
Professional Communicators and The Future of North Dakota

Prepared for:
North Dakota Professional Communicators



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Executive Summary

North Dakota Professional Communicators undertook a research project to explore the connection between the future of communications professions, the future for professional communicators, and the future of the state of North Dakota. A survey of professional communicators in North Dakota was conducted to discover the employment profile and satisfaction of those in the field as well as perceptions of career opportunities. In addition, these professionals were asked their opinions about the role their professions and professional associations might play in improving the future of North Dakota.

The survey instrument was prepared by researchers at the University of North Dakota School of Communication in conjunction with the Social Science Research Institute. A mail questionnaire was sent to a statewide constructed list of 432 individuals working in communications areas, with 143 (34.5 percent, accounting for 18 undeliverables) responding.

Employment Background

- Until the recent economic downturn, communications employment nationally was among the fastest growing areas of employment, particularly in advertising, public relations, and new media;
- In North Dakota, communications employment has not had as high a projected growth rate. Replacement jobs and some growth in selected areas has been anticipated. Attention to new media careers has been minimal.

Key Survey Findings

- Highest job satisfaction was noted for relationships among co-workers, schedule flexibility, and technology used at work;
- Job dissatisfaction rose and satisfaction declined for prospects for salary increases, salary, support for professional development, and benefits;
- Respondents strongly value professional development and their contributions to society through their work, and they take pride in the organizations for which they work;
- While respondents generally are satisfied with their current employment, a considerable portion would consider changing jobs or field of communication;
- Suggestions for ways professional associations could support communicators include developing career opportunities, providing leadership training, and improving standards of communication education and professional practice;
- Respondents are interested in non-credit workshops available locally or classes through distance education rather than on-campus classes, and they are interested in graduate rather than undergraduate education;
- Problems identified for North Dakota communications professions include lack of career opportunities and out migration of potential employees, followed by loss of advertising revenue and circulation;
- Respondents see potential for communications professions to contribute to North Dakota by improving its national image, being an advocate for the state, and providing public discussion of North Dakota issues.

Introduction

North Dakota faces challenges about its future. What is its economic potential? What is the impact of population decline? How will North Dakota grow? How will it keep young people and attract others? How are we viewed by the rest of the country? What leadership and initiatives are needed to improve North Dakota's prospects for a vibrant future?

For those who are professional communicators, these questions have a particular relevance. Developments in communication are heralded nationally as both a social and an economic good. Employment projections generally are very strong in times of economic stability or growth. The development of new technologies promises to open possibilities for new careers just being imagined. The role of strategic communication by professional communicators can be a factor in the success of organizations, and the part played by news organizations can be integral to the health of communities. If all these things are true, what good might come from giving attention to the role of communication and of professional communicators in the state of North Dakota, a state looking for answers to concerns about employment opportunities, population decline, and national image?

It is significant that North Dakota Professional Communicators is taking a leadership role in raising these questions. NDPC is an organization of women and men employed in all aspects of communication—newspapers, public relations, education, magazines, television and radio broadcasting, publishing, advertising, photography, and freelance work. NDPC, formerly North Dakota Press Women, was organized in 1950 as an affiliate of the National Federation of Press Women. The first man was accepted as a member when NDPC voted at the 1973 convention to open membership to men. At the 1988 spring convention, members voted to change the name from North Dakota Press Women to North Dakota Professional Communicators. Its mission is to achieve:

- The active and thoughtful advancement of the communications professions;
- A statewide network for the vibrant exchange of ideas; and
- Recognition and evaluation for the outstanding work of its members.

In keeping with its mission, NDPC undertook this project to explore the connection between the future of communications professions, the future for professional communicators, and the future of the state of North Dakota. A survey of professional communicators in North Dakota was conducted to discover the employment profile and satisfaction of those in the field as well as perceptions of career opportunities. This information could illuminate the potential for supporting and developing employment in communication related areas. In addition, these professionals were asked their opinions about the role their professions and professional associations might play in improving the future of North Dakota.

In the following pages we first set the context for the future for careers in communications in the country generally and in North Dakota more specifically. Then we summarize our survey methodology and major findings, analyze results, and discuss possibilities. We have provided in the appendix a copy of the survey instrument with percentages for each response and written comments to an open-ended survey question about ideas for addressing North Dakota's challenges.

Background

Journalism and mass communication related fields embrace a wide spectrum of people and types of employment. Prospects for growth, until recent economic downturns, have been very strong overall nationally, but this has not been the case necessarily in North Dakota.

Nationally, some areas of communications were projected to be among the fastest growing occupations between 2000 and 2010, while others were expected to grow, but more slowly, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (*Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-2003*, "Tomorrow's Jobs"). The fastest growing occupations were projected to be related to computer and information systems, public relations management, advertising and promotions management, and desktop publishing. Overall, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated an increase by 16 percent for employment in the communications sector. While half of those new jobs were expected in the telephone communications industry, cable and other pay television, wired and wireless services, and Internet connectivity were expected to contribute to the growth of communications industries (p. 4).

More specifically, employment in advertising had been projected to grow 32 percent between 2000 and 2010, compared to 15 percent for all industries combined (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Career Guide to Industries, 2002-2003*, "Advertising"). However, advertising employment tends to be concentrated in large cities and to be tied to economic expansion, which generates more products and services to advertise. Layoffs are common when accounts are lost, major clients cut advertising budget, or agencies merge. Ad agencies have been termed "a bellwether for the economy" (Quinn, 2002). A hiring slump reduced ad agency employment sharply during 2001 and 2002, but more recently there has been a jump in employment figures in most parts of the country, including the Midwest (Dolliver, 2003). Time will tell whether previous employment growth will be regained. Advertising salaries on average are significantly higher than other comparable jobs. Nonsupervisory workers in advertising averaged \$712 a week in 2000, more than the \$474 a week for all other nonsupervisory workers in private industry (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Advertising").

