Training: Conducts seminars
Journals/Publications: *Independents School*, *NAIS e-Bulletin*
Job Listings: Online career center includes job listings

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Rd.
Urbana, IL 61801
ncte.org

Members/Purpose: Teachers of English at all school levels; works to
increase the effectiveness of instruction in English language and
literature

Training: Hosts workshops, institutes, and conventions
Journals/Publications: *Language Arts, School Talk, Voices from the Middle*

National Educational Association
1201 16th St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
nea.org

Members/Purpose: Professional organization and union of elementary and
secondary school teachers, college and university professors,
administrators, principals, counselors, and others concerned with
education

Journals/Publications: *NEA Today, This Active Life* magazine, *Tomorrow’s
Teachers* magazine, *Higher Education Advocate*

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An attractive mystique surrounds the fields of advertising and public relations, and not only for the English major. These fields are seen, and justifiably so in most instances, as glamorous, high-visibility industries. Not only are advertising and public relations omnipresent in today’s society, but we are also fascinated with the mechanics of how they are accomplished and what works and what doesn’t. Advertising campaigns become the subject of morning-after conferences in the workplace, and the latest spokesperson’s financial deal is the subject of newspaper headlines. Working in these fields seems to convey to the employee a halo of quickness, creativity, and imagination—not all of which may be warranted. We associate advertising with celebrity, which may or may not be justified. Advertising is not only omnipresent in society; it can be (and has been) the subject of great controversy, subsequently attracting enormous press coverage in and of itself.

Advertising continues to be a medium of social change in the United States. Increasingly, ads are targeted at very specific audiences. The music, setting, and choice of actors all combine to create a message directed at a very specific group of the buying public. With so many advertising messages constantly being aired, individual advertisers will frequently “push the envelope” of taste and/or discretion to have their product noticed in hopes the public will be provoked to some kind of reaction.

Public relations has also come into the common vocabulary as we become more aware of how organizations, products, and personalities manage their public presence in our lives. One example that emphasizes the importance of public relations to the viability of a company was Merck and Company’s response to the first Vioxx trial in which a jury awarded $253 million to the widow of a man who died after taking the painkiller Vioxx for several
months. In a news release, the senior VP and general counsel of Merck described how the company had acted responsibly by researching the product prior to approval, by monitoring the medicine while it was on the market, and by voluntarily withdrawing the medicine from the marketplace. As trials continue, the company's skillful handling of public relations during this crisis will be critical to the solvency of this global pharmaceutical company.

Much is written and broadcast about the behind-the-scenes work of both public relations and advertising managers. Not all of it is positive, and occasionally we see instances of downright duplicity, but both fields remain centers of creativity, originality, and impact. Because of that, they justify being called glamour jobs.

**Getting the Message Across**

For the English major interested in a graphic illustration of the shifting importance of language in both public relations and advertising, a fascinating comparison would be to look at advertising from the 1950s and advertising from the present. You'll notice in the older advertisements a far greater reliance on textual material. People read ads, and there was a significant amount of straightforward text. Today, people view ads and respond far more to color and photographic images than to factual detail. Our increasing fascination with photographs means they are used far more often than the printed word to convey meaning. Today, we only see text-heavy copy in advertisements for very costly or highly complex products. Generally, commercial advertising has become a visual medium, and product presentation through the use of words has taken second place to art, atmosphere, and personalities.

Public relations has also undergone a revolution over the past few decades. In the 1950s, public relations may have simply meant responding to a consumer's letter of compliment or complaint and answering inquiries about product composition or manufacturing processes. American society was enjoying a booming proliferation of consumer goods, variations on product themes, and even packaging. This was a far cry from our concerns today, where much of such proliferation is being rejected or subjected to intense scrutiny. But during the '50s, the public was largely an adulatory audience to the manufacturer and wanted more, not less.

Today public relations departments have many more interested observers and critics carefully watching the organization's performance from the vantage point of whatever special-interest group they represent: environmental, nutritional, child protective rights, gender equity issues, product quality, or full-disclosure concerns. These groups recognize the impact corporations can have on our quality of life and the influence they can exert on public opinion, social structure, moral issues, and values. Many argue that just the prevalence of corporate messages sends a disturbing signal about acquisitiveness and self-indulgence. More than ever before, a business must be prepared to answer to numerous publics on equally as many issues.

Some organizations have learned a difficult lesson from not having a crisis management team to deal with threats from the outside that might have permanent negative effects on the organization's product, image, or continued existence. Now, corporations have departments or at least teams who handle crisis management. These personnel are trained to provide information to the public about the crisis, organize and manage product recall if necessary, and create mechanisms to prevent reoccurrence if possible.

Public relations has become increasingly complex, the situations are often serious, and the concerns of the public are legitimate and insistent. Public relations must become increasingly proactive; therefore, the field is more in need of good writers and communicators than ever before. Both advertising and public relations still welcome the English major who is interested in the field of persuasive communications. A number of avenues are possible in both fields, and both offer much creativity and opportunity to touch the lives of people in meaningful and unexpected ways.

**Definition of the Career Path**

Public relations and advertising are often linked, but in fact they are two very different fields of public communication with different aims, techniques, and intentions. Nevertheless, we usually refer to them in one phrase, and with good reason. Most firms that buy advertising and use it to promote their corporate image, products, or ideas will probably at some time need public relations to explain, clarify, or deal with sectors of the public that take issue with the organization over some aspect of its operation.

**Public Relations**

Public relations is that function of an organization that seeks to maintain good relations with any number of publics it must interact with in doing business. A good example may be the popular American fast-food chain McDonald's. The publics McDonald's must stay responsive to are many. They include envi-
environmentalists who are concerned about such issues as packaging. Or city and town planners who worry about issues such as signage and sign height, curb cuts to allow entrance and exit to parking lots, and the physical impact of a restaurant on their municipality. And there are school officials who may be concerned that the restaurant might become a hangout or who fear many children will work excessive part-time hours and diminish their school performance. Another public includes zoning officials who worry about spot rezoning planned neighborhoods to accommodate a McDonald’s restaurant. One more group is made up of nutritionists who want consumers to understand the caloric, sodium, and fat content and nutritional composition of products. The list could go on and on.

