



A Legacy Fulfilled ... Then, Now, Next

The Story of Paul Werth Associates



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Publisher's Note

Sandra Werth Harbrecht Ratchford commissioned this history in early 2022 with the goal of having it published in 2023 to commemorate our firm's 60th year in business. Sadly, Sandy lost her battle with cancer on June 18, 2023, before she could see it in book form.

While Sandy was always uncomfortable with attention to her own accomplishments, it would be impossible to ignore her 40 years at Werth and her role in its success. For were it not for Sandy, Werth might very well have fizzled after the founder — her father — retired, as at least one rival predicted.

Werth flourished during Sandy's years as President and CEO because of the values she insisted on as a condition of employment and by which she lived: honesty, excellence, ethical practices and commitment to the greater good.

Sandy liked to say that some of our firm's most valuable work was work nobody except the client would ever see. What she meant was that helping to avoid a crisis or solve an issue behind the scenes was more important than having our work show up in the headlines. Because *behind the scenes* often meant off-the-clock counsel to those who may or may not have been clients, no one will ever know the full impact Sandy had on our community and on the individuals whose lives are better for having known her.

Sandy was a rare gift, and we miss her deeply. For those of us committed to continuing her vision, she left us another gift: her blueprint for success in business and in life. It's a blueprint that we hope becomes clear to you as you read this book.

Julie Granillo
President and CEO
Paul Werth Associates
October 2023



Forward

In many ways, 1963 was a defining year for America. The civil rights movement was in full swing, marked by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's *I Have a Dream* speech. Sadly, it was the same year that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, shattering the innocence we seemed to have acquired during the 1950s.

Yet, the nation and the world continued to progress, in medicine, pop culture and society.

It was a year that saw the first liver and lung transplants.

In America, ZIP codes were introduced, speeding the delivery of mail.

The Beatles stormed into the country, changing music forever.

Western Electric introduced the first touch-tone phones, signaling the demise of the rotary dial.

And NASA launched the world's first geostationary satellite, Syncom.

For me, however, 1963 was a year that changed the life of my father, my family and my own professional future. That year my father hung a shingle outside a former candy shop reading *Paul Werth Associates*.

My dad was a man who believed that words and ideas could build bridges between organizations and their stakeholders that, as Mike Harden, former *Columbus Dispatch* columnist, wrote in the first history of our firm in 1995, "were as powerful as those of steel and cable that linked the land."

Dad knew then what we know now: Words matter, because the right words can lead to action benefiting our neighborhoods, our business community and individuals.

Dad's early clients included Worthington Industries, Dennison Engineering and Anheuser-Busch. He later added companies and organizations such as Ohio National Bank, BancOhio, Homewood, CompuServe, Battelle, Borden and American Electric Power. Every engagement was based on three things: *relationships, trust and integrity*.

So, when I joined my father in 1983, the foundation had already been laid. My goal since then has been to build on his philosophy by forging personal and professional partnerships that go beyond the paid work we do. Our idea about what it takes to build and preserve a reputation — the most important asset any organization owns — also has remained the same as his. While words matter, actions mean more. In other words, it's never about *spin*, it's about helping others to do the right thing before, during and after things become difficult.

As we celebrate our 60th year in business — and as I mark my 40th anniversary here — our firm is blessed with a wide variety of clients in financial services, government, health care, education, energy, economic development and more. Our associates often build personal relationships with the people and causes for whom we advocate. We are passionate about equity, better educational outcomes for our city's children, better health care, and a collaborative, civil community that works together for economic prosperity.

This updated history of our firm is a testament to the many associates, past and present, who have worked to give our clients the best counsel available, support our community as it grows, and make Paul Werth Associates so successful. Most of all, it's a testament to my father, who started it all.

Sandra Werth Harbrecht Ratchford, APR
Chairman
May 2023



1963-WORDS MATTER-
relationships, trust and integrity.

Werth 60
Fulfilling a Legacy

In the Beginning

The history of Paul Werth Associates begins in 1963, when its namesake opened up shop in a former candy store on Olentangy River Road. However, that's not really the beginning of the story. To understand the full picture, it's important to understand a little about the founder.

Paul Werth was born in 1918 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. From an early age, Paul helped support the family by delivering papers and goods from his mother's home bakery. This penchant for hard work would serve him well in later life, but his approach to public relations would come from elsewhere.

In fact, the techniques Paul pioneered as founder of Paul Werth Associates were forged as a sales executive for companies, such as Carnation Company, Gordon Hatch Co., A.O. Smith Corporation, Whirlpool and Industrial Nucleonics, at a time when public relations was still only partly defined. In those roles, Paul went beyond sales to building relationships, raising awareness and solving business problems. Those experiences would shape — and are still shaping — the firm's innovative approach to public relations.

Whirlpool, a company Paul joined in 1949, is as good a place to start as any. Though his responsibility with Whirlpool was chiefly in sales for a six-state region, Paul often found himself in a public relations role. He formulated marketing policies and strategies and served as a factory liaison and as an adviser on national promotions and advertising. His job was not simply to assign or cancel dealerships within his region, but to promote harmony between distributors and the factory.

Sales quadrupled during his tenure in Whirlpool's south-central region, with market share climbing to nearly 10% from its previous 2%. He was promoted to oversee the north-central region, including Ohio and the upper Midwest.

However, after four years with Whirlpool, the extensive travel was wearing thin. By 1956, Paul had three children: Bill, Sandra (Sandy) and Linda. When he was offered a job as director of public relations, advertising and sales promotion for Industrial Nucleonics in Columbus, Ohio, he took it.

Paul once said that the company was, "short on money but big on expectations. We had to come up with another way to draw attention to the company. I had to ask, 'What is it about this company that is truly unique? What can I use to bring attention to them?' In the case of Industrial Nucleonics, it was radio isotopes."

In 1956, so soon after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and amid an escalating cold war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, many Americans associated atomic energy with war and destruction. Paul had \$35,000 to prove to the American public that there was a more positive side.

That, Paul recalled, was when he first began to understand what public relations was all about. It wasn't about press releases. It wasn't about spin. It was about building a credible narrative that demonstrated a client's value to its key audiences. Paul encouraged and helped company engineers get published in trade journals, thus educating other professionals about Industrial Nucleonics. But to change perceptions among skittish members of the public, he needed a way to sell what the company did to everyday folks.

Paul's initial efforts, which spanned everything from creating a house organ to launching national product publicity initiatives, caught the eye of Ray Vicker, a Chicago correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. He telephoned Paul and said, "I heard about you utilizing atomic energy for peaceful purposes, and sometime I'd like to know a little more about it."

Paul had no immediate plans to visit Chicago. But that's not what he told Ray. Instead, he informed the reporter that, by the happiest of coincidences, he was scheduled to fly to Chicago in the next several days and would be more than pleased to bring Ray to Columbus on the return trip so he could learn a little more about the peaceful use of the atom.