Employment of public relations specialists has been expected to increase much faster than the average for all occupations through 2010. However, while the interest in using public relations services has grown, in-house professionals are particularly vulnerable to being dropped or the work "outsourced" when organizations downsize or merge (Freivalds, 1997). The median annual income for a public relations specialist was \$39,000 in 1999, according to a survey conducted by the International Association of Business Communicators and the Public Relations Society of America. Salaries range, however, from \$22,780 for the lowest 10 percent of employees to more than \$70,480 for the top 10 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-2003*, "Public Relations Specialists").

While advertising and public relations had been expected to be growing dramatically, employment in radio and television broadcasting was expected to increase only 10 percent over the same ten year period, slower than the 15 percent growth projected for all industries combined. Industry consolidation, introduction of new technologies, greater use of prepared programming, and competition from other media have been cited as contributing factors to slower projected growth (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Career Guide to Industries, 2002-2003*,

“Radio and Television Broadcasting”). Employment actually peaked in 2000 and has been falling since. Economic downturns affect advertising revenues. In addition, the effects of deregulation have been cited as impacting numbers of employees of fewer media owners in media markets (Jessell, 2003). Employment growth could come in newer applications of broadcast technology such as data services, however. Salaries in broadcasting are higher on average for nonsupervisory workers than in other industries, but earnings are highest in large metropolitan areas (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Radio and Television Broadcasting”).

Slower growth than other occupations was predicted for the years 2000-2010 for employment of news analysts, reporters, and correspondents (both broadcast and newspaper) as the result of mergers, consolidations, closing newspapers, decreased circulation, increased expenses, and a decline in advertising revenues. Some newspaper chains have experienced deep cuts. Online newspapers and magazines, however, are expecting growth. Job openings also come about because of the need for replacement of employees who leave for other occupations because of stress and lifestyle. Salaries can be high in large markets, but they are generally very low at small broadcast stations and newspapers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-2003*, “News Analysts, Reporters, and Correspondents”). One commentator noted that for journalists, “Salaries are low and the outlook for major improvement is bleak” (Kodrich, n.d, par 3).

The job outlook for writers and editors has been an optimistic one, with expectations for increases faster than the average for all occupations. Demand for technical writers and writers in specialty areas (such as law, medicine, technology and electronics) has been increasing. On-line publications and services have grown, spurring demand for writers and editors, while numbers of editors of newspapers, periodicals, book publishers, and non-profit organizations is expected to increase with demand for those publications. Job opportunities also occur because of high replacement needs for employees in this area. Free-lancers may leave the field because they cannot earn enough money. Median annual earnings for salaried writers and authors were \$42,270 in 2000, but only \$26,470 in the newspaper industry (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-2003*, “Writers and Editors”).

Finally, new media present the possibility of new career options. While forecasts for growth were very high up until 2000 (Walsh, 2000), the dot-com crash has cooled projections if not interest in the type of work (Arenofsky, 2002). The Internet began impacting job placements by 1996, when one study showed that more than three and a half percent of journalism and mass communication graduates that year were offered online publishing jobs (*News Photographer*, 1998). It was predicted that desktop publishers would be among the fastest growing occupations, growing about 67 percent over the decade (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook 2002-2003*, “Tomorrow’s Jobs”). Pavlik reported in *Nieman Reports* (1996) that jobs in “technically advanced media, such as CD-ROMs and on-line publishers, offer the best opportunities for media job-seekers” (p.26). Even with employment cuts, positions such as the following could be considered attractive by those coming into the labor market or switching from other shrinking media professions: information designer (who analyzes client needs, defines the site map, and creates the informational structure of the site), graphic designer, Web editor or administrator, copywriter, search engine analyst, site publicist, and advertising account manager (Arenofsky, 2002).

The prospects for employment in communication areas in North Dakota have not been as positive as nationally, even before the most recent economic downturn. Projections for employment were made by the North Dakota Job Service (“Industry Projections Data 1998-2008”) for the period 1998 to 2008. Specific areas of communications in North Dakota had the following projections, with average current salaries from North Dakota Job Service (“Wages for North Dakota Jobs”):

- Writers and editors were expected to see a small increase (about six percent) between 1998 and 2008, from 493 employed to 522 (replacing 13 and adding three jobs per year). Average annual salary in 2002 was \$30,800.
- Reporters and correspondents could expect a downturn in that time period (about 11 percent fewer), losing three jobs per year while replacing 10, for a change in employment of 308 individuals to 275. Current salaries average \$26,300.
- Broadcast news analysts were expected to see no new jobs and replacement of only one job per year, a projected loss of about 14 percent by 2008 (21 to 18 employed). Radio and television announcers were expected to decrease by about 23 percent (from 392 to 301). Salaries average less than \$21,000.
- Postsecondary communications teachers were expected to increase from 62 in 1998 to 74 in 2008, a percentage growth of about 19 (one new job annually with two positions replaced). Annual salaries are about \$38,500.
- Marketing and advertising could anticipate about 12 percent annual growth rate of eight jobs and an annual replacement of nine (increasing from 638 to 717 individuals employed). These positions have the highest average annual salary at almost \$55,000.
- Public relations specialists were projected to grow about 10 percent, with three new jobs and eight replacements (315 to 348). Average annual salaries are about \$39,500.