Each of these groups has issues over this internationally famous restaurant chain’s operation. Public relations officials seek not only to understand the points of view of these groups, but also to have these groups understand McDonald’s point of view on the concerns they may hold particularly important. The award-winning documentary Supersize Me, by Morgan Spurlock, looked at the legal, financial, and physical costs of America’s hunger for fast food and specifically targeted McDonald’s. The film spurred an outcry from many health-oriented individuals and organizations and led to McDonald’s launch of a new worldwide initiative in early 2005 that promoted healthy living in an effort to combat criticism of its food and business. Public relations professionals played a key role in explaining the introduction of new products and the healthiness of existing products in efforts to sway the critics.

**Who is the Public?** You may have noticed that customers were not in the list of publics. Customers are not part of the public in the term public relations. Customers are the focus of advertising, marketing, operations, and product delivery. The customer is the “business” that a firm is about. Certain publics may take issue with the organization as it does business with the market, and public relations is the arm of an institution that takes responsibility for dealing with these noncustomer publics. The public relations department may respond to individual consumer concerns by providing needed technical data, but as a group, consumers are categorized separately.

It isn’t just commercial enterprises that have need of public relations. Public relations exists in any large institution; even colleges and universities have need of public relations. Perhaps neighbors are upset over streets jammed with cars every time there’s a football game on Saturday at a major university, or about shifting property values as students take over nearby dwellings for apartment buildings. Public relations officers handle these situations and help the parties reach solutions. They also draw the public’s attention to efforts undertaken by the institution, for example, the new city park built and financed through student efforts or the care for elders provided by a fraternity or sorority house. No public relations staff member expects all assignments to be positive ones, but part of the job is to ensure that the public has the full picture of an organization.

Our McDonald’s example hardly exhausted the range of publics that a public relations department deals with, however. Other aspects of public relations include public information provided to concerned groups and individuals to explain changes in operations, product quality information, or initiatives undertaken by the corporation. This may seem relatively static, but part of good public relations is being able to document this kind of consistent public disclosure to prevent accusations of conspiracy or undue secrecy. Most firms issue regular press releases that announce expansion plans, new factory sites, potential layoffs, new products, product recalls, and a host of other events of at least some interest to the public.

**Communicating the Message.** Whenever a corporation makes information public by press release; newsletter; a mass mailing to customers, clients, or investors; television announcement; or major newspaper display ad, the public relations knows best how to present the message of the organization to the public at large. Mobil Corporation, which has certainly had ample opportunity to test the merits of its corporate communications department, pioneered the advertorial, a paid piece of advertising designed and written to resemble an editorial piece. These are thoughtful and thought-provoking pieces of writing to keep the public thinking about the role of oil energy and the impact of that product in our lives. Today organizations have the option to create these messages internally or to outsource this work. If you use your favorite search engine and enter the word advertorial, you will see how important these communications have become given the hundreds of thousands of hits you’ll get.

**Keeping Investors Informed.** Investor relations is a public relations function organized to meet the needs of individuals who have invested in the organization through stock purchases or other mechanisms and who tend to be among the most vocal and active of publics. These members have a right and obligation as investors to thoroughly understand company operations and policy. Public relations produces informative material to keep these investors abreast of profits, losses, future plans, personnel, and the financial stability of the firm.
Addressing Questions from Customers. Consumer services is yet another public relations division that answers customers' questions about product handling, quality, manufacturing processes, safety, and even student requests for company information to do research reports. In fact, some organizations provide quite extensive consumer services, and most now maintain websites and toll-free numbers. As with all public relations efforts, the purpose is twofold. In satisfying consumer requests for information and by being accessible, the company increases the probability of a positive relationship with both customers and the general public and assures its continued presence in the marketplace.

The Importance of Research. A research department of a large public relations division might support public relations by providing the necessary factual data to most accurately and honestly respond to a variety of situations. Researchers can ascertain how much of a product is sold, where in the world certain raw materials used in the manufacturing process are obtained, the origin of the labor pool, the origin of specific parts used in making the product, and any other information required by the public relations department. A consumer may, for example, ask about a chemical or ingredient to which he or she is sensitive that is not listed on the packaging of a particular product but may be used in processing or in other products made on the same equipment and thus could potentially lead to an allergic reaction and perhaps serious health consequences. If the public relations department does not immediately know the answer to such a query, it could direct the problem to the organization's research arm.

A Focus on Internal Constituents. Employees staff the organization, but they are also a public that needs to understand the corporation's mission because they serve as the corporation's ambassadors in their personal lives. Likewise, employees need to be understood by management so that an effective team is formed and sustained as products or services are produced and delivered to the consumer. Corporate newsletters, picnics, interest-free Christmas loans, or on-site child care or elder care are all projects in which public relations team members might participate. You might have seen television commercials showing various employees in an organization going about their jobs. General Motors and other automobile manufacturers have been notable in this regard. Such commercials certainly put an individual face on a large corporation for average consumers, but they also serve to instill pride and loyalty in the workforce that is being featured.

Sample Job Postings. The following advertisements are actual job postings for public relations staffers that would be particularly attractive to a college English major. See what they can tell you about the job and the organization:

**Internal Communications Specialist.** Manufacturing company. Assist with the development and implementation of internal communications strategies using a variety of print, video, and electronic media. The specialist will also serve as editor of a weekly company-wide newsletter. Requires outstanding writing, editing, and communications skills; good organizational skills; outstanding team focus; bachelor's degree in communications or a related field.

**Public Relations Specialist.** Communications and brand consulting firm. Responsibilities include interviewing agency contacts to develop story angles and write news releases to generate publicity; coordinating all aspects of support materials for media pitches, including photography and other visual elements; interfacing with media contacts in a backup capacity; researching and maintaining media contacts database; pitching stories as assigned; writing and maintaining agency blog. Bachelor's degree required, prefer some background in public relations, and strong writing skills.

