal Curtis Sparrer

Practice areas and offices

Provide overview of the firm’s practice areas, offices, and capabilities, including any new areas, offices, and capabilities added during entry period. This would include acquisitions or new partnerships



Bospar has built a highly successful all-virtual PR firm that specializes in promoting new technology.

The firm has written the “next-gen PR agency playbook” on how to excel in a digital world by working with the best people - no matter their location. The result gives clients the focus of a boutique PR firm with the footprint of a large agency. Staff is based in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and the Washington, D.C., area. Bospar offers the following practices: consumer, developer, enterprise, fintech, health tech, security, and social.

In 2018 Bospar hired two former client contacts at the SVP level, enabling the agency to launch two new offerings: a marketing/branding arm and a health tech practice. The agency expanded its social media offering, providing social media sales boot camps to sales teams in Europe, Asia, and North and South America. This is in addition to the social media and digital content Bospar is also producing for its clients.

Recognizing the importance of content, Bospar expanded its content team so that clients could have access to content creators from coast to coast. The agency is also now producing videos.

Bospar teamed up with WHM to launch a more client-friendly website, with access to instructional bylines and blog posts.

In three years Bospar has gone from zero to \$4.1 million and is already nearing a \$5 million run rate for 2018 while making a significant profit. At 28 people, Bospar's three-year staff turnover rate is near zero. Bospar has several client contacts who have hired us multiple times as they change jobs. The agency has a seat at the table with client contacts who include CMOs & CEOs.

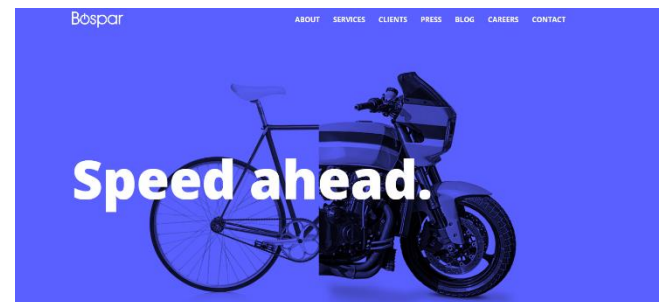
The agency strengthened its commitment to diversity with new hires. Its staff includes Hispanic, African-American, Dominican Republic, Indian and Asian backgrounds. The agency participates in the National Hispanic Journalists Association and the National Lesbian Gay Journalists Association. As part of its charitable PR work, the agency represents CloudNOW, a consortium of women in cloud computing.

Bospar rolled out a fun committee, tasked with the job of providing more glue to our virtual workplace.

Bospar believes they are in this to make a difference.



Bospartans Stacey Grimsrud, Kourtney Evans, Gaby Perez-Silva



Bospar's new website launched in September 2018



Bospartans Alisha Alvarez, Curtis Sparrer, Stacey Grimsrud, Samir Sampat, Brent Shelton



"We value business success but are in this for much more than the money," said Chris Boehlke, Bospar's co-founder and principal. "We partner with clients who can change the world and help them to do so."

Account information

List long-term accounts; notable account wins and losses during entry period; and details of exceptional client work during the entry period

Ever hear of Snowflake?

If you live in the San Francisco Bay Area it's hard to miss the virtual data warehouse company. Their billboards dot every major highway. Powering the company's buzz is the fact that the company is a newly minted unicorn valued at \$1.5 billion dollars.

It's also the newest Bospar client.

"A PR firm is all about its people," said Snowflake CMO Denise Persson. "Bospar has built an outstanding team."

For Persson, the decision was an easy one. She had worked with Bospar's team twice before.

But the story is more complicated than that. Bospar had wanted to work with Snowflake since its inception in 2015, but couldn't because one of its very first clients was a competitor, 1010data. In what seemed like the agency version of a love triangle, Snowflake and 1010data both made the case for why they should get the proverbial rose. But when the head of marketing for 1010data left for a new opportunity, the decision became clear: 1010data was out; Snowflake was in.

Other new clients included: Digital Brands, Espresa, Instart Logic, Intapp, Living Matrix, Marqeta, Postman, Prodege, SalesLoft, SleepCycle, ThinCl, and Zingbox.