Given the relatively small number of people employed in these communications professions in the state of North Dakota, even minor changes in economic fortune for employers can displace or shrink the employment prospects of those in the field, entering it, or seeking to change employers or careers. At the same time, employees or potential employees who are discouraged about remaining in the communications workforce or about finding employment in North Dakota can impact availability of personnel even for replacement of vacated positions. Finding out how professional communicators feel about their employment, what they want in their positions, and their career prospects could tell us more about some aspects of future employment.

Equally important may be paying attention to developing new career opportunities. The potential for new media careers has been exploited in other parts of the country but little attention has been devoted in North Dakota to how these careers might be part of other new technology initiatives seen as important to economic development. Yet the size and needs of the state suggest that career prospects might be enhanced with innovative thinking and statewide communication and technology leadership.

Methodology

Determining who is employed in journalism and mass communication-related fields and how to contact them to solicit their opinions is challenging. These fields include radio and television broadcasting, newspapers, public relations, advertising, marketing, publishing, free-lance writing and designing, graphic designing, education, and internet-related jobs such as website design and editing. To reach a broad representation from these areas of communication, from management and nonmanagement responsibilities, and from across the state of North Dakota, a constructed list was created from the mailing lists of the North Dakota Professional Communicators (105 individuals); North Dakota Newspaper Association (78 individuals); and North Dakota Broadcasters Association (112 individuals). To ensure adequate representation of certain categories of employment, an additional 137 individuals were added from the International Association of Business Communication Great Plains Chapter in Bismarck, Advertising Federation of Fargo-Moorhead, and Advertising Federation of Bismarck-Mandan, as well as educators in communications-related departments of colleges and universities in North Dakota, and additional reporters from daily newspapers. Some employment sectors were unavoidably underrepresented such as Internet related jobs and graphic design. Women represented a majority (62 percent) of those sent surveys, reflecting their membership in NDPC and perhaps the heavy employment of women in communications fields nationally and locally.

A survey instrument was designed by researchers at the University of North Dakota School of Communication. The instrument was divided into five sections: demographics, job satisfaction, career outlook, professional development, and visions for North Dakota. In Section One, respondents were asked about wages, primary employment position and economic sector, education, age, gender, field of communication, and years of experience. Questions in Section Two ranged from relationships with coworkers to salary to job security and flexibility to implementation of technology at work. Section Three focused on career outlook in relation to ongoing professional development, cultural diversity, sexual harassment, and gender roles.

Section Four asked for multiple responses to questions about professional memberships and interest in educational opportunities. Additionally, respondents were asked to write-in their perception of North Dakota Professional Communicators. Section Five asked respondents to answer questions focused on problems and concerns facing professional communicators in this state. Subsequently, respondents were allowed to write-in their ideas and suggestions for how communications professionals could contribute to the future of North Dakota.

A total of 432 surveys were mailed, with 18 surveys returned as undeliverable by the U.S. Postal Service, creating a total of 414 delivered. Respondents returned 143 surveys, yielding a 34.5 percent response rate. Surveys were mailed on March 16, 2003 and a reminder card was sent March 26, 2003. Survey responses were recorded, using SPSS data software, by the Social Science Research Institute at the University of North Dakota and graduate students in the UND School of Communication. The project manager and project assistant read and recorded all of the open-ended responses. All tabulations for the survey data were processed by the Social Science Research Institute at the University of North Dakota. The demographic profile of respondents was a balanced reflection of the demographic profile of the original mailing list.

Findings

Survey results are presented here following the organization of the instrument.

Section One: Demographics

The demographic characteristics of respondents reflect some key characteristics represented in the sample. For example, respondents represented an even distribution of salaried employees (about 38 percent) and managers (about 37 percent). An additional 13 percent work for hourly wages and about 9 percent are self-employed. The majority of the respondents indicated they are women (64 percent). Nearly all respondents are white; only 2.8 percent of the total respondents reported a different racial or ethnic origin.

Respondents work across the range of communications areas (Figure 1): newspapers (28 percent); public relations and advertising (27 percent); radio and television (18 percent), education (13 percent), and publishing, writing, and free-lancing (8 percent).

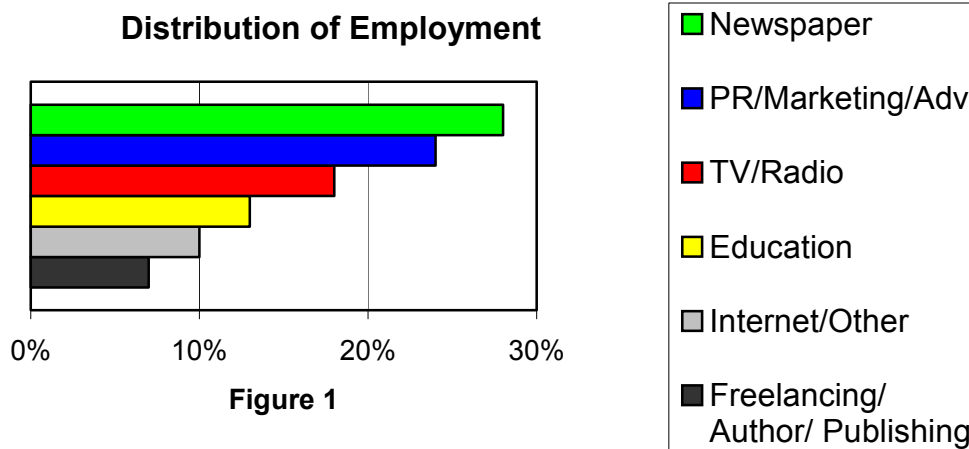


Figure 1

Over half indicated a current annual salary between \$25,000 and \$50,000, while over 16 percent reported annual salaries less than \$18,000 (see Figure 2). Only 15 percent indicated they earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000 annually, with approximately 10 percent of respondents earning over \$75,000.

