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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TAMARA L. GILLIS, ED.D., ABC, is professor and immediate past chairman of the Department of Communications at Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania. Her research interests include change management, civic involvement, organizational design, career development and the impact of new media. She also serves as a communication consultant with Cooper Wright LLC. In her career, she has led communication programs for higher education institutions, associations and a health care corporation. She has served as faculty in Swaziland, Namibia and the Semester at Sea program. The IABC Research Foundation honored her with the 2004 Foundation Lifetime Friend Award. In 2001–2002 she chaired the IABC Research Foundation. She has held leadership positions at the district and international levels of IABC. She is an active participant in the development of the ABC accreditation process. The author of numerous articles and book chapters, her book credits include The Human Element, Essentials of Employee Communication and The IABC Handbook of Organizational Communication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / The research process and compilation of this study would not have been possible without the assistance of Megan Hoffa and Rachel Rohland, senior communications student assistants at Elizabethtown College, the proofreading of Carol Gima, as well as the patience of Jeffrey Van Boskirk, and a one-semester sabbatical release from Elizabethtown College.
The objectives of this study were to gain insight into the competencies necessary for success in the discipline of corporate communication through career maturity, and the impact of professional development or accreditation on a corporate communication career. To satisfy these objectives, three research activities were conducted: a review of existing academic and practitioner research to identify existing expectations, a content analysis of position descriptions representing the continuum from entry-level to senior-level positions, and expert interviews with communication professionals regarding expectations and competencies.

When the data was collected for this study, the U.S. watched as major financial and manufacturing entities struggled for economic survival. The U.S. government was bailing out financial institutions and weighing the decline of U.S. auto manufacturing. Around the world, Europe and Asia experienced similar scenarios of organizational survival. Amid this turmoil, the job posting boards of IABC, PRNews and Ragan continued to experience regular postings for communication positions. New practitioners embark on corporate communication careers with traditional formal education backgrounds as well as non-traditional backgrounds, especially during times of economic upheaval. As professionals from other disciplines are displaced by layoffs and closings, knowing the general expectations and competencies for advancing in the communication discipline is powerful knowledge in positioning a candidate for career success.

From the literature review emerged the foundation of fundamental skills in general communication and specific areas of practice, such as formative and summative research, communication planning, writing across the media, relationship development with numerous constituencies (including but not limited to media, employees, community, investors, government, advocacy groups), and general management. These skills are affected by societal trends and communication technology. Trends and technology continue to advance; corporate communication practitioners must be keen to understand and forecast trends as well as use new technology in a client’s or an employer’s best interest.

Success for entry-level communication specialists rests in their preparation and ability to complete primary, essential tasks. To continue to be successful in the development of a corporate communication career, practitioners must be prepared for more advanced activities, i.e., strategic planning, crisis management and program measurement.

The content analysis of 514 position descriptions supported existing matrices and illuminated expectations for professionals at numerous levels of career development. As they advance in their careers, communication professionals are engaged in the strategic management of core communication processes for businesses and organizations. These professional communicators are presumed to have mastered fundamental skills before taking on more advanced projects, which allows practitioners to move from advocacy level positions (tacticians or technicians) to advisory positions (management) (Broom and Dozier, 1986).

The most common skill sets and knowledge sets across the career continuum included:
Executive Summary

- **Skill sets**: writing and editing, relationship building, presentation skills, project management, new media acumen, visual communication, business acumen, measurement (research and evaluation skills), communication planning, communication management and special events planning/management.

- **Knowledge sets**: media relations, marketing communication, employee relations/internal relations and community relations

No skill sets or knowledge sets were found to be exclusive to senior-level positions. Expertise within the above areas were greater and more precise at the most advanced levels, i.e., labor relations as a more sophisticated practice of employee relations or lobbying as a more advanced practice in government relations.

By the completion of the entry-level period of practice or experience (three years), practitioners are expected to have working knowledge and some expertise to work independently as well as lead assigned projects in the following knowledge sets with the following skill sets:

- **Knowledge sets**: media relations, marketing communication, employee relations/internal relations, executive communication, community relations, issue management, investor/donor relations, consumer/customer relations, client relations, government relations, crisis communication, negotiation skills, change management, corporate social responsibility, and advocacy relations

- **Skill sets**: writing and editing, relationship building, presentation skills, visual communication, business acumen, new media acumen, communication planning, measurement (research and evaluation), communication management, project management, special events planning/management, human resource management, cultural literacy diversity, vendor and agency contract relations, leadership, professional development, foreign language, business development, fundraising and grant writing, ethical concerns, recruitment and training, RFP process management, and managing volunteers.

This observation alone makes apparent the importance of educational preparation and the experiences new practitioners gather during college preparation and initial career-related work experiences (compensated jobs, internships and volunteer positions).

The most basic skills of writing and editing were explicitly defined as an expectation for all positions analyzed. For entry-level positions, this included the ability to write and edit reports, collateral materials or news releases. For mid-level positions, this included managing the writing and editing process and producing specialized writing and editing deliverables. For more advanced or senior-level positions, this included the supervision of the writing and editing process produced by staff or writing policies and executive communication.

Business acumen was also found to be an expectation at each career level with the expectation of greater understanding of business goals and communication contributions toward reaching these goals at higher levels of experience.

As practitioners mature, move up the chain of command and supervise more employees, they become more generalists than specialists (unless they supervise a unit of specialists) in communication. Additionally, experience gained from working in a particular industry was also a popular expectation of successful candidates, i.e., health care communication, fundraising and development, or specialized computer software programs.

Quantifying the presence of skills and knowledge sets makes apparent that communicators at all levels participate in defined areas, but at different degrees of expertise or complexity. Similar to the
IABC Communicator Competency Model (2008), this analysis supports skill growth and knowledge expectations over a period of time—a career. Some skills or knowledge sets may not be present in all cohorts (groups by years of experience) because these skills are specific to an industry, i.e., fundraising and donor relations would be skills and knowledge sets that are expected of practitioners at the advanced levels in the nonprofit sector, but this sample included few position descriptions for that sector at that level.

The interviews with communication professionals, while anecdotal in nature, confirmed the findings from the content analysis and addressed the expectations of accreditation for mid-level and advanced-level communication professionals as a means for documenting their professional expertise.

While only a snapshot of skills necessary at this particular point in time regarding a finite population of entries, regular investigation of expectations and competencies is necessary for professional communicators to keep pace with traditional skills as well as strategies and new advances in corporate communication. This study reinforces the need for traditional communication skills, business acumen, and ongoing learning of skills and strategies in new media technology and industry trends.

While not the primary intent of this report, the analysis as a whole supported the viability of the IABC Communicator’s Competency Model (2008) as a starting point for plotting career advancement competencies for communicators from entry-level to advanced-level positions; however, this model is not a complete composite of skills and knowledge sets necessary for career advancement.

Exposure to preliminary knowledge sets and skills in formal educational development (college or university education) is the foundation for building a sound career plan. While practitioners will continue to be tasked with learning new skills and keeping pace with technology and social trends, elements like writing, planning and measurement continue to serve as a sound foundation.

As the field of corporate communication continues to grow with new technology and industry advances, practitioners will be well served to develop career advancement plans that include advanced formal education, informal professional development opportunities and professional accreditation. These educational opportunities will provide evidence of skill and knowledge set attainment through formal measurement and evaluation that is respected by employers and fellow practitioners.

This study can be considered a benchmark work, in the sense that it recognizes that there is much that remains to be done to improve the procedures for evaluating career expectations and competencies across the career continuum.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The practices that punctuate the discipline of corporate communication and the competencies of public relations can be traced back to Edward Bernays' theories of engineering consent. Today the rapid pace of technology development compounds the traditional competencies of corporate communication practitioners.

A number of studies (Stacks, Botan & Turk, 1999; Commission on Public Relation Education, 1999 & 2006; Sriramesh & Hornaman, 2006; Stacks & Watson, 2006; Turk, 2006) have posed the question to educators and practitioners: What should be included in an undergraduate education for public relations and corporate communications practitioners to be successful practitioners? Others (Claussen, 2008 and Hatzios & Lariscy, 2008) have questioned the success of higher education programming in preparing communication professionals. Another approach to this conundrum may be to ask: What are today’s employers’ expectations of competency at numerous levels of a communicator’s career?

This project investigated current expectations (education and experience) and competencies (strategies and tactics) required to succeed and advance in corporate communication. Research questions included:

- What expectations do employers have for communicators of different experience levels from entry-level to senior-level communicators?
- What is the demand for accreditation in career advancement in corporate communication?

Answering these questions will lead to a greater understanding of the process of preparation necessary for a successful career path in corporate communication. Potential uses of this study include a career-planning tool suitable for use by academics who are developing communication curriculum, corporate executives and human resources executives who are evaluating corporate communication positions, and individual practitioners who are planning corporate communication career paths.

It is anticipated that the outcome from this research will support and amplify existing planning models for professional development and advancement in the field of corporate communication. Additionally, understanding levels of career maturity may be an asset for facilitating communication department organization in organizational development.

1 As defined in The IABC Handbook of Organizational Communication (Gillis, 2006, xi) and the IABC Profile Study 2008: Trends in Communication Professional Compensation, respectively, “Based on a survey of scholarly literature, we use these three terms—organizational communication, corporate communication, and business communication—interchangeably to describe the internal and external communication functions of an organization or company” and “Corporate communication is the descriptor used to include those functions of both internal and external communication.”
2.0 METHODOLOGY

Most research studies conducted to assess competencies and expectations of acumen at various levels of career maturity in corporate communication\(^2\) have been based on opinions or perceptions collected by surveying educators and practitioners (Stacks, Botan & Turk, 1999; Commission on Public Relation Education, 1999 & 2006; Sriramesh & Hornaman, 2006; Stacks & Watson, 2006; Turk, 2006; Hatzois & Lariscy, 2008).

This project included a combination of methodologies: a literature review, a content analysis of communication position descriptions and interviews with communication leaders.

First, a literature review of existing academic and practitioner research provided a foundation of existing expectations and competencies for the discipline of corporate communication. This included curricular standards. Findings from the literature review were used to develop the coding catalog for the content analysis investigation.

Second, a content analysis was conducted on a population of position descriptions as primary sources on which to base employer expectations of competencies. Position descriptions (not recruitment copy\(^3\)) are organizational documents that are regularly evaluated through organizational assessment processes, i.e., communication department audits, organizational assessments, strategic planning activities and individual annual human resources evaluations. Several studies (Gardner, Reithel, Foley, Cogliser & Walumbwa, 2009; Breugh, 2008; Templer, Tay & Chandrasekar, 2006; Brandon, 2005) indicate that the more realistic the position description or use of realistic job previews, the higher the recruitment success and employment retention and satisfaction rates. To locate a wide selection of position descriptions, three prominent corporate communication portals with job posting/recruitment sections were used: IABC.com, myragan.com and PRNewsonline.com. Position descriptions were collected at two times to generate a large sample of companies and organizations: the week of 10 July 2008 and the week of 16 September 2008 (an in-depth description of the content analysis process is located in Chapter 8).

### Figure 2.1: Population Overview

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of entries</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of countries represented</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of companies/organizations represented</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of industry types represented</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

2 See previous footnote.

3 Recruitment copy is often a truncated version of a position description used to recruit applicants to a job opening with an organization. It is not the official description of the position in full.
The intent of this project was to represent an international population that included corporate, nonprofit, and government entities. The final population included 514 position descriptions representing 409 organizations and 21 countries.

Finally, expert or elite interviews were conducted with an international group of corporate communication professionals regarding expectations of competencies at numerous levels of career development as well as expectations of professional development and accreditation. The professionals represented the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and South Africa. Twenty-three professionals were invited to participate in the qualitative interviews; 18 accepted the invitation.

**Figure 2.2: Countries Represented in the Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country &amp; Number of Entries</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.3: Industry Types Represented by Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit Organization</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services (advertising, marketing, PR agencies)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Technology (hardware and software)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy/Utilities/Gas/Oil/Electric</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking/Accounting/Financial</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment/Media</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceutical</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting/Radio/TV</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Products</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-commerce</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality/Tourism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology/Medical Research</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness/Agricultural</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture/Design</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airline/Aerospace/Aviation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Total**                                          | **514** | **100**
2.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since this study is based on a non-probability sample (available sample), the results and conclusions drawn from the data represent a snapshot in time and may only be generalized to the sample population. Additional implementation of this study design on a probability sample is suggested for the future (see Conclusions for suggestions for future research designs). Position descriptions represented 32 different industries. With such a diverse population, sample sizes from each industry were too small to extrapolate industry-specific findings.

2.2 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

A number of assumptions should be considered when reviewing the findings:

- Minimum years of experience information presented in the position descriptions represents an expectation of the least amount of experience necessary to enter the position, while the position description may represent duties currently being performed by the sitting communicator who has more than the minimum years of experience since that individual has been on the job for a few years.

- The communicator may be the only communicator within the organization or company, thus the position description may define tasks related to all levels of the career spectrum.

- Some skills or knowledge sets may not be present in all cohorts (years of experience) because these skills are specific to an industry, i.e. fundraising is a skill that is expected of communicators at the senior level in the nonprofit sector, but this sample included few position descriptions for that sector at that level.
3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature defines the discipline of corporate communication and its impact on organizations, the necessary preparation for career success (both formal education and continuing professional development), expectations for professional practice and career advancement.

3.1 DEFINING THE DISCIPLINE

As defined in *The IABC Handbook of Organizational Communication* (Gillis, 2006, xi) and the *IABC Profile Study 2008: Trends in Communication Professional Compensation*, respectively: “Based on a survey of scholarly literature, we use these three terms—organizational communication, corporate communication, and business communication—interchangeably to describe the internal and external communication functions of an organization or company” and “Corporate communication is the descriptor used to include those functions of both internal and external communication.” Management communication, business communication, organizational communication and corporate communication—while these terms may have differing connotations in academic research, the underpinning of these concepts are one in the same (van Riel, 1997).

In an attempt to precisely define corporate communication as a discipline, Argenti (1996) concluded that the macro function of corporate communication has evolved in organizations from an organic need to communicate with internal and external constituencies to a formalized function; organization of the function became more structured as the business environment became more regulated and law bound. “The responses to constituencies became frequent enough because of the changing environment that someone who was not responsible for another function, such as marketing or administration, has to take control of certain aspects of communication” (p. 75). Corporate communication moved from tactical responses on behalf of the company to more strategic development of messages to influence constituent behavior and opinions in the marketplace. Today, corporate communication includes both the management of external communications and internal communications. Argenti concluded that corporate communication practitioners must be competent in both the discipline of communication as well as business management.

According to Argenti (1996) the subfunctions that comprise corporate communication include image and identity management, corporate advertising, media relations, financial communications, employee relations, community relations, corporate philanthropy, government relations, and crisis communications. “Although this is not an all-encompassing list of activities, it represents the most important subfunctions within a large corporation” (p. 77).

The communication model, whether internal or external, is defined as a four-stage process. It goes by many acronyms: RACE (Marston, 1963), ROPE (Hendrix, 2004), RPIE (Seitel, 2004), RPIM (Ragan, 2008), to name a few. Hendrix’s model includes the stages of research, objectives, programming and evaluation. Marston’s model addresses the stages as research, action planning, communication and evaluation. Seitel’s model includes research, planning, implementation and evaluation. While not as catchy as a mnemonic device, Ragan’s abbreviation simply defines the stages: research, planning, implementation and measurement.
Skills associated with the first stage of the communication process, the research stage, include audience analysis—quantitative and qualitative research skills, and strategic planning skills—aligning communication activities to meet organizational strategic goals and objectives, communication audits, and best practices analyses. Research by Van den Bosch, de Jong and Elving (2006) concluded that connecting the business strategy through communication campaigns to all key publics relies on leveraging consistent messages across the media; consistency in applying visual communication guidelines and standards is key to enhancing organizational identity with key publics for both public and private organizations. “Knowing about the organization strategy seems to help them implement the [corporate visual identity] guidelines, which results in greater consistency” (p. 155).

Skills associated with the second stage of the process, the planning stage, include articulating organizational goals; working independently or with a team of associates to develop the strategy and tactics to reach organizational goals; audience segmentation; and developing message strategies using preferred media or channels to reach target audiences. This stage of the process includes the development of the communication plan, whether that is for a year, a single event or a campaign. At an organizational level, business communication plans include strategic long-term planning, annual plans, crisis communication plans and knowledge management plans, to name a few.

Pavlik (2008) suggests that leveraging technology (choosing the appropriate media, producing messages for multiple media and planning to manage the two-way relationship that Web 2.0 technologies enable) will continue to be a critical skill set of corporate communication. This includes mastering writing and production for technologies including “digital, or computer-based, and network-enabled, such as wired and wireless technologies that reach globally through the Internet and World Wide Web” (p. 2).

Skills associated with the third stage of the process, the communication implementation stage, include writing and producing the elements defined in the communication planning documents. This may include print and multimedia production as well as the business transactions of placing advertisements or working with agencies to provide these services. Key to implementation is integrating the defined messages of the plan in both internal and external channels across multiple media to reach the intended audiences. As Pavlik (2008) and Argenti (2006) suggest, using new media to reach target audiences is critical to the ongoing leveraging of the two-way symmetrical model of communication.

Leveraging technology also includes an individual’s ability to multitask (Turner and Reinsch, 2007). Business communicators are frequently expected to multitask to complete communication work for clients and organizations, as well as be able to use multiple media to coordinate company messages and reach audiences who are also using multiple media for news and information. Turner and Reinsch (2007, p. 47) conclude that business communicators are presence allocators: “an individual can survey the available communication technologies, choose a medium that provides the right cues for each interaction, and divide his or her presence among two or more interlocutors.”