"In two weeks, we had a front-page, right-column story about Industrial Nucleonics in *The Wall Street Journal*," Paul recalled. "That took us right into *Business Week*," and soon thereafter, *Time*, *Fortune*, *Reader's Digest*, CBS's *See It Now* and NBC's *Dave Garroway Show*.

Industrial Nucleonics' sales soared. Public relations, however it could be defined then, had done its job.

Yet, by 1963, the bloom had faded from the rose at Industrial Nucleonics. While Paul never publicly disclosed the details of the split, it was clearly time to move on. This time, it would be on his own.



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“What is it about this company that is truly unique?”

- Paul Werth

Opening Shop

A picture hangs today in Werth's offices at the corner of Columbus' Broad and High streets. Paul, wearing glasses, is bending over in a white, short-sleeved shirt and a dark tie to adjust a company sign reading *Paul Werth Associates*. The building, unseen in the picture, is a former chocolate shop that will, for the foreseeable future, house a workforce of one. While the exact date is unknown, today's Werth associates celebrate Founder's Day on May 31 — Paul's birthday.

Venturing out on his own certainly presented professional risks. But Paul had established a reputation for credibility throughout the city, in major markets and among top PR leaders across the country. It didn't take Paul long to gain traction.

Paul Werth Associates' first client was Worthington Industries, still young in its eighth year. His second was Dennison Engineering. And the third was Anheuser-Busch.

Werth associates
celebrate Founder's
Day on May 31 —
Paul's birthday.



In many ways, being selected to handle Anheuser-Busch as the company prepared to open a brewery in north Columbus was a payoff for the years Paul had guarded and nurtured his reputation for credibility. The company brass in St. Louis knew little about PR practitioners in Columbus. Al Fleishman, a friend whose FleishmanHillard firm was working with the brewer in Chicago, asked Paul to come on board.

In its maiden year, Werth's revenues were triple Industrial Nucleonics' annual public relations budget. A growing list of clients would eventually include BancOhio Corporation, Homewood Corporation, Ohio National Bank, CompuServe, Brown Steel Company, MCQ Industries, Borden and American Electric Power (the latter two of which Werth assisted in relocating to Columbus from New York City) and a host of others.

Paul would go on to build one of the most respected and enduring public relations firms in the country, while at the same time helping to professionalize an industry that was changing quickly. His contributions did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries. In fact, after his passing on July 1, 2002, *PRWeek* reminded readers that many of the ideas Paul pioneered had become central to modern public relations practice. (These included one of the first product cross-promotions, a focus on professionalism among associates and research-based communications initiatives.)



Over the years, revenues have risen steadily while the firm operates debt-free. Chief Financial Officer Carl West, who continually monitors industry benchmarks, notes that Werth consistently outperforms public relations firms twice its size.

As a reflection of its capabilities within the industry, Werth has won 10 Silver Anvil Awards, the Public Relations Society of America's highest accolade for excellence within the profession.

And one more thing of which Sandy was proud and of which Paul would undoubtedly have been also: Competitors have come and gone over the years, while Werth remains the only Columbus PR firm in business in 1963 that still operates under the same (family) ownership.

Passing the Torch

Big shoes, especially in a family business personified by its founder, are notoriously difficult to fill. Paul had established a reputation as the city's go-to counselor for an important network of CEOs, government officials and community "titans" who turned to him in times of trouble and opportunity. He was known and respected nationally by industry leaders.

Despite her close proximity to the firm over the years, Sandy came to Werth with experience of another sort. Her first decade out of Kent State University was spent in the classroom teaching special education to second and third graders in the Worthington City Schools.

"I was one of those teachers who cried on the last day of school," she said. "I loved the children."



By the summer of 1982, Sandy had completed work on her MBA at The Ohio State University and was considering a move toward school administration. But as her father approached retirement, she had something else to consider: his request that she join the firm, which had outgrown his desire to manage it alone.

Sandy wasn't sure she had the experience or makeup for the PR world. Also, her mother, Margie, was dead set against it.

"She had seen how much it had taken out of dad," Sandy revealed during a 2022 interview for this history. "She didn't want it at all."

However, national marketing guru Roger Blackwell, then a professor at Ohio State, encouraged her to take a closer look at the opportunity. After all, she had already been using her considerable powers of persuasion to influence one of the toughest market segments in existence: 7- and 8-year-olds.

She eventually saw things Blackwell's way. In 1983, Sandy left teaching and, despite her many unanswered questions, began a new career that would lead her to the top of her profession and inclusion among Columbus' most influential people.

She never imagined running the firm; she just wanted to help her dad. But even that proved difficult in the early days, she said.

"There were no women running businesses, no access for women in the clubs or on the golf courses, so I was very much having to figure out how to do this without the access that my dad had on the golf course, The Athletic Club and the general opportunities open to men at that time," she recalled.

Initially, Paul had hired a New York public relations veteran to step into a management role. He was not a good fit and didn't last long.

"For a week, we talked about how to run a PR business. There were about 25 of us, very classy and sharp owners of firms from all over the country."

- Sandy W. Harbrecht

Meanwhile, other dynamics were churning. A key senior associate left and took two other employees — and a major client — with him, telling those left behind that the firm would never survive after Paul retired.

Another key associate died, and yet another became ill and resigned.

In reflecting on those times, Sandy said several things happened that helped her build the know-how — and access — she had lacked.

One turning point was when Paul sent her to a PRSA Counselors Academy program at Princeton University. Led by renowned professional services consultant David Maister, the workshop was pivotal, Sandy said.

"For a week, we talked about how to run a PR business," she said. "There were about 25 of us, very classy and sharp owners of firms from all over the country."

Among them were three women who became mentors and lifelong friends, she said: Amanda Brown-Olmstead, CEO and President of A. Brown-Olmstead Associates in Atlanta; Carol Cone, founder of the Boston-based firm Cone and a pioneer in cause marketing; and Cynthia Pharr, founder of C. Pharr & Company (now Dala Communications) in Dallas.

"They were like the light bulb that went on," Sandy remembered. "If Cynthia Pharr, and Carol Cone, and Amanda Brown-Olmstead can do this, maybe it CAN be done by a woman. They all knew and loved and respected my dad, and they took me under their wing. They were wonderful to me and helped me get an understanding that so much of what you do is what you believe you can do."

Building a Network

Another turning point for Sandy — and one instrumental in cracking the old boys' club that loomed over Columbus in those days — was making herself available for leadership positions around town.

"I started out with the Columbus Metropolitan Club as a member," she said. "I started from the ground floor and ended up becoming president. It was a really prestigious group, and that increased my visibility."

Meanwhile, the all-male University Club was fighting internal battles over whether to admit women.