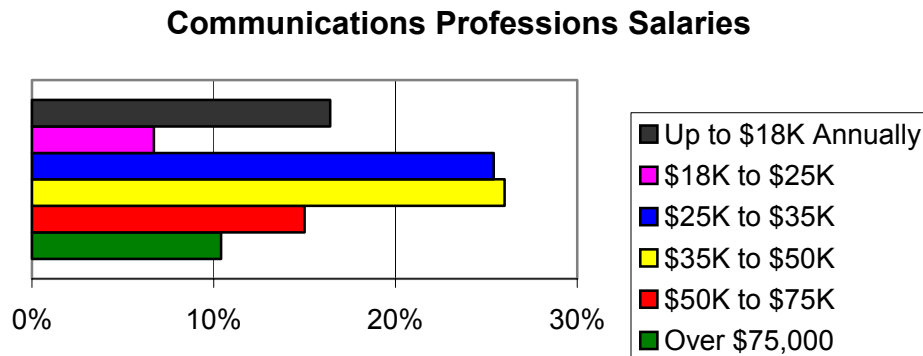


Figure 2

Respondents represent a fairly even distribution across years of experience. When asked about years employed at a current position, over a third said they had worked four to 10 years, about 30 percent had worked under three years, 21 percent between 11 and 20 years, and about 13 percent had worked over 20 years for the same employer.

Those respondents working in the private (for profit) sector in North Dakota eclipsed those working in the non-profit sector and public sectors combined (56 compared to 44 percent). Not quite half of all respondents currently work in a community with a population of over 40,000 residents.

Over one half (57 percent) of all respondents hold a bachelor's degree compared to 19 percent with a high school diploma or a vocational training degree. Advanced degree holders made up 18 percent of those surveyed and 7 percent hold an associate degree.

Communications professionals over the age of 35 but younger than 49 made up the largest category of respondents (44 percent), with nearly a quarter of the respondents between 26 and 35 and 50 to 65. About 3.5 percent are under the age of 25 and five percent over 65 years of age.

Section Two

Overall, respondents to this survey are satisfied to very satisfied with many aspects of their current employment (Figure 3). The highest percentages went to relationships among co-workers (88 percent), schedule flexibility (87 percent), and flexibility for handling family responsibilities and technology used for their work (each about 82 percent).

Areas of Highest Job Satisfaction

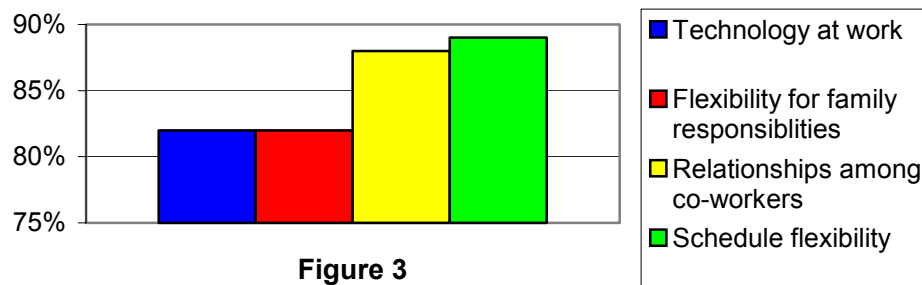


Figure 3

The area of employment with which respondents showed the most dissatisfaction was not salary, as one might expect, but prospects for salary increases (about 32 percent, with only 44 percent expressing satisfaction), followed by salary at 20 percent expressing dissatisfaction (to 64 percent expressing satisfaction), support for professional development at 16 percent dissatisfaction, and benefits with 15 percent dissatisfaction (Figure 4).

Areas of Most Job Dissatisfaction

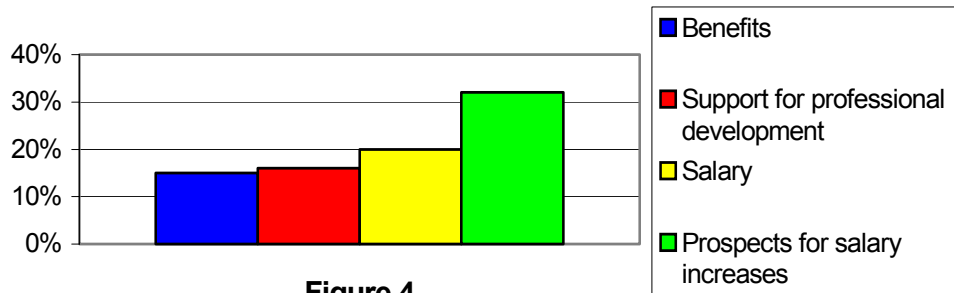


Figure 4

Section Three

When asked questions relating to their careers (Figure 5a), respondents overwhelmingly agreed (96 percent) that professional development is important to them. Contributing to society through their work came in second at 90 percent, followed by a sense of pride (84 percent) for the organizations for which they work. Sexual harassment was not identified as a problem by 85 percent but was for 7 percent, while 68 percent said gender had not played a role in job opportunities for them (almost 15 percent agreed it had and another 12 percent were neutral or did not know).