Snowflake's eye-catching billboards dot the San Francisco Bay Area



Bospartans Gabi Jasinski and Gaby Perez-Silva with Snowflake's sled



But perhaps the most exciting client was House of Cats. The company's founder approached Bospar, saying that she wanted to launch the company with Star Trek actor George Takei providing the new app social media support. Bospar responded with crucial counsel, reasoning that the app's story could be better told if the company positioned Takei as the originator of the app based on his development of the "grumpy cat meme." Takei accepted Bospar's recommendation and they started work.



George Takei with "Trumpy Cat" for House of Cats

The biggest challenge in leveraging Takei's star power was his availability. The only times he was available for a launch coincided with San Diego's Comic-Con, which would compete with the same core audience House of Cats and Bospar were trying to target. Bospar recommended a counter-programming strategy and sent Takei and Bospar principal Curtis Sparrer to the opposite side of the country, believing that New York media would welcome the attention.

The story was a hit, with placements from Esquire, Entertainment Tonight, TMZ, Cheddar, CNET, TechCrunch and over one hundred other outlets. The media attention sent House of Cats to #3 on paid entertainment apps. PRWeek even noticed the buzz and interviewed Takei and Sparrer about how they actually met each other years ago at where else? A Star Trek convention.

New products or innovations

Word count: 397 / 400

What's the biggest challenge about doing tech PR?

Tech PR is focused on innovation and disruption and clients start to expect that you will do the same.

In 2018 Bospar formalized its social media training into social media boot camps that were designed especially for sales teams in their efforts to improve their funnel and close deals. Bospar started providing training sessions for sales teams in Asia, Europe, North and South America.



Typical Bospar Meeting



Due to the increased need for content, Bospar established its content as a service approach, with a content team in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. Bospar is now producing ghost-written bylines, case studies, and is now producing videos. Agency researchers help clients mine data for data-driven stories.

Bospar leveraged the artificial intelligence technology of its client, Conversica, to power its business development, allowing the agency to focus more of its staff time on providing client service.



Bospar Principals Tom Carpenter and Chris Boehlke

Two former client contacts became the agency's newest SVPs charged with leading a new marketing and branding arm of the agency as well as a health tech practice. One of their first branding challenges was for a new crypto currency app, trying to distinguish itself in a crowded field.

Bospar also formalized its media training session, creating an interactive interview simulation where clients work with award-winning journalists to see how well their narratives perform.

The agency also continued to refine its virtual model.

The agency moved away from phone to video conferencing, which allows you to not only see facial expressions but also whether someone is simply present at all. There's no need to check attendance when you can see the faces in a virtual room, and it enables you to see who wants to talk next so there are not as many interruptions there are on a call. The challenge, of course, is the temptation to multitask or not stay fully engaged.

Bospar studied virtual environments and created a best practices manual so that all staff members could maximize the value when we gather. Every week on Monday, the company holds a video all-hands meeting so everyone can see and hear each other, get updates on agency and client activity, and also participate in learning sessions from journalists and other communications experts, with virtual whiteboards so we can brainstorm, iterate on plans, and refine concepts just as if we were in the same room together.



Bospar's Leadership: Curtis Sparrer, Tom Carpenter, Chris Boehlke, Tricia Heinrich

Total staff as of Oct. 1, 2018: 28

Total staff as of Oct. 1, 2017: 17

List notable hires and departures during entry period

"For most of my career I tried to hire Bospar," said Lauren Essex, former vice president of marketing at Great Call, the provider of the Jitterbug cell phone for senior citizens. "But now I'm working with them!"

Essex, now a Bospar SVP tasked with leading the agency health tech practice, is one of three client contacts Bospar has hired to increase its marketing strength. The agency also hired Priti Khare of Ebates and Brent Shelton of Fat Wallet. The previous year Bospar hired Tricia Heinrich of ON24 to be the agency's chief content officer.

We did have one resignation, SVP Ivette Almeida. She decided that Bospar was not a fit for her.