"They conducted two votes," she said. "In the first vote, they turned it down, so they lost a lot of members. So, they had another vote and agreed to let women in, and then they lost another group of members. So, some of the people asked if I would be the first female member, and I agreed."

It wasn't long before Sandy was asked to serve on the board. And then to take on the role of president.

"I had a high visibility role in trying to save the University Club, which we did — for a while," she explained. "So, it was little by little establishing myself in a couple of high-profile opportunities, and it was probably because they were looking for a woman, and somebody asked me, and I said yes."

However, what Sandy considered the most important factor leading to her success was the support she received from her father's friends and clients.

"The best thing of all was my dad's clients. There were a few of them who said to me, 'I think you should be in your dad's seat someday. I think you can do it, have you ever thought about it?' I said, 'No, I haven't.'

"They said, 'Well, you should think about it, and we're going to talk to your dad about it.'

In 1986, the firm announced Sandy as its new president. While Paul was a steady presence even after passing the torch to his daughter, it was now Sandy's firm.

Continuing to build her network, both on her own and with the support of prominent business leaders, would be paramount to the firm's future success.

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- Sandy W. Harbrecht

"Everybody says it's relationships, but it's really having clients who are true partners," she said. "You can have clients for whom it's transactional. We have had way more of those than we want to think about. But we also have so many terrific clients who believe the more success Werth has, the better it is for them too."

Carl West, who joined the firm in 1997 and is one of Werth's longest-tenured associates, said Paul was ecstatic to see how Sandy grew into her role.

"He held her to a pretty high standard," West said. "And he could be hard on her. But he loved, loved, loved Sandy. He would often call me, and the first question would always be, 'Are we making any money?' and the second would be, 'How's my daughter?' He was really calling to find out how Sandy was doing. He was really proud of her. He said to me once, 'She's done things with this company that I never could have done.'

Some of those things, Carl said, we may never know.

"There's so much that Sandy has done that can never be publicized," he said. "What people don't realize is there are so many community leaders who have access to her that get free advice, but to her, that's just building goodwill. Yet, she never name drops."

Julie Granillo, who succeeded her aunt as President and CEO in 2023, also noted Sandy's influence on scores of PR professionals who worked alongside, or in partnership with her, over the years.

"She was an amazing teacher," Julie said. "She told you what you needed to hear. It's remarkable to think about all the people she had an impact on."



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- Julie Granillo

Influencing the Industry

Public relations, in one form or another, has existed throughout history. People seeking to change the behavior of community members, customers, voters, or other constituents have probably found ways to get their messages out since the birth of language.

The American colonists used mass media — newspapers, pamphlets and flyers — to advertise their wares and sway public opinion about how a new republic should be organized. The Federalist Papers could be considered an early PR campaign to shape the form of government after the Revolutionary War. Later, entrepreneurs such as P.T. Barnum and Harry Houdini used flamboyant promotions to drive people into seats or places of business.

For the first half of the 20th century, public relations consisted primarily of press agencies or influencing reporters and editors to develop stories favorable to a particular point of view. In the decades since, however, the tools and techniques of persuasion have changed and advanced. So have the capabilities of firms such as Werth.

Werth today is an integrated communications firm with expertise in public relations, public affairs, marketing and research. It offers strategic counsel and a full array of creative services with deep expertise in digital solutions and social media strategies.

Paul Werth saw the profession evolving as well, largely through the efforts of professional associations. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the industry's flagship trade group, formed in 1947 to advance the profession and its members and provide a set of professional and ethical standards to improve individuals, their organizations, government and civil society.

As the narrow focus on the press agency expanded to other areas of influence, the skills of communicators, such as former journalists, advertising professionals and government relations experts, began coming together in new ways. Paul recognized the changing face of PR and became fully engaged in supporting the profession's advancement.

Here, it may be helpful to define public relations. Those of a certain age may recall PR professionals being referred to as *spin doctors*, *flaks* or worse. The idea inherent

in these descriptions is a single-minded one: that PR exists to divert inconvenient truths away from misbehaving organizations and protect clients from accountability. For reputable PR professionals, that has never been the case.

Yet, trying to describe PR is often difficult even for those who practice it. Today, for example, Werth is a research organization, public affairs organization, creative organization, crisis management organization and counselor to top executives throughout the region.

PRSA has simplified things with this definition:

“Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.”

Paul could have written the definition himself, and as the profession evolved, he made sure his firm was at the leading edge. One big step was accreditation of those within the field.

PRSA established the Accreditation in Public Relations credential in 1964. It remains the profession's only national post-graduate program, and those who complete it proudly display the APR designation after their names.

Paul developed his expertise as a public relations leader along the paths of practical, hands-on experience within the firm, in addition to consistent education and growth through professional affiliation. He not only joined the local PRSA chapter, but two years after opening his doors, he became one of the first in the nation to become accredited. Locally, he served as the chapter's accreditation preparer and its oral and written examiner.



"Dad wanted accreditation because he said anybody can hang up a shingle and say they're a PR person," Sandy remembered.

As a member of the local chapter, Paul held several local and national leadership roles, including chapter president, national delegate and membership on the PRSA Grievance Committee, later known as the Board of Ethics and Professional Standards.

In 1968, PRSA chartered the first nine chapters of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). The Ohio State University was among them, and again, Paul partnered with national PRSA and university representatives to establish the local PRSSA chapter. To top it off, he also served as the chapter's first professional adviser and helped develop the university's PR curriculum.

Paul also was an early chairman of the PRSA Counselors Academy, formed in 1960 to foster collaborative peer relationships among senior level public relations counselors.

Llyle Barker, Ohio State professor of public relations emeritus and former PRSSA adviser, later wrote that "Mr. Werth's input has been instrumental in the formulation of the public relations curriculum at The Ohio State University," specifically writing courses that were added at Paul's urging.

By 1971, Paul was advocating not just for a more sophisticated profession, but for spreading the word of its evolution to those in other disciplines. "There can be little question that the field of public relations is misunderstood or poorly thought of by a large portion of the general public," he said in a speech to PRSA's Counselors Section, "which includes, of course, many of the people and groups with which we are concerned in the conduct of our work."

“There can be little question that the field of public relations is misunderstood or poorly thought of by a large portion of the general public, which includes, of course, many of the people and groups with which we are concerned in the conduct of our work.”

- Paul Werth

1971 PRSA's Counselors Section

Among his recommendations were liaison committees to work with other professional organizations on matters of mutual interest, making articles from the *PR Journal* available to various financial publications, and focusing more on speaking engagements to "our publics, not to ourselves."

His contributions earned him the 1971 Distinguished Service Award from the Counselors Academy as well as the PRSA Chairman's Award; nearly 20 years later, in 1990, his contributions to the profession earned him a seat on the prestigious PRSA College of Fellows. In supporting his nomination, Judith Bogart, founder of Judith Bogart Associates in Cincinnati and the second woman to serve as PRSA's national president, wrote that, "If such a designation were available, Paul Werth would be the 'Dean' of Ohio public relations."

