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Look at the opportunities in corporate communications

Janet Rose

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JOURNAL OF THESIS ABSTRACTS

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AUTHOR: Janet Rose

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ADVISOR'S DEPT: Communication Studies

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SUBJECT HEADINGS: (CHOOSE FIVE KEY WORDS) _____

Trends, Careers, Specialists, Corporations, Job Connections

ABSTRACT (100-200 words):

The purpose of my brochure is to inform students majoring in corporate

communications about the latest trends, different areas of specialty and

job prospects in the area. I also want to present some of the options I've

found available in starting out. In researching my topic, I used the

career resources available in Northern's Career Placement Center. I also

surveyed professionals in the field over the phone at PR firms and large

Chicago-based companies. In doing research, I found that many opportunities
exist, yet job availability is tight. This is especially true for the positions

in corporations. People in corporate positions usually "stay put" for years, and

openings are rare. Corporate cutbacks also contribute to this situation.

To work their way into the field, students may have to settle for a low-

paying or no paying job to make connections or get their foot in the door.

The saying, "It's not what you know but who you know" definitely applies in
this field --at least in the beginning!

For Office Use:

THESIS NUMBER: _____

JAN 30 1989

Northern Illinois University 
DeKalb, Illinois 60115-2854

University Honors Program
815 753 0694

January 20, 1989

To: Charles Larson
Communication Studies

From: Marion Miller, Director
University Honors Program

Marion

Janet Rose dropped off two copies of her Capstone project
-- one for you.

If you approve of her work, could you please sign and
return the approval sheet to the Honors House?

Thanks.

/rcn
Enc.

*→ The dept needs Janet's
permission to reprint copies
for our majors. Do you
expect to communicate with
her soon? If so, please have
her contact me.*

Thrx

CMJ

Approved: Work by Janet Rose / Charles W. Rose

Department of: COMS.

Date: 1/26/89

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Look at the
Opportunities
in
Corporate Communications

A Brochure submitted to the University Honors Program
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree
With University Honors

Department of Communications

by

Janet Rose

DeKalb, Illinois

December 1988

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LOOK

at
the

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in

Corporate

Communications

1989

INTRODUCTION

In compiling this brochure, I sought the most recent information on possible career paths for the corporate communications student. Since the field is so broad, making choices (as I am finding), can be quite overwhelming. I hope that this publication will be helpful to you in your investigation of trends and opportunities in the communications industry.

Because of the field's magnitude and diversity, I could never attempt to cover the entire range of possibilities available in corporate communications without my brochure turning into a book. For simplicity, I divided the brochure into several parts designed to give you an overview of the career situation.

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What's New in Corporate Communication

CHANGE

Change in the business world is effecting the way top management is viewing the communication function within the organization. In some cases, change is beneficial to the future of corporate communications, and in others --- detrimental. The following are a few changes being made:

- * Management hiring and firing at top levels.
- * Reductions in corporate staffs.
- * Department chargebacks for time and overhead.
- * Outside PR firms replacing long-standing corporate staff people.
- * Ex-employees opening new agencies with short-term contracts, or no contracts at all.

THE SITUATION

According to Jim Arnold, an associate at the management consulting company of Chester Arnold and Associates, the days of traditional communication have ended, and a new business force is moving in. He says, "long-term communication goals like building a favorable reputation just aren't considered as important anymore. Instead, CEOs are asking for measurable, short-term results that support their business goals. Pat Jackson, editor of PR Reporter agrees. He sees the trend moving from what he calls "old-fashioned" communication to new, mostly temporary solutions that answer specific needs.

DOWNSIZING

Corporate restructuring has a way of turning the communication specialist's job upsidedown and out. Corporations are cutting costs and downsizing to small staffs of "generalists" who handle a variety of tasks. As a result, the so called "specialists" lose job opportunities in corporations. Headhunting and placement agencies report record numbers of corporate editors, speech writers, designers, photographers and AV experts out-of-work, particularly at very senior or very junior levels. Dennis Spring, a recruiter from New York also notices the diminishing need for specialists. He says, "What corporations are looking for are good all-around communicators, particularly with financial or media relations experience. Agency experience is also a plus as it shows that the candidate is used to juggling assignments and tracking time and expenses."