**Media/Public Relations Assistant.** Fast-paced ad agency looking for an organized, outgoing, and dependable individual able to work in a team environment. Must be detail oriented, possess strong grammatical and communications skills, and be a self-starter who takes initiative. Must be proficient in Microsoft Office with emphasis on Word and Excel. Bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, or English.

**Advertising**
Advertising is the world of paid persuasive communications that reach consumers through the mass media. The design, production, and execution of an advertisement for a website, magazine, newspaper, or TV or radio spot must accomplish several things. Advertisements are intended to remind customers of a product, to highlight a need for that product, to inform the audience of a product's availability and the identity and location of the seller, or to detail product features and compare them to the competition. Advertisers like to create excitement around their products by developing an image and identity that will clearly separate the product from that of the competition.
As products and their uses change over time, advertisers often need to create advertising to demonstrate to the public new ways of thinking about and using their products. The classic example of such repositioning might be the condom. For most of its product history, the condom was used to prevent pregnancy. However, with the arrival of AIDS, condom use began to be advocated as a method of disease prevention and condom manufacturer responded with advertising that featured this product advantage.

**Before You See the Ad.** Before ads reach the public, much activity has already taken place. Most of the planning for advertising is done with written communications that outline ideas, document various proposals, and suggest possible themes. Ultimately this written work culminates in formal presentation documents that put forth a commercial idea and its associated costs before the officials who provide the goods or services being advertised and who will fund the cost of the advertising.

Account executives will present numerous ideas and rationales on paper to company agents suggesting possible advertising campaign themes, such as scripts for TV advertising, radio spots, in-theater commercials, telemarketing activities, and print advertising. This is the work of the copywriter. Although the copywriter’s work is the most obvious and creative use of words seen by the commercial consumer, there is much behind that work. Efforts include building an advertising concept, creating a unique selling proposition to the public that will help to separate this product from its peers, developing the rationale for the ad, and preparing ideas, proposals, and presentations to advertising agencies, artists, and owner representatives.

**Using the Language of the Marketplace.** Ad agencies are built on words. Advertising people care deeply about words, enjoy them, and value people who can use them effectively and even dramatically. But they are not sticklers about correct language; they listen to the language of the market they hope to speak to. They mimic the vocabulary, syntax, and phrases of that market. When the market sees or hears this work, consumers should think, “They’re talking to me!” That is when the writer has been successful.

**Enhancing the Product’s Impact.** Advertising departments include creative services, which can realize packaging, logotypes, design concepts, slogans, signature lines, and any kind of concept or visual to enhance the impact of the product that appears before the public. Although much of this work may be subcontracted to smaller “boutique” type agencies, especially in cases of music services or voice-overs, creative control is exercised by the agency and the account executives managing that particular client’s account.

These account executives have helped to develop the concept and will ensure that any participating services, performers, designers, and copywriters who become involved maintain a fidelity to the original concept. The integrity of this concept and the adjusting of advertising to match it are the subject of countless memoranda, letters, and notes exchanged between account executives and the providers of individual services, who may be at some distance from the original concept.

**Timing the Message.** Media services is a common area of entry into an agency and involves the scheduling and buying of media time for an account. How commercial messages are timed for frequency in any particular time period (month, season, year) can have a tremendous impact on the public’s response. The buying of media is a sophisticated art blending knowledge of the market, understanding the best media approach to that market, and knowing the optimum listening or viewing times, repetition frequency, and length and content of the message for the market. If there is too little exposure the impact will be weak; if there is too much there actually may be a negative reaction to the product. Each additional dollar spent on media should ideally add customers. Media buying requires creativity to work effectively.

Perhaps you are promoting a movie about a mother and daughter, both parts being played by actresses popular with their own age groups. Running a movie commercial featuring the mother during daytime or late afternoon talk-show time slots (a time period favored by mature women) and a different commercial featuring the younger actress during prime-time situation comedy slots would attract both audience segments.

**Managing Clients’ Needs: Account Executives.** The senior account executives who manage individual client accounts are drawn from across all agency departments and have the experience to manage general oversight of a client’s total advertising effort with the agency. They schedule and conduct meetings and presentations for the client, interact with subcontractors, manage billing, and, most important, work with the client to achieve the most distinctive campaign or advertisement possible for the medium and cost. These individuals are excellent communicators, both verbally and on paper. Many an advertising executive is also a short-story writer, novelist, poet, playwright, or screenwriter. Legions of published writers have been incubated in advertising agencies.

Advertising account executive is an exciting, fast-paced career position with frequent changes of jobs between agencies as executives seek new arenas to exercise their talents. Clients also frequently change agencies, even
when their current agency does superior work. After lengthy association with an agency, clients may simply wonder if someone else couldn’t “spark” their advertising efforts in a unique way. This kind of movement of both executives and clients suggests the need for a high tolerance of risk and low need for job security.

**Ad Agency or In-House?** Not all advertising is done in a professional advertising agency. Many organizations have their own advertising departments, which replicate in many aspects the functions of a full-fledged agency. Often these in-house agencies will do everything up until the actual purchase of print or broadcast media time.

**Brand Management.** Consumer goods firms also have individuals charged with brand management. These executives have the responsibility for all activities surrounding a particular branded product, such as Minute Maid orange juice, Scotch tape dispensers, or Hellmann’s mayonnaise. They manage all aspects of production, product sizing, sales promotion, and advertising. They exercise a strong influence on advertising initiatives for their product line and work closely with in-house and contracted outside agencies to produce effective advertising for their product.

**Sample Job Postings.** Here are some recent entry-level job postings in the field of advertising:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistant Brand Manager</th>
<th>Marketing Coordinator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assist with new package design development; execution and collation of SKU data; new product development; identifying new product opportunities; researching current dynamics in the marketplace; writing design briefs; verbally briefing design agency; managing iterative design process; developing coupons. Requires four-year degree, strong verbal and written ability to communicate, strategic thinking, analytical approach to problem solving, attention to detail, and organizational skills.</td>
<td>Responsibilities include market research, development and implementation of marketing programs, event planning, and working on special projects. Requires bachelor’s degree in business, journalism, or related field; ability to work under pressure in a fast-paced environment; and excellent communications and time management skills.</td>
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**Public Relations and Advertising: The Common Denominators**
We have made a distinction between the fields of advertising and public relations, but the question remains, why group them together if they are, in fact, so different? It’s a reasonable question with a logical answer. Both advertising and public relations have a message to convey to the public. To do that most effectively requires an understanding of who the public is, how members of the target market think, and what language, images, ideas, and words they are most likely to respond to.