Perhaps the highest praise came from someone for whom credibility was everything. *The Columbus Dispatch* Editor Bob Smith noted that, "Paul has always been extremely careful to work diligently for his clients yet honestly with the news media ... He has never misled or oversold *The Columbus Dispatch* on behalf of one of his clients. To the contrary, he has been extremely forthright and has been extremely helpful in ferreting out the truth."

Following in the founder's footsteps, Sandy made significant contributions of her own to PRSA and to the profession nationally. For example, she was elected to the executive committee of the Counselors Academy in 1989 and headed professional development programming for its members. She went on to serve separately as national secretary-treasurer and chair.



By 1998, owners of PR firms across the country recognized a need for an organization that would help "grow talent, revenue, profit, and reputation for member agencies and the industry." That year, carrying on the firm's history of involvement in the professionalism on a national scale, Sandy joined select PR leaders across the country to form the PR Council. The council as of 2023 consists of more than 130 of the country's premier public relations firms.

Sixty years after its founding, Paul Werth Associates continues to hold fast to the values and responsibilities outlined in PRSA's code of ethics and to the value of professional development. The firm requires new associates to sign its own ethical framework and adhere to PRSA's as well. Several members of the firm have taken leadership roles in the Columbus PRSA chapter. And Werth, without hesitation, provides financial support to any associate who is serious about becoming accredited or advancing his or her professional education.

Evolving With the Times

Clients change. Society changes. Communication tools and channels become more diverse and sophisticated. Therefore, PR firms must evolve as well.

Several key milestones attest to Werth's consistent pursuit of new capabilities and excellence in a changing landscape.

For example, in 2004 as clients sought more sophisticated creative services, Werth acquired The Haunty Agency. It was a direct response to client requests for more robust marketing communications services.

At the time, Jack Haunty had built a successful career path as a leader in brand-building communications and advertising. The acquisition of his firm added advertising, brand development and video production services to Werth's specialties and nearly half a million dollars in net revenue to Werth, which had reported \$2.22 million in 2003.



The move also added several blue-ribbon organizations, including T. Marzetti Co. and Amanda Hills Spring Water Co., to Werth's client base.

Another milestone followed the next year with Werth's acquisition of MMD Research. While research had long been an important aspect of the firm's strategic planning services, MMD added more sophisticated capabilities in-house to encompass all phases of market and public policy research across a substantial array of consumer and business-to-business categories.

"Research is such an integral part of what we do for our clients and something that has set us apart from our competition over the years," Sandy explained. "It enables us to help our clients make strategic marketing decisions based on data and a true understanding of their market and customers."

Joining the Digital Age

Vice President Beth Hillis, who joined Werth in 1998, recalled that when she came on board Werth didn't have internet and lacked a fast and efficient email system. "I remember clients and associates were very frustrated, since we only had one computer with a modem that could send external emails," she said. "The first six months, all I did was work on improving technology. So gaining access to the internet was a big accomplishment for Werth."

In 2010, as digital communications began to proliferate throughout the business world, Werth acquired huber+co. interactive, which specialized in internet marketing, web design and development, social media integration, e-commerce, search engine optimization and analytics.

Negotiating a New Media Landscape

When Paul founded the firm, the term media referred primarily to newspapers, magazines, television and radio. News organizations had enough advertising revenues to staff substantial numbers of reporters, who often worked specific "beats" like business, sports, education, courts and government. It was easy to get to know the reporters and their respective news outlets, and if you wanted your story covered, you pitched your story to those reporters. Consequently, building strong professional relationships with media influencers and reputable reporters was paramount to success. The landscape began changing as the internet allowed anyone to build a webpage, start a blog or publish an online magazine. Soon, anybody with a special interest and the savvy to build a following became a competitor with traditional mainstream media.

As social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube proliferated, media specialists had to become experts in these new channels, know the influencers and how to tell client stories using digital channels.

"Social media was an 'aha' moment," Beth remembered. "That was a game changer. Building those capabilities gave us another tool to get the message out. Now, it's almost always part of our media strategy and a key part of our communications strategies."

Ohio Telecom Association President Charley Moses, a Werth associate from 1997 to 1999 and now a longtime member of the firm's advisory board, agreed that building social media capabilities was a game changer.

"Sandy's willingness to try new things can't be underestimated," he said. "Werth had a reputation of being monolithic and buttoned down, but Sandy was willing to try new things. Social media, digital channels, she made all kinds of moves to understand that and, in response to client needs, adapted to new ways of communication."



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- Sandy W. Harbrecht

Committing to Senior Talent

For many years, Werth followed the traditional industry staffing pattern: Hire mostly junior associates to handle the bulk of the client work and a few senior managers to oversee them.

At a certain point, Sandy made a decision to turn that model on its head. The catalyst was a revolving door of young talent and their frequent struggles to provide the sophisticated services required at a firm based on strategic counsel.

"I had been a teacher — but that's not what I wanted to deal with," Sandy explained. "I didn't want to be constantly training people and turning them out into the world. I couldn't blame them, that's what a 20-something does. But it was also a mismatch between the generation we were hiring and our clients."

While it was a gradual evolution, Werth began filling new openings with associates who had at least 10 years of experience in government, media, business and other relevant disciplines. Today, that allows almost any member of the staff to engage at the C-suite level, where most of Werth's work is done.

When asked what he considered some of Werth's biggest successes, longtime Werth advisory board member Ken Jones named two things:

"(Werth's) development of nonpartisan connections throughout the state of Ohio," and "a commitment to seniority within the staff."

Those seniors have come from government, nonprofits, media and business. In other words, public relations isn't usually a Werth associate's first discipline, though all are well versed in communications.

Charley agreed that Werth's staffing model is a key differentiator from its competitors. "One of Werth's biggest successes is the senior team that the firm has developed," he said. "They're master communicators, and they have experience. This was a calculated move, and it's what I especially like about the firm now."



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- Charley Moses

Adding an Advisory Board

As Sandy continued to build expertise at the firm, she frequently sought outside business counsel. While she had often tapped two or three paid advisers, she felt the firm needed the honest appraisal and counsel of a dedicated board. Just before the turn of the millennium, Werth established a formal advisory board.

Charley Moses recalled that in addition to Ken Jones, early board members John Russell, Don Freytag and Bill Lhota were crucial to Sandy's evolution as a leader.

"They were older than Sandy and they were prominent people in the community," Charley said. "They felt comfortable calling Sandy on things other people didn't or asking the tough questions every leader needs to hear."



"They have been absolutely instrumental in helping me understand what it will take to be successful and answering the question, 'Am I crazy?'"