GOOD NEWS FOR STUDENTS

Companies are adding new blood! Jim Arnold of Chester Arnold and Associates says, "Communication is seen as another weapon in the corporation's arsenal." Using the old axiom of war being too important to leave to the generals, he says that CEOs are looking for new blood who have the business savvy, management skills and performance standards to navigate an effective counteroffense.

CHANGING ROLES

Through corporate restructuring and downsizing, the corporate communicator's job is often sacrificed. The more popular euphemism is called "value-added managing." This means that the communicator must be innovative in creating a position. According to Peter Nulty in a Fortune article (Feb.2,1987), most people in the disappearing positions provide ancillary services, such as law or public relations, or act as mediators analyzing for senior management what's happening in lower ranks and interpreting to the lower ranks directives coming from above.

Nulty says that this new area of filtering and refiltering information serves to minimize risk by preventing corporate mistakes. People being phased out of one area of communications in a company may consider changing their role to fit such a position.

QUANTIFY RESULTS

Larry Hincker, manager of external affairs at Sunstrand Corporation in Rockford puts the concept of "value added meaning" into common terms. He says, "If your company operates on a 10 percent profit margin and your department costs \$250,000 annually, the company needs to sell \$2.5 million in product to pay for you. You, therefore, need to show how you're worth \$2.5 million." More and more CEOs are predicted to expect returns on the communications investment in quantifiable terms.

Communications as a Career

Think back to your speech classes.

Remember how the audience could make or break a speech depending on their reaction. From a corporation's perspective, audience reactions have a similarly great impact on how well it fairs in the marketplace, the investment community, and, when government is involved, as a corporate citizen. Therefore, the corporate communicator's performance in maintaining the audience's satisfaction is crucial. Some of the most common audiences are customers, employees of the company, stockholders, local citizens and government officials who watch over the company's safety and environmental practices.

More and more communications specialists are being called on to transfer corporate messages to their audiences. According to Myra Kruger, regional communications manager for the consulting firm Forster and Crosby, "The number of communications jobs is increasing, and at the same time, so is the professionalism of the communications practitioners."

Most functions of communications are similar, yet their execution can differ significantly. Corporate communications must deal with a broad spectrum of communications from internal to external. The three main communications specialties include employee relations, investor relations and media relations. Descriptions of these three areas follow.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Some companies have established corporate cultures through firm beliefs and generations of family building up the company name, while others are more or less an assemblage of neatly figured financial statements. Much of the work in helping a corporation relate to others by promoting a corporate culture or philosophy is the job of an employee relations specialist. The minimum employee relations (ER) function is to produce an ongoing weekly or monthly newsletter. Some companies have invested in expensive video conferencing methods in order to show tapes or management lectures to distant office staffs. Other companies have organized comprehensive seminar series to key staffs brought into the organization regularly for teaching, motivational work and strategic planning.

Many of the activities can be looked on as simple morale building which is a way to keep staff in sync. Morale boosting is a worthy goal in itself, yet ER can have even greater significance. When large, fast-growing companies are changing their business strategies on an almost monthly basis, employee relations is an important force in directing the company's ideas.

INVESTOR RELATIONS

Recently, investors have become an important audience for the corporation, and staffs have been developed specially for transferring news to this public. There are several reasons for the recent attention toward investors, but the most prominent reason is corporate raiding! Raiding had become popular in the past few years to attack the management of a company by appealing to its stockholders. In order to prevent such takeovers, the investor relations specialist is responsible for keeping lines of communication open to individual stockholders as well as the financial community.

MEDIA RELATIONS

A media relations specialist is usually part of a larger public affairs department whose staff is responsible for handling queries from print and electronic media. The media relations specialist also goes by the name publicist, whose further duties will be expanded on in the next section.

In the larger corporations, communications becomes very specialized. Some of the other positions include community relations, government relations, and marketing. The college relations specialist is another subgroup which has recently emerged in the field.

