

Summary of Discussions with Focus Groups from the Media and Communication Occupational Group

Overview of Findings

The agencies which had employee representation at the focus group for the media and communication occupations generally require employees to have a broader knowledge of the principles and techniques in communicating visual information than is associated with the more specialized disciplines of graphic design, photography, video production, or technical writing. These agencies utilize a “generalist” approach in their communication team or departments by having employees perform more than one specialized discipline or perform media and communication tasks that are normally not seen as traditional to the discipline.

While specific techniques and products differ among the occupational disciplines, a common thread runs through the work: the requirement for planning and, in some cases, personally executing and developing of a visual product intended to convey information. In addition, there is also a common thread of three levels of difficulty. The least difficult level, assignments involve producing visual products conceived and designed by others. The emphasis is on applying technical knowledge and skill to produce work according to detail specifications. An intermediate level of difficulty involves developing alternative designs and working out details of visual products conceived by others. The most difficult assignments require the design of original visual products. There is increased emphasis on originality, developing design, and deciding the specific content of a visual product, following only general instructions regarding the subject matter to be depicted and objectives to be achieved; as well as, identifying the best media to get the most out of buck. Lastly, the movement towards digital imagery is becoming a standard in the design and creation of visual products. Use of computers to produce visual products has blurred the distinctions between work traditionally performed by a specialized discipline and that which is now performed by employees in media and communication disciplines. Example: Some graphic designers develop material for Internet Web pages, interactive media, and multimedia projects.

Although the above common thread runs through the work of all the media and communication disciplines, there are several differences as well. There are two clearly defined job roles that were repeated in the focus group for non-managerial or supervisory positions. These two roles are: positions that focus on planning and managing the effective use of visual material to achieve public information objectives as opposed to lay out and executing illustrations. In addition, there are work areas that generally one does not relate to the occupation. Example: Photography which records the original crime or accident scene, recording all evidence, providing a permanent visual record and understand the admissibility of photographic evidence.

Minimum Qualifications

The majority of the participants agreed that the current minimum qualifications should require experience. Some of the reoccurring comments from the participants are as follows:

- Some experience in the media and communication occupation is essential.
- Most of the work is learned on the job.

Full Performance

Amount of Time to Reach Full Performance

Participants indicated that it takes anywhere from six months to a year to reach full performance as an entry-level person and between one and three years to be capable of full performance work as an experience technician. The distinction between an entry-level and full performance technician is primarily based on the employee's aptitude with a range of processes and procedures, as well as the level of independence in the performance of the employee's duties.

In almost all cases, the time increments mentioned above reflect the experience acquired through on the job training. However, some positions require persons to complete specific certification or training requirements before being able to complete full-performance work.

Advanced Full Performance Level

In the media and communication occupation group there seems there is not a clearly defined level of work that is higher in complexity and responsibilities than a person who is seen as performing independently at full performance. The persons in advanced levels are those individuals who have demonstrated their skills in a project or assignment. The next higher role is generally seen as a supervisor or manager.

There are some work areas where a person or persons are identified as a lead worker due to their advanced expert knowledge on procedures and operations or due to their expertise in a particular specialty or sub-discipline.

Type of Supervision Received

Technicians generally receive limited supervision and the work requires employees to use independent judgment or act on their own discretion, requiring the use of initiative and creativity to complete projects. As employees obtain more experience, direction becomes more general and employees have greater and greater independence and accountability. Major work assignments are examined for soundness or technical judgment and for general effectiveness towards the assignment given. Supervision exists to provide administrative direction in the planning, organizing and implementation of the work activities, as well as to oversee the budget responsibilities, respond to legislative and media inquiries and complaints, and to see to human resource issues. In general, the supervisors and managers handle the more potentially controversial matters, larger projects, and other administrative/managerial types of problems.