- Sandy W. Harbrecht

The advisory board also provided Sandy with counsel in how to thrive in a political city without becoming hampered by politics. Although Sandy always had personal views on a range of issues, she was deliberately apolitical in her professional life. This allowed her to work across party lines to do impactful work on important community issues such as education, environment and health care that affect everybody, regardless of party affiliation.

Today, "we come in and look at things, and Ken will have a good sense of how we stand financially after all these years," Charley said in 2022. "The board was instrumental in the decision to hire senior associates. They have given advice on purchasing smaller companies. But over time, Sandy has faced issues both personal and professional, and the board is there to support her in both."

Sandy described the advisory board's value succinctly: "They have been absolutely instrumental in helping me understand what it will take to be successful and answering the question, 'Am I crazy?'"

Fulfilling a Legacy

**1963**

Paul Werth opens our doors with our first client, Worthington Industries.

**1965**

Paul Werth is named President of the Central Ohio Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

**1968**

Werth introduces Anheuser-Busch to Columbus.

**1971**

Paul Werth becomes chair of the PRSA's Counselors Academy in recognition of his leadership within the industry.

**1974**

Werth receives its first national Silver Anvil Award for Homewood Corp./Ohio State University Solar Home Project — Excellence in Special Events.

**1980**

Werth assists with groundbreaking for the Ohio Center, Columbus' convention facility. Werth joins the American Electric Power (AEP) team to plan its relocation from New York City to Columbus.

**1990**

Paul Werth is selected to the second class of PRSA's College of Fellows.

**1991**

Werth receives the Silver Anvil Award for the City of Columbus, Department of Public Service — Excellence in National Marketing Campaign.

Werth launches the Werth Poll.

**2006**

Kent State University Board of Trustees elects Sandra Harbrecht as chair.

Werth and OBDC win American Business Awards: The Stevie for nation's best business-to-business ad campaign.

**2008**

Werth moves offices to the corner of Broad and High streets in Columbus.

**2012**

The Insurance Industry Resource Council partners with Werth on an ongoing public relations and marketing campaign to promote insurance careers throughout the state of Ohio: Insuring Ohio Futures.

**2013**

Werth helps to develop, design and launch CelebrateOne, a program to reverse infant mortality rates in central Ohio after convening the Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force.

**2017**

Sandra Harbrecht is named CEO of the Year by Columbus CEO magazine.

**1981**

Nationwide becomes a client.

**1983**

Sandra Harbrecht joins Werth as Director, Client Services.

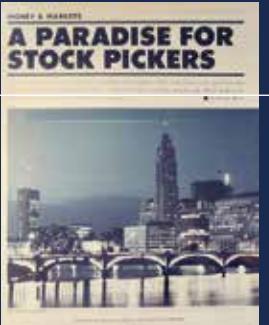
CHASE**1985**

Werth launches Chase Manhattan Bank in the Ohio market.

Sandra Harbrecht becomes Werth President.

**1986**

Werth launches Prudential HealthCare's PruCare in Ohio.

**1987**

Werth receives Silver Anvil for Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce — Excellence in Marketing Communications (Established Services).

**1988**

Werth receives Silver Anvil for the Rebuild Ohio Committee, State Issue 2 — Excellence in Public Affairs; Issue 2 approves \$2 billion bond for infrastructure financing.

Werth receives Silver Anvil for White Castle — Excellence in Marketing Communications.

**1998**

As a founding member, Werth helps launch the national trade group, Council of Public Relations Firms.

Werth partners with the Jerome Schottenstein Center for opening festivities.

**2000**

Werth launches the national eCorridor branding campaign for the Ohio Department of Development and establishes the E3 OHIO technology coalition.

**2001**

Sandra Harbrecht is elected to the Board of the Council of Public Relations Firms.

**2002**

Dedication of the Paul and Margaret Werth Community Resource Center at the American Cancer Society.

**2004**

Werth acquires The Haunty Agency, a prominent local advertising agency.

**2005**

Ohio Business Development Coalition (OBDC) becomes a client.

Werth acquires MMD Research.

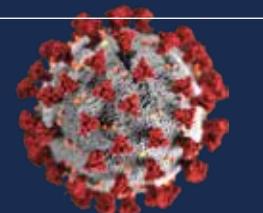
**2018**

Werth becomes the public relations agency for the Ohio Opioid Education Alliance and begins building a statewide coalition to combat opioid addiction.

Werth supports the fundraising for and opening of the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park.

2019

Julie Granillo, a Nashville leader in social enterprise, health care industry veteran, and granddaughter of the firm's founder, joins the company to usher in the next generation of family involvement.

**2020**

Werth begins remote-only operations in the face of a devastating COVID-19 pandemic. In support of hard-hit organizations, Werth serves more than a dozen pro bono clients while maintaining all associates and full employee benefits.

**GONGWERWerth**
LEGISLATIVE OPINION POLL**2021**

Werth launches the Gongwer-Werth Legislative Opinion Poll. Werth wins its 10th Silver Anvil Award for Insuring Ohio Futures.

**2022**

Werth relaunches its federal practice to support Ohio companies seeking to elevate their Washington, D.C. agenda.

Werth**2023**

To honor its 60th anniversary, Werth plants a Red Sunset Maple on the northwest corner of the Ohio Statehouse.

Committing to Columbus

Despite Werth's longtime practice of avoiding partisan entanglements, the firm has always served a substantial number of government clients, companies, and other entities that feed on the energy of downtown Columbus. Long associated with Capitol Square itself, Werth has thrived in an environment that puts it in close proximity to some of Ohio's most influential decision-makers.

So, in the early 2000s, Sandy had a decision to make. Owners of the Key Bank Building at 88 E. Broad Street made plans to repurpose the top seven floors of the building as condominiums. Werth, which occupied the top floor, had to look for a new home.

Werth could have — as some of its competitors have done — sought out digs in the suburbs. After all, the commutes would be easier, the parking more plentiful and the overhead cheaper. But for Sandy, that option was a non-starter. Instead, she made the decision to lease 8,400 square feet of office space and purchase 2,800 square feet of condo space at 10 N. High Street.

The firm moved there in 2008 after at least two years of planning. The space raised the firm's visibility on Capitol Square and its profile with clients at the famous corner of Broad and High, where Werth remains today.



Making a Local Impact

While Werth has worked diligently to advance the profession over the years, it has played an even more important role in the advancement of the communities it serves. This is no accident; one of Werth's core values — Responsibility to the Greater Good — reads:

"Service to our community and our profession is our firm's heritage. In volunteer efforts as well as in client work, we always serve the public's best interests."

The scope of that commitment is vast. For example, the firm played crucial roles in supporting the moves of major corporations and thousands of new jobs to the Columbus region, including the establishment of Honda of America Mfg., Inc. in Marysville, Ohio, and American Electric Power, Borden, Chase Bank and Anheuser-Busch in Columbus. In the early 1980s, Werth partnered with the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce to change the nation's image of the city as a "Cowtown" and market its unique benefits.