MORE TRENDS

According to IABC's (International Association of Business Communicator's) polls of its members, in 1985 salaries were at a low of \$10,000 and a high of \$100,000. The average salary was \$33,900 going up from 1983. Highest salaries were most often found in automotive industries, followed by forest products/paper, pharmaceuticals, and metals mining. Lowest salaries were found in publishing, education and medical/hospital areas.

The preferred training for a person interested in the field is a communications degree. Journalism is also a popular choice. Regardless of the college program, the most indispensable career asset according to IABC's Kruger, is polished writing skills. She says, "Even with jobs or programs with a heavy emphasis on oral skills or other means of communication, one needs the discipline of writing. I can't think of any communications job where writing skills aren't required."

Once the communications graduate has a grip on writing skills, he can increase his chance of success by developing expertise in one of the new electronic media. Videotaping, for example, has been an up and coming tool of the communicator. With rapid advances in such innovations as telecommunications, personal computers and video conferencing, it will pay to continue learning.

The Specialists

* Even though the trends suggest a recent decline in the need for specialists, it is important to learn about each position in becoming a well-rounded communicator.

THE PUBLICIST

The publicist (or media relations specialist) is responsible for tasks such as organizing press conferences, publicity campaigns for media events, and alerting television newspaper assignment desks of spontaneous events. Media relations is the stronghold of a public relations program, which is any effort to promote goodwill and communicate on behalf of a corporation, social welfare organization, trade association, labor union, government agency, or individual.

THE PR TEAM: Publicists are crucial to the public relations team. Unlike advertising, the publicity involved in a publicist's job is free (print and broadcast media). Because of this, an extremely high number of stories are originated by publicists. For example, in the situation of a hospital wanting to fill more beds, the public relations staff could suggest that the hospital sponsor a health fair. Hospital publicists would work with local media to cover the fair and arrange an appearance by the hospital's director to be aired on local television news.

Entry-level salaries for a publicist range from \$10,000 - \$25,000 depending on one's experience, education, locality, type and size of agency or organization. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) reports that the median 1985 salary for public relations specialists was \$43,000. Consumer product companies tend to pay the most (\$59,000) and nonprofits (excluding hospitals and trade associations) pay the least (\$31,650). Top salaries according to the PRSA can exceed \$100,000.

Differences exist in working for public relations agencies and in-house for public relations departments of organizations. Agencies manage a variety of different clients, are more flexible, less predictable in the amount of work and more creative. Organizations, on the other hand, usually have clearly defined objectives and offer good benefits including better job security.

IN THE BEGINNING: Beginning publicists perform a variety of diverse tasks. Some of these include developing lists of appropriate press and media contacts for the client's materials; writing press releases and feature stories for distribution to particular media; booking the client's spokespeople on television and radio shows; and contacting writers and editors to interest them in a story on some angle of the client's business.

The publicist is frequently liason between client and media. Usually, clients want immediate media attention, and the good media specialist is able to match the best media exposure for the particular occasion.

In this growing field of communications, a liberal arts degree is a requirement for practically all entry-level jobs. According to a recent poll of CEOs, the degrees considered as "good background" include communication studies, journalism and public relations. The most important attributes of a successful publicist are good writing and oral communication skills.

THE SPEECH WRITER

If you are interested in prestige and wealth--speech writing may be the career path for you. According to Larry Marshall, principal of Marshall Consultants, you can have it all as a speech writer! He reports that his firm has placed people in positions paying \$60,000 to \$70,000 annually with several receiving in excess of \$100,000. In addition, since the corporate speech writers usually work closely with the CEO, president and other top professionals, they can win great respect in these circles and make the move to top corporate positions.

According to Marshall, the strongest demand for speech writers is coming from companies undergoing rapid change that feel a need to make their cases public. Firms that are characteristic of this need are in fields such as high tech, financial services, medical and professional services.

Government and political associations such as the U.S. Cabinet department hire speech writers for comparable salaries. A senior Cabinet speech writer might make \$60,000. As a bit of trivia, the last president to insist upon writing his own speeches was Woodrow Wilson.

