

# PRWeek

December 2011



## Healthy dialogue p.38

Healthcare PR pros gather to discuss how their jobs are evolving

## MORALE BOOSTER

As SVP of culture and comms, Ginger Hardage spurs enthusiasm at Southwest Airlines through consistent, targeted outreach

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**DIVERSITY AWARD WINNERS HONOR AGENCY EFFORTS**

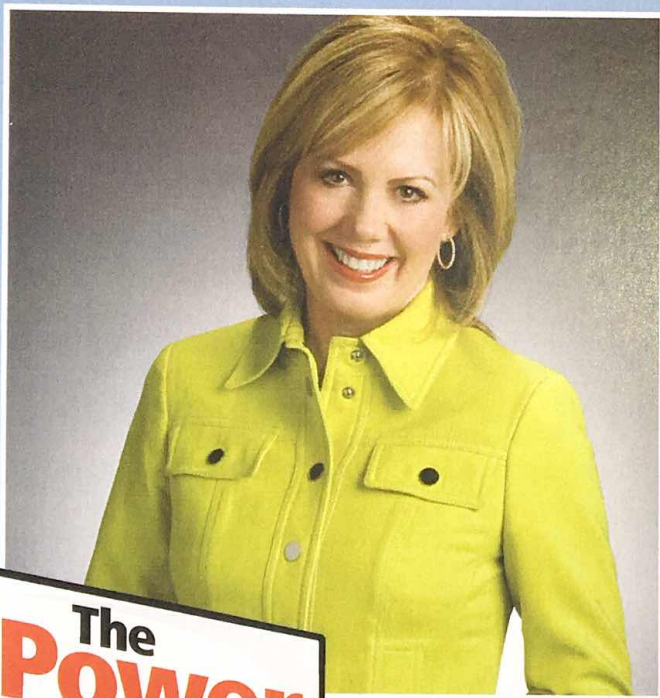
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**SIR MARTIN SORRELL UNDERSCORES THE RISING POWER OF PR**

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## Ginger Hardage

SVP of culture and communications,  
Southwest Airlines

It might surprise some to learn that Southwest Airlines flew more domestic passengers in the US than any other airline in 2010 (according to US Transportation Department data). And that was before this past May, when it finalized its \$1 billion deal to acquire AirTran, which increased Southwest's traffic by about 25%. Combine all those interested consumers with a leading brand in a highly scrutinized sector and you'll likely find a communicator whose message carries some weight.

In 2010, Ginger Hardage was honored as one of Texas' Most Powerful and Influential Women by *Texas Diversity*. Southwest's top-20 "best in class" ranking in a national corporate public affairs survey also validates her efforts.

The 30-year PR veteran describes leadership as such: "Communicating the mission, supporting your team with necessary resources, and getting out of their way so they can achieve great things."



# Ginger Hardage

SVP, culture and communications,  
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Year in and year out, Southwest Airlines appears on many best-of lists and no wonder, the company has never had any lay-offs – an astounding feat in today's economy.

The airline recently passed United Airlines as the largest carrier of local passengers to Denver, having only begun service in the area seven years ago, and there is significant buzz in the news about Southwest going international –

although executives remain tight lipped about future plans.

And one of the cornerstones of a corporate culture and employee morale envied by most businesses is Ginger Hardage, who has been with Southwest since 1990.

Hardage and her team have built a robust slate of initiatives to recognize employees that “live the Southwest way.” One example is Heroes of the Heart, a program that recognizes a behind-the-scenes employee or department that goes above and beyond by painting the names of winners on the side of an airplane for a year.

“I don't think there are many companies that spend as much time as Southwest does on direct employee contact,” she proudly asserts.