Not only was Werth involved in helping to sell the city to new companies, but it also engaged with community members to ease concerns. For example, according to Sandy, people in nearby Worthington were "up in arms" over pollution they feared would spew from Anheuser-Busch's brewery. As it turned out, the expected pollutants were merely steam that needed to be expelled through the factory's stacks.

Werth since then has tackled some of the most difficult, and sometimes controversial, problems faced by Ohio companies and industries.

In the early 1990s, critics sought to close one of the nation's largest chemical facilities, an Ohio site where BP used the deep well injection method to safely dispose of hazardous material. Long the target of environmental protests and lawsuits, the plant's future was in jeopardy when BP asked Werth to build the support needed to win approval of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Through telephone surveys and focus groups, Werth gained the insights needed to develop a strategic plan to build community and governmental support for the continued use of deep well injection. The program featured grassroots communications, coalition building and the creation of an advisory panel of scientists who studied rock samples 1,000 feet below ground.

Study results and the positive relationships established with stakeholders led the EPA to grant approval for BP's continued use of what, at the end of the day, was an environmentally sound process. BP would remain in operation.

PRSA recognized Werth's campaign with a 1993 Silver Anvil for excellence in strategic communications, and BP recognized Werth with its Chairman's Award.

Soon afterward, Werth took on an unprecedented engagement when American Electric Power (AEP), then the country's largest public utility, faced an accusation by the EPA that it had violated the Clean Air Act at the Gavin Power Plant in the southeastern Ohio hamlet of Cheshire.

To resolve the issue, AEP not only decided to close the plant, but made the extraordinary decision in 2002 to buy the entire town for \$20 million. Because Werth had provided research and public relations counsel to AEP since orchestrating its location in downtown Columbus decades prior, the company turned to Werth for assistance. Werth's strategic counsel included research to gauge public perception of AEP, to understand the real concerns of communities where it had plants, and to improve AEP's community outreach.

Werth's positive impact on the Ohio insurance industry is also well documented. In 2011, baby boomers were retiring faster than jobs could be filled, making a future talent gap inevitable. That's when the state's leading

insurance companies put competition aside and looked to Werth to develop a comprehensive initiative to get more Ohioans into insurance jobs.



Ten years later, Insuring Ohio Futures resulted in greater awareness of and interest in insurance jobs; robust collaboration among insurance companies, government entities and higher education; and a pipeline of 12 college-level insurance and risk management programs where once there were none. That work, too, earned Werth a Silver Anvil, its 10th.

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"Service to our community and our profession is our firm's heritage. In volunteer efforts as well as in client work, we always serve the public's best interests."

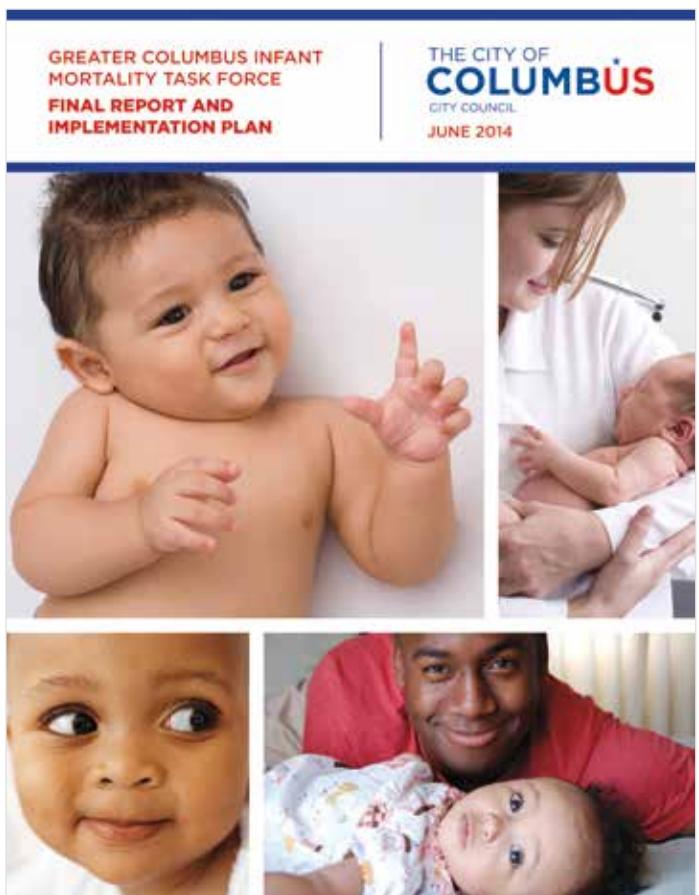
Werth's core values — Responsibility to the Greater Good

A Rush Toward Quality-of-Life Issues

Werth continues to rush toward issue-oriented causes that it feels will improve the community and residents' quality of life. Thus, many of Werth's most remarkable successes have come in the areas of health care and children's well-being.

"Werth has been a leader on so many public health initiatives, whether smoking cessation, or work for OSU's Wexner Medical Center — health care in every community now is crucial," noted Charley Moses. "Sandy navigated a really interesting line of public health issues over the years."

For example, in the early 1990s, more than 60% of Columbus 2-year-olds lacked full immunization. While public health officials recognized the severity of the problem, solving it was hampered by a number of factors: Parents were unaware that unvaccinated children were at risk. Limited clinic hours and existing locations impeded immunization. Many physicians were unaware of changes to recommended immunization schedules and practices, and a historical lack of collaboration among immunization advocates stymied progress.



Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force

The result was Project L.O.V.E. (Love Our kids... Vaccinate Early!), in which Werth forged a coalition of 11 independent hospitals, physicians, government and corporations. The partnership executed a Werth-led strategic plan designed to increase infant vaccinations by 50% over two years.

Ultimately, that goal was exceeded as the educational initiative touched every part of the community. Project L.O.V.E. received national attention. It not only gained Werth a Silver Anvil, but the top Silver Anvil among all national recipients.

When then-Mayor Michael B. Coleman launched an initiative in 2014 to combat the city's high infant mortality rates and a racial disparity that saw Black babies dying at 2.5 times the rate of white infants, Werth was charged with forming the Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force.

Werth has been there to lead the way on both strategy and execution on many of the community's most impactful initiatives: enrolling Ohioans in Ohio's new health care exchange under the Affordable Care Act; leading smoking cessation initiatives; and educating central Ohioans about the city's Smart City mobility initiatives.

Werth has also been a critical partner in convening and managing the Ohio Opioid Education Alliance, a coalition of more than 100 partners working to change perceptions about opioid misuse and addiction.



PROJECT  L.O.V.E.

