

# HARVEY BENNETT

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## DIRECTOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CORPORATE | GOVERNMENT | NON-PROFIT | COMMUNITY RELATIONS

*“I help organizations reach their goals through better communications!”*

Dynamic, articulate communications leadership professional with successes in program development and implementation, strategic campaign planning, creative development, and multi-faceted communications strategies designed to reach broad or specific targets. Skilled strategist with expertise in vision leadership for internal and external communications. Solutions-oriented marketing professional highly skilled in promoting programs in association, business, and government environments to achieve organizational goals. Proficient in relationship building, media relations, public relations, public affairs, business development, and networking. Diverse experience in creative and administrative management.

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

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- Communications Management
  - Strategic Analysis, Planning
  - Media & Public Relations
  - Marketing, Promotions
  - Crisis Response, Diplomacy
  - Internal/External Communications
  - Event & Program Development
  - Campaign Creation
  - Project Design, Management
  - Relationship Management
  - Fundraising
  - Writing, Presentations, Editing
  - Research, Analysis, Publishing
  - Stakeholder Engagement
  - Team Leadership
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### KEY SKILLS ASSESSMENT

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- Ability to effectively communicate the impact public policies have on business and the economy.
  - Highly skilled in fostering productive collaboration among diverse parties to solve complex issues.
  - Public policy development and implementation experience on tax, fiscal, insurance, and economic development matters including testifying before the legislature and serving as a spokesperson.
  - Ability to cultivate valuable relationships with major business leaders, corporate and association C-Suite Executives, and leaders of governments, colleges, school districts, and community groups.
  - Creativity in developing events and leading dynamic panels to facilitate public engagement and collaboration.
  - Expertise in developing, pitching and constructing pertinent information to news & media organizations and achieving effective promotional results.
  - Know-how to spot opportunity and generate revenue.
  - Excellent presentation, oral and written communication skills with the ability to present complex issues in comprehensible and relative context. (view: <http://bit.ly/1Pgjump> )
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### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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#### TELEDIRECTIONS

##### Principal

July 2015 – present

Founded this strategic communications firm focused on helping clients capitalize on their content and utilize public engagement and facilitation programs for complex business and public policy issues. View [www.TeleDirections.com](http://www.TeleDirections.com)

#### FLORIDA OFFICE of INSURANCE REGULATION

##### Director of Communications

March 2014 – June 2015

Directed the activities of the Office's communications business unit to ensure the general public, insurance industry, and news media were provided pertinent and timely information.

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- Developed media, communications, and public relations strategies; advised the Commissioner and senior staff on plans of action. This included traditional and new social media.

Key Accomplishment:

- Reinforced industry confidence in the Office at a crucial period by implementing key op-editorial columns on Florida's homeowners market published in major newspapers.

## **FLORIDA TAXWATCH**

### **Senior Vice President of Marketing & Membership**

January 2007- March 2014

Oversaw business development and the statewide membership initiative for this nonprofit taxpayer research institute to successfully garner new members.

- Served as point person to an outside brand assessment and led the subsequent effort to formulate and execute improvements, including redevelopment of the website, increasing site visits and donations.
- Part of senior leadership team that developed the quarterly research and policy agenda in conjunction with members and Centers of Excellence advisory boards.

Key Accomplishment:

Consistently achieved a 90%+ retention rate during especially challenging years for Florida's businesses and economy.

### **Vice President of Communications & Marketing**

October 2003 - December 2006

Managed all aspects of internal and external communications; identified and expanded outreach and education to various audiences with tailored communications products across different platforms.

- Developed an annual program of 14 regional briefings along with statewide community campaigns and forums on critical statewide issues.
- Organized the TaxWatch [Center for Educational Performance & Accountability](#), created its first communications and marketing plan, and recruited the advisory board.

Key Accomplishments:

- Achieved greater member engagement, media mentions, legislative awareness and action, and revenue.
- Recipient of the Florida TaxWatch President's Award for "extraordinary commitment to the TaxWatch mission and tireless efforts at messaging and successfully engaging new members" in role in association management.

## **FLORIDA'S NEWS CHANNEL**

### **Vice President of News**

January 1998 – September 2003

Headed the team that created and launched the nation's first 24-hour multi-channel regional television news service.

- Managed a division of 105 employees with an annual operating budget of \$3 million.
- Developed the strategic plan, brand positioning, programming, promotion, and key messages for the network.

Key Accomplishments:

- Created FNC News Services division providing message development and production of Video News Releases and television interview tours to Florida clients.
- Attained a 1.2 rating within three weeks of launch, a significant measurement of success in the cable television industry.

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## **EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Bachelor of Journalism, Emphasis in Marketing**, University of Missouri-Columbia,  
School of Public Communication, Boston University  
Tax Executives Institute - Florida Chapter, CPE Credits  
Certificate in Grant Writing - MCDG, Inc.

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## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

**Communities in Schools**, served on board in place of TaxWatch President (2009-2012)  
**Boy Scouts of America**, Tallahassee Pack 114 den leader (2003-2008)

# Success Stories for Harvey Bennett

## REINFORCING INDUSTRY CONFIDENCE IN THE OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATION

Recognized the threat to the Office's reputation from a [critical column](#) published by one of Florida's leading newspapers. Proposed and received approval from the Insurance Commissioner to write a guest column in reply ("[Florida's Homeowners Market is Strong](#)") that used facts to correct the number and frequency of property insurer failures cited in the newspaper's column.