**Using the Power of Persuasion.** Another shared dimension of the communications of both advertising and public relations is that they are persuasive in tone. Advertising seeks to move the market to excitement, change of attitude, and ultimately purchase. The public relations approach may be more subtle, but it also seeks to influence public thinking and behavior about an organization. Public relations communications seek to persuade the public to perceive the organization in a certain way; to understand its position, mission, and goals; and to appreciate its contribution to our life and society in general.

**Building Broad Awareness and Appreciation.** In both fields the precise word, tone, and nuance of the message can have significant reverberations for the organization or product being represented. These fields both require not only a masterful grasp of English, but also a real sense of the sweep of the English language, both historically and in its most recent incarnations. Along with these language skills must come a very high level of general information. Advertisers need to know at least something about almost everything, and public relations people have to be equally in tune with their audience. For example, if a public relations department sends out correspondence regarding environmental issues, sending that message on recycled paper (labeled as such) and printed with environmentally approved soy-based ink.
would be noticed and appreciated by the audience and would help to condition the audience's response to the message.

Effective messages are based on such connections with the audience. So it isn't enough to know about sports and athletes if your next client is a music producer representing a violin virtuoso. Pest exterminators, AIDS activists, microchip manufacturers, department stores, insurance companies, and thousands of other organizations seek advertising and public relations assistance. A limitation in terms of awareness of and appreciation for the clients' products and services could be your biggest liability.

Using Technology. The need for computer skills, especially desktop publishing and graphics familiarity, is particularly acute in both advertising and public relations. If you are contemplating either of these careers and are still in college, take advantage of your computer science or graphic arts department course offerings and build some expertise in this area to add to your desirability as a job candidate.

Developing a Deep-Rooted Understanding. Personal characteristics of advertising executives have tended to overstate the need for creativity. Certainly there is a demand for quickness, the ability to generate ideas, and the ability to be intuitive about a product and how best to present that product. But most advertising professionals will say that their best efforts are actually born from a deep understanding of the product and marketplace. The concepts and appeals they create develop quite organically from their research on the market and the product. Advertising has become a highly quantitative business; people spending money on advertising expect some reasonable quantification of return on their investment. How many people will see a particular print ad or view a commercial? What percentage of sales increase might be realized in a geographic market as the result of special advertising programs? What would be the net effect of in-store promotions versus broadcast media for a product?

For those in public relations, personal characteristics would include a sense of poise even under pressure and a good sense of humor, even of the absurd! The ability to remain cool and collected in stressful situations is important to ensure that any communications you give out in times of stress (crisis management, unusual incidents, natural disasters) are statements you can live with long after the incident. Diplomacy, thoughtfulness, and a real sensitivity to the concerns of interested publics are also important. If you are helping to stage a reception for distinguished foreign guests, should you serve cuisine of their country, American food, or perhaps some combination? What would suit the audience and the situation? Public relations professionals are masters of anticipation. They are constantly thinking of how any action, statement, or initiative on the part of their organization may be perceived or misperceived by the public.

Adding to the Team. Much of both advertising and public relations is teamwork, so the ability to work in groups is quite important to success. It is difficult to generalize about other desired characteristics in the successful advertising executive and public relations official. Both have room for a great many personalities with as many skills and talents. Both will tolerate an extreme range of personalities if the person can produce effective work. Most effective workers in this area, however, probably are curious about people's behavior and values and the marketplace itself. Many are widely read and enjoy staying current with literature, art, music, the theater, and athletics. They are intensely aware of social and political events and how these can affect the public's collective consciousness. They are often predictors of trends and fads.

Helping to Move the Cause Forward. Careers develop in advertising and public relations in a somewhat similar fashion. Advertising careers are made by how well you do for a particular account. This means not only how much your advertising is noticed, but also how effectively it moves consumers to do what you hoped they would, which might be simply to remember the product's name. Public relations success is accelerated when you are helpful in responding to a difficult situation for an organization or managing a successful change in image or a repositioning of the organization in the public's mind.

Competing for the Job. Entry into either advertising or public relations can be discouraging because, as with so many "glamour" jobs, most of the glamour is misunderstood. The lines of applicants are long, however, and competition is stiff. Some kind of related experience would be helpful. Meeting practitioners and learning about their experiences and views of the business would also be of immense value. For advertising, it may be best to think not in terms of a job in advertising, but a job in one of the media, for example, radio, TV, or print. Build your expertise in a department such as scheduling or sales and then bring that experience to an advertising agency.

Public relations has its own grooming process. To speak with authority and credibility for the organization, you need significant experience at a senior level to know what to say and how to say it. It is not uncommon for senior public relations officials to have been leaders of a number of different divi-
sions. It is through long experience that the trust an organization must place in its spokesperson is born. He or she has earned this trust over time and in many roles.

Because advertising is predominant in American society, many organizations have done very well through their advertising efforts, and even small organizations have taken it upon themselves to buy advertising services. Public relations has also grown as an industry, although as a specialty it has not achieved the stature of advertising because a firm needs to reach a certain size in terms of output, staff, and impact to feel the need to respond to its publics in a formal, planned manner. Likewise, the public doesn’t always demand a professional level of response from a smaller firm. Consequently, you will find fewer public relations opportunities with small firms than are found in advertising.

*Advancing in Your Career.* Often practitioners of both public relations and advertising see career growth by moving to larger and larger clients and increasing the size of their staffs and budgets in the process. Issues and challenges become correspondingly larger, and the opportunity for great success or public failure is an element of risk. Even the most skilled advertisers with extensive staffs and budgets can produce advertisements that not only don’t do what they set out to accomplish, but might, in fact, attract negative publicity. Likewise, skilled public relations professionals can misjudge the significance of a situation and fail to exercise judicious damage control at the proper time, letting a difficult situation go from bad to worse. It is just this risk—the potential for failure or success—that many in advertising and public relations find exciting. These fields are highly dependent on the professional’s “reading” of the public’s attitudes and disposition toward the organization or product.