But Werth's commitment to the public good has gone well beyond health issues. For example, in 1990 when the City of Columbus began an effort to educate residents about the need for long-term road improvements, Werth got the call to lead it. "Paving the Way..." won Werth its second Silver Anvil award by overcoming a hostile public already fed up with orange road construction barrels, resistance from a city council that was not uniformly behind the effort, and stereotypes about city bureaucrats being stubbornly unimaginative.

And, when then-City Council President Andrew J. Ginther in 2012 called on the community to solve persistent problems that saw too many children falling behind in school, the Greater Columbus Education Commission called on Werth to document the commission's proceedings and write the final report.

Beyond the Client Work

It's hard to say whether the firm's focus on the common good influenced the behavior of Werth's associates, or whether Sandy's practice of hiring only high-character people led to it. However, over the years, numerous Werth associates have been recognized for their community work and volunteer engagements with awards ranging from the Central Ohio YWCA's Women of Achievement to *Columbus Business First's* 40 Under 40.

"When I began leading the firm," Sandy said, "I had a mantra. My mission came to be that I want to work with people I admire, respect and trust, and who admire, respect and trust me. People who are not in it for what's in it for them, but people who are in it for the benefit of the whole. We've built our business on people like that."

Sandy led the way. She was a trustee of the Ingram-White Castle Foundation and chair of the Arvin Alexander Fund of The Columbus Foundation. Her unwavering support for Junior Achievement earned her entry into the Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame.



She served her alma mater, Kent State University, throughout her career, including as a member and chair of the Board of Trustees and chair of the Presidential Search Committee. She was also committed to The Ohio State University, from which she earned her MBA, and served on the External Advisory Council for the College of Engineering, the President's Alumni Advisory Council and the Dean's Advisory Council for Fisher College of Business, in addition to numerous corporate board memberships.

There's a pattern here: While Werth puts its full energy behind supporting all of its clients, public service is in its blood.



"When I began leading the firm, I had a mantra. My mission came to be that I want to work with people I admire, respect and trust, and who admire, respect and trust me."

- Sandy W. Harbrecht

Managing Through Hard Times

Werth, like all businesses, has faced storms of one kind or another throughout its history. While painful, hard times can confirm a business's true strengths while also offering learning opportunities.

In the mid-2000s, years of loosened banking regulations and cheap credit came back to haunt the nation, as a massive subprime lending market ballooned, home ownership skyrocketed, and home values plummeted. By December 2007, millions of homeowners found themselves owing more than their houses were worth, and subprime lenders, and those who invested in those riskier loans, took a hit.

The results rippled through the economy, leading to the worst recession since the Great Depression. Ohio's unemployment rate rose to more than 11% while the state lost hundreds of thousands of jobs.

As the recession gained steam in 2008, Werth found itself facing two big challenges. The firm had just borrowed a significant amount of money to make the move to 10 N. High Street. Then, due to business pressures, two major clients canceled their contracts with Werth. Not only were those clients ones that any firm would love to have, they represented 40% of the firm's revenues.

"We had the perfect storm," CFO Carl West recalled. "We had debt and we had a huge loss of revenue. The data shows that if you lose even 30% of your revenue, you have a high chance of failure."

For the first and only time in its history, Werth laid off staff. According to Carl, Sandy took a pay cut while maintaining salaries and benefits for the remaining associates.

"Sandy always put the company first and never wavered from that," Carl said. "She always invested profits back into the company and made sure the company had what it needed. If she hadn't, things might have been different."

Instead, while Werth lost some clients, it added others. Rather than holding its debt, the company paid off the seven-year loan in 18 months (and has declined ever since to take on new debt). In the end, Carl said, 2008 proved to be one of the firm's best years ever.

"What we learned was that big clients are great, but if you're overly reliant on them, that's a big risk factor," Carl said. "You have to always be out looking for new clients, because eventually your number one client is going to leave."

"Sandy always put the company first and never wavered from that. She always invested profits back into the company and made sure the company had what it needed. If she hadn't, things might have been different."

- Carl West



"You have to always be out looking for new clients, because eventually your number one client is going to leave."

- Carl West



Equally unexpected was what occurred in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic shook business as usual to its foundation. Amid government stay-at-home orders and internal safety measures, employees were sent home to work remotely, and some clients — particularly those who relied on open doors and gatherings — curtailed their operations and saw their revenues plummet.

Sandy stood firm in retaining every associate, maintaining benefits and salary levels, and remaining available for decision-makers facing difficult issues or crises. Meanwhile, as part of its advocacy for clients both on and off the clock, Werth continued to provide services — though at a lower level — to some clients who could no longer afford to pay. When a few clients ended their contracts with Werth, the firm not only continued building its new business pipeline, but encouraged associates to look for pro bono opportunities to support a hurting community.

Relationships established over many years often paid off with new business. For example, as the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services found itself overwhelmed by skyrocketing unemployment claims and a reputational crisis because of its response, the department turned to Werth for help.

"When we lose a client, we put them on the prospects list," Sandy said. "We've had many clients where our work for them ended, and eventually they reengaged with us."

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"We've had many clients where our work for them ended, and eventually they reengaged with us."

- Sandy W. Harbrecht

COVID-19 presented Werth with a generational opportunity to give back. Using their personal and professional connections, Werth associates suggested and executed pro bono projects for organizations including:

- [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Ohio](#)
- [Catholic Social Services](#)
- [Children's Defense Fund of Ohio](#)
- [Franklin County Public Health](#)
- [The Office of Governor Mike DeWine](#)
- [Human Service Chamber of Franklin County and United Way of Central Ohio](#)
- [Ohio Legal Help](#)
- [Shadyside Health and Wellness Project](#)
- [Star House](#)
- [The Columbus Foundation](#)
- [United Schools Network](#)
- [Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority](#)

Preparing for the Future

Each December, Werth publishes its "Fearless Forecast" for the coming year. It's a light-hearted tradition that allows associates to go out on a limb while never venturing too far from possibility. Every forecast is thoughtful and based on what associates are reading, seeing and hearing about the world of technology, economics, politics, sports and any other topic that may lend itself to an interesting take.

The Fearless Forecasts aren't just a year-end diversion, but a reflection of the thinking that goes on constantly within the firm. That's because successful companies must closely monitor the world around them. It's the only way to anticipate what will be necessary to remain competitive, and Paul Werth Associates is forever checking the prevailing winds.

The most important forecasts are what Werth makes about the opportunities that lie ahead. A formal pipeline of potential clients is constantly tracked for possible outreach, sometimes informally, other times through formal contact. Every associate participates in year-end forecasts for the coming year as well, calculating which clients present opportunities for new work and noting the status of the relationship with each client. That exercise provides a foundation for ongoing business development and stronger ties with existing partners.

The secret sauce continues to be the relationships and partnerships the firm has built. A congratulations email on a notable achievement, a lunch date, or an introduction to an important influencer can sometimes mean a new engagement. Other clients come to Werth through word of mouth or from past work with the firm.