Skills associated with the fourth stage of the process, the measurement or evaluation stage, include developing measurement processes or tools to assess the success of the plan and the implementation

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4 Grunig (1984) outlined four models of the public relations process. Two of these were one-way communication models—press agentry and publicity. Both disseminated information through the mass media to various publics, and usually did not include research. The other two models were based on two-way communication and relied on research: two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication. The asymmetrical model used research to help determine which messages would be the most likely to persuade publics. The symmetrical model used research to help foster mutual understanding between organizations and their publics.
of the plan. Additionally, measurement of return on investment (ROI) of organizational communication activities—both internal and external—includes assessment of employee engagement, productivity, organizational trust and continuous improvement of the organization. According to Swerling et al. (2007) “The imperative to evaluate PR spending and activity now has equal footing in organizations of all sizes” (p. III−19). According to Swerling et al. (2007, p. III−39) measurement methods used for communication ROI and impact on the organizational bottom line include the following in order of most prevalent to least prevalent:

- Influence on corporate reputation
- Influence on stakeholder awareness
- Influence on employee attitudes
- Content analysis of clips
- Influence on stakeholder opinion
- Total number of clips
- Influence on corporate culture
- Total impressions
- Total number of clips in “top tier” media

Additionally, Swerling's findings indicate that public relations officers use data from other corporate functions (i.e., marketing, finance and human resources) in ROI analysis, thus implying that integrated communication is necessary to assess corporate communication impact on organization bottom lines. This stage brings the cycle full-circle in that practitioners must be able to measure communication impact on reaching strategic organizational goals.

Organizational structure has an impact on the performance and contribution of any organizational function. According to the science of structure (Meyer, 2007a), organization structures define reporting lines, workflow and an organization's ability to react to change. “There is no one right organization chart. Every organization is different” (Meyer, 2007a, p. 2). Thus, reporting structures differ across industry type (i.e., public and private company, nonprofit organization, governments, educational institutions, health care organizations).

In a blog entry titled “The blurring line between external and internal communications” Shel Holtz (2006) reflected on the findings of a Watson Wyatt report that supports the impact of internal communication on external business success. He continues with a discussion of the placement of the communication functions in organizations and concludes with a popular contention that the placement of employee communication is often a political decision. But his preference would be for employee communication to report directly to the CEO to recognize the impact that internal communication has on business goal satisfaction and reputation. Additionally, he adds that in an era when employees are blogging publicly about the daily activities of their companies, it is imperative that employees understand how their work contributes to the company's business goals and reputation.

In addition to placement of communication within the organizational structure, building the right communication team is another consideration. Researchers and practitioners (Solis, 2004; Swerling et al., 2007; Hess, 2008; Collura, 2008; Eschbach, 2008) contend that using outsourced agents is a popular solution for providing the resources necessary to meet communication needs of clients and companies. Many companies rely on an internal team of communication professionals to provide internal and external communication strategies. Agencies are often engaged to help during periods of high demand to complement the company's in-house team of communication practitioners.
Outsourcing is also a common strategy for companies that are restructuring communication functions during times of turmoil and change.

From a study of external communication in the United Kingdom, Cornelissen and Thorpe (2001) contend that the organizational relationship between external communication departments, such as public relations and marketing, are correlated with internal environmental conditions such as the similarity of the work of the departments, resource dependence, and the prevailing organizational norms and cultural conditions.

Regardless of formal reporting lines, organizational charts and restructuring schemes, Whitworth (2008) reminds communicators: “Proximity to the senior management team is not necessarily the same as access to the senior management team. What you need to do your job effectively is access” (p. 1).

Respondents to the Annenberg Generally Accepted Practices (GAP) study (Swerling et al., 2007, p. III−21) reported that the communication function reporting lines include the following in order of most prevalent to least prevalent:

- C-suite (chairperson, CEO, COO)
- Marketing
- Head of operating unit
- Human resources
- Legal
- Strategic planning
- Finance

Multiple reporting line relationships represented at least one-quarter of the responses. For example, the communication function in colleges and universities usually reports through an office of advancement that coordinates public relations, college relations, and alumni relations in what might be described as an integration of internal and external communication functions (Simpson and Parrot, 2008; Meyer, 2007a, 2007b). The office of advancement reports directly to the institution president.

### 3.2 PREPARING FOR A CAREER IN CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Hand-in-hand with defining the breadth of the functions, strategies and tactics of the field is identification of appropriate preparation for success as a practitioner. A cursory review of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) curriculum and instruction standards bring to light the “chicken-and-egg” struggle of studying, forecasting and developing plans of study to prepare professionals for corporate communication careers. Scholars often argue that through the academic study of the discipline, curriculum improvements should be made. But practitioners argue that academics cannot forecast future developments and cannot study trends and new strategies until these practices are in regular use. Thus the profession should influence the development of curricula—plans of study. It is a phenomenological debate that neither side appears to be winning; both sides benefit more from compromise (Thomas, 2007).

The ACEJMC requires the following of mass communication curricula (of which public relations or corporate communications is regarded).

That graduates are able to:
• understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
• demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
• demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications;
• understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
• demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
• think critically, creatively and independently;
• conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
• write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
• critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
• apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
• apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work. (Standard 2, ACEJMC Accrediting Standards, 2003)

In 1999 the Commission on Public Relations Education set out to answer the question of what elements are required for a complete public relations education. The members of the Commission were forward thinking while also reflective of the traditional concepts and theories that continue to provide a foundation for successful public relations career development. The Commission recommended that students graduate with an undergraduate degree and gain both knowledge (“what graduates should know and understand”) and skills (“areas of competence necessary to enter the profession”).

Necessary knowledge includes:
• Communication and persuasion concepts and strategies.
• Communication and public relations theories.
• Relationships and relationship building.
• Societal trends.
• Ethical issues.
• Legal requirements and issues.
• Marketing and finance.
• Public relations history.
• Uses of research and forecasting.
• Multicultural and global issues.
• Organizational change and development.
• Management concepts and theories.

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5 The Commission on Public Relations Education has regularly surveyed communication educators and practitioners regarding progress in curriculum and professional outcomes since 1974 to maintain the pulse of corporate communication education.
Necessary skills include:

- Research methods and analysis.
- Management of information.
- Mastery of language in written and oral communication.
- Problem solving and negotiation.
- Management of communication.
- Strategic planning.
- Issues management.
- Audience segmentation.
- Informative and persuasive writing.
- Community relations, consumer relations, employee relations, other practice areas.
- Technological and visual literacy.
- Managing people, programs and resources.
- Sensitive interpersonal communication.
- Fluency in a foreign language.
- Ethical decision-making.
- Participation in the professional public relations community.
- Message production.
- Working with a current issue.
- Public speaking and presentation.
- Applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity.

The Commission recommends that the undergraduate public relations curriculum be grounded in a strong traditional liberal arts and social science education” (CPRE, 1999, p. 3–4).

The Commission continued to conduct research on corporate communication education and preparation and published two additional studies following up on these findings (2002 & 2006). In 2006 the Commission (Turk, 2006) produced a comprehensive report on the state of corporate communication education—public relations education. They concluded that “an ‘ideal’ undergraduate major in public relations” (p. 7) should include the following course work:

- Introduction to public relations (including theory, origin and principles)
- Case studies in public relations that review the professional practice
- Public relations research, measurement and evaluation
- Public relations law and ethics
- Public relations writing and production
- Public relations planning and management
- Public relations campaigns
- Supervised work experience in public relations (internship)
- Additional directed electives

Participation in professional and pre-professional organizations is also strongly suggested.

The Commission’s findings also suggest that “the graduate student should master the following content areas beyond undergraduate competencies: Public relations theory and concepts; Public relations law; Public relations ethics; Global public relations; Public relations applications; Public relations management; Public relations research; Public relations programming and production; Public relations publics; Communication processes; Management sciences; Behavioral sciences; Internship and practicum experience; [and] Thesis and capstone project and/or comprehensive exam” (Turk, 2006, p. 7).
In 2006, Stacks and Watkins noted that educators and practitioners reported the following curriculum areas (courses) as essential to public relations education:

- **Educators:**
  - Origins and Principles of Public Relations (Nature and role of PR: definitions)
  - The PR Field (Duties of PR practitioners; Publicity and media relations)
  - PR Research (PR research designs, processes, techniques; Fact-finding, applied research)
  - PR Planning (Problem-opportunity analysis; setting goals, objectives, long-term, strategic planning; Audience segmentation; Issues management; Contingency, crisis planning)
  - Ethics and Law (Credibility; Transparency; Ethics, codes of practice; Corporate social responsibility; PR law)
  - PR Action/Implementation (Campaigns, as opposed to single activities)
  - PR Communication (Message strategy; Interpersonal communication; Print communication planning, writing and production; Multimedia communication—planning, writing, production of audio, video and electronic media; New PR tools and technologies)
  - PR Performance Evaluation/Measurement (Setting performance, success criteria; Methods of evaluation; Measurement program effectiveness; Reporting on results of PR efforts; Decision making based on results)
  - Courses in PR-Related Disciplines (Courses in journalism)

- **Practitioners:**
  - Origins and Principles of Public Relations (Nature and role of PR: definitions; Societal forces affecting PR)
  - The PR Field (Duties of PR practitioners; Publicity and media relations; Community relations; Employee relations)
  - PR Research (PR research designs, processes, techniques; Public opinion polling, surveys; Issue tracking; Fact-finding, applied research; Focus groups)
  - PR Planning (Problem-opportunity analysis; Organizational background, culture; Setting goals, objectives, long-term, strategic planning; Timetables; Planning theory, techniques, models; Audience segmentation; Issues management; Contingency, crisis planning)
  - Ethics and Law (Credibility; Transparency; Ethics, codes of practice; Corporate social responsibility; PR law)
  - PR Action/Implementation (Campaigns, as opposed to single activities; One-time incidents, crisis communication)
  - PR Communication (Communication theory; Persuasion; Message strategy; Interpersonal communication; Print communication—planning, writing and production; Multimedia communication—planning, writing, production of audio, video and electronic media; Employee, internal communication; New PR tools and technologies)
  - PR Performance Evaluation/Measurement (Setting performance, success criteria; Methods of evaluation; Measurement program effectiveness; Measuring staff, counsel effectiveness; Reporting on results of PR efforts; Decision-making based on results)
Additionally, both educators and practitioners reported that internships or other structured work experiences are beneficial to the success of new hires. Integrating business research methods and communication skills in a holistic curriculum has been found to provide undergraduate students with the communication and business skills employers require for initial success in business communication positions (Neff, 1990; Zhao and Alexander, 2004). Additionally, in a survey of educators and practitioners, Kelley and Bridges (2005) concluded that introducing professional and career development skills in marketing curricula increases the readiness of undergraduate students for success in entry-level marketing positions.

According to Sriramesh and Hornaman (2006), scholars, educators and practitioners are in some agreement that the best preparation for a successful career in public relations includes a broad liberal arts background—including exposure to the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, government, business management, law, and scientific and technical issues; understanding of business and management; understanding of ethics; understanding of communication theory; understanding of research; a background in writing for a wide range of media; training in new media technology; and experiential learning in the form of internships or practica.

The conclusions of Sriramesh and Hornaman (2006, p. 168) indicated that public relations graduates ought to know the following (in rank order):

1. Communication and persuasion concepts and strategies
2. Communication and public relations theories
3. Ethical issues
4. Relationships and relationship building
5. Use of research and forecasting
6. Societal trends
7. Marketing and finance
8. Management concepts and theories
9. Legal requirements and issues
10. Multicultural and global issues
11. Organizational change and development

Graduates should have the following skill levels (Sriramesh & Hornaman, 2006, p. 169):

1. Mastery of language in written and oral communication
2. Informative and persuasive writing
3. Problem solving and negotiation
4. Strategic planning
5. Ethical decision making
6. Research methods and analysis
7. Public speaking and presentation
8. Working with a current issue
9. Management of information
10. Management of communication
11. Issues management
12. Message production
13. Audience segmentation
14. Sensitive interpersonal communication
15. Community relations, consumer relations, employee relations, other practice areas
16. Managing people, programmes and resources
17. Technological and visual literacy
18. Applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity
19. Participation in the professional public relations community

Only one skill component, “fluency in a foreign language,” was not seen to be as important as the others.
According to Sriramesh and Hornaman (2006, p. 169) scholars, educators and practitioners identified the following undergraduate courses as necessary to an education in public relations:

1. Public relations writing and production
2. Supervised work experience in public relations (internship)
3. Public relations planning and management
4. Public relations research, measurement and evaluation
5. Introduction to public relations
6. Public relations campaigns
7. Case studies in public relations

Scholars, educators and practitioners identified the following topics as most important in the preparation of successful corporate communication professionals (Sriramesh & Hornaman, 2006, p. 170):

- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Knowledge about mass media
- New PR technologies (computers, Internet, Web design, etc.)
- Public opinion concepts/research (surveys, focus groups, etc.)
- Setting goals/objectives
- Long- and short-term strategic planning
- General liberal arts knowledge (English, history, etc.)
- Knowledge about crisis management
- Courses in marketing
- Leadership skills
- Publicity techniques
- Courses in journalism
- Courses in management/organization behaviour
- General social science knowledge (sociology, psychology, etc.)
- PR law/privacy/defamation/copyright/product liability/financial disclosure, etc.

In editorial commentary, Claussen (2008) noted that United States and European counterparts in public relations, integrated marketing communications and advertising curricula are weak in instilling business acumen through required course work:

PR practitioners (not excepting practitioners of government or other nonprofit PR) need to know as much as they can about various aspects of business and economics generally, as well as specifics of their own business sector (if in-house) or their clients’ (if at an agency). … [B]usiness and economics have only become increasingly complex … in addition to the fact that PR practices are increasingly integrated into more and more aspects of all business (and other) organizations and PR practitioners are increasingly working directly with top executives and involved in making major decisions. (p. 192)

From a survey of public relations educators and practitioners, Hatzios and Lariscy (2008) report the importance of international public relations, globalization and diversity considerations in curriculum development to correspond with the growing internationalization of the corporate environment. “International courses help the future practitioner understand the intercultural aspects of practicing PR in an international, or global, context” (p. 254).
3.3 EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

As the academy and professionals reflected on preparation for career success, additional research was conducted regarding best practices and excellence in the practice of the discipline.

In 2002, the IABC Research Foundation published the last of three tomes (Grunig, 1992, Dozier, Grunig & Grunig 1995, Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002) that defined and explained universal criteria for excellence in public relations and communication management. In the first of the three books (Grunig, 1992), the researchers identified a set of principles that public relations professionals can use to measure this excellence. This is also known as best practices. To summarize their contributions to communication management research here would trivialize their watershed work. Many of the principles they identified address advanced practice and status.

The following elements of the “Excellence Study” research (Grunig, 1992, Dozier, Grunig & Grunig 1995, Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002) should be reflected in the knowledge of entry-level practitioners as well as more advanced positions. The communication function of an organization must be integrated with an organization’s executive management. The leader (manager, director) of the communication office must be a member of the executive management of the organization. Corporate communication is an integral part of the strategic planning process of the organization, and its programming is developed from sound formative and evaluative research. This strategic planning is evidenced in the segmenting and planning of programming to strategic publics. The public relations and communication management activities of an organization are practiced ethically and by using the two-way, symmetrical model of organizational communication. Communication programs are developed for building and maintaining relationships through good and bad times.

The impact of the “Excellence Study” axioms continues to stand the test of time. A 2007 study by Watson Wyatt contends that high-performing companies communicate better, i.e., when communication is an integrated and valued business function, it contributes as much as other business functions to the outcomes and goal-satisfaction of the company (Sweetland, 2007). The Watson Wyatt study identified six characteristics of high-performance companies: “1) Their managers and workers focus on customer needs. 2) They engage employees in running the business. 3) They help managers communicate well. 4) They hire superior internal communicators who manage change effectively. 5) They measure the effect of employee communication. 6) They brand their employee experience” (as cited by Sweetland, 2007, p. 1).

Boundary-spanning activities associated with corporate communicators—both internal and external communication activities—enhance opportunities for the diffusion of innovation, learning and resource acquisition within organizations and between collaborating entities (Johnson and Chang, 2000). As new organization structures develop, external communication becomes increasingly important for dealing with complex inter-organizational relationships (partnerships, mergers, acquisitions, etc.). Congruence of internal and external messages and the frequency of boundary spanning within the organization are important to support the diffusion of innovation.

According to the Annenberg GAP study (Swerling, et al., 2007, p. III–61), public relations practitioners reported the following communication-related functions for which their departments have primary budgetary responsibility (listed here in rank order):
3.4 EXPECTATIONS OF COMPETENCIES

As this review reflects, this discussion of competencies and expectations is ongoing among academics, researchers, and practitioners regarding basic skills and knowledge sets necessary for professional success.

Scholars and practitioners (Argenti, 1996; Williams, 2007; IABC Heritage Region, 2007; Dewhurst & FitzPatrick, 2008; Butler, 2008; IABC Accreditation Council, 2008; IABC Victoria, 2009) agree that since corporate communicators supervise employees and report to other associates (i.e., human resource officers, marketing officers, or chief executive officers/company presidents) (Grunig et al., 2002; Swerling et al., 2007; Gillis, 2008b), general management skills are important. The following skills are identified as general management skills:

- Strategic planning
- Professional development participation
- Negotiating and coaching senior management
- Benchmarking best practices
- Leveraging technology
- Developing policy
- Project management
- Change management
- Crisis management
- Issues management
- Communication audits
- Measuring return on investment
- General business literacy

Dewhurst and FitzPatrick (2008) advise that the basics are still key: understanding business needs, analyzing and planning communication approaches, and selecting the best strategies and tactics to reach business goals.

