

BPRC's 5th Annual Social Media Spring Training Speaker Bios



[Bryan Sears](#), Government Reporter, *The Daily Record*, Annapolis

Bryan Sears is a journalist with experience in local and statewide coverage stretching back over 30 years in Maryland including 20 covering the State House. Over the last 19 he has repeatedly reinvented himself experimenting with social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Periscope and becoming a one-man reporter band writing, shooting video and photos for legacy and online media outlets. For the last eight years he has worked as the state government and politics reporter for The Daily Record in Baltimore. He and his wife are expecting twins later this spring. In his free time, he works on making his Golden Retriever Maggie a minor social media star.



[Claire Knudsen](#), Social Media Director, [TBC](#), Baltimore

Claire Knudsen is the social media director at TBC, an independently owned, full-service branding, advertising and public relations agency with headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. She has nine years of experience in social media marketing and advertising and influencer marketing. At TBC, she leads all social media strategy, spearheading paid and organic social media campaigns, and manages the agency's blogger and influencer relationships.

Prior to joining TBC, Claire was the Senior Social Media Manager at Push, an advertising agency located in Orlando, Florida, that specializes in food, retail and hospitality. At Push, she led social media content strategy for a range of clients including Johnny Rockets, Uno Pizzeria & Grill, Tijuana Flats, Sonny's BBQ, and Another Broken Egg.

Claire holds an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Maryland, College Park. She is a certified Registered Yoga Teacher (200 RYT) and Les Mills certified fitness expert, and shares her passion for fitness as an instructor at CorePower Yoga and Merritt Clubs.



[Mara J. Gassmann](#), [Ballard Spahr](#), Attorney, Seattle

Mara J. Gassmann's practice focuses on litigating and counseling news, entertainment, and other media clients in a wide range of matters implicating their First Amendment and intellectual property rights.

Before beginning her legal career, Mara was a spokesperson for CNN in its Washington, D.C., bureau. During law school, she returned to CNN as a freelance legal writer during the confirmation hearings of Justice Sonia Sotomayor and worked with Reporters Without Borders analyzing the applicability of U.S. asylum law for foreign journalists.

Mara previously was with the highly regarded First Amendment boutique law firm Levine Sullivan Koch & Schulz, which merged with Ballard Spahr in October 2017.



[Karen Cruz](#), President, [The Marketing Click](#), Baltimore

Karen Cruz is an online marketing expert specializing in search marketing, social media, and display marketing. Her ability to understand changing technologies, collaborate cross-functionally, secure win-win situations for all parties, as well as be the “eye in the hurricane of chaos,” has made her an effective and well-respected project manager for companies such as AOL/Advertising.com and Double Positive, where she managed complex ad budgets upwards of \$4MM/month.

Eager to share her talents with others, she draws upon these experiences to promote small to medium-size businesses in the online space as the owner of The Marketing Click, which she founded in 2007. Karen believes that communication, commitment, and building a partnership with clients are the keys to success.