In the end, there is no crystal ball.

"One key is always looking, as Wayne Gretzky might say, to where the puck is going to be and where we want to be," Sandy said.

"And where the market wants us to be. I had to ask myself at one point: If Werth went away, would anybody care? I feel now that we've done a lot to add to what the community is. So, we need to keep thinking about our place in the industry and the community, and kind of marry that with what we want to be in the next generation of the firm."

Ushering in a New Generation

While no one knows exactly what the coming decades will bring, the next generation of leadership has already come on board. In December 2019, Julie Granillo — a veteran of the health care and tech industries in Nashville, Tennessee — joined Werth. As Sandy's niece and Paul Werth's granddaughter, Julie represents the third generation of family involvement in the firm.

While Julie had watched the firm prosper for years, she hadn't seriously thought about joining it. Yet, over the years, she couldn't help but see how closely the company's values and commitment to community reflected her own.

Her ties to Nashville were solid. In 2007, she graduated summa cum laude from Vanderbilt University with a degree in human and organizational development and a minor in art history. She promptly helped found the Dispensary of Hope, a not-for-profit pharmaceutical distributor for the poor and uninsured, funded initially by a \$1 million startup grant from the state of Tennessee and Ascension, the nation's largest nonprofit health system. It was a first-of-its-kind organization, one that secured surplus medications throughout the pharmaceutical supply chain and distributed them to charitable clinics and pharmacies across the country.

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

BY ELEANOR KENNEDY
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST



Julie Granillo didn't expect to take the top job at Paul Werth Associates when she did.

Her aunt and mentor, Sandra Werth Harbrecht Rutherford, died this summer after decades of running the family business. Just four years earlier, she suggested Granillo, then living in Nashville, come back to Ohio and join her at Paul Werth.

The Wooster native took her up on the offer, and spent the ensuing years settling into a leadership role at the firm. Now she's running it, and while taking over came much faster than she wanted or hoped, Granillo said she's excited about the team she has and the work they're doing.

The following are highlights from our conversation, edited for length and clarity.

So we have a shared history, having both lived in Nashville. Before we get into what you're doing today, can you tell me a bit about your career track while you were in Nashville? I went to undergrad in Nashville. And my senior year at Vanderbilt, I interned at St. Thomas Health, which is part of Ascension Health, in their New Ventures division. I got involved in launching a startup in the pharmaceutical space. We would take medications all throughout the pharmaceutical supply chain and redistribute those to charitable clinics and pharmacies that were serving the uninsured - did that across the country.



In 2014, she was recruited as chief operating officer for ToGoTechnologies, a startup serving the restaurant industry. There, she helped grow the business to include more than 1,000 restaurant clients.

"I was fulfilled in Nashville having built the Dispensary of Hope and working with a new startup," she recalled. "I had a great network, did a lot in the community, and had started building a family. But I was also doing some soul searching to determine what I wanted to come next in my career." A light bulb seemed to go on during one of Sandy's visits to Nashville in the spring of 2019, Julie said.

"After that visit, I realized I had an incredible opportunity right in front of me," she said. "Sandy never put any pressure on me, or even directly asked me to come to Werth, but she made it known in her own way that the opportunity was there if I wanted it. We talked for hours over the next few months, and the more I learned about the type of work we get to do and the type of clients we get to serve, the more it spoke to me. After meeting some of the staff and our advisory board, I was sold."

Sandy said Julie not only brought added stability to the firm at a time when Sandy was developing a succession plan, but that "she's really smart and has the personality needed in a leader."

It didn't take Julie long to prove Sandy right, both in her account work and in her leadership style. She soon rose to senior vice president and, in early 2023, was named president. Today, she is both president and CEO, taking the torch from Sandy much as Sandy did from her father.

"We're clearly in a time of rapid change," Julie said. "Workforce needs are changing and so are the needs of our clients. We're no longer bound by geography, and that certainly creates opportunities for us with our workforce. At the same time, I'm concerned by the state of journalism and the level of disinformation we battle daily, but our industry is always evolving and I'm optimistic in our ability to ensure an informed public."

"We're clearly in a time of rapid change. Workforce needs are changing and so are the needs of our clients.

- Julie Granillo



As revenues rise year after year and Werth's capabilities continue to expand, the size of the firm matters less than what it brings to its clients, Carl West said. Those strengths, Sandy believed, were embodied in the Werth team, which at the time of her passing was arguably one of the strongest collection of professionals in the firm's history.

Julie agreed that Werth is well positioned for the future.

"We've been tested many times in the past 60 years," she explained. "We've survived recessions, pandemics and changes in leadership. As important as both Sandy and my grandfather were to our firm, both knew they wouldn't be at the helm forever. They planned for their successors and had confidence in Werth's ability to evolve and grow after they were gone."

From where did that confidence come?

"Our company was built not only on a set of core ethical values but on a way of doing business that has helped to ensure our resilience," Julie said. "Some of this includes our nonpartisan approach to civic engagement, our intentional approach to hiring, and our conservative fiscal policy, which has given us a strong financial foundation for growth."

The groundwork has been laid for the firm's future success. The time has now come for those who carry the work forward to deliver on an enviable task — for there could be no more honorable one than to build on a legacy built by two industry giants: Paul Werth and Sandra Werth Harbrecht Ratchford.



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"Our company was built not only on a set of core ethical values but on a way of doing business that has helped to ensure our resilience."

- Julie Granillo

A Symbol of Enduring Commitment

On April 19, 2023, Werth associates and a few of the firm's close friends gathered on the northwest corner of the Ohio Statehouse grounds to plant a young tree.

Sandy had suggested the planting as a gift to the community on the firm's 60th anniversary. After researching the options, and in coordination with the Capitol Square Foundation, she settled on a Red Sunset® Maple.

The day was chilly, but the sun was shining. Planted quietly without fanfare, it would symbolize Werth's enduring commitment to Ohio and downtown Columbus, Sandy said, while also standing as "a symbol of our roots here and the inextricable connections between our future growth and that of the community."

For Werth, the tree indeed symbolizes a past, present and future tied inseparably to that of the community. But it also reminds us of Sandy and her quiet, lifelong commitment to the greater good.



About the Author

Gene Monteith began his career as a newspaper reporter in Mississippi and Indiana, and later spent seven years as a marketing specialist and an executive speechwriter in the insurance industry. He was the managing editor of two online magazines — one focused on Ohio's emerging technology sectors and the other on Ohio STEM education. He spent more than 20 years at Columbus public relations firms, the last 10 of which were spent at Paul Werth Associates. He retired at the end of 2021 as Vice President of Editorial Services. He is one of countless people who owe a debt of gratitude to Sandra Werth Harbrecht Ratchford, who he considers, by far, his greatest mentor.





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