

MARKETWISE

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

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MARKETING ISRAEL is not an easy job, but the **Facing Tomorrow** conference initiated by President **Shimon Peres** to mark the nation's 60th anniversary generated more positive publicity over a few days than some of the country's best spokespeople were able to achieve collectively in the space of a year. Of course, it helped to have people like US President **George W. Bush** in attendance, as well as presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers and top-ranking former officials from other countries, along with global personalities from hi-tech, academia and the business world from more than half the countries with which Israel enjoys diplomatic relations. How much would all the publicity have been worth if Israel had to pay for it?

Charley Levine, CEO of Lone Star Communications, at a meeting with Peres this week, put forward a conservative ballpark figure of \$25 million, with well over 1,000 reports on television channels and radio stations and in newspapers and periodicals around the globe, and close to 500 correspondents reporting from the conference. Lone Star handled the foreign media at the conference, and Levine presented Peres with a review and analysis of the coverage.

According to Peres, there's going to be a similar conference in 2009. Will it attract the same kind of top-ranking attendance? Perhaps – especially if it's related in some way to the Tel Aviv centenary celebrations. After all, Tel Aviv is the cultural, hi-tech and business capital of Israel, and its 100th birthday warrants a conference with 3,000 or more participants.



CHARLEY LEVINE, whose public relations company handled the foreign media at the recent Facing Tomorrow conference, this week told President Shimon Peres the free publicity from the worldwide media that covered the event would have cost the country \$25 million if it had had to pay for it. (Courtesy)