*Enjoying the Rewards.* What are the rewards of working in public relations or advertising? Both involve teamwork; consequently, those who enjoy working with other individuals and the camaraderie and esprit de corps that develop will enjoy this aspect of the work. Using your intelligence, creativity, understanding of the public, intuition, artistic sense, critical judgment, and analytical ability can allow you to feel an exciting sense of “stretch” and personal development. Both fields test the individual’s skills and attributes. If you enjoy that kind of testing in a work environment, you will find advertising and public relations stimulating and challenging.

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**Working Conditions**

The similarities and differences between advertising and public relations working conditions are described here.

**Advertising**

Advertising working conditions are centered on the product and the market for the product. Advertising professionals need to be aware of the news and social trends, for in any of these events may come an indication of change that may impact how a product should be presented or how a product’s reception may change. Aspirin, for example, was originally used to relieve pain. Now, producers of aspirin are touting it as a wonder drug. Some researchers believe it may reduce the risk of colorectal cancer, and most manufacturers encourage aspirin regimens to reduce the risk of heart attack. There is aspirin plus calcium for women, chewable aspirin for children, aspirin cream for muscle and joint pain, aspirin for rapid headache relief, and low-dose safety coated aspirin, just to name a few.

So advertisers must stay current on social thinking and trends. Consequently, advertising offices and departments are social centers with much collaboration and shared idea generation. Everything is grist for the advertising mill. Much planning goes into advertising, but new ideas are welcome and risks are often taken in the hopes of increasing market share for a product. For established products of stable demand, advertisers simply try to create the most effective distribution of their message through the appropriate media for the budget they have been allotted.

Advertising offices exhibit all kinds of energy levels, from frantic activity to intense concentration, depending on what stage of the process or what kind of account the workers are focusing on at the time. They are fast-paced, active, “let’s do it” climates with high energy levels that require a high tolerance for stress.

**Public Relations**

Public relations offers two different working conditions. For most public relations, there is significant ordered planning to build and achieve rapport with any number of publics. Many situations require research, careful thought, and solid preparation to ensure that the organization’s goals and mission are presented accurately and that material is available to meet the questions and concerns of interested publics. Some of these situations include formal pre-
sentations, responses to letters or complaints, court cases, consumer disputes, company expansion plans, or new product launches.

This proactive work may involve placing informative messages in major media publications, direct mailings to customers or investors, telemarketing, press conferences, or press kits to the media. In most instances, public relations are ongoing, although there may be short-term goals for a particular reason, for example price hikes or a product recall.

Sometimes, however, plans don't go as intended. Accidents occur, violence takes place, nature intervenes, production lines fail, or any of a million possible negative situations occurs. Then the public relations department is called in to respond and set things right: alert the public to alternative product sources, describe how to file a reimbursement claim, or explain how to return a damaged product. Some of these situations could be classified as crisis management. Most public relations experts will tell you that although you cannot anticipate a crisis, you can plan for it by suggesting certain scenarios and determining in advance what might be the best response for the organization in such an eventuality. The more alternatives and situations you can anticipate, the faster and more effectively you can respond when an event occurs.

Even though you may have planned for a particular crisis, it is still a time of stress if it actually develops. For the duration of the problem, the public relations department may find itself the press headquarters of an organization—granting interviews, writing news stories, providing press releases, all of which must be carefully considered to maintain public confidence in the product or service and the organization.

Training and Qualifications

A review of some of the actual advertisements for entry-level positions in advertising and public relations will clearly demonstrate that with your English degree you have the basic qualifications for work in these fields. If you are a skillful user of English both verbally and in written formats, you'll be very competitive. Add some computer familiarity (word processing at least; desktop publishing is a plus), and you'll find you fit the bill for most entry-level positions.

This is good news for English majors. However, there is a caution attached! The basic skills and a little more may get your foot in the proverbial door, but from that point on, the qualifications become less specific and more difficult to pin down.

Both areas demand a high level of general information. Because these fields are essentially barometers of social trends, the qualified candidate needs to be a highly aware individual. You cannot afford to ignore certain fields of human activity. For example, perhaps you find professional wrestling childish, contrived, and repellent, so you have always ignored it and its personalities. However, as an advertising executive, you may be managing the promotion events for a line of toys or clothing or board games based on this sport. In public relations, you may need to secure the services of a currently popular wrestler to promote your company's or client's product.

The people who populate the fields of advertising and public relations are marked by their diversity, their wide range of interests, and their encyclopedic knowledge of current events, human activity, politics, and personalities. They can talk on the latest medical developments in the search for a cure for cystic fibrosis and move on to experimental opera. They are, and you should be, too, invertebrate readers. They watch television and go to films, theater, car rallies, rodeos, concerts, and other types of events.

To communicate effectively with the public, you need to understand all kinds of human activities, not just those that you personally prefer. You will need to appreciate varying public tastes, needs, wants, and desires and how they are expressed in order to effectively communicate through the medium of advertising or public relations.

A valuable test of your own preparedness for these fields as well as qualifying training experience in and of itself is the internship. This will be an education in what professionals do in these fields as well as a close-up observation of the personalities that inhabit them. You'll learn some skills, practice many others, and take stock of how well you measure up to expectations and norms.

Most important, given the intense and unrelenting competitive demand for positions in these fields, the internship provides yet another notch in your handle of experience. Examine some of the excellent internship directories, such as the American Advertising Federation's Internship Directory (aaf.org/college/internships.html), National Directory of Arts Internships (artistplacement.com), and Peterson's Internships (http://testnas.petersons.com/books). They list hundreds of organizations from coast to coast offering public relations and advertising internships in museums, social service agencies, theaters, festivals, university settings, environmental organizations, women's centers, juvenile courts, TV and radio stations, and zoos. Look for these directories in your career-office library or public library. You will find internships listed on the Internet as well. Simply use your favorite search engine and start looking!
Earnings

Salaries for established professionals are usually based on the span of control, budgetary authority, and educational and experiential background. When entry-level positions are examined, factors affecting salary include size, geographic location, billing size, and type of organization.