Elena Sansalone, who heads a group of 10 professional writers at Hill and Knowlton says she divides most business speeches into three categories: the "nuts and bolts" variety, given on routine basis to keep workers, community bodies and customers informed; policy speeches, in which the CEO lays out important aspects of a company strategy; and crisis speeches, given in response to hostile takeover bids, pollution spills, plant shut-downs and other misfortunate events.

In the time between writing speeches, the writer will do such activities as preparing the corporate or product publicity news releases. Since there is a great amount of flexibility in work assignments, younger copy writers have the opportunity to take a shot at speech writing. The first step for a young writer may be to write a section of a speech; progression in the field would depend largely upon building up one's reputation. The median salary for beginning speech-writers is \$19,000 a year.

The college backgrounds of Sansalone's writers at Hill and Knowlton (the largest PR firm in Chicago) are diverse. Some have journalism degrees and newspaper experience, whereas others have had training in the social sciences, history, and English.

SECRETS OF SUCCESS: Whereas one's academic specialty is not of foremost importance, certain "people skills" such as diplomacy and sensitivity to the intricacies of corporate life are a must. In order to be successful, the writer must be persuasive enough to win interviewing time with the top executive giving the speech so that he can tailor it to his needs and personality.

In most organizations, the speech begins as an idea or theme started by a top manager. The first task of the speech writer is to form an outline, next a draft and then numerous revisions in which all upper management will seemingly have something to say. The job can be quite stressful with tight deadlines to work under.

Despite the constraints, speech writers find their trade to be rewarding and intellectually stimulating. They often have the chance to become part of the highest levels in an organization. In the words of RCA's John Casey, a 16 year veteran in the field, "Speech writing is one of the few jobs in which you can put your feet up on your desk, read a book, and still be doing your work."

CRISIS MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST

Do you remember the case of the tainted Tylenol capsules? The Tylenol story is an example of good crisis management. Thanks to fast action by a team of crisis experts from Burson-Marsteller, a leading national public relations firm, the public's confidence in the product was restored. According to John LaSage, executive vice-president and general manager of Burson's Chicago office, "The importance of crisis management is that it gives a corporation or organization a working plan by which it can deal with a crisis as quickly and efficiently as possible." Mr. LaSage says that the most crucial time in a crisis is the first two or three days.

Crisis management seems to be growing. A national survey by Western Union Corporation, shows the growing awareness of the need for crisis management. It shows that 57 percent of the largest U.S. corporations now have operational plans for crisis management. Another sign of the specialty's growth is that colleges are adding graduate courses in crisis management.

According to the PR Reporter, the median salary of PR consultants in general is \$45,000. Top executives in charge of crisis management for major public relations firms, have yet higher salaries that range from \$70,000 a year to \$250,000.

THE OUTLOOK IS GOOD: Dwayne Summar, president of the Public Relations Society Of America (PRSA) says that there is a need for people who have experience in crisis management. According to Summar, "With all of the changes in our technologically advanced society, companies have to know what they will say to television reporters and other media people. Skilled crisis managers with complete and detailed information available to the media and public, develop trust. In that way, people aren't wondering if there's a coverup."

Overall, crisis management is a team effort to promote trust and uphold the company's good name in time of trouble. Even though there are unlimited opportunities in the field, people involved should have a cool head and be able to talk the language of top management.

Corporate Chicago

For this section, I have selected several corporations from Scholl's Corporate Guide of Chicago-based companies. I surveyed a variety of professionals from various companies who were knowledgeable about their corporate communications department. Most of the people I spoke with were in personnel or managers of the corporate communications and related departments. The results will hopefully give you an idea as to what the norms are for a corporate communicator in a variety of Chicago-based corporations.

*Note: The result format varies because I had to tailor my results to different replies.

THE QUAKER OATS COMPANY

321 N. Clark Street, Chicago, Il. 60610
Telephone: 222-7111

Description: The Quaker Oats Company is an international marketer of foods, pet foods and toys.