Crafted an adapted column in response to another newspaper's similarly critical editorial. Following publication, received letters of praise from the heads of two major insurance companies in Florida. One cited the Office's column as "One of the best editorial pieces I have ever seen on the subject. On behalf of our more than 100 employees and thousands of stakeholders, thank you for speaking so well to the issues."

The other letter said in part, "It's very encouraging to see a regulator effectively respond to inaccuracies and misconceptions in the media. And, to do so in such a public manner represents bold leadership that is so rare in government officials... You've done this industry and the public we serve a great service."

## PREVENTING AN UNFAIR REVIEW OF SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS AND A PROPERTY TAX/SALES TAX SWAP

Developed and executed a series of active and reactive communications strategies to help counter efforts by others to force a review of current state sales tax exemptions that Florida TaxWatch research had shown would be unfair to taxpayers and ineffective in bridging revenue shortfalls.

The effort included research releases, [media releases](#) and news conferences, op-editorials, legislative testimony, and a taxpayer education campaign focusing on a better alternative. Identified the opportunity and created [pitch letters](#) and follow-up phone scripts to offer industry associations contracted research to quantify the economic impact to their sector. The effort culminated with TaxWatch filing a friend-of-the-court brief, which played a role in the Florida Supreme Court striking the measure from the ballot.

This multi-year strategic communications effort resulted in new research revenue and achieved greater member engagement, media mentions, legislative awareness & action, and greater general membership revenue.

## COMMUNICATION PLAN ON PROPERTY TAXES RAISES AWARENESS & ACTION FROM BUSINESS COMMUNITY

In response to the escalating increase in local property taxes in 2005-2006, developed a business communication action plan on property taxes that included a survey to TaxWatch members, enhanced release of a research briefing on the scope of the problem, and series of statewide presentations to stakeholder groups and media to solicit support.

At the same time, developed grass-roots support for reform through joint meetings with 18 regional taxpayer groups, providing them specific data, talking points, and delivering effective strategy to assist them in communicating with their constituents, locally-elected officials and hometown media.

The legislature the next year held the line on increases to the Required Local Effort (state-mandated local school property tax) and some local governments at least more openly debated proposed tax increases and some declined passing net tax increases. The effort resulted in new membership revenue as well.

## STREAMLINING REGULATION PROJECT HELPS ELIMINATE COSTLY RULES AND BUREAUCRACY

Designed a [research project](#) to streamline Florida's burdensome regulatory process on development. The effort involved organizing a task force that included strategic partner organizations and diverse stakeholders, such as the Florida Homebuilders Association, NAIOP, major land owners, and Florida

Audubon. Personally recruited expert and prestigious members that included past secretaries of state departments of Community Affairs, Environmental Protection, and Water Management Districts.

The task force effort produced recommendations that were included in a cooperative report to the legislature that ultimately resulted in the elimination of the Florida Department of Community Affairs, greatly streamlined regulations, and a return to a more home-rule environment on planning and permitting for Florida's 67 counties, which helped accelerate Florida's construction rebound.

## SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN RESULTS IN REPEALING FLORIDA'S SUBSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS TAX

Created and helped lead this strategic communications and marketing campaign, including organizing a task force among TaxWatch members and strategic parties, creating a media blitz (that garnered more than a dozen articles in major newspapers pre- and during session), ghost-writing an "Ideas in Action" TaxWatch publication on behalf of a former Governor, and coordinating efforts with IT Florida and other stakeholder groups.

As a result, many legislators became aware of the gravity of this tax for the first time. The Legislature followed the task force recommendations and eliminated this antiquated tax.

## PROVIDING 'PROOF OF PERFORMANCE' GAINS NEW MEMBERS & REINFORCES VALUE TO EXISTING MEMBERS

Revamped TaxWatch marketing materials including one-sheet bulleted takeaways on major research projects of the past, present, and future and targeted-industry "Research That Gets Results" sheets tying TaxWatch efforts with the prospective member's business interests. This became an annual follow-up [Legislative Accomplishments](#) report for current and prospective members and our website.

These targeted marketing materials reinforced confidence and helped increase membership renewal and upgraded dues in existing members and provide the proof of performance to successfully engage and convert prospects to new members.

## OTHER WRITING & MARKETING EXAMPLES:

The collage features three documents. The leftmost is a 'SPONSORED REPORT' titled 'Protecting Core Government Services without Raising Taxes' by Florida TaxWatch, discussing cost savings ideas for the next state budget. The middle document is a congratulatory message for Florida TaxWatch on its 30th anniversary, listing the Executive Committee and Immediate Past Chairman. The rightmost document is titled 'What is Florida TaxWatch?' and provides a brief overview of the organization's mission and history.

**Florida TaxWatch  
Advertorial in Florida  
Trend Magazine,  
September 2010  
[\(click to view\)](#)**

**DOMINIC CALABRO**  
President  
**FLORIDA TAXWATCH  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

**TaxWatch Giving  
Library Videos  
[\(click to view\)](#)**