Career Outlook: Professional Values

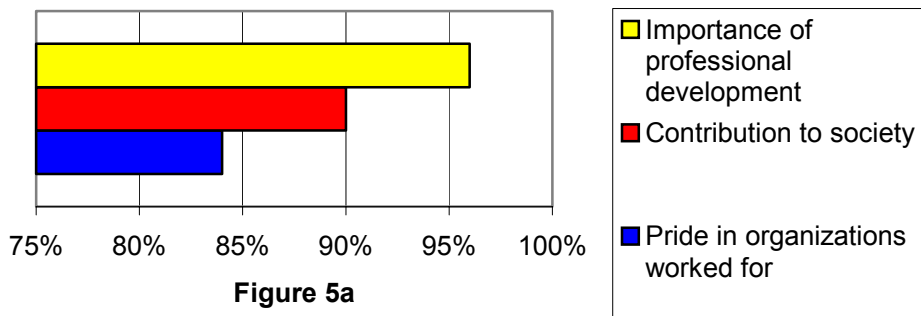
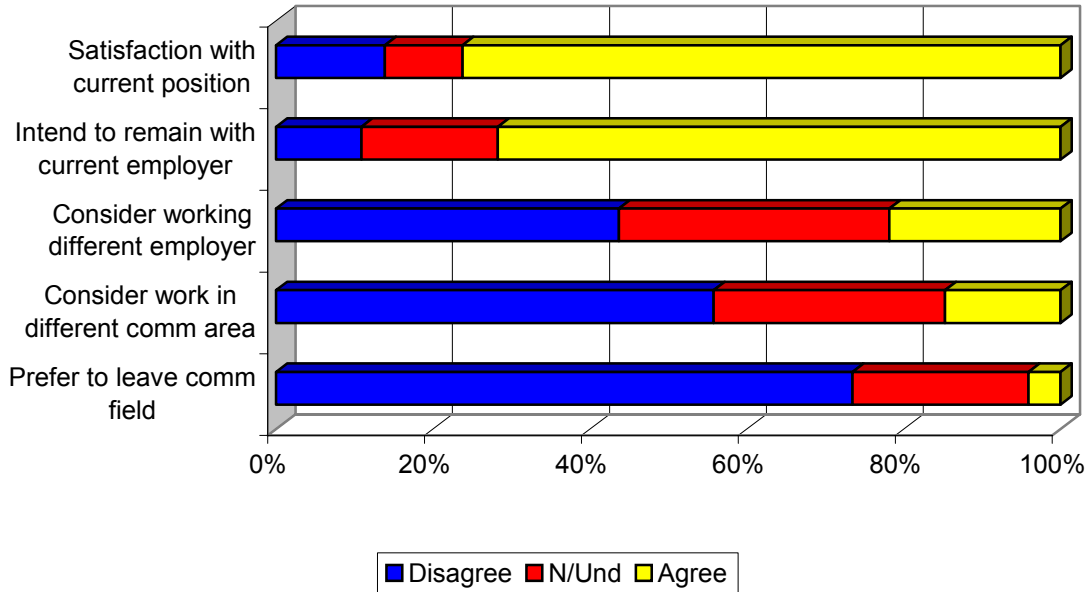


Figure 5a

About employment interests (Figure 5b), respondents overall showed satisfaction with what they are doing and for whom, but large percentages of undecided respondents and a segment of dissatisfaction bears consideration. The majority (over 76 percent) are satisfied with their current position, but 13.5 percent are dissatisfied, and another 10 percent are neutral or undecided. About two-thirds indicated they intend to remain with their current employer, but over 16 percent are undecided or neutral on this question and another 10 percent do not intend to remain. About 38 percent would not prefer to work for a different employer, but almost 30 percent are undecided or neutral and another 19 percent would. Over half would not prefer to work in a different type of communications, but 28 percent are neutral or undecided. Over 70 percent do not wish to leave the field of communications, but 22 percent are neutral or undecided.

Figure 5b Career Prospects



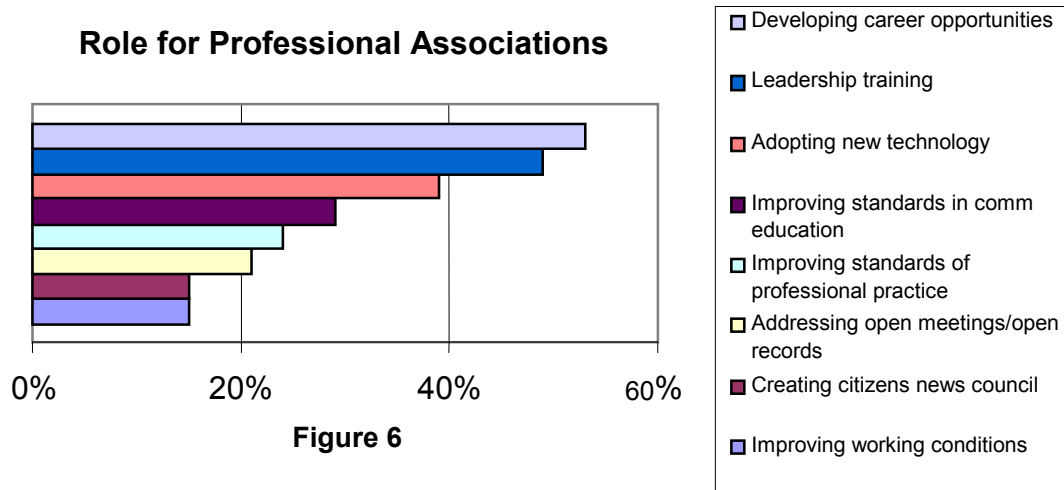
Section Four

Slightly over 30 percent of respondents belong to North Dakota Professional Communicators (a slightly higher proportion of their 24 percent representation in the original sample). Of those who are not members, about 56 percent were not familiar with the organization. Respondents were asked if their employer was a member of the North Dakota Newspaper Association (41 percent said yes) and North Dakota Broadcasters Association (22 percent said yes). Other professional associations identified were Cooperative Communications Association, National Communication Association, Advertising Federation, International Association of Business Communication, Livestock Publications Council, Minnesota Broadcasters Association, Native American Journalists Association, and an assortment of others. No consistent pattern of additional professional memberships emerged beyond those identified for the mailing list.