Our primary goal when we launched Bospar on January 1, 2015, was to create a boutique tech PR firm that could take on the toughest jobs and deliver the most spectacular results, all of it powered by the right mix of senior leadership and up-and-coming talent. That's exactly what we've done right up to the present day.

Bospar employs a lengthy hiring process, including interviews with all managers and leadership as well as writing tests. With the extensive process, we can ensure that everyone we hire is the perfect fit for Bospar and for our clients.

Because of that, our turnover is very low. Here's a better look at how our retention has looked since we opened our doors in 2015:

2015 Retention is 91.7%; 12 employees – 1 resigned

2016 Retention is 93.4%; 15 employees – 1 resigned

2017 Retention is 90%; 20 employees – 2 resigned

2018 Retention is 96%; 28 employees – 1 resigned

Due to our low turnover, we have happy, serial clients, who continue their relationships with Bospar because of our staff.



Former Bospar client contact, Priti Khare along with Bospar VP Sara Black, Curtis Sparrer and Alisha Alvarez



Note HR programs that moved forward during entry period

Word count: 397 / 400

When Bospar first opened, we wanted to attract the best-caliber PR professionals to work with our world-class clients. To do that, we needed to offer competitive benefits to all of our employees.

As of 2018, Bospar offers fully paid, top-of-the-line PPO health, dental and vision insurance for all staff and all their dependents.

Additionally, we offer a \$100 monthly stipend for wellness activities (such as gym memberships), \$250 per year towards ergonomic upgrades, and internet and phone service reimbursements.

We've grown at 20 -40% annually each year, so we've been able to promote almost all our employees – some of them twice – during our 3+ years in business. Bospar also offers a \$2,000 bonus for a successful hire from a referral.

To ensure our staff achieves the right work/life balance, Bospar provides 17 paid holidays instead of the normal 10. This is on top of five sick days and three weeks' vacation to start, which then goes to four weeks after three years.

Bospar also likes to consider itself a family-friendly company and gives all employees two months of paid maternity or paternity leave to welcome the birth of a child.

Bospar takes staff happiness very seriously. We sent champagne to each members' house to celebrate our PRWeek "Best Boutique Agency" win. We used the champagne in a virtual champagne toast, which one of the candidates said was "a rare gesture in the workplace to show employee appreciation." Additionally, we launched an internal "fun committee" with the charter of ensuring that the team doesn't just work together but is able to play together as well.

For their first fun committee activity the agency devoted itself to a social game where we told two truths and one lie about ourselves. It might seem like a small party trick, but when you're trying to knit together an agency staff that is distributed across the United States, small things like this matter.

Also, in 2018, we are hosting quarterly in-person meet-and-greets and flying staff members to San Francisco from Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and the Washington, D.C., area. The idea is to provide face-to-face mentorship and staff development. Bospar is devoting itself to hosting regular activities like the fun committee events and in-person



Bospartan Ali Nagy has used Bospar's maternity program twice



Bospar's Fun Committee sent this swag to all staff



Bospar Cat "Cognac"



summits, realizing that these activities are the glue that makes a virtual PR agency feel just as “real” as if it were brick and mortar.

Miscellaneous

Include anything relevant to industry leadership; charitable/community efforts; the development and advancement of the firm’s culture, and the like

"Bospar is not just an agency," said Chris Boehlke, Bospar's co-founder and principal. "It's an exciting and rewarding way to live your life."

What does that mean?

We believe our love of curiosity, creativity and pushing the envelope from the top down mean that everyone gets to expand their own skill sets every day. At the same time, we closely mentor and nurture people to make sure they are able to “swim – not sink.”

With that approach we have come to refer to ourselves as Bospartans – banding together as one virtual team to become an extended family to our clients in the pursuit of excellence. Greek history says: “Spartans would never lay down their weapons for any reason – be it hunger, or danger.” We think the same is true of our agency.

At Bospar we have widened the scope of our charitable work. We donated over 200 hours to promoting CloudNow, a non-profit consortium of the leading women in cloud computing, leading their awards program at Google's headquarters and impacting the discussion about women's role in technology. We were even asked to address the Professional Business Women of California about how PR tenets can improve a woman's personal brand.

