



Co-Founder, Burson-Marsteller

He started Burson-Marsteller in 1953 with Harold Burson. Under their leadership, the agency became a global powerhouse with 2,500 employees in 50 offices.

William "Bill" Marsteller began his career at the Champaign News-Gazette in Illinois. After working for the Chicago Daily News, the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company and the Edward Valve Company, Marsteller joined the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company. As advertising manager, he devised a new name, the Rockwell Manufacturing Company, and rose to become a vice president.

At Rockwell, Marsteller emphasized the importance of the market-research department, which was a fairly new function in the industrial field. The idea of creating a small market-research firm for industrial companies led him to Gebhardt & Brockson, an advertising agency that he purchased. Marsteller incorporated a public relations operation into his business, which aided the growth of his company. The agency, primarily an industrial one, expanded to purchase Richard & Company in 1955 before moving into corporate public relations and consumer advertising. Purchasing the Zlowe Company helped the agency in its expansion into consumer industries and broadened the scope of the agency's business. Marsteller worked tirelessly to build a successful advertising agency and public relations firm whose beginnings were modest but accomplishments great.

Under his leadership, Burson-Marsteller worked with many universities to educate and encourage students to join the world of advertising. The University of Southern California, Northwestern, Syracuse and Florida University are but a handful of colleges that received significant funds from the agency. Marsteller also contributed to the James Webb Young Fund and to Barnard College.

William A. Marsteller, a retired advertising executive who was a member of the Advertising Hall of Fame, died Monday at his home in Palm Beach, Fla. He was 73 years old and also had a residence in Manhattan.

Mr. Marsteller, who retired in 1979, founded Marsteller Inc., which specialized in business-to-business advertising. He also helped found a public-relations concern, Burson-Marsteller. Marsteller Inc. and Burson-Marsteller were acquired in 1979 by Young & Rubicam.

A well-known writer and speaker, he communicated through memorandums to his staff that were the basis for two books, "The Wonderful World of Words" and "Creative Management." Mr. Marsteller was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1979.

He was born in Champaign, Ill., and received a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1937 from the University of Illinois. After college, Mr. Marsteller worked for the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company. He was also a

former vice president of marketing for the Rockwell Manufacturing Company, now part of Rockwell International.

Surviving are his wife, Gloria; two daughters, Julie, of Manhattan, and Elizabeth A. Gordon of San Francisco, and two grandchildren.

Burson-Marsteller is a global public relations and communications firm headquartered in New York City. Burson-Marsteller consists of 77 offices and 85 affiliate offices, together operating in 110 countries across six continents

The company was founded by Harold Burson and William Marsteller in 1953, and, by the early 1980s, had become one of the largest public relations companies in the world. In 1979 it became a subsidiary of Young & Rubicam, which in turn is now owned by WPP Group PLC. In 2018, it merged with Cohn & Wolfe and renamed Burson Cohn & Wolfe. The current CEO of Burson-Marsteller is Don Baer, former communications director for the Clinton administration, who joined the company in 2007 and who replaced Mark Penn as worldwide CEO in July 2012.

The firm provides public relations and advertising services to clients, including multinational corporations and government agencies. It is primarily known for its crisis management services and political lobbying. It has won numerous awards from the public relations industry over the years for its work in high-profile crisis management, including the late 1990s Asian financial crisis, a 2002 extortion attempt against British company GlaxoSmithKline, and a response described as the "gold standard" for its crisis management of the 1982 Chicago Tylenol poisonings. Other high-profile crisis cases include the manufacturers of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station and Egypt following terrorist attacks on tourists in 1993. At times it has also been the subject of protests and criticism for its use of smearing and doubt campaigns (to undermine concerns about passive smoking for Philip Morris in the 1990s and anti-Google smear campaigning for Facebook in 2011) and its work for regimes facing severe human rights criticisms (Argentina and Indonesia). The firm also works in corporate PR, public affairs, technology and healthcare communications, and brand marketing.