Cirillo (1996) defined the following skills as necessary for public relations practitioner success: strategic planning, problem-solving, marketing, finance, client relations and information technology.

In a 1999 survey of educators and practitioners, Stacks, Botan and Turk reported the following top outcomes were required for hiring entry-level, hiring advanced-level, and promoting advanced-level corporate communication professionals:
• Outcomes for entry-level hires: writing skills, communicating publicly, interpersonal skills, and practical experiences
• Outcomes for advanced-level hires: field experience in public relations, understanding of public relations’ management team role and working well in a team effort
• Outcomes for promoting advanced-level professionals: organizational leadership, attendance at professional development programs and presenting at professional conferences

According to Forman (2005, p. 213), European corporate communication professionals preparing for senior management positions are expected to understand:

• Corporate governance ("operations of the board of directors in both the public and private sectors; duties and responsibilities of individual board members; analysis and advice that corporate communication officers can offer to help the CEO influence the board").
• Human resource management ("understanding of key human resources strategy models, that is, models for considering changes in people, jobs, and leadership styles, among others, to align the organization with its market opportunities and threats; application of these key models to improving the performance of the workforce").
• Negotiations ("critical concepts, frameworks, and approaches for individual, group, and organizational negotiations; preparation for a negotiation, including how to recognize and overcome common decision-making biases during negotiations").
• Global information economy ("evolution of information, communication, and information technologies and the growth of the information sector in the economy; economics of information, including the creation of content (e.g., films and music) and the delivery of that content to consumers; exposure to business sectors like communications, media, and publishing; development of competitive strategy in the global information economy").
• Management of corporate transitions ("key success factors in the management of organizational growth and transition; leadership styles best suited to each stage of the organizational life cycle").

In 2006 Stacks and Watson identified the following areas as important skills or attributes for entry-level practitioners (in rank order from most to least important):

1. Writing skills
2. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
3. A good attitude
4. The ability to communicate publicly
5. Initiative (being a self-starter)

The following skills or attributes were identified as important for advanced-level practitioners (in rank order from most to least important):

1. Research skills
2. A global perspective
3. Cultural experiences
4. Critical listening skills
5. Knowledge of the budgeting process
The following skills or attributes were identified as important for the promotion of advanced-level professionals: demonstrated leadership skills, participation in professional conferences, and an earned accreditation like APR or ABC designation.

The Commission on Public Relations Education (Turk, 2006) reported “that the top-rated competencies sought in hiring entry-level practitioners are writing skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, a good attitude, the ability to communicate publicly and initiative. For practitioners at a more advanced level, research skills, the ability to handle the media professionally, work experience in public relations, knowledge of the role of public relations on the management team and knowledge of issues management are the most prized characteristics” (p. 19–20).

The results from a 2007 survey of communication professionals from the U.S. east coast (IABC Heritage Region, 2007) report the following as the top five essential skills for business communicators (in priority order):

1. Listening
2. Writing
3. Selecting key messages
4. Selecting appropriate communication channels to reach the target audience
5. Communication counseling

The next five skills identified were as follows:

1. Facilitating communication
2. Public speaking
3. Interpreting business trends and issues
4. Coaching
5. Measuring results

Similarly, in a 2009 survey of communication professionals in Victoria, Australia the top must-have skills were identified as the ability to measure return on investment (ROI), political acumen or stakeholder management, and leveraging social media. Additionally, the communicators in Victoria (2009) identified the following skills affecting the work of communicators:

- The importance of generalist skills
- Change management
- The rise in the use of consultancies and contractors
- Communicating bad news
- A focus on simple messages
- Strategic long-term planning
- Alignment with senior management
- Corporate social responsibility
- Marketing communication

Professional recruiters regularly provide advice to entry-level and more seasoned professionals regarding the job market and the skills necessary for the future. In 2004, Hulin reported that jobs were plentiful for corporate communicators in broad and niche markets for young professionals with generalist skills who are willing to pay their dues. Hulin (2004b) reported that the top skills most recruiters were looking for in communication hires were good writing, intelligence, cultural literacy,
the ability to identify opportunities for the client, media savvy, contacts, good business sense, broad communication experience, a specialized niche skill or experience, and the ability to avoid career clichés.

Ironically, a content analysis of communication behaviors exhibited by participants in *The Apprentice* television program (Kinnick and Parton, 2005) concluded that communication skills necessary for business success include the power to persuade, leadership abilities, interpersonal communication, and collaboration and negotiation skills.

In 2007 communication professionals surveyed regarding job satisfaction and skills reported the most important skills and emerging skills for corporate communicators included strategic planning, issues management, general business acumen, crisis management, international relations, and employee communication (Gillis & ResearchWorks, 2008; Gillis, 2007a; Gillis, 2007b). Also the IABC Profile Study respondents indicated that membership in professional organizations was an important component for professional development and improving problem-solving skills.

Butler (2008) suggests the following key competencies for internal communication candidates: leveraging technology like social media, understanding business needs and drivers, and understanding the impact of corporate communication across the company.

Communication strategists regularly predict business trends that will affect the practice of communication professionals. In 2002, Woodall and Smith of Towers Perrin predicted the top trends to influence the practice of organizational communications would include globalization, technology, speed of change, business change events, global change events, brand alignment and talent management. In 2006 Woodall updated her forecast regarding top influences affecting business communications to include:

- The need for senior leaders to be effective communicators.
- The impact of technology on internal, external and work group communication processes.
- The importance of measurement of communication ROI.
- General business literacy.
- The need for organizations to improve communication credibility with employees as well as external audiences.
- The ability to manage change.
- Issues management.

Respondents to the 2008 IABC Profile Study indicated the following challenges for the future: connecting corporate communication contribution to the satisfaction of business goals, leveraging technology, customer satisfaction, ethics and accountability (Gillis & ResearchWorks, 2008; Gillis, 2007a; Gillis, 2007b).

The Commission on Public Relations Education (Turk, 2006) noted the following trends that are expected to continue to affect the practice of public relations: “the need for transparency and accountability; the increasing value of public relations to top management; the demand for public relations research methodology, measurement and metrics; globalization; an increasingly complex and difficult ethical environment; challenges to institutional trust and credibility; rapidly changing media; technological change; the increasing importance of internal audiences; the need for organizations to integrate their communication” (p. 21).
PR Week (2009) interviewed a number of public relations thought leaders regarding the future skill set of public relations professionals. The consensus of the group included the following: quality writing; corporate storytelling; creativity; content creator in traditional and new media; ability to apply new media applications to organizational messaging; ability to drive the conversation between the organization and its publics; ability to adapt to new business and societal conditions; sound business acumen; good researcher; ability to handle a crisis; ability to provide honest counsel to executives; and constant curiosity, candor and passion for communication.

Finally, from a survey of CEOs the Arthur W. Page Society (2007) reported, “CEOs are looking for their Chief Communications Officers to take a more strategic and interactive role within the senior leadership of the company” (p. 6). Because of rapid changes in both communications and society at large businesses and organizations are facing “a global playing field of unprecedented transparency and radically democratized access to information production, dissemination and consumption.” These forces require businesses and communicators to develop new means to segment audiences and messages and to manage its reputation. “Today the corporation’s relationship with one constituency is readily visible to all constituencies, who are multiplying in number and growing in sophistication.” From this report, four new priorities for chief communications officers’ leadership roles are defined:

1. Leadership in defining and instilling company values;
2. Leadership in building and managing multi-stakeholder relationships;
3. Leadership in enabling the enterprise with ‘new media’ skills and tools; and

Success in meeting these challenges will require new approaches, deeper business knowledge, and new skills and measurements. Adding credence to this insight, a USA Today Snapshot survey (2008) reported the biggest challenges for CEOs during a recession include retention of talent, relationships with investors, preserving or improving company reputation, and globalization. Each of these concerns is directly affected by corporate communication programming as suggested by the Arthur W. Page Society.

In the early 1980s, around the same time as the initial “Excellence Study,” the International Association of Business Communicators developed a matrix that identified the skills necessary to succeed in advancing a communication career. Entry-level skill expectations included the following:

- Understanding of communication theory
- News writing
- Feature writing
- Newsletter editing and design
- Magazine editing and design
- Basic photography
- Graphic design
- Writing for audiovisual media
- Law and government relations
- Speech writing
- Event planning
- Communication ethics

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Skills necessary to make the first advancement or promotion included the following:

- Proposal writing
- Publication management
- General management
- Media relations
- Financial management
- Constituent research
- Evaluation and measurement of programs
- Strategic planning

The matrix included five levels of competency to reflect the lifespan of a communication career with advanced skills in both communication and business management at each level. In 2008 the IABC Accreditation Council introduced a Communicator’s Competency Model based on focus group responses of accredited communicators regarding the value of accreditation and continuing education. This model provides a revision of the skills and competencies necessary for career success in corporate communication and suggests means for reaching excellence in these areas based on continuing education, work-related challenges, and accreditation completion.

Similar to the research reviewed thus far, the IABC Communicator’s Competency Model defines basic communication skills, management skills, and specific knowledge sets that practitioners must acquire and master to advance in the profession. Additionally, the 2008 IABC model acknowledges that skills and knowledge sets are based on a continuum from tactical activities to strategic actions. Candidates for professional practice may have been exposed to the mechanics and theory of these skills and knowledge sets through academic preparation, but actual expertise is developed through exercise and hands-on application in work experiences.

Communicators may choose to pursue accreditation as documentation of their expertise. These programs may be national or international. Examples of accreditation programs communicators complete to assess competencies and skills—the International Association of Business Communicators, the Public Relations Society of America and the Canadian Public Relations Society—share some common expectations and requirements for professionals. Common measurement tools used for assessing competencies include oral and written examinations as well as a portfolio of work. These groups also have an eligibility requirement of years of experience in the field before pursuing the accreditation process; typically this is three to five years of experience. The process of accreditation itself is one of continuing professional development and learning that is an expectation for advancing in a corporate communication career (Swerling et al., 2007; Stacks, Botan & Turk, 1999).
3.5 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

From this review, a pattern of knowledge sets and representative skills is emerging from both academics and professionals. Fundamental skills in general communication and specific areas of practice such as formative and summative research, communications planning, writing across the media, relationship development with numerous constituencies (including but not limited to media, employees, community, investors, government, advocacy groups), and general management are among the relevant skills. These skills are affected by societal trends and communication technology. Trends and technology continue to advance; corporate communication practitioners must be keen to understand and forecast trends as well as use new technology in a client’s or an employer’s best interest.

Success for entry-level organizational communication specialists rests in their preparation and ability to complete primary, essential tasks. To continue to be successful in the development of a corporate communication career, practitioners must be prepared for more advanced activities, i.e., strategic planning, crisis management and program measurement.

This content analysis of position descriptions illuminates the expectations for professionals at numerous levels of career development. As they advance in their careers, communication professionals are engaged in the strategic management of core communication processes for businesses and organizations. These professional communicators are presumed to have mastered fundamental skills before taking on more advanced projects, which allows practitioners to move from advocacy level positions (tacticians or technicians) to advisory positions (management) (Broom & Dozier, 1986).
**Figure 3.1 Definition of Terms**

As the key findings and recommendations are reviewed, the following standard communication terms are used to describe primary organizational communication functions.

Community relations is defined as “a function of public relations that involves dealing and communicating with the citizens and groups within an organization’s geographic operating area” (Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2007, p. 381).

Internal communication consists of “communications within a company or organization to personnel or membership” (Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2007, p. 388). Whitworth (cited in Gillis, 2006, p. 212) adds, “today it is harder to define who belongs to an internal audience. Organizations have full-time employees, part-time employees, contractors, consultants, temporary employees, and just about every other kind of worker.”

Marketing communication “is all communication activities an organization undertakes to promote its agenda to its audiences. It might be advertising, public relations, or a coordinated face-to-face campaign” (Sierra cited in Gillis, 2006, p. 392). Newsom et al. (2007, p. 390) add that marketing is “an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relations in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders.”

Media relations is defined as “a function of public relations that involves dealing with the communications media in seeking publicity for, or responding to, media interest in an organization” (Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2007, p. 390).

Organizational communication describes “the internal and external communication functions of an organization or company,” i.e., all communication on behalf of the organization that is designed to reach organizational goals and objectives. This includes but is not limited to strategic communication and planning, research, public relations, public affairs, marketing, media relations, community relations, constituent relations, and internal communication (Gillis, 2006, p. xi.).

Public affairs is widely defined as “a function of PR that works with governments and groups involved in setting public policy and legislation (may involve lobbying efforts)” (Whalen, 2006, p. 103).

Whalen (2005, p. 103) concludes that the term public information officer is “a common title for a PR person who works for a state, local or federal government agency. They tend to provide educational materials to their constituencies and answer media questions.” As such, the term is a parochial connotation much like “college relations” is used in higher education. It becomes a catch-all modifier for all public relations or organizational communication on behalf of the organization.

Public relations: Whalen acknowledges that there are more than 500 definitions for the practice of public relations. The most widely used definition states, “public relations is the deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics” (BIPO as cited in Whalen, 2005, p. 103). For clarification, publics are any group of people who have a stake in an organization’s activities. These groups can be formal and organized, or random collections of people, like the general public.
4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research project aimed to identify current communication and workplace competencies for business communicators from entry-level to career maturity. The research questions included:

- What expectations do employers have for communicators of different experience levels from entry-level to senior-level communicators?
- What is the demand for accreditation in career advancement in corporate communication?

These questions are on the minds of many practitioners. In a 2009 forum entry to Myragan.com (6 March 2009), the following question was posed: “What advice would you give to your younger self beginning a career in corporate communication? What's the best advice to succeed in this business?” The post netted 17 threads in six days. Most of the responses to this post focused on behaviors and general advice for succeeding in a first job versus competencies or skills specific to corporate communication, for example: don't lie, be flexible, develop a thick skin, network, join a professional organization, have a backup plan, keep a portfolio of work, stay in school until the economy improves, get a variety of communication experiences, be willing to relocate, read and listen, learn as much as possible about the client or employer, and have a work ethic based on quality. A few responses gave advice on communication competencies to master, including: master writing skills from grammar and spelling to point of view and tone, exhibit quality planning and management skills, focus on relationship building with clients, and understand the impact of research on project success.

This advice is valuable; understanding the competencies associated with corporate communication work is key to skill assessment and to developing a plan for advancement, which may include additional formal education, informal continuing education, accreditation, and volunteer experiences as well as compensated experiences.

4.1 A FOUNDATION OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE SETS

Figure 4.1 shows a composite of skills and knowledge sets determined from the review of literature. This preliminary list shows skill growth and development from entry-level to advanced-level practitioners. The elements in Figure 4.1 include communication skill sets, managerial skills and professional communication knowledge sets.

The IABC Communicator's Competency Model (2008) delineates skills and knowledge sets necessary for career advancement. The concepts identified from the review of literature (Figure 4.1) were codified using the IABC model as a proxy to determine a foundation of skill and knowledge sets.

Using the IABC model as a proxy for expertise, the data from the content analysis was categorized by minimum years of experience as defined by the posting boards’ rubrics to attempt to replicate the expectations defined by the IABC model. This analysis served as a test of the viability of the IABC model as a career-planning tool. The IABC model includes some specific knowledge sets that represent advanced skills in knowledge sets that the literature review defined more broadly (i.e., labor relations is an advanced concept in the managerial skill set of human resource management; problem solving is an expectation of communication planning and management).
Figure 4.1 shows there is an expectation that through education and previous work experiences entry-level professionals are familiar with a number of knowledge sets and experienced in communication and managerial skills. More technician applications are evident in the lower ranges of the composite matrix. Knowledge sets increase as years of experience increase with an expectation that professionals are developing additional knowledge set applications as they mature in their careers.

As the documentation in the next section shows, professionals at each level are often expected to participate in advanced knowledge set applications but at a variety of levels of expertise (with the most sophisticated participation at the senior range of the spectrum of career maturity).

The following skills and knowledge sets were codified as concepts for identification through the content analysis portion of the study based on the review of literature (see Chapter 8 for details of the content analysis and coding process). The IABC Communicator’s Competency Model (2008) rubric of skill and knowledge sets was used to organize and present the findings. Included with the definition are examples of language from the position description entries that support the presence of the concepts; the definitions were derived from the content of the literature review:

4.1.1 Basic Communication Skills

Behavioral characteristics: those general employee characteristics that are defined as expectations of model employees, i.e., critical thinking skills, critical listening skills, punctuality, attention to detail, the ability to meet deadlines, the ability to work well with others, good interpersonal skills, a positive attitude, being a self-starter (showing initiative), the “ability to be flexible and handle ambiguity,” et al.

Examples of critical thinking behaviors included the ability to critically evaluate one’s work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness; intelligence; and the ability to think critically, creatively and independently. Problem-solving skills are another example of critical thinking skills. General model employee characteristics included showing initiative (being a self-starter), having a positive attitude, being punctual, showing attention to detail, interpersonal communication skills, and the ability to work well with others to achieve organizational goals.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “High energy, detail-oriented person who thrives in a fast-paced environment. A self-starter with the ability to work independently as well as contribute to the larger team.”
- “This position is for you if you are a highly organized and motivated individual with attention to detail and strong interpersonal skills.”