Advertising

The Internet can be a useful resource for finding the latest earnings information for jobs in the advertising industry. Career websites such as career mosaic.com and commercial sites such as Advertising Age's site (adage.com) provide lots of useful information, including some salaries. Keep in mind that salaries will vary by type of agency, billing size, and region of the country. At the time of this writing, the following entry-level salaries were available for those working in either an agency or for a corporation:

- Media buyer: $40,750
- Media planner: $42,000
- Advertising coordinator: $38,900
- Marketing assistant: $35,300-$40,000

Public Relations

PR Week regularly publishes salary surveys, and it reports average entry-level salary information for the industry. The 2005 salary survey listed an entry-level salary range of $36,331 to $37,038. At the time of printing, Wageweb (wageweb.com), an online salary service, lists average minimum salaries for a public relations representative as $31,322. Be sure to check the latest information available on both websites.

Career Outlook

For those seeking entry-level positions in public relations, the competition will be keen. As we discussed, many new college graduates are interested in working in this field, and the number of job openings is often smaller than the number of qualified applicants. Related summer work and internships along with relevant course work will positively affect your standing in the applicant pool. Be sure to review the section entitled “Strategy for Finding the Jobs” for additional suggestions.

Advertising-industry employment is expected to grow steadily through the year 2012, according to the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Factors affecting advertising employment include both domestic and global competition in products and services. As consumers draw from both domestic and international markets, there will be a corresponding demand on advertisers and marketers to master the promotional, communications, and advertising strategies needed to succeed in this evolving business environment.

Strategy for Finding the Jobs

The four tasks outlined here create a comprehensive strategy for finding work in advertising and public relations.

Highlight Relevant Course Work

Employers want to know about relevant courses you've taken—they will serve as part of the foundation that will make you a valued and productive employee. For advertising positions some relevant course work includes marketing, consumer behavior, market research, sales, communication methods and technology, and visual arts (art history, photography, and so on). In public relations, the following courses are beneficial: advertising, business administration, public affairs, public speaking, political science, and creative and technical writing.

Because you will be presenting your degree in English, rather than a business degree, as your educational credential, it is especially important to highlight relevant courses. Some of these classes, for example, communication methods, creative writing, and technical writing, may have been part of your degree program. You may have taken other courses as part of a minor or to meet a general education requirement. Be sure to put this relevant coursework on your résumé and talk about it during the interview. You will also need to express your interest in participating in professional development opportunities that will bring you up to speed in other areas.

Review Job Advertisements

Read job listings on the Internet and in the papers—they will help you learn job titles, duties, and responsibilities for various jobs and get some sense of salary levels. Determine which job advertisements mesh with your interests and background and then how you can refine your résumé and cover letter. It is important to know what's out there, both the good and the not so good.
Hit the Streets!
Most job listings in advertising and public relations that you come across will be for specialized experience (which you do not yet have) or will be low-level clerical/administrative jobs that you would not enjoy and, more important, would not learn from. The wisdom on the street for jobs in these fields is that it is best to directly contact an agency or organization for which you want to work. The best cover letter and résumé in advertising and public relations is the one that’s hand delivered. The supply of candidates in advertising and public relations so far outweighs demand for available positions that job-seekers must literally go straight to the employers. This standard is so developed that employers ignore résumés that arrive by mail. With job candidates walking in the door, employers don’t need to answer letters that suggest they call the job seeker if interested.

Keep Checking with Potential Employers
If an agency principal is looking to fill a position, chances are he or she doesn’t have to do much more than wander out to the office lobby and see who is at the reception desk trying desperately to see someone about a job. There is a logic here, as well. The kind of assertiveness, persistence, and “go-for-it” drive that would bring an individual to the agency in person are just the qualities that are called for in advertising and public relations. If you want to get a job, yours will be the face that the receptionist sees on a fairly regular basis.

Possible Employers
There is a range of possible employers for those interested in working in advertising or public relations. The list includes advertising agencies, TV stations, radio stations, specialty advertisers, outdoor advertising agencies, magazines, newspapers, public relations firms, utilities, sports organizations, the U.S. government, state and local governments, educational institutions, medical institutions, and associations. Let’s review a series of possible employer types with an accent on the English major. Because many employer directories and job listings sources cover all or many of these employer types, we’ll provide a basic library of listings and resources to locate these employers. Give each type of employer your full consideration and begin your job search by contacting the type of employer you are most interested in working with.

Advertising Agencies
Advertising agencies continue to break new ground in communicating with the public, despite the continuing proliferation of products and “noise” surrounding each of those products. Although advertisements have become increasingly visual, writers are still needed for copy used in print ads, voice-overs in films and videos, and product packaging. Even in the purest visual advertisement, the effectiveness is achieved because behind and supporting the ad is a position paper outlining the intent, scope, and focus of the proposed piece of advertising. Communication remains the mainstay of the independent advertising agency. The demand is still crucial for strong and creative communication that will arrest the public’s attention and move people to some desired response.

TV Stations
TV stations are supported by the advertising that is placed with them. Advertising departments for TV stations work to attract and hold potential advertisers by offering them time and day slots for their advertising that will best deliver the correct market for the advertiser’s product. Because of these stations’ technical capabilities, they are frequently called on to produce commercial messages as well as air them, and opportunities to function similarly to a full-fledged advertising agency also exist within television stations.

