

PATRICK SLEVIN

Founder and president of the Slevin Group, Inc., a public relations firm in Tallahassee, Fla. Slevin previously served as southeast regional media manager for the National Federation of Independent Business, national public relations manager for Eckerd Drug Stores and mayor of Safety Harbor, Fla., near Tampa. Slevin graduated cum laude from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla., earning a bachelor's of arts degree in organizational studies. He is married to Eileen Slevin and has two children: Brendan, 10 and Kathleen, 5.



What is the first step in turning around a client's bad press?

"Determine whether the negative coverage was accurate. If so, evaluate the damage, position elements that will exemplify the positives, and act accordingly. If not accurate, then find out where the story came from, design counter measures, and go for the throat."

How important is it to get to know reporters and have them trust you?

"Reporters are quick sketch artists, not painters. Therefore, those who provide reporters with timely, accurate and substantive information will secure equity with most reporters, paying dividends regardless of rapport."

How do you deal with clients who think they know strategy better than you do?

"I prefer a confident, competent and enthusiastic client who wants to synergize efforts. Many PR agencies forget the client knows more about their organization than they do and a 'dealing with them' attitude will only undermine your record of success."

Claim to Fame

"I was elected mayor of Safety Harbor, Fla., at 27 years old...I was the youngest GOP mayor in the United States in 1996."

Best Day

"The day my wife of more than 13 years said yes to my asking for her hand in marriage."

In 10 years

"Writing books, giving lectures and special counsel to select organizations and politicians."

Immediate Career Goals

"Expanding our presence in the southeast, establishing best practices for developers in response to the NIMBY [Not in My Backyard] epidemic facing our nation, and electing the next governor of Florida."

Political Heroes

"Ronald Reagan infused a nation with optimism during a time of malaise. Ben Franklin was our nation's Da Vinci, his wisdom was crucial in the birth of our republic. Michael

Deaver, who rocks the PR industry with the 'Deaver Factor.' Karl Rove for elevating President Bush's presidency toward a McKinley legacy."

Secrets of Success

"Taking the road less traveled with passion and a positive mental attitude will get you the keys to a successful career. However, finding, experiencing and achieving grace in everything you do reveals a code that opens the door to a successful life."

Biggest Gripes

"Why gripe? No one wants to hear it. But, if I had to pick one, it would be finding a parking spot during the holiday season."

Predictions

"Jeb Bush will go against his mother's wishes, run for president and win in 2008. His reluctant decision is in response to heightened pressure exerted by anxious GOP leaders who fear their stable of presidential hopefuls cannot win the race on Election Day."

Best Moment in a Campaign

"'60 Minutes' coverage of tort reform in Mississippi: Working for NFIB in fall of 2001, packaged three membership meetings in Tupelo, Meridian and Hattiesburg and launched a statewide grass-roots tort reform campaign. We kicked off the effort in Biloxi focused on generating local buzz in each market, which quickly triggered an avalanche of statewide and national news coverage, producing editorials for months demanding tort reform in Mississippi. Our four-day, grass-roots campaign established political traction, got the anti-lawsuit campaign out of first gear, and ultimately helped pass tort reform in Mississippi."

Worst Moment in a Campaign

"Do not recall."

If I Were President for a Day

"I would take Air Force One out for a spin and then land in Area 51 to check out the hype."