Name of Department:

*Public Affairs (divided into subgroups)

- 1) Investor Relations
- 2) Shareholder Relations
- 3) Media Relations
- 4) Employee Relations
- 5) Corporate Communications
- 6) Executive Relations

Size of Department:

- *50 employees in public affairs
- * 29,800 total employees

How They Recruit:

- * You basically have to know someone or make yourself known.
- * Quaker Oats does not usually recruit on campuses for the communications area.

Salary:

- * 25,000 on the average for entry-level positions.

Resume Highlights:

- * They look for a good G.P.A. and related work experience (well-rounded students).

Duties: (of corporate communications section)

- * In charge of special projects and lobby exhibit.

Trends: The importance of knowing business as well as communications.

Advancement Outlook: Good advancement from within. They post jobs internally before seeking outside employees.

WASTE MANAGEMENT INC.

3003 Butterfield Road, Oakbrook, Il. 60521
Telephone: 572-8800

Description: Waste Management, Inc. is the world's largest waste service company. Operations include collection, transfer, processing and disposal of hazardous and solid waste. It also manages low-level radioactive wastes and resource recovery.

Name of Department: Corporate Communications

Size of Department:

- * 6 professionals and 4 support staff.
- * 24,500 total employees.

How They Recruit:

- * Send in resume.
- * They look for people with at least two years of experience. There is no training for entry level in the communications department.
- * Some people grow into the position by starting in the human resources department.

Salary: \$24,000 for entry-level.

Duties:

- * Develop video tapes and slides.
- * Write annual report and photography.
- * Print national and bi-weekly newsletters
- * Produce company commercials with outside agency.
- * Keep media informed.
- * Coordinate tradeshow exhibits.

Trends: The communications industry is growing as a whole.

Advancement Outlook: Advancement is good, and the employee grows into several different positions.

A.M. Castle and Company

3400 North Franklin Park, Il. 60131
Telephone: 625-6411

Description: A.M. Castle and Company is one of the nation's largest suppliers of high technology and specialty metals.

Name of Department: customer service/Sales

Size of Department:

- * 50 employees
- * 1300 in entire company.

How They Recruit: Send in resume.

Salary: \$18,000-\$21,000 entry-level.

Advancement Possibilities:

- * Good- Employees hired in the areas of customer service, sales or purchasing are able to rotate positions.

Trends: There is a trend in the type of customer buying metals. It is moving from construction oriented customers to those who are interested in aerospace and robotics.

Inland Steel Industries Inc.

30 West Monroe Street, Chicago, Il. 60603
Telephone: 346-0300

Description: Inland Steel Industries is a holding company whose primary activities are centered in two business segments. They manufacture four principal lines of products: sheets, bars plates and structures.

Name of Department: Corporate Communications

Size: 4 professionals and 2 clerks .
Total- 22,700 employees

How They Recruit:

- * They promote from within and advertise in professional journals.
- * No entry-level positions
- * Five years of experience is required on an average depending on the position.

Salary: \$35,000-\$100,000 (varying with age, importance of job and years with the company).

Duties:

- * Public Relations and News Media Relations.
- * Publishing of Annual and quarterly financial reports.
- * Corporate publications such as the company magazine.
- * Advice and council to chairman of company.

Trends: There has been a trimming of staffs, yet there is always a need for communicators.

Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company

410 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Il. 60611
Telephone: 644-2121

Description: The Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company is the largest producer of chewing gum in the world.

Name of Department: Secretaries Department

Size: 30 in department; 5,500 in company.

Duties:

- * Writing annual Report.
- * Consumer relations.
- * Stockholder relations.

Advancement:

- * Good possibilities of advancement to consumer affairs administration. The next step is vice-president of corporate affairs.

Trends: There is a need for corporate communicators.

Salary: ? (Secret Info.)

Making Connections

JOIN A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

One method of "making yourself known" among professionals in the communications field is to post an ad on yourself in the IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) Job Bulletin published monthly by the association. They often have a special students edition where for a small fee, students can get a head start on the job search, begin networking and apply for future membership in the association. The below ad from a Job Bulletin explains the application process. Call for information on the next student's edition!

