

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



GRASSLANDS
A JOURNALISM-MINDED AGENCY

High-Profile NYC Publishing Veteran Enters Buzzy Cannabis MarCom Landscape, Joins Boutique Agency Grasslands

Grasslands Appoints ex-Condé Nast Managing Editor Debbie McHugh as Chief of Staff to Steer Growth as Firm Ramps Up Services to Clients Across Highly Regulated Industries

DENVER—Dec. 18, 2018—As dynamic full-service communications firm [Grasslands](#) continues its course of strategic expansion, 20-year publishing veteran Debbie McHugh joins the team as Chief of Staff.

Founded in 2016, Grasslands—which pioneered the *journalism-minded agency* concept rooted in content-forward, deadline-oriented accountability—has quickly positioned itself as a leading communications agency focused on public relations, thought leadership and content curation for businesses operating in highly regulated industries.

“Debbie comes to us with a tremendous background and a wealth of operations and management experience that will solidify Grasslands’ internal processes and embolden our external operations,” said Ricardo Baca, Founder and CEO of the Denver-based agency, which employs 10 full-time staff. “Her connections and relationships with top media publishers, news editors, producers, journalists and literary agents across the country will be transformative for Grasslands, and more importantly, for our clients.”



Ms. McHugh joins Grasslands from publishing company Rodale, Inc. (since acquired by Hearst Communications), where she served in a senior-level role as Director of People Operations & Strategy for all Rodale properties, including *Men’s Health*, *Women’s Health* and *Runner’s World*.

She has extensive top-level experience overseeing large-scale media operations, including roles as senior manager at *Men's Health*, and managing editor with national media outlets spanning print and digital, including Condé Nast Publications, *Seventeen*, *YM* and *Aspen Magazine*. Additionally, Ms. McHugh helped guide the nationwide launch of *Jane* magazine, where she also served as managing editor. Throughout her more than two decades in the publishing industry, Ms. McHugh has helped recruit and hire numerous senior-level editors and nurtured countless careers in the media-publishing industry.

"I look forward to the years ahead and helping lift Grasslands to the next level of MarCom service," Ms. McHugh said. "I'm excited to be working alongside Ricardo Baca, who is without a doubt one of the most highly respected journalists and thought leaders in the cannabis media space—and a much-needed breath of fresh air in the world of PR agencies."

The growing Denver firm brings journalistic rigor to its full range of agency services, including multi-directional public relations, client thought leadership development, securing high-profile speaking engagements, book development and crafting research-based content for digital and print mediums. The focus on getting things right on tight deadlines comes from Mr. Baca, a 25-year newspaper veteran and the founder / original editor-in-chief of groundbreaking news site *The Cannabist*, an award-winning vertical of Colorado's largest news organization, *The Denver Post*.

Ms. McHugh has demonstrated exceptional acumen in the media-publicity space throughout her career. She spearheaded numerous high-profile partnerships and wide-reaching programs, including the ultra-successful "Search for the Ultimate Men's Health Guy" campaign and the "Next Top Trainer" competition at *Men's Health*, which earned her Rodale's organization-wide Impact Award in 2015.

"This is really a perfect pairing," she continued. "Between my operational expertise and national media contacts, Ricardo's journalism mastery and our team's connections throughout a number of highly regulated industries—Grasslands is primed for the exciting growth ahead.

"And Ricardo is now the third media visionary I've had the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with and support, including Jane Pratt (*Jane* and *Sassy* magazines) and David Zinczenko (*Men's Health*)."

Ms. McHugh is based out of Grasslands' Denver office at 146 W. 12th Ave., in the Golden Triangle. Headquartered in Denver with an office in Los Angeles, Grasslands proudly represents clients in cannabis, government, technology, entertainment, hospitality and healthcare.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Mr. Baca or Ms. McHugh, please reach out to Emily Trigg at XXX-XXX-XXXX or em@mygrasslands.com.

###

About Grasslands: A Journalism-Minded Agency

Grasslands is a full-service boutique agency working with clients in highly regulated industries. A nimble 10-person firm with offices in Denver and Los Angeles, Grasslands specializes in best-in-class Public Relations, Content Marketing, Social Media, Thought Leadership work, Newsletter Campaigns, Book Development and Event Execution for businesses and executives in highly regulated industries. Founder and CEO Ricardo Baca, a 20-year newspaper veteran, has built a seasoned team with more than six decades of top-level journalism experience at outlets including *Men's Health*, *The Denver Post*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Seventeen*, *The Daily Beast* and *Wonkette*—and PR experience with clients including IKEA North America, Farmers Insurance Group, K12 Inc., REI, DuPage Medical Group, Fisher-Price and Emeril Lagasse (*bam!*). Grasslands has a deep bench of experience supporting clients through product launches, acquisitions and IPOs, crisis management and capital funding initiatives.