Some perceptions volunteered about NDPC by nonmembers included that it sponsors a contest, it is for women only, it is mostly for newspaper reporters, it is not applicable to noncommercial broadcasting, it is disorganized, and it is well organized and a very good organization.

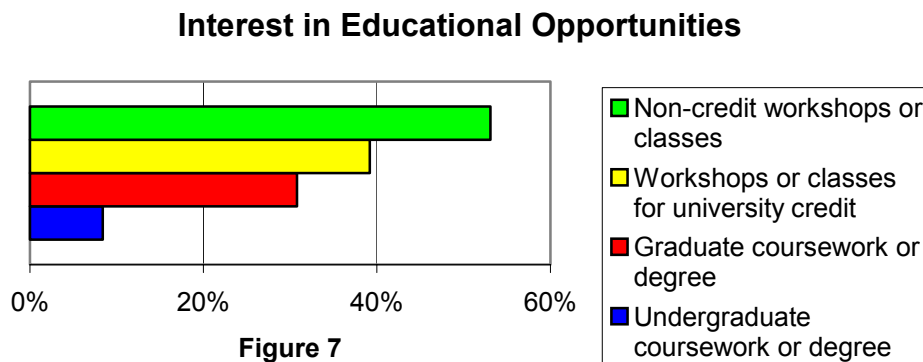
Respondents had suggestions for what professional communications associations in North Dakota could address (Figure 6). Developing career opportunities was the most frequently identified activity (53 percent). Providing leadership training (49 percent) and adopting new technology (39 percent) came next. About 29 percent want to see standards in communication

education addressed and another 24 percent want standards of professional practice addressed. Twenty-one percent think addressing open meetings and open records issues is a role for professional associations. Creating a news council and improving working conditions were favored by about 15 percent each.



Other suggestions volunteered by eight respondents were addressing sexism in media, workplace bullying and abuse, monopolization in local and national media, and Native broadcasting. Stressing coping skills was suggested, as well as providing continuing education, training in writing, and including small papers in professional organizations.

Respondents have an interest in educational opportunities (Figure 7). A majority (53 percent) stated that non-credit workshops and classes would best serve their needs; 40 percent wanted classes for credit. About 31 percent were interested in graduate classes, while only eight percent were interested in undergraduate classes.



Respondents favor having professional development and continuing education come to them (Figure 8). Local seminars were the most desired format for continuing education (65 percent). Further behind in preference were distance education courses, attractive to about 39 percent, state-wide conferences attractive to 36 percent, and on-campus classes attractive to 29 percent.

Format for Continuing Education

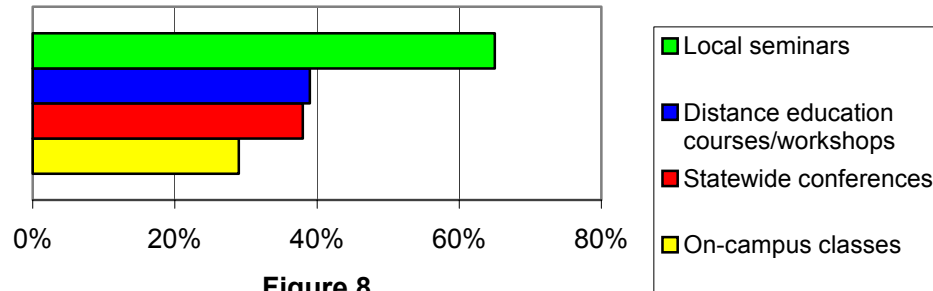


Figure 8

Section Five

Professional communicators see a role for what their professions might contribute to the state of North Dakota (Figure 9). Almost 70 percent thought that communications professions could contribute to the development of North Dakota by improving North Dakota’s image nationally. The next highest, 64 percent, suggested they be advocates for North Dakota, and another 55 percent thought providing public discussion of North Dakota issues is a significant area for consideration. Over 40 percent indicated increasing civic participation in North Dakota and taking a leadership role in developing new communications technologies were contributions that could be made.