Radio Stations
Radio has become particularly specialized, with stations making market-oriented decisions to go all classical or country or talk or news and weather or pop psychology or soft rock. The intent here is that by focusing on the needs of a particular market profile, the station will also be better able to attract advertisers whose products speak to that narrow market and by doing so will create a definite niche in the radio spectrum. This represents a sharp break from the past, when station programming tried to provide a little bit of everything throughout the day. Now, the trend is to provide a narrow focus and hope that it brings in a deep audience. English majors working in radio today will need to understand the particular market they are writing for so that they can communicate using language, including style, syntax, metaphors, and tone, that says to the audience, “That’s talking to me”

Specialty Advertisers
Specialty advertising is all around us. The printed yardstick from the lumberyard. The free mini-flashlight from the hardware store with the store's
address and hours of operation. The credit card case imprinted with a printer's logo. Many businesses cannot afford broadcast or print media advertising, but almost every firm can afford some kind of imprinted article that reminds people who it is and where the business is located. Specialty advertising is used to complement broadcast advertising. Creative opportunities abound in this area as the specialty advertiser and the client come together to plan a promotion, event, or anniversary. Often, items, slogans, themes, and messages are expressly designed for the client. For the English major who enjoys the creative use of language, specialty advertising offers possibilities.

**Outdoor Advertising Agencies**

With a renewed interest in the aesthetics of public spaces, including highways, outdoor advertising has undergone some restructuring and reframing of purpose. Although restrictions proliferate, there are still ample opportunities for billboards, spectacles, and other forms of outdoor advertising, including signs, blimps, skywriting, and tethered inflatables. Outdoor advertising specialists often work with an advertiser and its advertising agency to add outdoor ads to a complete campaign. The outdoor specialists can provide the best information on site selection, copy length, and copy/visual balance.

**Magazines**

Today's magazine advertising departments have assembled more information on their readership than ever before. They can tell a prospective advertiser how old their readers are, how many cars they own, how often they travel abroad, and how much money they make. The magazine uses this information to recruit the kind of advertiser its readers want to see and have need of. It will assist advertisers with designing winning appeals to the market and can advise on successful placement of the ad within the publication. Some magazine product runs allow for creative "split ads" on opposing pages or can incorporate some product samples in the assembling and stapling process.

**Newspapers**

Newspapers depend heavily on advertising to support the publication. Newspaper advertising departments often work very closely with clients of all sizes to assist in producing ads that are effective, often under pressures of time and space limitations. English majors interested in this particular area of employment will find their talents constantly stretched.

**Public Relations Firms**

Public relations organizations take on individuals, institutions (churches, corporations, not-for-profit firms, and so on), products, and even ideas and work to improve, alter, reposition, or change public opinion about them. They use every opportunity at their disposal, including the placement of news stories, photo opportunities, charity work, public appearances, and one-on-one meetings to build support for whatever position or platform they are trying to affect. Considerable written work is involved, and public relations organizations issue a steady stream of position papers, news releases, background stories, biographies, and fact sheets to support their efforts. The writing task is a demanding one, because the final product must meet severe public scrutiny.

**Utilities**

Another symptom of a shrinking planet and the public's interest and concern is the need for utilities to have public relations offices. Once a very quiet sector of the economy, firms that deal in oil, gasoline, natural gas, hydroelectric power, and nuclear energy are constantly being called on to explain and document their impact on the environment. In an era of rising costs that outstrip rising paychecks, there is also concern for the economic impact of ever-escalating energy costs on the individual. Public relations professionals must be excellent listeners, able to understand and empathize with others' points of view, while at the same time articulating company policy. They can play a significant role in bringing disparate viewpoints together and building bridges for cooperation. English majors looking to do PR work in the utilities need to be equally at home on the word processor and in front of the telephone. They need to be able to produce a newsletter or field angry questions from consumers. This job requires a unique blend of skilled communicator and negotiator.

**Sports Organizations**

Promotion of individual sports, specific sports leagues, and unique competitions are all part of the working day for public relations specialists in sports organizations. Increased attendance brings increased sponsorship and results in bigger prizes and more public attention for events. Creating excitement, raising public awareness about a sport, and attracting advertisers are all the responsibility of the sports organization public relations staff. If you have an English education and a love for sports, you may want to investigate the extensive possibilities in sports organization public relations.
Federal Government
Many job seekers would be surprised to find that the government employs public relations professionals. However, whether it's controversy surrounding federal money mismanagement, sex discrimination at a major military college, or a positive news story about military assistance during civilian disasters, the government needs qualified public relations professionals who can communicate effectively with all those interested in government activities. Because the U.S. government has numerous departments, agencies, and divisions, the entry-level public relations aspirant would do well to spend some serious investigative time on opportunities in government public relations.

State and Local Government
The same public scrutiny that necessitates federal public relations is present for state, city, and local governments to a lesser degree. Depending on the size of the locality and the issues present, the concerns may be taxes, zoning, preservation of wetlands, redistricting, highway tolls, state lotteries, and similar issues that need to be addressed in the press, on television and radio, by personal communication, and in news conferences. A high level of general information about the locality and its issues, poise under pressure, and the gift of diplomacy are all helpful attributes.

Educational Institutions
Perhaps a college campus is reacting to news reports of corporate advertising on the college’s website. Or it may be a story concerning “town-gown” relations between the college and the community in which it is located. These are some of the issues a public relations staff member would be planning for and responding to in an educational institution today. Such examples are evidence of the need for the kind of skilled communications a trained professional can bring to an educational institution’s relationship with the community.

Medical Institutions
Questions of medical ethics, the prolongation of life, the acceptance or denial of certain classifications of patients, the movement of patients from one facility to another, and the high-risk areas of experimental surgery and drug treatment are often the focal issues for public relations in hospital administration. Working in this field means acquiring a specialized medical vocabulary and gaining familiarity with hospital procedures because public statements must be carefully worded to avoid confusion or misstatement.

Professional Organizations
A growing number of professional associations have a critical need for a public relations practitioner. Staffs for these groups may be small and include many volunteer workers, but there is a need for skilled personnel to answer press queries and personal letters and to issue press releases on possible news stories. Some organizations find, over time, that their activities are not perceived as they desire, and they seek help to reeducate the public about their true intents and aims as an organization. Others want public support in terms of time and financial contributions and need professional help through public relations to elicit that support. Although only large, well-funded associations can maintain a professional public relations staff, this is in no way a limitation for the job seeker. Directories of associations list thousands of organizations whose size and financial structure allow them to employ PR staff.

Possible Job Titles
The two following lists are an attempt to give you some idea of possible job titles in advertising and public relations. The lists are not exhaustive. Many other titles exist that might not directly suggest an advertising or public relations function. For example, on some college campuses, there is a director of news services. A significant component of this job is public relations. Use the following lists as a rough guide, and add to them those job titles you discover through your own investigations.