Event planning and management: planning and implementation necessary for events that fulfill objectives related to internal communication, public relations and marketing goals, i.e., trade shows, receptions, seminars, annual meetings, recruitment fairs, sponsored events, cultural events, community events, and charity events.

Examples from position descriptions:

Evidence from the position descriptions was edited to maintain the anonymity of the company or organization.
Figure 4.1: Preliminary Composite of Expectations and Competencies Based on Existing Research

Expectations and competencies compound from left to right: entry-level to advanced-level practice. Components are listed alphabetically for reference purposes only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry-Level Positions</th>
<th>Mid-Level Positions</th>
<th>Advanced-Level Positions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sets</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Government relations</td>
<td>• Change communication</td>
<td>• Change management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Media relations</td>
<td>• Constituent relations programs (numerous defined publics such as employees, donors, investors, customers/consumers, community)</td>
<td>• Communication policy formulation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Consulting, counseling leadership (executive communications)</td>
<td>• Corporate contributions management</td>
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<td>• Corporate governance</td>
<td>• Crisis communication</td>
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<td>• Developing identity programs</td>
<td>• Financial communication programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Institutional trust and credibility</td>
<td>• Government regulatory affairs and legislation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Issues management</td>
<td>• International communication (cultural literacy)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Marketing communication</td>
<td>• Labor relations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Organizational culture</td>
<td>• Marketing/marketing communication management</td>
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<td>• Media relations management</td>
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<td>• Organizational design</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Organizational negotiations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Political action committee design/management</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Skills and Managerial Skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communication Skills and Managerial Skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communication Skills and Managerial Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communication planning</td>
<td>• Budget development</td>
<td>• Accountability management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct research to measure program impact</td>
<td>• Communication planning and management</td>
<td>• Earned accreditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ethical behavior</td>
<td>• Cultural literacy: global perspective/cultural experiences (may include language fluency)</td>
<td>• Financial management</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Event management and planning</td>
<td>• General management skills (business acumen)</td>
<td>• Managing communication staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Financial management (adheres to project budget)</td>
<td>• Leveraging technology</td>
<td>• Problem analysis/identification</td>
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<tr>
<td>• General office management</td>
<td>• Measurement of program effectiveness</td>
<td>• Research (ROI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interpersonal skills (includes critical listening skills)</td>
<td>• Personnel supervision/management</td>
<td>• Strategic communication planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Office computer skills</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
<td>• Project management</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Online communication and technology literacy</td>
<td>• Proposal writing</td>
<td>• Writing policies and procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Organizational skills</td>
<td>• Teamwork (team player, collaboration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Presentations (speech writing and performance)</td>
<td>• Visual communication (writing and production for multimedia, photography, graphic design and publication management)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Proposal writing</td>
<td>• Work independently</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teamwork (team player, collaboration)</td>
<td>• Working with others (outside the work unit, i.e., agencies, vendors, freelancers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Visual communication (writing and production for multimedia, photography, graphic design and publication management)</td>
<td>• Writing and editing</td>
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• “Define, review and streamline key event engines for [company] to reach marketing and sales objectives.”
• “Invitation, event-feedback, follow up and reporting process to improve closed loop process, and evaluation of impact.”
• “Coordination for major customer or industry events, including hotels, customer events arrangements (suites, food, entertainment, gifts, etc.), registration, collecting leads, booth supplies, etc.”
• “Key responsibilities include planning, creatively designing and implementing donor events that meet our organizational objectives within budget, developing event timelines and overseeing all aspects of event plan management, ensuring deliverables are met on a timely basis and managing and providing on-site leadership at donor events.”

Fluency in a foreign language: a high level of language proficiency in both written and oral communication

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Proficiency with foreign language(s).”
• “French/English bilingualism would be an asset.”
• “Multilingual skills—Brazilian Portuguese, English and Spanish are highly desirable.”
• “Knowledge of Kiswahili.”
• “Fluency in Dutch would be an advantage.”

New media acumen: understanding the impact, planning, and implementation of new media technology to improve the internal and external communication and productivity of the enterprise; monitoring and participation in the blogosphere; managing the corporate intranet and Internet; monitoring and participation in other online media; monitoring new technologies; participation in online social networking.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Leads social marketing and social media opportunities (e.g., Web 2.0 applications, social networking, themed contests, advertising).”
• “… updating, publishing, writing and editing web content.”
• “Implementation of Internet strategy design, including web site development.”
• “Development and implementation of a communication strategy; including the optimal use of the website/portal.”
• “… provide expertise in developing and implementing a wide array of communications materials with specific experience in e-communications including website development and implementation, website analysis, coordinating webcasts and podcasts, creating website content and implementing social media tools.”
• “Develops new Intranet site including drafting and editing content and creating web graphics.”
• “The position acts as a resource with respect to web and new media communications including development of e-chats, e-invitations, news flashes, and other new media and social network messaging and tools geared to a variety of audiences.”
**Presentation skills:** understanding concepts and applying theories in the use of oral presentations, including images and information; the ability to deliver public presentations.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Strong public presentation skills.”
- “Develops and delivers presentations to clearly articulate and sell strategic and creative ideas to management and peers.”
- “Develop clean designs and innovative ideas to effectively represent the project (e.g., multimedia presentations, PowerPoint, etc.)”
- “Coach lawyers as they prepare for marketing- and business development-related presentations.”
- “Prepares presentations, speaking notes and messages of greeting for Foundation spokespeople and representatives, and provides administrative support to speakers’ program.”

**Relationship building:** the process of developing and maintaining relationships with specifically segmented audience (publics/markets) identified by the organization as strategic and necessary for reaching organizational goals and objectives. This concept includes peer-to-peer relationships to facilitate daily work activities as well as specific audience groups that might be related to another concept, i.e., donors, employees, government bodies and media.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Builds partnerships with individuals at all levels of the organization and works across multiple functions.”
- “Coordinate and develop proactive strategies to deepen and leverage relationships with key regional and national partners.”
- “Develop and maintain relationships with a wide variety of community agencies, academic institutions, federal and provincial political parties, NGOs and other organizations.”
- “Build partnerships with clients and stakeholders across the Division and with communications staff in business units and within [the company] globally.”
- “Strong relationship-building skills with the ability to influence key stakeholders on strategies and initiatives.”

**Relationships with vendors and agencies:** the process of assessing the capabilities of a vendor/agency to meet communication needs, participating in vendor/agency selection, providing day-to-day management and oversight of projects and raising issues when barriers surface.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Manage freelance writers for Association publications.”
- “Assess capabilities of vendor/agency to meet communication needs. Recommend and influence vendor/agency selection. Participate in the negotiation of the agreement terms. Provide day-to-day management and oversight of project and raise issues when barriers surface.”
- “Coordinate the selection of and manage relationships with a number of external communications vendors for the design and printing of publications and other materials.”

**Visual communication skills:** graphic design skills associated with publication and new media.
Findings and Discussion

production; photography, videography, publication design. This also includes identity management such as graphic design standards maintained by the use of logos, slogans and trademark identity marks.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “overssees an internal communications unit that is responsible for facilitating and producing all print and electronic communications from the office.”
- “... thorough knowledge of all processes involving print, visual and electronic communications.”
- “Initiates and develops high quality communications tools (print and electronic) that deliver compelling content in line with strategic/operational communications based on research and measurable outcomes.”
- “... an understanding of design, graphics and photography.”
- “Also responsible for creating and maintaining communications vehicles (web, print, video, and broadcasting).”
- “Manage print communications, including but not limited to the company newsletter, brochures, reports and corporate advertising. Management of photography and video projects is also integral to the role.”
- “Responsible for producing public service announcements, news articles, and advertisements for television, radio, and print media.”
- “... develops updates and drives adherence to the company’s identity standards...develops, updates, monitors, enforces and provides counsel on corporate identity standards.”
- “Maintain corporate wide graphic and identity standards.”

Writing and editing skills: correctly and clearly writes in forms and styles appropriate for the communication professions, audiences and purposes they serve; the ability to produce informative and persuasive writing.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Well-developed business writing skills with a demonstrated ability to succinctly communicate useful and relevant information to internal customers.”
- “Write consistently in an influential, moving and memorable style. Connect communication messages across vehicles to influence broader opportunities and ensure consistency and reinforcement of critical messages. Edit for style, consistency and fluidity across the organization. Write clearly and effectively under pressure.”
- “Actively participate in team efforts to define and articulate the editorial standards.”

4.1.2 Managerial Skills

Accreditation: earned accreditation through a recognized professional organization, i.e., IABC, PRSA, CPRS.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “prefer accreditation in business communications (ABC) or public relations (APR).”
- “preferably with CPRS or IABC accreditation.”
- “accredited communications professional, award winning communicator as identified by professional associations.”
Findings and Discussion

**Business/Financial acumen:** understanding business needs and drivers, and communication’s role in the satisfaction of business goals; general business literacy; the ability to engage in the budgeting process and financial practices.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Understand business issues and use communication to help solve organizational problems and achieve objectives.”
- “Manage the day-to-day operations and tactical implementation of the Donor Relations annual business plan.”
- “Compile and monitor global contributions budget and analyze and measure the program’s overall effectiveness and make recommendations for future improvements.”
- “Develop an annual corporate communications strategy, plan and budget for each functional area, in accordance with the corporate objectives and product objectives.”
- “Responsible for Center’s budget and directing the day-to-day management of office.”

**Business development:** those activities associated with cultivating new business leads and referrals that lead to new accounts for a firm or agency.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Manage business development process and pipeline on behalf of office and practice/industry group leadership.”
- “… identifying potential leads, collecting and sharing market and industry intelligence, tracking business development activity, identifying professional and trade associations with which the office should affiliate.”
- “… increase positive brand recognition and new business leads, ultimately resulting in increased sales.”

**Communication management:** the general process of managing communication strategies and tactics to reach business goals; holding a strategic and interactive role within the senior leadership of the company; understanding the impact of corporate communication across the company.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Directs the University’s strategic public relations initiatives; oversees development of public relations campaigns to meet University goals.”
- “Develop and implement an annual communications plan.”
- “Planning, organization and execution of communication activities to demonstrate company vision and mission.”

**Communication planning:** analyzing and planning communication approaches; this includes identifying opportunities for clients, communicating in an integrated model, and developing programs to build and maintain relationships.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Develop best practices for local PR/marketing initiatives in order to continue to improve stream of communication.”
- “Develop and coordinate public relations strategy to help raise our visibility.”
- “Develop and manage the successful implementation and execution of brand communications and PR programs to achieve defined plan objectives.”
• “Develops communication plans and strategies for the department and district to include research, planning, communication and evaluation.”
• “Strategic planning skills that link communications strategies and plans to business objectives outcomes.”

Cultural literacy/diversity: a demonstrated understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communication; diversity sensitivity, applying cross-cultural and cross gender sensitivity.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Committed to serving a diverse group of girls, working with a diverse team of colleagues and volunteers, and contributing to [the organization’s] cultural competency efforts.”
• “... show respect for differences and diversity.”
• “... coordinate the creation, cultivation, and communication of the organization’s Workplace Diversity Plan identifying the diversity vision, mission, and goals.”

Ethical behavior/ethical decision making: demonstrating an understanding of professional ethical principles and working ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity on behalf of the organization and the practitioner.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Knowledge of best practices and ethics in journalism.”
• “Extensive knowledge of current public relations practices and ethics, current marketing trends and familiarity with journalism requirements and ethics.”
• “... demonstrates principled leadership and sound business ethics.”
• “Assist with rollout of HR initiatives such as ethics training, total rewards, PMD, etc.”
• “Adhere to a strict code of ethics and [company] values.”

Fundraising and grant writing: specialized persuasive writing skills associated with donor relations in nonprofit organizations.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Identify opportunities for grant funding through foundations and government related entities; write and submit grant proposals, securing a minimum of budgeted donations; communicate the organization’s case and mission in a way that compels prospective donors to give; conduct an annual giving campaign, utilizing best practice marketing and development tools for optimum results.”
• “Responsible for researching and developing a variety of communication vehicles including grant proposals.”

Human resource management activities: managing people, programs and resources, talent management; includes the management activities of evaluating, motivating and counseling employees.

Examples from position descriptions:
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• “Must be capable of managing a diverse staff, providing opportunities for staff growth and professional development as appropriate.”
• “Perform peer review of other consultants’ work. Mentor junior-level staff.”
• “Responsible for managing staff including, recruitment and selection, work assignments and customer service, staff development and training, and performance evaluations.”

Leadership skills: communication leadership skills include being a member of the executive management of the organization, participation in corporate governance (i.e., developing policy), initiating strategic communication programming in support of organizational goals, and participation in corporate transitions. Communication leadership includes building and managing multi-stakeholder relationships, building and managing trust, and defining and instilling company values.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Participate in staff leadership team…to address strategic issues facing organization.”
• “Provides leadership and direction in developing a team of communications professionals in media relations, public relations, internal and executive communications, regional communications and strategic philanthropy.”

Managing volunteers: an extension of human resource activities, this includes recruiting, training and supervising the activities of volunteers—typically a skill set associated with nonprofit organizations.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Provide training and mentoring for volunteers.”
• “Manage activities with executive management, volunteers and key field representatives to ensure consistent and timely message dissemination between entities.”
• “Recruit and train new communications volunteers, create and deliver future training opportunities and supervise their activities to support chapter operations.”

Professional development: membership and participation in professional organizations that represent communication or the specialization of the employer; participation in professional conferences and attendance at professional development programs and continuing professional education.

Example from position descriptions:
• “Retains membership in local IABC chapter and attends periodic professional development opportunities toward the goal of constantly improving the HR communications function.”

Statements establishing the requirement of application of best practices represent assumptions that the candidate is participating in professional development to keep pace with best practices:
• “Provide best practice communication advice and counsel.”
• “Maintains an understanding of best practices in media and stakeholder relations.”

Project management: the skills associated with planning, implementing, and measuring any organizational project that helps to meet organizational objectives; includes the management of tangible and intangible resources. This concept overlaps with other concepts, since projects are defined by professional knowledge sets or communication skills, i.e., web site development, publications, media relations, marketing communications.
Examples from position descriptions:

- “Project management knowledge and skills that enable the delivery of planned outcomes within established timelines and budget.”
- “Oversees project management for global print and electronic communication vehicles, including design, development, production, printing and distribution, to ensure delivery on time and within budget.”
- “Manage project development, including project schedules, work assignments, budgets, and reports.”

**Recruitment and training:** those communication activities used to encourage commitment by employees and volunteers and developing necessary skills and quality of work from employees, volunteers and peers.

Example from position descriptions:

- “Lead, mentor, and train institutional writers to increase quality of written outputs ranging from repeatables and RFP responses to value-added content. Train and support writers to become better managers of their roles and responsibilities, including: Managing role ambiguity in serving needs of multiple stakeholders; and balancing conflicting demands to produce repeatables, RFPs, and value added content supporting Business Units.”

**Research/measurement/evaluation:** communication research is both qualitative and quantitative measures conducted to form communication strategy and tactics as well as evaluate the efficacy of strategies and tactics in reaching organizational goals. Corporate communication is an integral part of the strategic planning process of the organization, and its programming is developed from sound formative and evaluative research. This strategic planning is evidenced in the segmenting and planning of programming to strategic publics. Research may be used for planning and forecasting strategies. Popular concerns include measuring return on investment (ROI) and strategic planning.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Measure and report on results. Use analysis and benchmarking to ensure communications goals and objectives are being met.”
- “Directs the research, develops objectives, creative brief and program metrics and guides the execution of programs and campaigns.”

Research statements were also embedded in descriptions of professional work, i.e., measuring media relations programs or fundraising campaigns:

- “Gather market data to measure effectiveness of marketing activities and maintain monthly buzz metrics.”
- “Develop measurement criteria to effectively evaluate communications programs; incorporate changes in communications programs based upon measurement results.”

**RFP process management:** the management of the request for proposal process includes both a) the activities associated with developing RFPs for the company and managing the responses and b) collecting and constructing a proposal to respond to an RFP on behalf of the company as the vendor soliciting work. This is sub-concept of business development.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Researches sales opportunities via Request for Proposals (RFPs) and direct proposal strategy, development, production, and delivery.”
• “Investigates RFP response opportunities and assists with proposal development.”
• “Lead the client reporting and RFP content development process, managing a team of Institutional Writers to achieve timeliness, efficiency, and high quality.”
• “Work closely with lawyers, marketing staff and firm wide personnel to prepare RFP responses, write proposals, and create presentations for new business.”
• “… design, write, and produce the company’s Request for Proposal (RFP) and Request for Information (RFI) responses and qualified unsolicited proposals on a timely basis while ensuring high quality and consistency with potential client and [company] standards.”

4.1.3 Professional Knowledge Sets

Advocacy relations: public relations strategies and tactics used to advocate or influence attitudes and behaviors; often associated with relationships with advocacy groups or governmental organizations that will affect the practice of the client or employer; lobbying and other public affairs activities may be included.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Identify opportunities where advocacy is a key strategy and interact effectively with advocate organizations”
• “develop and implement public affairs and issues advocacy strategies and programs targeted to critical business policy-related audiences to advance the company’s business strategy regarding positions on policies on key issues”
• “develop relationships with external advocacy organizations”
• “conducts research and writes briefing reports/submissions as needed for advocacy and policy work.”