HOW TO USE THE IABC/PCC/PRSA/WICI JOB BULLETIN

TO PLACE AN AD:

Communications Professionals Available or Freelancers Available.
Send a 65-75 word summary of your qualifications along with 10 or more resumes. In addition, state how many months you'd like your ad to run and what kind of ad you'd like: Professionals Available or Freelancers Available. Professionals Available ads will be assigned a confidential box number and replies will be forwarded promptly. Freelancers Available ads should include an address or telephone number for direct contact.
COST: \$10/ad members*, \$20/ad non-members (note correction from brochure)

Employers

Send a 65-75 word summary of the job opening(s). Replies to your ad will be directed to a confidential box number and forwarded promptly. As an added benefit, payment for your ad entitles you to one free data bank search upon request. Call Sean Clancy, Data Bank Coordinator for details at 372-7090.
COST: \$25/ad members*, \$50/ad non-members

*Member of IABC/PCC/PRSA/WICI or employ one or more members of same

For information on the IABC/PCC/PRSA/WICI Data Bank, call Sean Clancy, Data Bank Coordinator at 372-7090.

TO RESPOND TO AN AD:

Positions Available
Send all information requested in Positions Available ads to The Job Network (see address below). Be sure to indicate the box number on your envelope. There is no charge.

Professionals Available
Contact The Job Network office at 372-7744 and request resumes from the ads you saw in the Job Bulletin. They will be forwarded to you promptly. There is no charge.

Freelancers Available
Contact the individual in the ad directly.

Send ad and check payable to The Job Network (include membership status) to:
The Job Network
30 North Michigan Ave. Suite 306
Chicago, IL 60602

The deadline for each issue is the 15th of the preceding month.

Further Questions? Call 372-7744.

The following is a sample ad you can use
as a reference in constructing your own:

**DEPAUL SENIOR—DECEMBER '88
GRADUATE. B.A. in communications.
Looking for a job leading to a career in PR.
Completed two PR Internships for college
credit. Strong interpersonal skills.
Volunteer PR work. PCC Member. Seven
years administrative/secretarial experi-
ence. PC, word processing experience.
Portfolio available for review. Contact
Susan M. Ciastko at 248-6704.**

BE AN INTERN

Interning is a great way to supplement your studies, find out if the field is right for you, and get your foot in the door. Beside gaining valuable experience, you can also begin networking for that future job. Many agencies look upon the internship as an auditioning period where good performances can lead to a job offer. Some agencies even pay their interns. Following is a list of several PR agencies in Chicago that accept interns:

S and S Public Relations Inc.
40 Skokie Blvd.
Northbrook 60062
291-1616

Public Communications Inc.
35 E. Wacker Drive Ste. 1254
Chicago 60601
558-1770

Jacula/Terman & Associates Inc.
730 N. Franklin St.
Chicago 60610

Ketchum Public Relations
142 E. Ontario St. 11th Fl.
Chicago 60611
266-4550

Bozell & Jacobs Public Relations
625 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Il. 60611
988-2000

Burson-Marsteller
1 E. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, Il. 60601
329-9292

Carl Byoir & Associates
401 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Il. 60611
527-5100

Aaron D. Cushman & Associates
35 E. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, Il. 60601
263-2500

The Financial Relations Board
150 E. Huron St.
Chicago, Il. 60611
266-7800

Hill & Knowlton
111 E. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, Il. 60601
565-1200

Ketchum Communications
405 N. Wabash Ave.
Chicago, Il. 60611
266-4550

Margie Korshak & Associates
980 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Il. 60611
751-2121

Ruder, Finn & Rotman
444 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Il. 60611
644-8600

Last Remarks

know a little bit more about
lications and the
to offer, you can hopefully
search in a more directed
ing, I would like to extend
ts I have learned so far about
corporate world:

you can do something or not;

H. Ford

a small-minded person in the
er.

through changing -- you are

LEAVE BY:

have a plan B.