Advertising
Account assistant
Account coordinator
Account director
Account or district manager
Account executive
Account specialist
Account supervisor
Account trainee
Advertising director
Art director
Assistant account executive
Assistant planner
Associate media director
Associate research director
Broadcast supervisor
Copywriter
Creative director
Executive research director
Group or regional manager
Junior account executive
Junior buyer
Management supervisor
Media buyer
Media director
Media planner
Media supervisor
Press secretary
Producer
Production assistant
Production manager
Production supervisor
Project director
Research director
Research supervisor
Researcher
Sales assistant
Sales planner
Sales representative
Traffic assistant
Traffic controller
Traffic manager

Consumer affairs specialist
Corporate communications director
Crisis manager
Director of internal communications
Director of investor relations
Director of public affairs
Editor
Employee publications specialist
Event creation coordinator
Governmental relations staffer
Industrial public relations executive
Internal communications staffer
Investor relations officer
Media placement specialist
Media relations executive
Office of civic affairs representative
PR writer
Public affairs officer
Public information officer
Public relations assistant
Shareholder relations coordinator
Staff writer
Supervisor of educational affairs
Washington representative

Related Occupations

The fields of advertising and public relations are welcoming to the generalist such as the English major. Although the emphasis is on written and spoken communication skills, there is also a need for a high level of general information, responsiveness under pressure, the ability to present to large groups, and the ability to be endlessly responsive and creative as situations present themselves. It's difficult for an employer to know ahead of time who will be a success in this field. This brief related occupation list suggests that these skills, so valued in public relations and advertising, will be valued anywhere there is a need for someone to act as an intermediary between the organization and outside publics, formally or informally. Each of these has been selected because it draws on the same attributes to a greater or lesser degree.

Public Relations
Communications specialist
Community affairs coordinator
Caterer  
Cruise director  
Development specialist  
Function/special event sales manager  
Fund-raiser  
Interior designer  
Lobbyist  
Membership services director  
Patient relations director  
Patient relations specialist  
Police officer/community relations  
Promotion manager  
Real estate salesperson  
Religious administrator  
Shopping mall manager  
Spokesperson  
Volunteer coordinator

Help in Locating These Employers

Advertising and public relations agencies know the value of customer awareness. As you would expect, they are masters of self-promotion. A number of excellent websites and directories and lists are available to identify where these employers are located, how big their staffs are, what specialties each offers, and how much and what kind of business they do. The following list represents a beginning library of job sources for each of the possible advertising and public relations employers listed in this chapter.

- *Advertising Age* (adage.com), published by Crain Communications, Inc.
- *Adweek* (adweek.com), published by VNU Business Publications, USA, Inc., and VNU eMedia production

Professional Associations for Advertising and Public Relations

The following list will begin to give you some idea of the variety and specializations of professional associations supporting the fields of advertising and public relations. As you begin your own job search, you'll find many other professional groups, some with quite specialized purposes. Their websites contain a vast amount of information. If you have additional questions, an e-mail or a telephone call to the groups often will result in them sending you materials that open up career vistas you had not imagined.

**Advertising Council**  
261 Madison Ave.  
New York, NY 10016-2303  
adcouncil.org  
**Members/Purpose:** To conduct public service advertising campaigns

**Advertising Women of New York**  
25 West 54th St., Suite 1001  
New York, NY 10036  
awny.org
Members/Purpose: Professional development for women in advertising, publicity, marketing, research, or promotion
Training: Hosts annual advertising career conference
Journal/Publication: *AWNY Matters* online newsletter
Job Listings: Online job bank

American Advertising Federation
1101 Vermont Ave. NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
aaf.org

Members/Purpose: Advertisers, agencies, and media companies that comprise the nation's leading brands and corporations; promotes advertising through a nationally coordinated grassroots network of advertisers, agencies, media companies, local advertising clubs, and college chapters
Job Listings: Online job bank

American Association of Advertising Agencies
405 Lexington Ave., 18th Floor
New York, NY 10174-1801
aaa.org

Members/Purpose: A management-oriented association that offers its members the broadest possible services, expertise, and information regarding the advertising agency business
Training: Offers Institute of Advanced Advertising Studies, variety of conferences, workshops, and programs

Association of National Advertisers
708 Third Ave.
New York, NY 10017
ana.net

Members/Purpose: National and regional advertisers
Training: Hosts conferences and regional meetings
Journal/Publication: *The Advertiser* magazine
Job Listings: Online job opportunities

Institute for Public Relations
P.O. Box 118400
2096 Weimer Hall
Gainesville, FL 32611-8400
instituteforpr.com

Members/Purpose: Includes educators/researchers, public relations professionals, and the corporate/institutional clients they serve; focuses on the science beneath the art of public relations
Training: Offers lectures and forums

National Council for Marketing and Public Relations
P.O. Box 336039
Greeley, CO 80633
ncmpr.org

Members/Purpose: Represents marketing and PR professionals at community, technical, and junior colleges
Training: Hosts a national conference and regional conferences
Journals/Publications: *COUNSEL* quarterly newsletter, membership directory, and resource guide
Job Listings: Online listing of employment opportunities

Public Relations Society of America
33 Irving Pl.
New York, NY 10003
prsa.org

Members/Purpose: Advances the standards of the public relations profession and provides members with professional development opportunities through continuing education programs, information exchange forums, and research projects conducted on national and local levels
Training: Hosts seminars and e-learning opportunities
Journals/Publications: *PRSA e-newsletter*, *The Strategist* magazine, *Tactics* newspaper
Job Listings: Online job center

Promotional Products Association International
3125 Skyway Circle N.
Irving, TX 75038-3526
adweb.com/adassoc33.html

Members/Purpose: Works to expand the market, establish standards, enhance the professionalism of the industry, and support the growth of member companies
Training: Hosts business academy and Webinars
Journals/Publications: *Promotional Products Business* magazine, *PPAI Newsletter*, *PPB Newlink* electronic newsletter