Change management: developing communication programming to address and communicate on behalf of the organization during times of change and development. This includes internal and external communication strategies.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Proven ability to integrate change management and OD principles in communication initiatives.”
• “Serve as a partner to [company’s] HR change leadership teams, leveraging prior, hands-on experience leveraging communications as part of broader change management processes. Ensures these concepts are incorporated into communication strategy.”
• “Advises site leadership on the applications of change management principles to help guide the site through significant periods of transformation. Develop and implement detailed change management communication plans based on interactions with functional areas and PEG that will energize the site and embrace change.”

Client relations: corporate communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with organizational clients using communication and persuasion concepts and strategies. Evidence from the entries came primarily from positions within communication agencies.
Examples from position descriptions:

- “Understands client needs and issues within the client’s environment and manages client expectations.”
- “Manage highly visible client projects including project planning, scheduling, and budget tracking.”
- “Requires the ability to effectively manage day-to-day client relationships and ongoing workload.”

**Community relations:** corporate communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with citizens and groups within an organization’s geographic operating area using communication and persuasion concepts and strategies.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Promotes community support and understanding of district goals and objectives.”
- “Will serve as the key point of contact with the operations and provide strategic advice and guidance regarding the community investment activities and sponsorships at the operations level.”
- “Collaborate with other University contacts/departments and partner with community leaders in the development of joint programs and services.”
- “Develops and maintains community relations calendar, plans and coordinates special community events.”
- “Develop, coordinate and implement community relations strategies and activities to promote and leverage the presence of [the company] and its businesses with external shareholders (community groups, Chamber of Commerce, Business associations, etc.)”

**Consumer/customer relations:** corporate communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with consumers/customers.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Responsible for building and maintaining positive relations with existing and potential referring physicians in order to ensure excellent customer service and physician satisfaction.”
- “Customer Focus: Able to communicate courteously and pro-actively; able to learn customers’ short term and long term needs; see issues from customers’ position, and recommend products or services; able to promote customer focus in employees and develop partnerships with customers.”
- “Anticipates and responds to consumer interest to position products, services and people.”

**Corporate social responsibility:** managing an organization’s socially responsible activities, such as philanthropic efforts, cause branding campaigns, employee volunteerism programs and other sustainability efforts.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Develop and manage [company’s] community relations, volunteerism, and philanthropy following [company’s] philosophy and guidelines. Spearhead support for important local programs and events that improve the quality of life in the community while enhancing and differentiating the image of [the company] in the marketplace.”
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- “Recommends and manages operating and community giving budgets designed to optimize the return on the resources invested.”

**Crisis communication**: the functions associated with communicating on behalf of an organization during a time of crisis, typically evidenced by the management of a crisis plan that includes communication strategies designed to address organizational target publics.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Manage the company’s crisis communications planning and response.”
- “Serving as company spokesperson and implementing the plan during a crisis situation.”
- “Develop strategies and training for handling crisis communications.”
- “Handle all field crisis communications including field training, statement creation, and outreach to local media.”

**Employee/internal communication**: communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with employees and internal audiences.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Internal communications including culture building change management, employee communications and employee community involvement.”
- “Conduct research and gather feedback and employee reaction on communication solutions.”
- “Research, write, and edit stories for employees about company business goals and strategy, technical projects, and company news for print and online distribution.”
- “Responsible for developing and maintaining communication channels for internal communication and to provide departments within [company] the tools and resources necessary to ensure clear and effective employee communication.”
- “Supports the Human Resource department projects with communication plans.”

**Executive communication**: coaching senior management; helping managers communicate well both with internal and external publics.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Work independently and build partnerships with senior-level executives for presentation development, speech development, speech delivery, communications strategy and execution plans.”
- “Serves as communication advisor to executives and leadership teams.”
- “Advising and counseling senior leadership on matters of diversity within the organization and within the community.”
- “Executive communications including media and presentation training and speechwriting for senior management executives.” “Maintain frequent contact with the CEO, and provide strategic communications counsel, media training and executive communications assistance to the CEO and other senior executives.”

**Government relations**: communication activities on behalf of an organization or enterprise directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with local, regional and federal governing bodies that affect the success of the organization. Public Affairs is widely defined as “a function of PR that works with governments and groups involved in setting public policy and legislation (may
involve lobbying efforts)” (Whalen, 2005, p. 103).

Examples from position descriptions:
- “A key focus of activity is government relations, regulatory issues, research, and public and professional policy development.”
- “Represents the interests of its members and the motoring public to industry and all levels of government.”
- “Maintains relationships with government officials and offices at city, county, state and federal levels, provides current information on chapter activities, and coordinates involvement in chapter activities.”

At its most complex, communicators may participate in the legislative and lobbying activities:
- “Draft, prepare and lobby for legislation as necessary.”
- “Participate in the planning, coordination and direction of regulatory and legislative issues consistent with the strategic direction and operational needs of the division.”
- “Work with lobbyists and government relations staff in a coordinated effort.”
- “Serves as in-house lobbyist and liaisons with contract lobbyist.”

**Investor relations**: communication activities of publicly traded companies directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with current and potential investors and investor media representatives.

Examples from position descriptions:
- “Create and implement integrated programs for investor and analyst relations, public relations and internal communications to increase awareness and understanding of the company and its financial and business accomplishments.”
- “Understand SEC rules and regulations regarding Fair Disclosure.”
- “Develop and maintain core investor relations messages and presentations including conference presentations and investor pages on website, refreshing regularly for timely communication. Manage the preparation, distribution and response to annual reports, quarterly reports, fact sheets, press releases, conference call scripts, Q&A, and other communications to investors.”

For nonprofit organizations, this includes donor relations:
- “Manage the day-to-day operations and tactical implementation of the Donor Relations annual business plan.”
- “Develop and coordinate annual giving campaign to general donor base; develop and implement donor stewardship and recognition program, including annual major donor campaign and year round cultivation; develop and implement strategies for new donor identification and cultivation; coordinate development and use of donor database and fundraising materials.”

**Issues management**: strategic communication management addressing emerging trends and anticipating and taking actions on concerns likely to have an impact on an organization and its stakeholder groups.

Examples from position descriptions:
Findings and Discussion

• “Coordinates the development of specific issues management plans.”
• “Continuously monitors relevant issues and assesses their impact on the organization in collaboration with Legal & Compliance, Business Unit Leads and Corporate Affairs…track both current and potential future issues, recommends communications strategies to deal with them and prepares relevant briefings, key messages and responses.”
• “Identify emerging issues, ensure follow up and make recommendations to management.”

Marketing communication: communication activities engaged to support the marketing of the organization or to promote its agenda, including but not limited to audience segmentation, marketing PR/product PR, brand management, brand alignment and product advertising.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Develops, implements and measures integrated marketing communications plan to support company objectives and brand positioning.”
• “Develop institutional marketing communications that support the marketing objectives of institutional business units.”
• “Creates, implements and oversees marketing plans and programs that effectively build the brand, generate demand, and enable the sales process for one or more lines of business and the products that support that business through a target audience appropriate mix of on and offline advertising, direct marketing, events, sales collateral, public relations, and/or promotions.”
• “Coordinate production of key marketing materials, such as our website, annual report, newsletter, brochures, etc.”
• “Supervises marketing support to chapter programs including implementation of chapter marketing plans and cause-marketing relationships to support fundraising activities and enhance chapter visibility.”

Media relations: communication strategy and tactics used to develop and maintain relationships with mass media representatives in seeking publicity.

Examples from position descriptions:
• “Develops, budgets, executes and measures a proactive media strategy targeting local, regional and national media outlets for business units that support positioning and enhance reputation and brand. Consults and advises senior management on media relations issues and opportunities. Develops and maintains an effective crisis communications plan. Maintains effective relationships with media representatives and collaborates with all areas of [organization] to respond to media requests and to position products, services and people to further business objectives. Manages and directs all corporate media inquiries, and media relations training programs to prepare corporate spokespersons and media relations personnel.”
• “Builds and strengthens relationships with targeted media. Responds to media requests, trains media spokespersons and provides media materials and messaging for staff and volunteers. Utilizes media contact database to capture details about key media relationships.”

Negotiating (organizational negotiation): an interpersonal and group dynamics skill that requires diplomacy and tact in balancing the needs of a number of parties to accomplish the goals of all. Give
and take, bargaining, are expectations of the process with an end result that satisfies all parties as best possible with the resources available. Negotiation is usually associated with conflict management or conflict resolution.

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Involvement in interviewing and negotiating with executives and professionals in various fields depending on the needs of the situation.”
- “Collaborates with plant personnel, Company management and labor relations on issues involving contract interpretation. Represents Company in labor relations negotiations for the assigned location(s), and assists plant supervision in personnel issues.”
- “Influencing skills, excellent consensus-building, negotiating, mediation and leadership skills.”
- “As a senior-level individual contributor, negotiate complex and ambiguous challenges, driving solutions that benefit the client organization.”

**Trust and credibility:** an organization’s credibility with employees and external audiences; this is a concept often coupled with leadership skills. “The organization’s willingness, based upon its culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group, or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms and values” (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Cesaria, 2000).

Examples from position descriptions:

- “Lead and execute integrated and on-site PR and marketing campaigns to specifically support the long-term Trust Marketing/PR campaigns.”
- “Delivers work and solutions on time, on budget and in a team environment that builds trust and respect to both IT team members and clients.”

Additional concepts were defined and added as they became apparent during the content analysis: events planning and management; relationship building with vendors and agency personnel; fundraising and grant writing (advancement/development skills); additional specific human resource management skills associated with managing volunteers, recruitment (employees and volunteers) and training (employees and volunteers); advocacy relations; RFP process management; and business development activities.

Demographic elements from the position descriptions were coded by position title, company, industry, geographic location, job function, job type, minimum education, minimum experience, and education specifications. The study population included 21 countries, 409 companies and 32 industry types. (See section 4.5 for findings and discussion of educational expectations.) Years of experience data were used to answer questions regarding competencies at each level.

### 4.2 ENTRY-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

What competencies must entry-level communicators have to succeed and develop a career path? Figure 4.1 shows a preliminary composite of skills and knowledge sets defined by previous research examined as part of the literature review, which was used to develop the coding concepts. The concepts listed in the left column of Figure 4.1 are those that educators and practitioners deemed necessary for entry-level practitioners.
## Figure 4.2: Consolidated Frequencies 0–3 years—Entry-Level Positions

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</table>
**Education Requirements**

From the content analysis of those positions requiring 0 to 3 years of experience, the following expectations and competencies were compiled. In descending order of frequency, the educational requirements listed for entry-level (0 to 3 years of experience) included communication, journalism, public relations, marketing, English and business.

**Skill and Knowledge Sets**

Figure 4.2 presents the frequencies of skills and knowledge sets present in the entry-level position descriptions. In descending order of frequency, the combined skills and knowledge sets identified from the entry-level (0 to 3 years of experience) positions included the following:

- Writing and editing
- Relationship building
- Presentation skills
- Project management
- New media
- Visual communication
- Business acumen
- Measurement
- Media relations
- Marketing communication
- Communication planning
- Communication management
- Employee relations/internal relations
- Special events planning/management
- Community relations

Analysis of the entry-level descriptions indicate an expectation that candidates are able to assist in the following areas:

- Investor/donor relations
- Issues management
- Executive communication
- Vendor and agency contract relationships
- Leadership
- Consumer/customer relations
- Human resource management
- Managing volunteers
- Negotiation skills
- Fundraising and grant writing
- Business development
- Client relations
- Government relations
- Advocacy relations
- Corporate social responsibility
- RFP process management
4.3 MID-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

What expectations do employers have for communicators of different experience levels? To begin to answer this question, years of experience were used as a variable along with the coding classifications. Mid-level positions were defined as those ranging in years of experience from 3 to 10 years; this category was further sorted into early mid-level (3 to 7 years) and advanced mid-level (7 to 10 years) to identify competency growth in this level of the profession. Figure 4.1 (developed from the literature review) shows those skills and knowledge sets deemed necessary by educators and practitioners for mid-level professionals.

EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

For early mid-level positions, these included, in descending order of frequency, bachelor’s degrees as a minimum with an expectation of graduate studies or accreditation in the following majors of study: communication, journalism, public relations, marketing, English and business.

SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE SETS

Figure 4.3A presents the frequencies of skills and knowledge sets present in the early mid-level position descriptions. In descending order of frequency, the skills and knowledge sets identified from the early mid-level (3 to 7 years of experience) positions included:

- Writing and editing
- Relationship building
- Presentation skills
- Visual communication
- Business acumen
- New media
- Communication planning
- Media relations
- Marketing communication
- Measurement
- Communication management
- Project management
- Employee relations/internal relations
- Executive communication
- Special events planning/management
- Human resource management
- Cultural literacy/diversity
- Vendor and agency contract relations
- Community relations
- Issues management
- Investor/donor relations
- Leadership
- Consumer/customer relations
- Client relations
- Government relations
- Crisis communication
- Professional development
- Foreign language
- Business development
- Negotiation skills
- Change management
- Corporate social responsibility
- Fundraising and grant writing
- Ethical concerns
- Recruitment and training
- RFP process management
- Advocacy relations
- Managing volunteers
**Figure 4.3A: Consolidated Frequencies 3-7 years—Early Mid-Level Positions**

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Education Requirements

For advanced mid-level positions, these included a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in (listed in descending order of frequency) communication, journalism, business, marketing, public relations and English, with an expectation of graduate studies or accreditation.

Skill and Knowledge Sets

Figure 4.3B presents the frequencies of skills and knowledge sets present in the advanced mid-level position descriptions. In descending order of frequency, the skills and knowledge sets identified from the advanced mid-level (7 to 10 years of experience) positions included:

- Writing and editing
- Relationship building
- Presentation skills
- Business acumen
- Communication management
- Communication planning
- New media
- Visual communication
- Measurement
- Media relations
- Executive communication
- Marketing communication
- Employee relations/internal relations
- Human resource management
- Project management
- Leadership
- Issues management
- Cultural literacy/diversity
- Special events planning/management
- Consumer/customer relations
- Crisis communication
- Vendor and agency contract relations
- Investor/donor relations
- Client relations
- Government relations
- Community relations
- Professional development
- Business development
- Foreign language
- Change management
- Negotiation skills
- Advocacy relations
- Corporate social responsibility
- Managing volunteers
- Ethical concerns
- Fundraising and grant writing
- Trust
### Figure 4.3B: Consolidated Frequencies 7–10 years—Advanced Mid-Level Positions

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<td>12</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client relations</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government relations</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community relations</td>
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<td>11.36</td>
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<td>7.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy relations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate social responsibility</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills: Communication and Managerial</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and editing</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>98.86</td>
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<td>458</td>
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<td>92.05</td>
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<td>82.95</td>
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<td>375</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>82.95</td>
</tr>
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<td>394</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>80.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>69.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>142</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural literacy/diversity</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special events planning/management</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor and agency contract relationships</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
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<td>11.36</td>
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<td>10.23</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10.23</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising and grant writing</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and training</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFP process management</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 SENIOR-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

Senior-level positions were defined as those requiring 10 or more years of experience.

Educational Requirements

While a bachelor’s degree was listed as a minimum educational requirement, these positions suggested graduate studies or accreditation as an expectation. Figure 4.1 shows those skills and knowledge sets educators and practitioners deemed necessary for senior-level practitioners.

Skill and Knowledge Sets

Figure 4.4 presents the frequencies of skills and knowledge sets present in the senior-level position descriptions. In descending order of frequency, the education expectations included the following:

- Communication management
- Communication planning
- Relationship building
- Business acumen
- Presentation skills
- Writing and editing
- Media relations
- Measurement
- New media
- Marketing communication
- Visual communication
- Executive communication
- Employee relations/internal relations
- Human resource management
- Issues management
- Investor/donor relations
- Government relations
- Leadership
- Community relations
- Crisis communication
- Consumer/customer relations
- Vendor and agency contract relations
- Cultural literacy/diversity
- Special events planning/management
- Corporate social responsibility
- Project management
- Change management
- Professional development
- Advocacy relations
- Client relations
- Ethical concerns
- Foreign language
- Managing volunteers
- Negotiation skills
- Business development
- Trust
- Recruitment and training
- Fundraising and grant writing
- RFP process management
### Figure 4.4: Consolidated Frequencies 10+ years—Senior-Level Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Sets and Characteristics</th>
<th>Overall Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency for 10+ yrs</th>
<th>% n=50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media relations</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing communication</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive communication</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee relations/internal relations</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue management</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investor/donor relations</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government relations</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community relations</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis communication</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer relations/customer relations</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate social responsibility</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change management</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy relations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client relations</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation skills</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills: Communication and Managerial</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication management</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication planning</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship building</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral characteristics</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business acumen</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and editing</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual communication</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resource management</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor and agency contract relationships</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural literacy/diversity</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special events planning/management</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical concerns</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing volunteers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business development</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and training</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising and grant writing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings and Discussion

4.5 ACCREDITATION AND EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

What is the demand for accreditation on career advancement in corporate communication? Figure 4.5A identifies the number of positions at each of the educational requirement levels. Of the 514 entries, 469 entries defined a bachelor’s degree as the minimum education requirement. Of that number, 385 provided further details regarding majors of study. Seventy-eight of the 385 that defined a bachelor’s degree as the minimum education requirement for the position indicated a preference for a graduate degree.