What Criteria Should Compensation be Based? There seemed to be a consensus that performance and other personal characteristics that the employee brings to the job (such as initiative, artistic abilities, meeting deadlines, ability to work well with others, etc.) should be one of, if not the primary criteria for the basis of compensation. The participants indicated that this would be especially important criteria during the period of time when a new employee is working toward the full performance level. There was also consensus that, due to the importance of experience and on-the job training, longevity was also important criteria on which employees' pay should be based, especially after the point when an employee becomes capable of full performance of his or her job duties. Longevity coincides with an employee's continued career growth and additional responsibilities. Pay for an employees' certification or completion of

specific training, where such accomplishments enhance the employee's ability to perform the duties of their position or allow the employee to perform additional duties associated with their position, was also agreed to be something that would be a benefit to positions in the Median and Communication Occupational Group.

While performance and other personal characteristics were thought to be the most important criteria on which pay should be based, the participants expressed concern with the ability to fairly administer a system that bases pay on those qualities. The primary concern was favoritism. However, the participants thought that a person can show their ability by their portfolio, clips, reels, etc by their work product they produced.

In addition, the participants indicated that they were all in favor of a system that would allow an employee to progress in pay as they progressed in their career. Employees in those classes that have a career ladder expressed their appreciation of the system of progression, while those employees in agencies that do not have automatic progression expressed frustration for having to wait for a "slot" to open before they could receive an increase in pay.

Occupational Survey Summary on the Media and Communication Fields

Participation Rate: 33%

SUMMARY BY ROLES

	Technicians
<u>Participation Rate:</u>	25 of the 75 Whole
<u>Time Worked in Occupation:</u>	Approximately 72% of the employees in this field have over 1 year or more work experience; 36% have five or more years; and 27% have ten or more years.
<u>Education, Training and Experience:</u>	Most positions at entry will require additional education beyond high school. 61.5% participants say you need a bachelor's degree and additional one year on-the-job training to become fully proficient. This is due to a person at entry needing to be experienced on the first day to proceed independently with assignments.
<u>Skills:</u> (Extremely or Very Important)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Getting Information 2. Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates 3. Communicating with People Outside the Organization 4. Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships 5. Working with Computers 6. Time Management
<u>Behavioral:</u> (Core)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievement Orientation 2. Building Relationships 3. Communication 4. Problem Resolution 5. Team Work
<u>Work Context:</u> (Every Day)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact with Others 2. Face to face Discussions 3. Decisions affect other people 4. Work in teams 5. Interaction with external customer/public 6. Writes letters and memos
<u>Level of Complexity:</u> (Level 4 or Higher)	80% - Level 4 -You evaluate the relevance and importance of theories, concepts, and principles. You develop different approaches or tactical plans to fit specific circumstances. Guidelines may, exist, but are flexible and open to considerable interpretation. Independent judgment, personal direction, and resourcefulness are needed to interpret and apply guidelines

<u>Supervision Received/Independence:</u> (Level 4 or Higher)	88% - Level 4 - Receive limited supervision and the work requires employees to use independent judgment or act on their own discretion. Requires the use of initiative and creativity to resolve problems or interpret policy to develop solutions. A manager may be available to provide general direction or advice, but employees usually act independently based on their own judgment.
<u>Supervision Given:</u>	64% - Majority of positions have no supervisory responsibilities
<u>Knowledge within the Field or Specialty:</u>	100% - Majority of positions require at a minimum an in-depth knowledge of concepts, practices and procedures with ability to use in varied situations.
<u>Decision Making:</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 44% - Decisions may affect a work unit or area within a department/division. May contribute to business and operational decisions that affect the department/ division. 2. 20%- Decisions have major implications on the management and operations of an area within a department/division. Job may contribute to important strategy, operational and business decisions that affect the department/division.
<u>Problem Solving:</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 44% - Problems are varied, requiring analysis or interpretation of the situation. Problems are solved using knowledge and skills, general precedents and practices. 2. 44% - Problems are highly varied, complex and often non-recurring, requiring novel and creative approaches to resolution. New concepts and approaches may have to be developed.
<u>Fiscal Responsibility:</u>	Only 48% of the positions require assisting in planning, monitoring and/or managing budget in functional area of a program.
<u>Licenses/Certifications:</u>	Only 24% of position requires a licenses or certification.