Potential Contributions to North Dakota

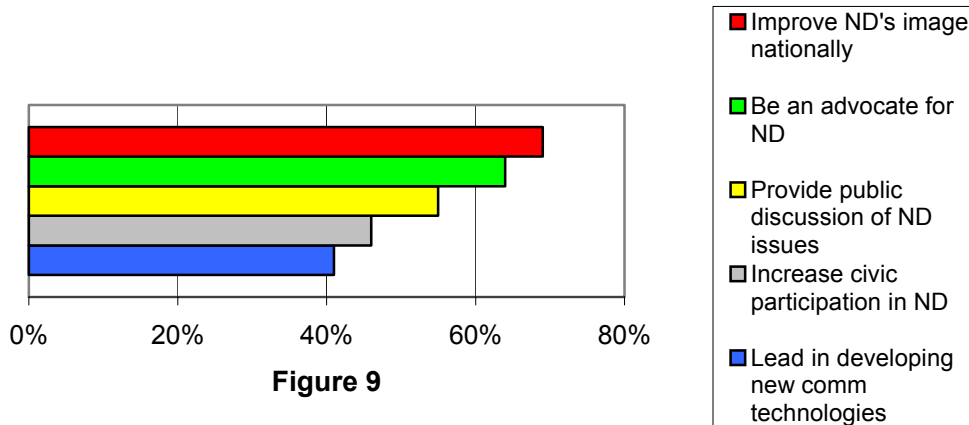


Figure 9

When queried about problems faced by the communications professions in North Dakota the majority of respondents saw a lack of career opportunities (62 percent) coupled with out migration of potential employees (50 percent) as principle problems (Figure 10). These findings eclipsed declining advertising revenue (39 percent), declining newspaper circulation (36 percent), and lack of recognition of the need for public relations (36 percent). Twenty-three percent felt slow adoption of new technologies was a problem. Only six percent thought insufficient unionization was a problem.

Problems Faced by Communications Professions

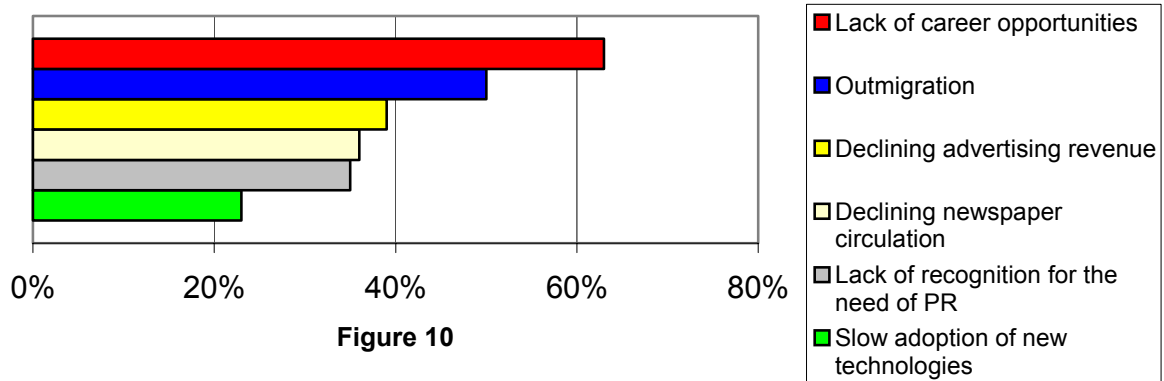


Figure 10

Eleven respondents provided written responses to an open-ended request for ideas about the problems or opportunities for North Dakota related to the fields of communication. Comments emphasized that opportunities do exist in North Dakota, three expressed concern about salaries, and four suggested North Dakota had a poor image that could be improved by public relations or would benefit from promotion. One writer suggested an image theme for the state—keeping it unique by preserving its remoteness and agrarian environment and capitalizing on the attractiveness of those qualities. Lack of local ownership was a concern, affecting the quality of communication in communities.

One writer said, “I think there are excellent opportunities in our field, but I’m not sure how many and what they are for someone with less experience.” This comment serves as a bridge to the recommendations to follow.

Analysis & Recommendations

Results from this statewide survey of professional communicators open a discussion about the current state of employment for communicators and future prospects. The opinions of respondents about the potential role they might play in the future of the state is worthy of further consideration by the professional associations to which they belong.

Respondents overall express a high degree of satisfaction with certain characteristics of their employment. These are characteristics that might well serve as selling points for employment in the communications fields in North Dakota. Relationships with co-workers, schedule flexibility, and technology used in their jobs are positive employment factors. In addition, respondents value professional development and the ability to contribute to society through their work. They take pride in the organizations for which they work. While these are not necessarily unique attributes of either communications employment or employees in North Dakota, these responses should provide ideas for ways to market employment opportunities. Likely these factors help compensate for other aspects of employment that are less satisfying.

It was surprising to find that salaries are not the highest or most clear cut concern of respondents, especially given that over 16 percent earn less than \$18,000 a year and another almost seven percent earn between \$18,000 and \$25,000. It is prospects for salary increases which sharply lower satisfaction rates and increase dissatisfaction rates. While respondents may be fairly satisfied with their current salary, they are not satisfied with what they see awaiting them for salary advances.

Benefits, too, are a source of concern or are not seen as a plus by over 30 percent. Another area of potential dissatisfaction is lack of support for professional development by employers. Given the high value placed on it by nearly all respondents, employers might consider how they could improve employee satisfaction and morale with support for professional development. Improving benefits (even those that are not particularly costly) and evaluating salary scales for merit and seniority increases are other ways to minimize the concern about low salaries that can be more difficult to address. Salaries do warrant attention, however, as does a discussion of the causes of low salaries and the remedies.

Professional associations could provide leadership for their members in new areas, if they heed respondents' suggestions. Professional communicators see a role for addressing collectively some important issues in North Dakota for their professions, particularly developing career opportunities, providing leadership training, and improving standards for communications education and for professional practice. Universities might well consider how they could play a larger role in these areas. Respondents are interested in professional development opportunities provided through local workshops and distance education classes. With shifts in employment likely to continue, more professionals will need education to move into new positions and new careers. In fact, the sizable portion of respondents who might consider changes of employment is one that bears watching. Will these employees be convinced to stay with their employer and their profession? What would make them stay and what would make them leave? Or will declining employment send them away and dry up opportunities to replace them?