Figure 4.5A: Positions Identified by Minimum Years of Experience and Education Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Years of Experience</th>
<th>Minimum Education Requirements</th>
<th>Associate’s Degree</th>
<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Graduate Degree</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Number of Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–1 year</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24.32</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–7 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35.99</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.12</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.73</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four hundred and twenty-two of the 514 position descriptions provided additional details regarding education requirements, more than the minimum of associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree or graduate degree. Additional details included preferred majors of study and additional education past the minimum requirement. Each job posting listed a minimum education requirement; narrative in the description provided additional details regarding the type of majors considered most appropriate as well as additional education expectations.

Figure 4.5B identifies these major areas of study in order of most cited to least cited. When a graduate or advanced degree was referenced, the following were the most commonly requested disciplines: communication, journalism, business, and English. Additionally, experience gained from working in the particular industry was also a popular expectation of successful candidates, i.e., health care communication, fundraising and development, or specialized computer software programs.

Figure 4.5B: Identified Education Requirements (based on the 422 positions that provided additional definition of the educational requirements, i.e., major areas of study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>161</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>106</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>103</td>
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<td>Business</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology/science/Web</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative/arts/graphic design</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration/public policy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public outreach</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings and Discussion

Figure 4.5C shows the number of position descriptions that defined a minimum educational experience and then later defined greater educational expectations in the narrative of the position entry. Of the 10 positions that stated a minimum educational requirement of an associate’s degree, five stated a preference for a bachelor’s degree. Of the 469 entries that required a minimum education of a bachelor’s degree, 68 entries stated a preference for additional education past the minimum requirement of a bachelor’s degree (i.e., a graduate or master’s degree). Eighteen of the 469 entries that required a minimum of a bachelor’s degree stated a preference or requirement for accreditation (ABC, APR or CPRS); two entries at this level required both additional education and accreditation. Only 20 position announcements directly addressed accreditation as an expectation. These were mid-level and senior-level positions.

**Figure 4.5C: Positions Identified by Additional Education Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Education Stated</th>
<th>No. of Entries</th>
<th>Additional Education requested</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
<th>Additional Education and Accreditation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>514</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.6 SUMMARY OF CONTENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS**

**4.6.1 Knowledge and Skill Sets**

Figure 4.6 provides a composite of knowledge and skill sets found in this analysis. The most common skill sets and knowledge sets across the career continuum included:

- Skill sets: writing and editing, relationship building, presentation skills, project management, new media acumen, visual communication, business acumen, measurement (research and evaluation skills), communication planning, communication management, and special events planning and management.

- Knowledge sets: media relations, marketing communication, employee relations/internal relations, and community relations.

No knowledge or skill sets were found to be exclusive to senior-level positions. Expertise within these concepts were greater and more precise at the most advanced levels, i.e., labor relations as a more sophisticated practice of employee relations or lobbying as a more advanced practice in government relations.

By the completion of the entry-level period of practice or experience (three years), practitioners are expected to have working knowledge and some expertise to work independently as well as lead assigned projects in the following knowledge sets with the following skill sets:

- Knowledge sets: media relations, marketing communication, employee relations/internal relations, executive communication, community relations, issues management, investor donor relations, consumer/customer relations, client relations, government relations, crisis communication, negotiation skills, change management, corporate social responsibility, and advocacy relations.
Findings and Discussion

- Skill sets: writing and editing, relationship building, presentation skills, visual communication, business acumen, new media acumen, communication planning, measurement (research and evaluation, communication management, project management, special events planning management, human resource management, cultural literacy diversity, vendor and agency contract relations, leadership, professional development, foreign language, business development, fundraising and grant writing, ethical concerns, recruitment and training, RFP process management, and managing volunteers.

This observation alone makes apparent the importance of educational preparation and the experiences new practitioners gather during college preparation and initial career-related work experiences (compensated jobs, internships, volunteer positions).

Quantifying the presence of skills and knowledge sets makes apparent that communicators at all levels participate in defined areas but at different degrees of expertise or complexity. Similar to the IABC Communicator Competency Model (2008), this analysis supports skill growth and knowledge expectations over a period of time—a career. Some skills or knowledge sets may not be present in all cohorts (groups by years of experience) because these skills are specific to an industry, i.e., fundraising and donor relations would be skills and knowledge sets that are expected of practitioners at the advanced levels in the nonprofit sector, but this sample included few position descriptions for that sector at that level.

Take the most common skill identified through the analysis as an example of this concept of acumen across a continuum of practice: writing and editing. The most basic skills of writing and editing were explicitly defined as an expectation for all positions analyzed. For entry-level positions, this included the ability to write and edit reports, collateral materials or news releases, as well as for new technology (the Web and social media). For mid-level positions, this included managing the writing and editing process and producing specialized writing and editing deliverables. For more advanced or senior-level positions, this included the supervision of the writing and editing process produced by staff, or writing policies and executive communication. (Examples of language from the analysis that supports this finding are included in the early section of this chapter under each concept evaluated.)

The analysis of skills and knowledge sets also shows an intricate weave of skills between knowledge sets. For example, media relations, crisis communication and issues management are linked as a corporate communicator is responsible for reputation management for an employer or multiple clients in an agency setting. At earlier levels of career development, a candidate may focus work in one of these areas more than another; perhaps a specialist is responsible for writing news release materials and distributing these through multiple traditional and new media channels (media relations and project management). As they mature in their career development, the same candidate may be asked to participate in strategic planning and the use of media relations strategies to meet the organization’s goals. Additionally, they may be tasked with leading crisis communication planning, training senior management as spokespeople, and identifying emerging issues in the strategic planning process.

Other career paths in corporate communication may be more monolithic, but still require greater degrees of expertise and a coupling of knowledge and skill sets in career development. For example, a candidate may start as a writer for the employee relations function and HR. As they become more seasoned, they may be asked to manage employee publications and the intranet as employee communication channels. This may lead to a leadership role in strategic planning at the organizational level, recognizing the importance of employee relations as a means for developing employee engagement and productivity. Additional knowledge sets like corporate social responsibility and labor relations may be expectations as this candidate matures along this career path.
**Figure 4.6: Composite of Content Analysis Findings of Expectations and Competencies**

Components are listed in descending order to reflect frequency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry-Level Positions</th>
<th>Early Mid-Level Positions</th>
<th>Advanced Mid-Level Positions</th>
<th>Senior-Level Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sets</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sets</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sets</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowledge Sets</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td>• Media relations</td>
<td>• Media relations</td>
<td>• Media relations</td>
<td>• Media relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Marketing</td>
<td>• Marketing</td>
<td>• Executive communication</td>
<td>• Marketing communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>• Employee relations/</td>
<td>• Marketing</td>
<td>• Employee relations/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>internal relations</td>
<td>• Community relations</td>
<td>internal relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community relations</td>
<td>• Community relations</td>
<td>• Crisis communication</td>
<td>• Community relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Issues management</td>
<td>• Negotiation skills</td>
<td>• Change management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Investor/donor relations</td>
<td>• Change management</td>
<td>• Negotiation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consumer/customer</td>
<td>• Change management</td>
<td>• Advocacy relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relations</td>
<td>• Corporate social</td>
<td>• Corporate social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Client relations</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government relations</td>
<td>• Media relations</td>
<td>• Client relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Crisis communication</td>
<td>• Marketing</td>
<td>• Government relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Negotiation skills</td>
<td>• Employee relations/</td>
<td>• Community relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Change management</td>
<td>internal relations</td>
<td>• Crisis communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Corporate social</td>
<td>• Issues management</td>
<td>• Investor/donor relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>• Consumer/customer</td>
<td>• Client relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advocacy relations</td>
<td>• Crisis communication</td>
<td>• Negotiation skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Communication Skills and Managerial Skills</strong></th>
<th><strong>Communication Skills and Managerial Skills</strong></th>
<th><strong>Communication Skills and Managerial Skills</strong></th>
<th><strong>Communication Skills and Managerial Skills</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Writing and editing</td>
<td>• Writing and editing</td>
<td>• Writing and editing</td>
<td>• Communication management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship building</td>
<td>• Relationship building</td>
<td>• Relationship building</td>
<td>• Communication planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presentation skills</td>
<td>• Presentation skills</td>
<td>• Presentation Skills</td>
<td>• Business acumen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visual communication</td>
<td>• Visual communication</td>
<td>• Communication management</td>
<td>• Communication management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business acumen</td>
<td>• Business acumen</td>
<td>• Human resource management</td>
<td>• Communication planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New media</td>
<td>• New media</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td>• New media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication planning</td>
<td>• Communication planning</td>
<td>• Cultural literacy/diversity</td>
<td>• Visual communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Project management</td>
<td>• Project management</td>
<td>• Special events planning/management</td>
<td>• Measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special events planning/management</td>
<td>• Special events planning/management</td>
<td>• Human resource management</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Human resource management</td>
<td>• Human resource management</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td>• Vendor and agency contract relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cultural literacy/diversity</td>
<td>• Cultural literacy/diversity</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td>• Contract relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vendor and agency contract relations</td>
<td>• Vendor and agency contract relations</td>
<td>• Project management</td>
<td>• Cultural literacy/diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td>• Special events planning/management</td>
<td>• Special events planning/management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional development</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
<td>• Vendor and agency contract relations</td>
<td>• Communication contract relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foreign language</td>
<td>• Business development</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business development</td>
<td>• Foreign language</td>
<td>• Business development</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fund-raising and grant writing</td>
<td>• Managing volunteers</td>
<td>• Foreign language</td>
<td>• Ethical concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ethical concerns</td>
<td>• Managing volunteers</td>
<td>• Managing volunteers</td>
<td>• Foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recruitment and training</td>
<td>• Trust</td>
<td>• Ethics concerns</td>
<td>• Managing volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• RFP process management</td>
<td>• Fund-raising and grant writing</td>
<td>• Trust</td>
<td>• Business development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Managing volunteers</td>
<td>• RFP process management</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fund-raising and grant writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recruitment and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fund-raising and grant writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• RFP process management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• RFP process management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From reviewing the descriptive language in the position entries, it appears that as practitioners move up the chain of command and supervise employees/staff, the practitioners become more generalists than specialists (unless they supervise a unit of specialists) in communication. Thus supervisory positions require greater knowledge of each of the skill and knowledge sets presented to adequately hire, supervise, train, mentor, coach, evaluate and counsel staff. Additionally, experience gained from working in a particular industry was a popular expectation of successful candidates for these supervisory positions, i.e., health care communication, fundraising and development, education, technology, or financial enterprises.

### 4.6.2 Accreditation and Education Expectations

The presentation of minimum education requirements and the position description narratives regarding education expectations exhibited some disconnect. As described in the findings above, 50 percent of positions stating an associate’s degree as a minimum entry requirement stated a preference for a bachelor’s degree; nearly 15 percent of those entries with a minimum education requirement of a bachelor’s degree stated a preference or requirement for a graduate or master’s degree. Since this is a content analysis and no contact was made with the companies or organizations represented by the entries, an assumption regarding this incongruity may be made. For these entries, minimum education requirements may represent an expectation to enter the position, while the position description may represent the education level and duties currently being performed by the incumbent communicator who has more than the minimum years of experience and education since that individual has been on the job for a few years. Alternatively, the incumbent communicator may be the only communicator in the organization, so they are tasked with all communications activities for the organization.

As for accreditation, a mere 20 entries (6 percent) of the 323 position entries eligible (those positions representing five or more years of experience—IABC and PRSA accreditation require a minimum of five years of experience) addressed accreditation as an expectation. Of the same population segment, 22 (7 percent) required a graduate degree and an additional 68 (21 percent) required a bachelor’s degree but were preferential to a graduate degree.

Since this study was based on a content analysis of position descriptions, employers were not queried about these requirements and the expectations associated with educational and accreditation requirements. Some recommendations may be made for further research in this area regarding the awareness of employers regarding accreditation programs and higher education programming like graduate studies. Additionally, research regarding communicator awareness of the values of accreditation and graduate studies would also be beneficial in defining these criteria as professional expectations in the future.

### 4.7 Career Advancement Insights from Qualitative Interviews

Twenty-three communication professionals were invited to participate in qualitative interviews to probe the core issues of this investigation. The final population of respondents included accredited (ABC, APR) and non-accredited individuals from the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe and South Africa who represented government organizations, nonprofits, agencies/consultancies, and commercial organizations. The respondents were responsible for both internal and external communication domestically and internationally (an attempt was made to reach respondents representing the international regions of the IABC). Eighteen communication professionals were interviewed and asked the following questions:
• When hiring entry-level communicators, what is the most important characteristic(s) you are looking for in a strong candidate? What advice do you have for new graduates or job changers entering the field?
• When hiring mid-career communicators, what is the most important characteristic(s) you are looking for in a strong candidate? What advice do you have for them in their career development?
• When hiring senior-level communicators, what is the most important characteristic(s) you are looking for in a strong candidate?
• What role does accreditation play in assessing candidates at the mid-career and senior levels? How important is accreditation in getting ahead on the career development ladder?

In response to these questions, respondents provided a list of skills and behavioral attributes similar to those found in the content analysis of position descriptions and the studies reviewed in the literature review. The experts used more subjective terms as compared to the language used in the position descriptions. A presence-of-topic (concept) content analysis was conducted for interview comments.

**Figure 4.7.1: Expectations of Entry-level Candidates Cited during Expert Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Skill Sets</th>
<th>n=89</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing and editing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-starter and team player</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in current events/trends</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation and listening</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organizing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational background and work experiences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking/intelligence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.7.1 Entry-Level Candidates and Career Development**

Eighty-nine comments were identified for the entry-level question set. Figure 4.7.1 shows the skills and knowledge sets identified by these experts regarding expectations of entry-level candidates.

The following compelling statements of note during the interviews summarize the commentary of the interviewees regarding competencies and expectations of entry-level candidates:

• “I am looking for someone who is eager to do whatever is asked of them, someone who has not already set their mind to what they think they should be doing, and someone who is willing to both test their skills, and make mistakes, in order to learn.”
• “Being a communicator in today’s environment is challenging at a number of levels, and someone with passion for the work will thrive far better than someone who’s just looking for a job or seeking a stepping stone to some other position in the organization.”
• “When you are starting out, you don’t know it all, but a sincere desire to learn and gain experience makes all the difference.”

4.7.2 **Mid-Level Candidates and Career Development**

As the discussion moved to mid-level or mid-career candidates, respondents across the board responded that they expected all of the entry-level competencies to be solidly in place and additional skills and knowledge sets to be in the mastery stages. Seventy-four comments were identified for this question set. Figure 4.7.2 shows the skills and knowledge sets identified by these experts regarding expectations of mid-level candidates.

Strategic concerns and demonstration of expertise through experiences were cited as more important to success at this level. Some respondents suggested getting a broad exposure to internal and external communication projects. Others suggested that mid-level candidates should begin to specialize in one area of corporate communication. These are examples of career development strategies, and both are valid points to consider. The following compelling statements of note during the interviews summarize the commentary of the interviews regarding mid-level candidates:

• “Mid-level folks should have a track record of some kind of career plan, reasonable opinions on public relations (that is, a fair amount of understanding of the business and its challenges), a track record of success on the job (and be able to identify that record for me), some sort of plan for the future for their career, expertise in something important to the field.”
• “Strong ability to manage projects, strong skills in writing and organization, research and understanding workplace protocol, ability to go the extra mile, and being a team player.”

**Figure 4.7.2: Expectations of Mid-Level Candidates Cited during Expert Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Skill Sets</th>
<th>n=74</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational background and work experience</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-starter and team player—team leadership skills</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning—career management</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organizing—strategic communication planning/project management</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence—business savvy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research skills and attention to current events/trends</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and editing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking/intelligence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation and listening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The professionals interviewed had more strategic advice for mid-level career professionals:

- Show that you understand and embrace new communication media by using social media and the Web in promoting yourself. Embrace new projects and ventures to stretch and test your skills.
- Know where you want to take your career. You should be able to show how this position fits on that journey and how this position will help you reach your potential.
- Never stop learning. Participating in continuing education opportunities shows a potential employer that you are keeping up to date with new concepts in the discipline. Learn from new experiences: successes and failures.
- Become active in professional associations in order to expand your knowledge base for performing your work and for networking for career advancement.
- Ensure your understanding of the company’s strategic plans and the role communication plays in achieving its goals.
- Be kind to all your past employers and contacts; they may hold the key to your next advancement contact.
- Don’t stay in the same job too long.
- Continue to volunteer your talents to groups in your community. We never outgrow volunteerism.
- Consider attaining accreditation through a professional organization.
- Learn about the business of business if you want to succeed in the corporate environment.
- Continue to hone your basic skills (presentation as well as writing, listening, etc.) as these are the skills that will set you apart from the crowd.
- Find a mentor as part of your advancement strategy.
- Keep abreast of industry and discipline trends.

4.7.3 Senior-Level Candidates and Career Development

As seen in the responses to the mid-level question set, respondents to this question set regarding senior-level competencies reiterated the importance of the primary tactical skills as the basis for sound planning and program success. Sixty comments were identified for this question set. Figure 4.7.3 shows the skills and knowledge sets identified by these experts regarding expectations of senior-level candidates.

The respondents interviewed roundly agreed that senior-level communicators need a mastery of all skill and knowledge sets previously included in the entry-level and mid-career level discussions as a foundation for mentoring employees, demonstration of strategic orientation, defense of communication initiatives that drive business goals and evidence of sound management decisions.

As one respondent stated: “I want someone who can guide others, not direct them, and who can speak with a level of experience that they inspire confidence of their clients and co-workers, and at the same time deliver consistent, effective results.”

The professionals interviewed challenge senior-level candidates with the following advice regarding career development:

- Know what you contribute to the business and how to articulate that charge to your employer.
- Continue to challenge yourself.
- Challenge yourself to advance the profession and not be complacent.
- Be willing to mentor. Mentor entry-level and mid-career communicators—formally in the corporate environment or informally through an alliance with a local college or university.
In summary of the expectations defined through these expert interviews regarding competencies at each career maturity level and career development advice, the comments from the interview respondents mirror the expectations illustrated in the IABC Communicator’s Competency Model (2008); i.e., as candidates mature in their communication career, expectations of participation in planning and management of processes and business acumen increase from tactical applications to strategic planning and business management.

Figure 4.7.3: Expectations of Senior-Level Candidates Cited During Expert Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Skill Sets</th>
<th>n=60</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence/business acumen/executive communication</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-starter and team player/managing people/leadership</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational background and work experience</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking/intelligence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research skills and attention to current events/trends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organizing/managing projects/strategic planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation and listening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and editing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New media</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7.4 Accreditation and Career Development

The respondents were split in their responses to the issue of accreditation and its impact on career development. Eight of the respondents were accredited (through IABC, PRSA or both); the other 10 respondents were not accredited. The responses ranged on a continuum from one end at which accreditation was defined as a requirement for hiring or promoting a candidate to the other end of the continuum at which accreditation was defined as a personal asset but meaningless in career development and advancement.

One accredited respondent reported that when job candidates are reviewed, those with accreditation are given first consideration. Accreditation is an expectation in professional development goals for this individual’s staff. “It demonstrates that the candidate has taken his or her career to the next level and wants to excel in the profession. It means that the candidate has a good understanding of communications and how to use it to benefit clients, build external reputation and brand, and shape internal behaviors, among other value-added benefits.” Another respondent added: “[Accreditation] must be vital for anyone making a major change in their career or seeking to assess their professional practice capabilities; [it] increases self-confidence in professional practice and strategic communication management capability.”

Another view shared by accredited respondents reported a similar view of accreditation as a means for assessing candidate skills: “If I know a candidate is accredited, I don’t have to waste my time assessing his or her grasp of the fundamentals and can focus instead on subtleties and nuances. To be frank, that’s what I’d want to focus on and, consequently, I’d be more favorably disposed to someone who has taken the time and trouble to earn an accreditation, saving me the trouble of having to
assess whether they can perform the fundamentals of the job.” Another respondent commented: “I will admit that I don’t hire just for accreditation but, give me two equal candidates, and one is accredited then, the accredited one wins.”

**Figure 4.7.4: Value of Accreditation as Defined by Expert Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Commentary</th>
<th>n=18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requirement for hiring or promotion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means for assessing candidate's skills/preference for accreditation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means for personal assessment and validation of skills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation not used as a measure in hiring or promotion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not valuable or important</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other respondents, both accredited and non-accredited, shared the view of accreditation as one step on the career ladder that establishes a candidate as knowledgeable in the discipline. Accreditation is a means by which individuals can measure and assess their skills as well as show clients and employers that they are knowledgeable about their craft: “It shows interest and commitment to your craft.”

- “[A]ccreditation signals you are prepared to keep learning, are a committed professional, and take your profession seriously.”
- “[Accreditation] might give an edge at the mid level, showing a serious commitment to the field. It is less important at senior level where resume and experience tells the tale. Neutral on getting ahead on the career development ladder as a credential.”

Another group of respondents, both accredited and non-accredited, reported that accreditation did not make a difference in hiring and advancement processes in their organizations and organizations for which they have worked: “I think its like being an alumni—it matters more to other accredited people who have it and share a common experience and perspective than to those who are not accredited.”

- “In today’s world, while accreditation does say something about you, personal references go further than anything when it comes to your professional reputation and marketability.”

One non-accredited respondent represented the end of the continuum with this comment: “No one has ever explained the value of accreditation to me, so I’ve never learned to value it. In my experience, the value is somewhere near zero. Advanced degrees and demonstration of being a life-long learner is critical.”
5.0 CONCLUSIONS

When the data was collected for this study, the U.S. watched as major financial and manufacturing organizations struggled for economic survival. The U.S. government was bailing out financial institutions and weighing the decline of U.S. auto manufacturing. Around the world, Europe and Asia experienced similar scenarios. Amid this turmoil, the job posting boards of IABC, PRNews, and Ragan continued to experience regular postings for communication positions.

New practitioners embark on corporate communication careers with traditional, formal education backgrounds as well as backgrounds from non-traditional areas, especially during times of economic upheaval. As professionals from other disciplines are displaced by layoffs and closings, knowing the general expectations and competencies for advancing in the communication discipline provides candidates an advantage in positioning themselves for career success.

While only a snapshot of skills necessary at this particular point in time regarding a finite population of entries, regular investigation of expectations and competencies is necessary for professional communicators to keep pace with traditional skills as well as strategies and new advances in corporate communication. This study reinforces the need for traditional communication skills, business acumen, and knowledge of ongoing development of skills and strategies in new media technology and industry trends.

While not the primary intent of this report, the analysis as a whole supported the viability of the IABC Communicator’s Competency Model (2008) as a starting point for plotting career advancement competencies for communicators from entry-level to advanced-level positions. But this model is not a complete composite of skills and knowledge sets necessary for career advancement.

The most basic skills of writing and editing were explicitly defined as an expectation for all positions analyzed. For entry-level positions, this included the ability to write and edit reports, collateral materials or news releases. For mid-level positions, this included managing the writing and editing process and producing specialized writing and editing deliverables. For more advanced or senior-level positions, this included the supervision of the writing and editing process produced by staff, or writing policies and executive communication.

Business acumen was also found to be an expectation at each career level, with the expectation of greater understanding of business goals and communication contributions toward reaching these goals.

As practitioners mature, move up the chain of command and supervise more employees, they become more generalists than specialists (unless they supervise a unit of specialists) in communication. Additionally, experience gained from working in a particular industry was also a popular expectation of successful candidates, i.e., health care communication, fundraising and development, or specialized computer software programs.

Quantifying the presence of skills and knowledge sets makes apparent that communicators at all levels participate in defined areas but at different degrees of expertise or complexity. Similar to the IABC Communicator’s Competency Model (2008), the position description content analysis supports skill growth and competency expectations over a period of time.
Years of experience could not be matched identically to the IABC model due to the limitations of the recruitment databases selection of years of experience. It may be assumed that any practitioner with more than 10 years of experience who has been successfully employed has gained appropriate knowledge sets to advance in their professional development.

Exposure to preliminary knowledge sets and skills in formal educational development (college or university education) is the foundation for building a sound career plan. While practitioners will continue to be tasked with learning new skills and keeping pace with technology and social trends, foundational elements like writing, planning and measurement continue to serve as a sound foundation.

It can be argued that some skill and knowledge sets are redundant of one another or subfunctions (Argenti, 1996) of a broader concept. For example, investor/donor relations may be identified as a knowledge set. Fundraising and grant writing may be classified as skill sets of the broader knowledge set of investor/donor relations (also known as institutional advancement or development in higher education and nonprofit sectors).

As the field of corporate communication continues to grow with new technology and industry advances, practitioners will be well served to develop career advancement plans that include advanced formal education, informal professional development opportunities and professional accreditation. These educational opportunities will provide evidence of skill and knowledge set attainment through formal measurement and evaluation respected by employers and fellow practitioners.

**5.1 FUTURE RESEARCH DESIGN**

Ideally, a content-analysis study should include a population sample that is representative of all individuals within the population. This research design was such, however, that it allowed for the capture of only position descriptions in the public domain publicized by popular communication portals at the time of the study. A future research study would do well to start with a population that includes a complete set of position descriptions (entry-level to senior-level) from a number of companies (nonprofit, publicly held, private and government entities) identified as excellent by an external reputable organization (i.e., Great Places to Work). Descriptions from each company could be analyzed together as a subset to see how competencies and expected skills are delegated across the team of communicators (from entry-level to senior-level) as well as by levels of expertise across the members of the complete population. The data afforded thereby would be much richer and generalizable than the current population. As to the generalizability of the current findings, the results are applicable only to the population studied. This was a field experiment that employed a one-shot research design.

This study can be considered a benchmark work, in the sense that it recognizes there is much that remains to be done to improve the procedures for evaluating career expectations and competencies across the career continuum.
6.0 APPLICATIONS: ASSESSING AND PLANNING CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Research findings are most meaningful when the conclusions provide insights for planning and development of skills, strategies or career development. This research has direct implications for academics developing corporate communication curricula, corporate and HR executives evaluating corporate communication positions, and individuals who are planning corporate communication careers.

6.1 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Anecdotal evidence from the academics who were interviewed indicates that with the news of layoffs, newsroom reductions, and media industry closings, many students are shifting plans of study from mass communications to corporate communication: “[J]ournalism track communication majors are concerned about the state of employment in media and some, not all, are reframing a focus on public relations, advertising, and marketing (although the news from advertising is definitely as bleak as it is in journalism). We are emphasizing the ‘tool kit’ approach—that the internship or job seeker needs to continually build a skill set that can be applicable across contexts.”

The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC) regularly evaluates and suggests curriculum designs for journalism, broadcasting, mass communications, and public relations.

The Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) standards (2003) and the Commission on Public Relations Education (2006) suggest that college students be exposed to a well-rounded liberal arts core of courses to complement courses in the discipline of communication. For public relations (corporate communication) graduates, these organizations advocate for a sound foundation in the study of corporate communication history, theory and strategic applications.

Academics may use the composite findings from this study to evaluate student exposure to traditional communication skills as well as specific professional knowledge sets. Traditional skills may be explored in major core courses (i.e., history of public relations, public relations writing, organizational communication, communication law and ethics, public speaking and presentations), while advanced skill sets should be introduced in advanced courses. Skills such as research and statistics methods, campaign planning, strategic planning, RFP responses, and business management of communication agencies may be introduced and practiced in advanced public relations and communication courses. Additionally, students should be encouraged, if not required, to take business courses to increase their understanding of basic business practices (Claussen, 2008).

Additional exposure may come in the form of cocurricular service activities, internships and practica that students pursue to complement their formal education. But these experiential activities should not be relied upon as the sole exposure to advanced corporate communication strategies. Including course assignments and recitation sessions that include the skill and knowledge sets identified by this research will improve graduate readiness for success in entry-level work.

Note: In some colleges and universities, communication and business disciplines are delineated differently. For example, in one college, communication courses may be strictly defined as mass communication and public relations practices. Another institution may define marketing and
advertising as communication disciplines, while another may define those disciplines as strictly business disciplines. Regardless of classifications, students should be encouraged to pursue a well-rounded foundation that includes liberal studies, business courses and corporate communication courses. A minor area of studies may be beneficial if a student has an interest in practicing corporate communication within a specific area, i.e., political science, health care, human resources, etc.

Partnerships between faculty and professional practitioners would benefit curriculum development and graduate readiness for entry-level position expectations.

Student participation in internships (experiential learning) as well as cocurricular experiences specific to communication career development would increase graduate readiness for success in entry-level communication careers. This is particularly true for business acumen, which employers expect of new employees.

A frustration that communication faculty regularly experience is one of too much content to deliver in too little time. Each year new strategies, trends and issues need to be considered (i.e., media technology and mass media delivery), and traditional skills cannot be eliminated or reduced in importance. More than ever, in a high literacy and high context environment, traditional writing, editing, multimedia design, interpersonal and presentation skills are critical for confident, competent professionals.

As curriculum is evaluated, students should also be expected to take up the mantle of professional quality in their personal career development. Students who are serious about taking a constructive role in corporate communication will embrace constructive criticism and opportunities to engage in professional caliber work and critique of that work.

As mentors, faculty and professionals need to provide frank and honest criticism of the work quality and professional readiness of future professionals rather than rewarding mediocre work.

6.2 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION TEAM OR DEPARTMENT DEVELOPMENT

Corporate communication professionals and human resources managers who are responsible for developing and assessing corporate communication departments within agencies (consultancies) and organizations (for-profit and nonprofit) may benefit from the findings of this study.

As organizations grow and change, their communication needs will also change. High performing organizations regularly evaluate the resources necessary for successful operations in all facets of the organization. This should include communication, both internal and external communication operations. This may include communication audits of tactics and strategies that support the business goals of the organization as well as audits of the position descriptions and work loads of individual communication office employees. These audits allow the organization to assess tangible and intangible resources across the organization, identify redundancies and align all resources to best serve business goals.

The findings from this study may be used to assess the skill and knowledge sets required of individual positions, assess growth opportunities for individuals within the organization, identify redundancies to increase efficiencies and, in larger organizations, provide employees who have the same position requirements equivalent compensation. Using the findings from this study, audits of communication positions may also identify the need for additional staff with skills and knowledge sets that are not adequately represented currently by staff.
Since the findings of this study are categorized by years of experience, hierarchical structures within the organization and communication office may also be examined for efficiency. As organizational communication trends continue to empower employees with more grassroots communication tactics, communication staff hierarchies continue to flatten. Using the findings from this study, communication staff can assess their readiness to take on new communication duties to meet the business strategies of the organization.

### 6.3 CORPORATE COMMUNICATION CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The findings of this study are also valuable to communication professionals as they assess and plan their professional careers. As organizations adjust practices to survive current economic times, all professionals—regardless of their discipline—should be assessing their current acumen and necessary skills for future career development. This is especially true in the field of communication. Business practices continue to evolve and require additional education (formal or informal). New communication technologies will continue to change and affect the practices of internal and external communication strategies. Communication professionals will need to keep pace with current trends and strategies as well as legal issues or be left in the wake of change.

Continuing professional education (lifelong learning) takes many forms, i.e., attendance at association-sponsored workshops, formal graduate and undergraduate courses provided by accredited higher education institutions, online courses provided by professional organizations, and independent studies. Accreditation through organizations like IABC, PRSA and CPRS may also be an option for maintaining current proficiency in communication theory and practices.

The findings from this study may be used as a guide for developing new communication competencies and keeping sharp on traditional skills and knowledge sets. The findings provide a set of expectations for existing communication opportunities at multiple levels of career maturity.

As entry-level employees learn their roles and identify their career interests, the findings from the entry-level expectations may be used as a set of guidelines for traditional communication and business skills expected for success at that level as well as the mastery needed to apply for more expert positions, either within their current organization or with another organization. As those entry-level skills and knowledge sets are mastered (and documented through a portfolio of work assignments), entry-level employees should be using the mid-level career sets as guides for future professional development to increase their readiness for promotion or hire to a position with greater demands (and hopefully, greater compensation or job satisfaction).

In addition to the findings in the competencies charts, entry-level professionals should also heed the advice suggested by the interviewed experts: Seek out a mentor. Ask for assignments that test

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8 In 1965 Gordon E. Moore, co-founder of Intel Corporation, predicted in an article published in *Electronics* magazine that technological development would double every 18 months. At the time, he was commenting on the development of transistors and computer technology. Skimming the history of computer technology and telecommunications from then until today bears witness to Moore’s prediction, known today as Moore’s Law. This revolution in technology was aptly summed up by Paul Otellini, current president and CEO of Intel, in a presentation to the 2006 Consumer Electronics Show when he said that Moore’s Law lives today in the adoption of consumer electronics (i.e., new media). What is new today is normal or expected tomorrow. Once something is normal, “you can’t go back.”

9 Job satisfaction is “a pleasurable or positive emotional state from the appraisal of one’s job or experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1297). Empirical evidence links effective employee communication as an element of quality of work life and overall employee satisfaction to the overall financial performance of businesses (May, Lau and Johnson, 1999 and Lyon, 2001).
your skills and strategies. Seek out opportunities where you can add value to the job. Read trade publications and keep up-to-date with industry trends and strategies. Develop specialized expertise (social media, etc.) as well as general communication acumen. Get involved with professional groups.

Candidates from outside the field of corporate communication who are considering pursuing a career in internal or external communication will find the competencies identified by this study a guide of skills necessary to gain credibility in the corporate communication field. From the findings, these candidates may develop a remediation plan that addresses the skills and knowledge sets necessary for success in the field, which may include formal and informal educational opportunities to develop a portfolio of work that demonstrates these competencies to potential employers.

Mid-career professionals may choose to use the findings from this study to assess their current competencies and the contents of their professional portfolio for developing a case for promotion or interviewing with other organizations for positions of greater competencies and business acumen. Further, these professionals may use the senior-level skills and knowledge sets as a guide for their professional development planning to increase their readiness for promotion and new positions outside their current organization.

The advice from the experts suggests mid-career professionals should:

- Embrace new projects and ventures to stretch and test their skills.
- Participate in continuing education opportunities to show a potential employers that they are keeping up to date with new concepts in the discipline.
- Keep active with professional associations.
- Ensure their business acumen.
- Continue to volunteer with community groups.
- Consider attaining accreditation through a professional organization.
- Continue to focus on basic skills.
- Find a mentor.
- Keep abreast with industry and discipline trends.

Senior-level professionals are not immune to professional development. Findings from this study indicate that across all levels of career maturity basic skills are critical for communication success and achieving business strategies. Senior-level professionals may use the findings from this study to develop continuing professional development strategies within a specific industry application of corporate communication or to continue to update their portfolio of professional work.

