

Cutting-edge Communication Careers

In four years of teaching communications to project management master's students, I've learned a lot about the large and growing impact communications has on business. Nowhere is this more evident than in the way traditional communications careers have evolved, and new communications careers have emerged.

In March, the 146-year-old Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper ceased publication and switched to an all-online format. The venerable Boston Globe is in serious financial trouble as it struggles to compete with online news outlets and bloggers. Television news channels often show video not from professional camerapeople but rather from amateur videographers who happen to be on the scene with camera-equipped cell phones.

Does this mean traditional communications careers are dead? No, but it means people entering those fields need to be technology-savvy to successfully adapt to the changing environment. The following traditional jobs, and more, are listed on a national job board right now: media buyer, corporate communications manager, communications coordinator, public relations intern, visual communication specialist, graphic designer, marketing communications specialist, TV/video/music director, and director of media relations. The same board lists the following technology-related communications jobs: web marketing manager, new media editor, webmaster, technical writer, learning technologist, graphic animator, and web developer.

If you're naturally curious and like to gather information, have good writing or speaking skills, and can take information and tailor it to a specific audience, a career in communications might be for you. In addition to the traditional communications major, you might also consider studying public relations, advertising, journalism, education, training, or marketing. The university where I teach offers classes on new media design, learning technologies, and communications for technology project managers. This summer, it will host an academy for high school students to learn about the growing field of video game development, which employs a wide variety of communication professionals. If you're interested in a career in communications, make sure to check out the course listings for schools you're considering, to see what classes they have to make you a technology-savvy communicator.

Communications professionals are needed in nearly every company, regardless of industry or region. Also, at a time when the economy is shrinking, demand for communications jobs appears strong. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are about 243,000 public relations jobs (growing at 18% annually) earning on average \$47,350 per year. Graphic designers hold 261,000 jobs (growing at 10% annually) earning on average \$39,900 per year. TV news reporters hold 67,000 jobs (no growth projected) and earn about \$33,470 annually.

What can you expect from a career in communications? Jason Kirsch, Director of Marketing and Public Relations for Commerce Bank says "A career in communications offers the chance to build relationships -- with employees, customers, investors and other stakeholders on whom an

organization's success depends. No two days are exactly alike. And communications professionals are often at the center of the action, which is part of what makes the field both exciting and challenging."

Communication Career Links

LatPro

Job board for Hispanic and bilingual professionals
www.latpro.com

National Diversity Newspaper Job Bank

Strives to diversify media with minorities and women
www.newsjobs.com

Minorities in Broadcasting Training Program

Helps place minorities as trainees at radio and TV stations
www.thebroadcaster.com

Harrisburg University of Science and Technology

Offers high-tech majors, classes, and seminars
www.harrisburgu.net

US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook

Shows job descriptions, number of jobs, training needed, and salaries
<http://www.bls.gov/OCO>

Steven Birmingham teaches Professional Communications for I.T. Project Managers at Harrisburg University of Science and Technology. For 10 years, he served as I.T. Director at a \$2 billion financial institution. He holds an M.S.E. in the Management of Technology from the University of Pennsylvania and is a popular seminar speaker on the topics of communications and project management. He is a founding member of The Communication Gym.