

■ ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION, CAREERS IN

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By the end of the twentieth century, the United States and other developed countries (especially Japan and most of the countries in Europe) had become information- and service-based economies. Due to the need to manage more complex social and institutional activities, and due to the rise of systematic management, communication media, computing systems, and telecommunications networks, more and more organizational activities have become symbolic—the creation, communication, and interpretation of information. Organizational communication and information professionals—“symbolic analysts” or “knowledge workers”—will play an increasingly crucial role in society and the economy.

The U.S. Department of Labor (2000c) predicts that there will be growth in the number of communication and information jobs between 1998 and 2008. Within the industrial sector, which will grow by 14.4 percent overall, the services sector will have the largest growth (31%). The largest expected growth will be in professional specialties (27%), technical and related support (22%), service (17.1%), executives, administration, and managerial (16.4%), and marketing and sales (14.9%). The top ten industries with the fastest wage and salary employment growth will include computer and data processing services (117%), management and public relations (45%), and research and testing services (40%). The top six fastest growing occupations will be computer engineers (108%), computer support specialists (102%), systems analysts (94%), database administrators (77%), desktop publishing specialists (73%), and paralegals and legal assistants (62%). Overall, the top ten occupations with the largest job growth include systems analysts, general managers and top executives, office clerks, and computer support specialists. The rise of the Internet, of course, has generated entirely new classes of

communication/information workers (see U.S. Department of Labor, 2000b).

Communication Careers

Disciplinary and association career guides, such as those noted in the bibliography section of this entry, provide good descriptions of the kinds of jobs, the educational and skill requirements, related disciplines, salary ranges, and associations related to communication and information professions.

Communication jobs can be categorized in a variety of ways:

- Advertising (marketing, copy writer, sales manager, media planner, media sales representative, opinion researcher, agency manager, account manager, creative/art director, publicity and promotion, etc.)
- Communication disorders (speech-language pathology, audiology, teaching, research)
- Communication education (media librarian, language arts coordinator, drama or debate director, university professor, etc.)
- Corporate communications (investor relations, environmental affairs, government relations, issues management, crisis management, public affairs, strategic planning, media relations, employee relations, community relations, marketing, special events, publicity, advertising, fundraising, media production)
- Electronic media (radio/television station personnel, film/tape librarian, engineer, community relations director, traffic/continuity specialist, media buyer, market researcher, actor, announcer, account executive, writer, news reporter or anchor, director, lighting director, multimedia developer, Internet information management, website developer, interactive materials producer, music librarian, video specialist, announcer, etc.)
- Publishers (print or electronic reporter, editor, copy writer, script writer, trade magazine representative, advertising sales, direct mail researcher, art and design, archivist/librarian, news service researcher, photography, technical writer, media critic/reviewer, media interviewer, printing, columnist, book editor, contract manager, literary agent, feature writer, freelance writer, etc.)



Tom Grimmer—the communications director for the Credit Suisse First Boston group—speaks to reporters outside the Credit Suisse's Tokyo branch office in October 1999 after the Japanese police had raided Credit Suisse Financial Products on suspicion that it obstructed an earlier inspection by Japanese financial regulators. (Reuters NewMedia Inc./Corbis)

- Public relations (publicity manager, marketing specialist, press agent, lobbyist, crisis management, press secretary, sales manager, media analyst, conference organizer, media planner, audience analyst, public opinion researcher, fund raiser, development officer, account executive, etc.)
- Theater/performing arts (performer, script writer, events organizer, producer, director, arts educator, lighting/design, theater librarian/historian, makeup/costume, theater critic, professor of theater and film, etc.)

Almost all other careers involve multiple aspects of communication and information. Some of the most relevant include business, education, government/politics, foreign service, educational institutions, high technology industries, health

centers, international relations and negotiations, law, and social and human services.

Organizational Communication and Information Professionals

Some theorists such as Chester Barnard and Karl Weick have argued that organizations exist only through the process of communicating, whereby members attempt to make sense of information by communicating with others. The work that is performed by managers primarily involves providing oral communication with external and internal information sources, making decisions from incomplete and contradictory information, developing formal and informal communication networks, scanning the environment and spanning organizational boundaries, and depending on organizational structures to filter and evaluate information. Communication and information are central aspects of all organizational activities, from managing offices, developing satisfying jobs and worker relations, motivation and commitment, up to corporate redesign, information systems implementation, and marketplace strategy.

The book *Managing Information for the Competitive Edge* (1996), which was edited by Ethel Auster and Chun Choo and contains good reviews of these topics, argues that "information management" represents the beginning of convergence of the knowledge and skills of a range of professions—as indicated by the rise in executive titles such as chief information officer and by the growth in research and consulting in the fields of information resource management and knowledge management. A United Kingdom report noted in the book listed the following five positions as the most important areas for information management: information strategy, systems development, management of information, training, and liaison among other managers. New university programs and degrees in communication/information include multidisciplinary domains such as information science, information systems, database managers, user-interface and usability evaluator, communication, psychology and sociology, management, health informatics, information management in a variety of institutional settings, and Internet use and evaluation.

The rise of team/project structures, virtual organizations, and groupware or collaborative

technology (such as desktop video, audio, and text conferencing, shared files and documents, and asynchronous task management), and contract and outsourced employment, all require greater knowledge of nonverbal, interpersonal, team, and organizational communication.

Jobs involving information handling, networking, managerial awareness of information technology, and project management will become more frequent and important. Four basic organizational information competencies are monitoring performance, correcting performance, improving systems, and designing new systems.

Many organizational communication textbooks discuss job and career opportunities. Development positions include improving team and organizational effectiveness, training managers, developing and delivering training services, providing sales and customer service training, career development, and offering technical and skills training. Public contact positions include public affairs, community relations, media relations, and employee relations, as well as the more familiar marketing and personal sales. Finally, general management careers pervade for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

A search of an online career placement service, using the search term "organizational communication," found more than two thousand job listings. Examples (with the main category capitalized and the communication-related subcategory in lower case) include Account Management, Administrative Support meetings & marketing, Advertising Management, Art Director of Magazine, Business Process Consultant, Clerical Ad Team coordinator, Consulting senior writer, Creative Services corporate communications, Desktop Publishing online senior editor, Education/Training instructional designer, Entertainment audiovisual, Executive director of communications, General Management media ratings, Graphics, Health Care director of needs assessment, Human Resources personnel management, Internet/Intranet/Extranet editor, Marketing Communications manager, Multimedia information architect, Other catalog marketing strategist, Other collaboration, Other Intra/Inter/Net content specialist, Other conference planner, Other media production team, Other corporate communications, Producer online, Public Relations administrator, Publishing assistant, Secretarial communications coordinator, Technology Development technical

writing, Trade Services internship coordinator, and Training manager.

Additional Sources

Most professional and academic associations have websites that describe their placement services, career opportunities, listings of related disciplines, and summaries of undergraduate and graduate programs. Particularly relevant associations are the American Society for Information Science, the International Communication Association, the National Communication Association, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the Association for Communication Administrators, the International Association of Business Communicators, and the American Speech–Language–Hearing Association. Most all career and occupational books provide resources for local, regional, and national employers, by job type. The *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, produced by the U.S. Department of Labor (2000a), provides a comprehensive list of job descriptions.

See also: INTERNET AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB; ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION; PUBLIC RELATIONS, CAREERS IN.

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