Bospar also teamed up with the San Francisco Historical Society and Museum to raise awareness of the city's history while also promoting the agency's data-driven approach to PR with their "Don't Say 'San Fran'" campaign.

Bospar has also worked hard to secure PR for itself, working the full PESO (paid, earned, shared and owned) model. We have a regular column in Forbes and Adweek, while securing placements in the LA Times, Barron's, and local ABC and NBC affiliates. For LGBT Pride for example, Bospar teamed up with Propeller Research to discover how accepting workplaces have become of gay Americans. The story was featured in outlets from Bloomberg to Logo (where RuPaul got her start).

In total, Bospar has secured +4,500 placements.



Chris Boehlke with clients Arlene Harris, "the first lady of wireless," and her husband, Marty Cooper, the inventor of the mobile phone



Bospar's Chief Content Officer Tricia Heinrich and Gaby Perez-Silva at CloudNOW



Bospar's Curtis Sparrer on KGO-TV to discuss LGBTQ Pride at Work Study



But one of our favorite PR placements for our agency comes from Merriam-Webster.

The dictionary cited our boutique agency in an example of how to use “fruition” in a sentence for its Word of the Day: “Many brands depend on crowdfunding to bring a concept to fruition.”

That’s what we hope for our agency – that our efforts come to fruition.

Three client testimonials

**** Certain information, including client wins and profitability/revenue, can be marked confidential and won’t be published. Omitting this information entirely, though, could impact judges’ scoring. For firms who do not supply exact figures (due to SOX), please be as specific as possible with monetary figures submitted.**

“We wanted to launch an app, but we didn’t have a PR strategy,” admitted Lindsay Hoover, co-founder of House of Cats, an augmented reality political humor app. “I came to Bospar with a complicated story and they straightened it out, suggesting that instead of showing consumers all the sausage-making, we instead center our origin story around George Takei. Then they held our proverbial hand during each step of the process. For example, they knew who to contact at the Apple app store to get our app approved. They walked us through the process of writing a reviewer’s guide. They created a media strategy that not only leveraged Takei’s star-power, but also focused on the app review media and the tech blogs. When we launched the coverage was incredible: TMZ, Entertainment Tonight, CNET, and TechCrunch. We shot up the charts to number three of all paid entertainment apps that day. We were blown away.”

“We needed to enhance our visibility in the industry to support our growth objectives,” said Scott Imhoff, Senior Vice President of Product Management. “The Bospar team partnered with us to first understand our business and target markets. Then, they executed a detailed media and analyst relations plan to clearly express our message and relevance to our target markets. This has been a key component to achieving our business goals.”

“The team at Bospar has catapulted Conversica into a much higher orbit of awareness, thanks to their creative ideas, flawless execution, deep media relationships and dogged persistence,” said Carl Landers, CMO, Conversica. “With Bospar as our greatest advocate, we’ve garnered the company’s first national TV news coverage on CNBC, had stories run in the top business sites, including Inc., Entrepreneur, TechCrunch and HBR, won the Red Herring 100 “Best AI in the Enterprise” awards, been included in key analyst reports, and increased VC and investor awareness. “

“We’ve worked with several PR agencies in the U.S. region, and Bospar outperforms all of them,” said Malin Eriksson, the Director Public Relations & Partnerships for Sleep Cycle, a sleeping app with millions of users all over the world. “Tom Carpenter is leading a team that delivers results that reflect our



CNBC's Eric Chemi interviewed Conversica's CEO, Alex Terry, for a segment



expectations and is a joy to work with. His attention to detail, creative focus, flexibility, and positive energy are exceptional.”

“Bospar has been a critical partner to CloudNOW in helping us expand our philanthropy, as well as raising our profile and attracting organizations like Google, Intel, HPE, and many others to our community network,” said Jocelyn DeGance Graham, founder of CloudNOW. “Bospar is part of our extended team as we work together to support the next generation of female leaders in tech.”



Bospar invests in its staff by flying members to meet up in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago.