

Job Outlook

Overall employment of news analysts, reporters, and correspondents is expected to grow little through the year 2008—the result of mergers, consolidations, and closures of newspapers; decreased circulation; increased expenses; and a decline in advertising profits. In spite of little change in overall employment, some job growth is expected in radio and television stations, whereas more rapid growth is expected in new media areas, such as online newspapers and magazines.

Competition will continue to be keen for jobs on large metropolitan newspapers and broadcast stations and on national magazines. Talented writers who can handle highly specialized scientific or technical subjects have an advantage. Also, more newspapers than before are hiring stringers and freelancers.

Most entry-level openings arise on small publications, as reporters and correspondents become editors or reporters on larger publications or leave the field. Small town and suburban newspapers will continue to offer most opportunities for persons seeking to enter this field.

Turnover is relatively high in this occupation. Some find the work too stressful and hectic, or do not like the lifestyle and transfer to other occupations. Journalism graduates have the background for work in closely-related fields such as advertising and public relations, and many take jobs in these fields. Other graduates accept sales, managerial, or other non-media positions, because of the difficulty in finding media jobs.

The newspaper and broadcasting industries are sensitive to economic ups and downs, because these industries depend on advertising revenue. During recessions, few new reporters are hired; and some reporters lose their jobs.

Earnings

Salaries for news analysts, reporters, and correspondents vary widely but, in general, are relatively high, except at small stations and small publications, where salaries are often very low. Median annual earnings of news analysts were \$26,470 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$19,210 and \$40,930. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$14,100 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$70,140. Median annual earnings of news analysts in radio and television broadcasting were \$28,500 in 1997.

Median annual earnings of reporters and correspondents were \$23,400 in 1997. The middle 50 percent earned between \$17,500 and \$35,600. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$12,900 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$55,100. Median annual earnings of reporters and correspondents in 1997 were \$23,300 in radio and television broadcasting and \$22,600 in newspapers.

According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Broadcasters and the Broadcast Cable Financial Management Association in 1997 and 1998, the annual average salary, including bonuses, for television news reporters was \$33,200 and \$32,300 for radio news reporters. Sportscasters averaged \$52,600 in television broadcasting and \$57,600 in radio broadcasting. Weathercasters earned an average of \$55,000.

Related Occupations

News analysts, reporters, and correspondents must write clearly and effectively to succeed in their profession. Others for whom good writing ability is essential include technical writers, advertising copy writers, public relations workers, educational writers, fiction writers, biographers, screen writers, and editors. Many news analysts, reporters, and correspondents must also communicate information orally. Others for whom oral communication skills are vital are announcers, interpreters, sales workers, and teachers.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on careers in broadcast news and related scholarships and internships, contact:

☛ Radio and Television News Directors Foundation, 1000 Connecticut Ave. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.rtndf.org>

General information on the broadcasting industry is available from:

☛ National Association of Broadcasters, 1771 N St. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.nab.org>

Career information, including pamphlets entitled *Newspaper Career Guide*, and *Newspaper: What's In It For Me?* is available from:

☛ Newspaper Association of America, 1921 Gallows Rd., Suite 600, Vienna, VA 22182.

Information on careers in journalism, colleges and universities offering degree programs in journalism or communications, and journalism scholarships and internships may be obtained from:

☛ The Dow Jones Newspaper Fund, Inc., PO Box 300, Princeton, NJ 08543-0300. Internet: <http://www.dowjones.com>

Information on union wage rates for newspaper and magazine reporters is available from:

☛ The Newspaper Guild, Research and Information Department, 501 3rd St. NW., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20001.

Internet: <http://www.newsguild.org>

For a list of schools with accredited programs in journalism, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

☛ The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Kansas School of Journalism, Stauffer-Flint Hall, Lawrence, KS 66045. Internet: <http://www.ukans.edu/~acejmc>

A pamphlet entitled *Newspaper Careers and Challenges for the Next Century*, can be obtained from:

☛ National Newspaper Association, 1525 Wilson Blvd., Suite 550, Arlington, VA 22209. Internet: <http://www.oweb.com/naa/home2.html>

Names and locations of newspapers and a list of schools and departments of journalism are published in the *Editor and Publisher International Year Book*, available in most public libraries and newspaper offices.

Public Relations Specialists

(O*NET 34008)

Significant Points

- Employment of public relations specialists is expected to increase faster than average, while keen competition is expected for entry-level jobs.
- Opportunities should be best for college graduates who combine a degree in journalism, public relations, advertising, or other communications-related fields with public relations work experience.

Nature of the Work

An organization's reputation, profitability, and even its continued existence can depend on the degree to which its targeted "publics" support its goals and policies. Public relations specialists serve as advocates for businesses, governments, universities, hospitals, schools, and other organizations, and build and maintain positive relationships with the public. As managers recognize the growing importance of good public relations to the success of their organizations, they increasingly rely on public relations specialists for advice on strategy and policy of such programs.

Public relations specialists handle organizational functions such as media, community, consumer, and governmental relations; political campaigns; interest-group representation; conflict mediation; or employee and investor relations. However, public relations is not only "telling the organization's story." Understanding the attitudes and concerns of consumers, employees, and various other groups is also a vital part of the job. To improve communications, public relations specialists establish and maintain cooperative relationships with representatives of community, consumer, employee, and public interest groups and those in print and broadcast journalism.

Informing the general public, interest groups, and stockholders of an organization's policies, activities, and accomplishments is an important part of a public relations specialist's job. Their work keeps management aware of public attitudes and concerns of the many groups and organizations with which they must deal.

Public relations specialists prepare press releases and contact people in the media who might print or broadcast their material. Many radio or television special reports, newspaper stories, and magazine articles start at the desks of public relations specialists. Sometimes the subject is an organization and its policies towards its employees or its role in the community. Often the subject is a public issue, such as health, nutrition, energy, or the environment.

Public relations specialists also arrange and conduct programs for contact between organization representatives and the public. For example, they set up speaking engagements and often prepare speeches for company officials. These specialists represent employers at community projects; make film, slide, or other visual presentations at meetings and school assemblies; and plan conventions. In addition, they are responsible for preparing annual reports and writing proposals for various projects.

In government, public relations specialists—who may be called press secretaries, information officers, public affairs specialists, or communications specialists—keep the public informed about the activities of government agencies and officials. For example, public affairs specialists in the Department of Energy keep the public informed about the proposed lease of offshore land for oil exploration. A press secretary for a member of Congress keeps constituents aware of their elected representative's accomplishments.

In large organizations, the key public relations executive, who is often a vice president, may develop overall plans and policies with other executives. In addition, public relations departments employ public relations specialists to write, do research, prepare materials, maintain contacts, and respond to inquiries.

People who handle publicity for an individual or who direct public relations for a small organization may deal with all aspects of the job. They contact people, plan and do research, and prepare material for distribution. They may also handle advertising or sales promotion work to support marketing.

Working Conditions

Some public relations specialists work a standard 35- to 40-hour week, but unpaid overtime is common. Occasionally they have to be at the job or on call around the clock, especially if there is an emergency or crisis. Public relations offices are busy places; work schedules can be irregular and frequently interrupted. Schedules often have to be rearranged to meet deadlines, deliver speeches, attend meetings and community activities, and travel out of town.



Public relations specialists put together information on an organization's policies, activities, and accomplishments.

Employment

Public relations specialists held about 122,000 jobs in 1998. Almost two-thirds of salaried public relations specialists worked in services industries—management and public relations firms, educational institutions, membership organizations, health care organizations, social service agencies, and advertising agencies, for example. Others worked for manufacturing firms, financial institutions, and government agencies. About 13,000 public relations specialists were self-employed.

Public relations specialists are concentrated in large cities where press services and other communications facilities are readily available, and many businesses and trade associations have their headquarters. Many public relations consulting firms, for example, are in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, DC. There is a trend, however, for public relations jobs to be dispersed throughout the Nation.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Although there are no defined standards for entry into a public relations career, a college degree combined with public relations experience, usually gained through an internship, is considered excellent preparation for public relations work. The ability to write and speak well is essential. Many entry-level public relations specialists have a college major in public relations, journalism, advertising, or communications. Some firms seek college graduates who have worked in electronic or print journalism. Other employers seek applicants with demonstrated communications skills and training or experience in a field related to the firm's business—science, engineering, sales, or finance, for example.

In 1998, well over 200 colleges and about 100 graduate schools offered degree programs or special curricula in public relations, usually in a journalism or communications department. In addition, many other colleges offered at least one course in this field. The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications is the only agency authorized to accredit schools or departments of public relations. A common public relations sequence includes courses in public relations principles and techniques; public relations management and administration, including organizational development; writing, emphasizing news releases, proposals, annual reports, scripts, speeches, and related items; visual communications, including desktop publishing and computer graphics; and research, emphasizing social science research and survey design and implementation. Courses in advertising, journalism, business administration, political science, psychology, sociology, and creative writing also are helpful, as is familiarity with word processing and other computer applications. Specialties are offered in public relations for business, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Many colleges help students gain part-time internships in public relations that provide valuable experience and training. The Armed Forces can also be an excellent place to gain training and experience. Membership in local chapters of the Public Relations Student Society of America or the International Association of Business Communicators provides an opportunity for students to exchange views with public relations specialists and to make professional contacts that may help them find a job in the field. A portfolio of published articles, television or radio programs, slide presentations, and other work is an asset in finding a job. Writing for a school publication or television or radio station provides valuable experience and material for one's portfolio.

Creativity, initiative, good judgment, and the ability to express thoughts clearly and simply are essential. Decision making, problem solving, and research skills are also important.

People who choose public relations as a career need an outgoing personality, self-confidence, an understanding of human psychology, and an enthusiasm for motivating people. They should be competitive, yet flexible, and able to function as part of a team.

Some organizations, particularly those with large public relations staffs, have formal training programs for new employees. In smaller organizations, new employees work under the guidance of experienced staff members. Beginners often maintain files of material about company activities, scan newspapers and magazines for appropriate articles to clip, and assemble information for speeches and pamphlets. They may also answer calls from the press and public, work on invitation lists and details for press conferences, or escort visitors and clients. After gaining experience, they write news releases, speeches, and articles for publication or design and carry out public relations programs. Public relations specialists in smaller firms usually get all-around experience, whereas those in larger firms tend to be more specialized.

The Public Relations Society of America accredits public relations specialists who have at least 5 years of experience in the field and have passed a comprehensive 6-hour examination (5 hours written, 1 hour oral). The International Association of Business Communicators also has an accreditation program for professionals in the communications field, including public relations specialists. Those who meet all the requirements of the program earn the Accredited Business Communicator designation. Candidates must have at least 5 years of experience in a communication field and pass a written and oral examination. They also must submit a portfolio of work samples demonstrating involvement in a range of communication projects and a thorough understanding of communication planning. Employers consider professional recognition through accreditation a sign of competence in this field, and it may be especially helpful in a competitive job market.

Promotion to supervisory jobs may come as public relations specialists show they can handle more demanding assignments. In public relations firms, a beginner may be hired as a research assistant or account assistant and be promoted to account executive, account supervisor, vice president, and eventually senior vice president. A similar career path is followed in corporate public relations, although the titles may differ. Some experienced public relations specialists start their own consulting firms. (For more information on public relations managers, see the *Handbook* statement on advertising, marketing, and public relations managers.)

Job Outlook

Keen competition will likely continue for entry-level public relations jobs as the number of qualified applicants is expected to exceed the number of job openings. Opportunities should be best for individuals who combine a college degree in journalism, public relations, advertising, or another communications-related field with relevant work experience. Public relations work experience as an intern is an asset in competing for entry-level jobs. Applicants without the appropriate educational background or work experience will face the toughest obstacles.

Employment of public relations specialists is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2008. The need for good public relations in an increasingly competitive business environment should spur demand for public relations specialists in organizations of all sizes. Employment in public relations firms should grow as firms hire contractors to provide public relations services rather than support full-time staff. In addition to growth, numerous job opportunities should result from the need to replace public relations specialists who take other jobs or who leave the occupation altogether.

Earnings

Median annual earnings for salaried public relations specialists were \$34,550 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$26,430 and \$46,330; the lowest 10 percent earned less than \$21,050, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$71,360. Median annual

earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of public relations specialists in 1997 were:

Management and public relations	\$35,100
State government, except education and hospitals	32,100
Colleges and universities	30,600

According to a salary survey conducted for the Public Relations Society of America, the overall median salary in public relations was about \$49,100. Salaries in public relations ranged from less than \$22,800 to more than \$141,400. There was little difference between the median salaries for account executives in public relations firms, corporations, government, health care, or nonprofit organizations—all ranged from over \$32,000 to nearly \$34,000.

Public relations specialists in the Federal Government in nonsupervisory, supervisory, and managerial positions averaged about \$56,700 a year in 1999.

Related Occupations

Public relations specialists create favorable attitudes among various organizations, special interest groups, and the public through effective communication. Other workers with similar jobs include fund raisers; lobbyists; advertising, marketing, and promotion managers; and police officers involved in community relations.

Sources of Additional Information

A comprehensive directory of schools offering degree programs or a sequence of study in public relations, a brochure on careers in public relations, and a \$5 brochure entitled *Where Shall I go to Study Advertising and Public Relations* are available from:

☛ Public Relations Society of America, Inc., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003-2376. Internet: <http://www.prsa.org>

Career information on public relations in hospitals and other health care settings is available from:

☛ The Society for Health Care Strategy and Market Development, One North Franklin St., 27th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606.

Internet: <http://www.shsm.org>

For a list of schools with accredited programs in public relations in their journalism departments, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to:

☛ The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Kansas School of Journalism, Stauffer Flint Hall, Lawrence, KS 66045. Internet: <http://www.ukans.edu/~acejmc>

For information on accreditation for public relations specialists, contact:

☛ International Association of Business Communicators, One Hallidie Plaza, Suite 600, San Francisco, CA 94102. Internet: <http://www.iabc.com>

Writers and Editors, Including Technical Writers

(O*NET 34002B, 34002C, 34002D, 34002E, 34002F, 34002G, 34002J, 34002L, 34002M, and 34005)

Significant Points

- Most jobs require a college degree in the liberal arts—communications, journalism, and English are preferred—or a technical subject for technical writing positions.
- Competition is expected to be less for lower paying, entry-level jobs at small daily and weekly newspapers, trade publications, and radio and television broadcasting stations in small markets.