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PROI Worldwide Introduces Founders Award Program

- *Inaugural winners Allard W. and Valerie van Veen, Vancouver, Canada*
- *2021 winner Clare Parsons, Chair, Lansons, London, UK*

Chicago: PROI Worldwide, the world's largest partnership of leading independent communications agencies, announces creation of the PROI Founders Award to recognize outstanding contributions to the organization.

"PROI Worldwide was founded in 1970 by eight communications entrepreneurs with a vision for growing their businesses and helping each other," said Jeff Altheide, PROI Worldwide Global Managing Director. "In their honor we created the Founders Award to recognize individuals making exceptional contributions to the organization which now includes 85 independent communications firms in 55 countries."

Recipients of the Founders Award announced at the PROI Global Summit include:

- **Allard W. and Valerie van Veen, Vancouver, Canada**

Allard van Veen, who at that time owned a leading Canadian communications agency with his wife and business partner, Valerie, was one of the original founders of PROI. In the 50+ years since, he served as Global Chair of the organization, and then the Global Managing Director from 1994–2020. Allard and Valerie became close friends and mentors to dozens of communications agency leaders and fostered the growth of PROI Worldwide to the status it enjoys today. In the van Veens' honor, PROI made a contribution to [Doctors Without Borders](#).

In accepting the award, the van Veens said, "While we are both very honored to receive this award, Valerie finds it especially personally significant. When we entered the PR industry 50 years ago, it was largely a man's world; though women were certainly present, their contributions were seldom publicly recognized. The PR industry has come a long way since, in reflecting the many facets of diversity and inclusion. Also, this award recognizes our partnership as founding members of PROI. In any effective partnership, be it a large international organization such as PROI or a privately owned company such as ours, some partners are more visible, some less so. The contributions of all partners are equally important to the success of the company or organization. This award, to both of us, recognizes the essence of a successful partnership."

- **Clare Parsons, Chair, Lansons, London, UK**

With Lansons being a long-time PROI Partner, Clare has served on the PROI Board and been involved with countless committees and programs. She was the first woman to serve as Global Chair of PROI, during the 2018–2020 term. Clare was recognized for strong leadership and guiding PROI through a significant growth and transition phase during her term. In Clare’s honor, PROI made a contribution to [The Felix Project](#), a London-based organization that collects fresh, nutritious food that cannot be sold, and delivers this surplus food to charities and schools.

In accepting the award, Clare said, “I’ve really enjoyed contributing to PROI. It’s a great organization with inspiring and talented agency leaders, ambitious entrepreneurs, experts in their fields. I’m hugely proud to be the first woman to lead PROI, it’s been a privilege. I know there will be more women to follow!”

PROI Worldwide encompasses 85 PR and communications businesses in 165 cities and 55 countries. Altheide says, individually, they are proven leaders in their home markets. Collectively, the PROI partners represent more than US\$913 million in revenue and 6,900 employees. Thousands of clients, including dozens of Fortune 500 companies, trust PROI partners in one or more countries and regions around the world.

About PROI Worldwide

[PROI Worldwide](#) harnesses the collective power of the world’s most ambitious entrepreneurial communications firms. By sharing global insights and best practices, PROI agencies remain best in market trendsetters, supporting the drive to deliver the most impactful communications campaigns for their clients. In 2020, PROI encompassed 80 partners with 6,900 employees in more than 165 cities and 55 countries. With combined revenue of more than US\$913 million, PROI ranked 5th among consolidated communications groups, and was the only one that is based on a unique partnership of independent business people.