The advice from the experts for professional development at the senior-level includes:

- Continuing to demonstrate business acumen.
- Taking on new challenges to demonstrate understanding of new strategies.
- Mentoring entry-level and mid-career communicators—formally in the corporate environment or informally through an alliance with a local college or university.
- Demonstrating professional expertise by offering to present at professional workshops.
6.3.1 Developing a Professional Development Plan

There is no one right way to develop a professional development plan. The following is one suggested approach that focuses on entry-level professionals and may be modified for mid-career and senior-level practitioners.

Where do you want your career path to go? All good plans begin with some research and this question may serve as a research question. The answer can be as lofty as you like. To get a realistic perspective on career advancement, one strategy for researching this question includes asking other professionals who are in positions you would one day like to attain about their career paths. One way to accomplish this research task is to join a professional organization like IABC or PRSA and attend regular meeting functions. At these functions, take advantage of the social hour to meet professionals in your geographic region and ask them about their career paths. Another approach is to research position descriptions of job openings for your career goal position. Similar to this research study, a set of competencies will emerge that can be used to develop career advancement strategies.

What goals and objectives will lead you there? After conducting some research and developing a career outlook or vision statement, it is time to prioritize realistic goals and supporting objectives that will lead to the ultimate career path goal—that dream job. Three to five goals should suffice. Once a goal is attained, it can be replaced with more advanced goals as your career advances. Goals should be challenging and should have SMARTS: be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, time-bound and stretch your current skills. Objectives are the action steps to be taken to obtain goals. These strategies and tactics will change from year to year as you move closer to your ultimate goal.

Sample goals and objectives that may be included in an entry-level career plan may be:

**Goal:** To develop a professional portfolio of work in order to showcase skills and knowledge sets for future employment opportunities.

*Obj:* Collect samples of past projects that show my best work. Include evaluation or results from the project that a future employer would find valuable.

*Obj:* Assess my samples for areas where I lack significant work samples.

*Obj:* Volunteer to be part of a project team to gain work experience in my weaker areas.

*Obj:* Volunteer with a local community group to complete a project that increases my experience in an area that I do not regularly practice in my job.

**Goal:** To specialize in a particular communication area for career advancement in that area, i.e., government relations.

*Obj:* If you do not work in a department that includes this area of expertise, make plans to network with practitioners who do this type of work. If members of your department do this type of work, ask to be assigned to a project to learn more about this area.

*Obj:* Participate in professional development opportunities with local professional organizations to learn more about career advancement in this area.

*Obj:* Assess your current skills and the necessary skills for success in this area of expertise, and then develop a plan for closing the gap between them.
Goal: To earn professional accreditation.

Obj: Review accreditation requirements.

Obj: Network with accredited members of your organization and ask for advice in preparing for the process.

Obj: Develop the necessary materials for review, i.e., portfolio of work, annotated resume.

Obj: Join an accreditation preparation group to study for the examination or develop an independent study program to prepare for the examination.

It is also smart to consider the financial implications of your career development plan. Will reaching a goal require additional financial resources on your part? For example, how much are you willing to spend on continuing education experiences? Does your employer reimburse expenses for professional development or reward community service? Part of setting smart goals includes giving yourself the resources you will need to achieve these goals.

No plan is accomplished in a vacuum. As you develop your goals and objectives, include ongoing feedback from supervisors and mentors as part of your development plan. These critiques allow you to modify your professional development activities and assess your progress.

**How often should I update this plan?** The goals and objectives of a career development plan will change as you advance toward your career path goal. Think of your career development plan as you do an organizational strategic plan. It must be measured and evaluated on a regular (at least annual) basis. Just as your supervisor will conduct an annual review of your work for the purposes of organizational development and your individual development, you too should conduct an annual review of your career plan. Some goals may be reached quickly and replaced with more challenging ones. Other goals may take longer to reach due to the necessary years of experience required to attain a goal like a promotion or professional accreditation. Assessing your performance toward your goals periodically during the year also allows you to correct your plan if things are not going as originally anticipated.
7.0 REFERENCES


International Association of Business Communicators. (n.d.). IABC career matrix. San Francisco: IABC.


**References**


8.0 METHODOLOGY (APPENDIX)

8.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a form of disciplined inquiry for “making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics” of a communication (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). This method is typically used for analyzing written texts, although in the social sciences it is particularly popular for examining multi-media, including audio and video recordings as well as new converged media. To conduct a content analysis on any body of information, the population sample is coded, using one of two methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis.

For this study of competencies and career maturity, a conceptual content analysis was conducted to determine the frequency or expectation of particular concepts as addressed in the population sample of position descriptions. Second, a relational content analysis was used to determine the relationship between the concepts and a variety of levels of career maturity determined by the experience or expertise expectations stated in the position descriptions. To reduce subjectivity in the conceptual analysis, terms or concepts under review were defined using an agreed upon body of knowledge of communication (from discipline-respected authoritative sources). For this study, the literature review in Chapter 3 provides definitions from the discipline of communication for career competencies.

The conceptual analysis was based on an eight-step model (defined by Carley, 1993): 1. Determine the level of analysis; 2. determine which concepts to code; 3. choose to code for existence or frequency of a concept; 4. decide on how to distinguish among concepts; 5. develop rules for coding; 6. manage irrelevant information; 7. code the texts; and 8. analyze results.

To locate a wide selection of position descriptions, three prominent corporate communication portals with job posting/recruitment section were used: IABC.com, myragan.com and PRNewsonline.com. Duplicate announcements were eliminated, announcements for positions that were not communication were eliminated (i.e., housekeeper), and then position descriptions were researched through corporate and organizational web sites. When an extended description document could not be found in the organization’s public presence, position descriptions were requested from organizational officials or eliminated if no further information could be located. The final population included 514 position descriptions representing 409 organizations and 21 countries. Position descriptions were collected at two times to generate a large sample of companies and organizations: the week of 10 July 2008 and the week of 16 September 2008.

This project is a concept level analysis. Thirty-nine concepts were identified in the review of literature. Distinct definitions for each concept are provided in the Codebook. The position descriptions were analyzed for the existence or presence of these concepts. Rules for coding the population sample are defined in the Codebook. To increase the consistency of application, coding was conducted by one researcher. Each text (position description) was coded for the existence of the 36 concepts. Specific skills were coded as tactical skills or strategic skills. After coding for the existence of concepts, texts were correlated by relational variables of expectations of expertise (year of experience) and position (title and reporting relationship) to develop a matrix of expectations by career maturity level. The analysis of data is presented in Chapter 4 with additional figures in Chapter 7.
Reliability of the single-coder model was established by conducting a reliability test (Lombard, et al., 2008) with two outside coders. These coders were prepared for the interceding reliability test by reading the literature review of the study and the definitions for the concepts in the codebook. A sample of 30 items was pulled, both to code (the same 30 items). A percentage reliability test compared the outside coder results to that of the researcher in this study, establishing a reliability score of 0.98 among coders.

8.1.1 Coding
The process of developing a coding system is one of selective reduction based on a broader understanding of the content, in this case the practices of corporate communication. By coding the texts into meaningful and pertinent units of information, characteristics and skills inherent to the expectations of the positions of corporate communicators at various levels of career maturity will emerge. This coding catalog or codebook is based on the expectations and predictions for future discipline growth identified in the literature review of this project. Thirty-nine concepts (skills and characteristics) were identified from the literature review. The concepts were coded for existence or presence based on level of expertise: tactical or strategic. For example, “writing a press release” is a tactical skill in media relations, while “managing the media relations program” describes a strategic skill. Existence of a concept was identified with 1 and non-existence with 0. Expertise of a skill or concept was identified with the following codes: tactical = T, strategic = S.

This coding catalog includes a definition of the coding process and the terms and concepts under investigation. Additional concepts were added to the catalog as these were identified by significance during the coding process.

8.2 The Codebook
The text of each position description was coded for the presence of each of the concepts and then further coded for expertise as defined above. The codes were maintained in a database for analysis.

8.2.1 Demographic and Identification
The demographic and identification fields included identification elements as well as some expectations, such as level of education, years of experience and accreditation. These fields are job title, company, industry, geographic location, type of job (full-time, part-time, contract), level of education, years of experience, reporting alignment, and earned accreditation (i.e., APR or ABC designation).

8.2.2 Behavior Characteristics
For this study, behavior characteristics are defined as those general employee characteristics that are defined as expectations of model employees, i.e., critical thinking, critical listening, punctuality, attention to detail, ability to meet deadlines, ability to work well with others, good interpersonal skills, a positive attitude, being a self-starter (showing initiative), “ability to be flexible and handle ambiguity,” etc. Examples of critical thinking behaviors included the ability of an individual to critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness; intelligence; and the ability to think critically, creatively and independently. Problem-solving skills are another example of critical thinking skills. General model employee characteristics included initiative (being a self-starter), having a positive attitude, being punctual, showing attention to detail, interpersonal communication skills, and the ability to work well with others to achieve organizational goals.
8.2.3 Communication Concepts

Dozier (1981) defines strategic skills or behaviors as those that involve expert prescription and problem solving, managerial, supervisory, or advisory level skills. Tactical skills or behaviors as those activities determined by managerial level associates and facilitate the process of communication and are defined as subordinate or advocate level skills.

Advocacy relations: public relations strategies and tactics used to advocate or influence attitudes and behaviors; often associated with relationships with advocacy groups or governmental organizations that will affect the practice of the client or employer; lobbying and other public affairs activities may be included.

Business/financial acumen: understanding business needs and drivers and communication's role in the satisfaction of business goals, general business literacy, the ability to engage in budgeting process and financial practices.

Business development: those activities associated with cultivating new business leads and referrals that lead to new accounts for a firm or agency.

Change management: developing communication programming to address and communicate on behalf of the organization during times of change and development. This includes internal and external communication strategies.

Client relations: corporate communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with organizational clients using communication and persuasion concepts and strategies.

Communication management: the general process of managing communication strategies and tactics to reach business goals; a strategic and interactive role within the senior leadership of the company; understanding the impact of corporate communication across the company.

Communication planning: analyzing and planning communication approaches, including identifying opportunities for clients; communicating in an integrated model, and developing programs to build and maintain relationships.

Community relations: corporate communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with citizens and groups within an organization's geographic operating area using communication and persuasion concepts and strategies.

Consumer relations: corporate communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with consumers.

Corporate social responsibility: managing an organization's socially responsible activities, such as philanthropic efforts, cause branding campaigns, employee volunteerism programs and other sustainability efforts.

Crisis communication: the functions associated with communicating on behalf of an organization during a time of crisis, typically evidenced by the management of a crisis plan that includes communication strategies designed to address organizational target publics.

Cultural literacy/diversity: a demonstrated understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communication; diversity sensitivity, applying cross-cultural and cross-gender sensitivity.
Employee/internal communications: communication activities directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with employees and internal audiences.

Ethical behavior/ethical decision making: demonstrating an understanding of professional ethical principles and working ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity on behalf of the organization and the practitioner.

Event planning and management: planning and implementation necessary for events that fulfill objectives related to internal communication, public relations and marketing goals, i.e., trade shows, receptions, seminars, annual meetings, recruitment fairs, sponsored events, cultural events, community events, charity events.

Executive communications: coaching senior management; helping managers communicate well both with internal and external publics.

Fluency in a foreign language: a high level of language proficiency in both written and oral communication.

Fund-raising and grant writing: specialized persuasive writing skills associated with donor relations in nonprofit organizations.

Government relations: communication activities on behalf of an organization or enterprise directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with local, regional and federal governing bodies that affect the success of the organization. Public affairs is widely defined as “a function of PR that works with governments and groups involved in setting public policy and legislation (may involve lobbying efforts)” (Whalen, 2005, p. 103).

Human resource management: managing people, programs and resources; talent management, including the management activities of evaluating, motivating and counseling employees.

Investor relations: communication activities of publicly traded companies directed specifically at developing and maintaining relationships with current and potential investors and investor media representatives.

Issues management: strategic communication management addressing emerging trends, anticipating and taking actions on concerns likely to have an impact on an organization and its stakeholder groups.

Leadership skills: communication leadership skills include being a member of the executive management of the organization; participation in corporate governance and developing policy, initiating strategic communication programming in support of organizational goals and participation in corporate transitions. Communication leadership includes building and managing multi-stakeholder relationships, building and managing trust, and defining and instilling company values.

Managing volunteers: an extension of human resource activities, this includes recruiting, training and supervising the activities of volunteers; this is typically a skill set associated with nonprofit organizations.

Marketing communication: communication activities engaged to support the marketing of the organization or promoting its agenda, including but not limited to audience segmentation, marketing PR/product PR, brand management, brand alignment, and product advertising.

Media relations: communication strategy and tactics used to develop and maintain relationships with mass media representatives in seeking publicity.
Negotiating (negotiation): an interpersonal and group dynamics skill that requires diplomacy and tact in balancing the needs of a number of parties to accomplish the goals of all. Give and take and bargaining are expectations of the process with an end result that satisfies all parties as best possible with the resources available. Negotiation is usually associated with conflict management or conflict resolution.

New media acumen: understanding the impact, planning, and implementation of new media technology to improve the internal and external communication and productivity of the enterprise; monitoring and participation in the blogosphere; managing the corporate intranet and Internet; monitoring and participation in other online media; monitoring new technologies; participation in online social networking.

Presentation skills: understanding concepts and applying theories in the use of oral presentations including images and information; the ability to deliver public presentations.

Professional development: membership and participation in professional organizations that represent communication or the specialization of the employer; participation in professional conferences, attendance at professional development programs and continuing professional education.

Project management: the skills associated with planning, implementing, and measuring any organizational project that helps to meet organizational objectives, including the management of tangible and intangible resources.

Publicity: see media relations

Recruitment and training: those communication activities used to encourage commitment by employees and volunteers and developing necessary skills and quality of work from employees, volunteers and peers.

Relationship building: the process of developing and maintaining relationships with specifically segmented audiences (publics/markets) identified by the organization as strategic and necessary for reaching organizational goals and objectives.

Relationships with vendors and agencies: the process of assessing capabilities of a vendor/agency to meet communication needs, participating in vendor/agency selection, providing day-to-day management and oversight of projects and raising issues when barriers surface.

Research/Measurement/Evaluation: communication research consists of both qualitative and quantitative measures conducted to form communication strategies and tactics as well as evaluate the efficacy of strategies and tactics in reaching organizational goals. Corporate communication is an integral part of the strategic planning process of the organization, and its programming is developed from sound formative and evaluative research. This strategic planning is evidenced in the segmenting and planning of programming to strategic publics. Research may be used for planning and forecasting strategies. Popular concerns include measuring return on investment (ROI) and strategic planning.

RFP process management: the management of the request for proposal process includes both a) the activities associated with developing RFPs for the company and managing the responses and b) collecting and constructing a proposal to respond to an RFP on behalf of the company as the vendor soliciting work.

Trust and credibility: the need for organizations to improve communication credibility with employees and external audiences. “The organization’s willingness, based upon its culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on
the belief that another individual, group, or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms and values” (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria, 2000)

**Visual communication skills:** graphic design skills associated with publication and new media production—photography, videography, publication design. This also includes identity management such as graphic design standards maintained through the use of logos, slogans, and trademarked identity marks.

**Writing and editing skills:** the ability to correctly and clearly write in forms and styles appropriate for the communication profession, audiences and purposes they serve; informative and persuasive writing.

**Note:** Some obvious concepts were not cataloged because the concepts represent a collection of the concepts identified here or are a component of a concept already listed. For example:

**Public relations:** Whalen acknowledges that there are more than 500 definitions for the practice of public relations. The most widely used definition states, “public relations is the deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics” (BIPO as cited in Whalen, 2005, p. 103). For clarification, publics are any group of people who have a stake in an organization’s activities. These groups can be formal and organized, or random collections of people, like the general public.

Public relations is recognized in many of the concepts on the current list, i.e., media relations, consumer relations, employee relations.

### 8.3 Qualitative Interviews

Expert interviews were conducted with an international group of corporate communication professionals regarding expectations of competencies at numerous levels of career development as well as expectations of professional development and accreditation. In-depth or qualitative interviews are designed to enter the perspective of the other person (Patton, 1987, p. 109). The quantity of interviews conducted is less important than the depth and the insight that the experts provide.

The professionals represented the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and South Africa. Twenty-three communication professionals were invited to participate in qualitative interviews to probe the core issues of this investigation. The final population of respondents included accredited (ABC, APR) and non-accredited individuals from the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe and South Africa who represented government, nonprofit, agencies/consultancies and commercial organizations. The respondents were responsible for both internal and external communication domestically and internationally. (An attempt was made to reach respondents representing the international regions of IABC.) Eighteen communication professionals were interviewed and asked the following questions:

- When hiring entry-level communicators, what (are) is the most important characteristic(s) you are looking for in a strong candidate? What advice do you have for new graduates or job changers entering the field?
- When hiring mid-career communicators, what is (are) the most important characteristic(s) you are looking for in a strong candidate? What advice do you have for them in their career development?
• When hiring senior-level communicators, what is (are) the most important characteristic(s) you are looking for in a strong candidate?
• What role does accreditation play in assessing candidates at the mid-career and senior-levels? How important is accreditation in getting ahead on the career development ladder?

In response to these questions, respondents provided a list of skills and behavioral attributes similar to those found in the content analysis of position descriptions and the studies reviewed in the literature review. The experts used more subjective terms as compared to the language used in the position descriptions. A presence-of-topic (concept) content analysis was conducted on interview comments as a population.

8.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
Since this study is based on a non-probability sample (available sample), the results and conclusions drawn from the data represent a snapshot in time and may only be generalized to the sample population. Additional implementation of this study design on a probability sample is suggested for the future.