Taking a creative approach to career possibilities in the communications professions in North Dakota might be one solution to the potential decline in certain job areas. Given the needs of the state and the opportunities for meeting those needs with communication technologies, talented professional communicators could play a role in modeling new careers. The current nucleus of free-lance writers and designers, for example, and a cottage industry of small communication businesses suggest that alternative employment models are feasible and desirable.

Finally, the opportunities for professional communicators to work collectively for the good of the state of North Dakota are surely there. The expertise of writers, creative thinkers and designers, marketers and advertisers, public relations experts, broadcasters, and newspaper editors and reporters could be put to good use if attention is focused on the needs of North Dakotans for robust means of communication and of North Dakota to be included in a greater national conversation.

How shall we begin?

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

SURVEY RESULTS OF COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS

The percentages are based upon 143 answered surveys from a pool of 414 yielding a 34.5% response rate.

Section One: Demographics

1. Currently working for wages:
95.1% a. Yes
4.9% b. No (If no, please answer for most recent employment)
2. Gender:
36.4% a. Male
63.6% b. Female
3. My primary position is:
12.8% a. Hourly staff
37.6% b. Salaried staff
36.9% c. Managerial staff
9.2% d. Self-Employed
3% e. Other _____
4. Years employed at current position:
29.8% a. 0-3 years
36.9% b. 4-10 years
20.6% c. 11-20 years
9.9% d. 21-30 years
2.8% e. Over 30 years
5. My age is:
3.5% a. 18-25 years
24.1% b. 26-35 years
44.0% c. 36-49 years
23.4% d. 50-65 years
5.0% e. Over 65 years
6. My racial or ethnic origin is:
97.1% a. White/Caucasian
[b. African American/Black
1.4% { c. American Indian/Alaskan Native
inclusive d. Hispanic/Latina/Latino
[e. Asian/Pacific Islander
1.4% f. Other : Arabic; Human Being
7. The highest degree I have earned is:
16.2% a. High School Diploma or GED
7.0% b. Associate Degree
55.6% c. Bachelor's Degree
16.2% d. Master's Degree
2.1% e. PhD or EdD Degree
2.8% f. Other: Vocational
8. My primary employment is:
9.9% a. Television
8.5% b. Radio
17.0% c. Public Relations
7.1% d. Marketing/Advertising
12.8% e. Education
27.7% f. Newspapers
3.5% g. Freelancing
1.4% h. Author
2.1% i. Publishing
0.0% j. Magazines
1.4% k. Internet-related
0.0% l. Layout-Design
8.5% m. Other: Speechwriter; Accountant, Corporate Comm.
9. My current salary is:
16.4% a. \$18,000 annually
6.7% b. \$18,001 to \$25,000
25.4% c. \$25,001 to \$35,000
26.1% d. \$35,001 to \$50,000
14.9% e. \$50,001 to \$75,000
0.4% f. Over \$75,001 annually
10. Years of experience in communications:
19.3% a. 0 to 5 years
18.6% b. 6 to 10
25.7% c. 11 to 20
22.1% d. 21 to 3
14.3% e. over 30
11. I work in a community with a population of:
5.0% a. less than 500 residents
16.3% b. 500 to 2,000 residents
7.8% c. 2,000 to 10,000 residents
24.1% d. 10,000 to 40,000 residents
46.8% e. Over 40,000 residents
12. I am employed in the:
56.3% a. Private (for profit) sector
25.4% b. Non-profit sector
18.3% c. Public sector
13. My college education was:
63.8% a. Related to communication
27.7% b. Unrelated to communication
8.5% c. Not applicable

Section Two: Level of satisfaction concerning current employment.

Statement	Very Dissatisfied to Dissatisfied	Neutral or Undecided	Satisfied to Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
a. Relationships among co-workers	4.2%	2.8%	88.0%	4.9%
b. Relationships between employees and managers	11.4%	6.4%	74.3%	7.9%
c. Technology used for my work	11.3%	7.0%	81.7%	0%
d. Schedule flexibility	7.1%	3.5%	88.6%	0.7%
e. Job security	8.5%	10.6%	78.7%	2.1%
f. Current level of unionization	6.3%	18.4%	10.7%	64.5%
g. Salary	20.4%	12.0%	64.1%	3.5%
h. Prospects for salary increases	32.4%	19.7%	43.7%	4.2%
i. Benefits	14.8%	15.5%	63.4%	6.3%
j. Flexibility for family responsibilities	5.6%	9.9%	81.7%	2.8%
k. Accommodations for disability	7.0%	22.5%	35.2%	35.2%
l. Support for professional development	16.2%	12.7%	65.4%	5.6%

Section Three: Career Outlook

Statement	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral or Undecided	Agree / Strongly Agree	Does Not Apply
a. I am satisfied with my current communications position	13.5%	9.9%	76.0%	0%
b. Contributing to society with my work is important to me	1.4%	7.9%	90.0%	0.7%
c. My professional development is important to me	1.4%	2.1%	96.4%	0%
d. I am proud of the organization that I work for	6.4%	7.8%	84.4%	1.4%
e. I feel my organization is open to innovation and change	12.1%	17.0%	70.2%	0.7%
f. My place of employment values cultural diversity	9.2%	20.6%	62.5%	7.8%
g. I feel valued at my place of employment	12.1%	10.6%	73.1%	4.3%

Section Three: Career Outlook (Continued)

Statement	Strongly Disagree / Disagree	Neutral or Undecided	Agree / Strongly Agree	Does Not Apply
h. My college education prepared me for my communications profession	11.5%	14.4%	62.6%	11.5%
i. I intend to remain with my current employer	9.9%	16.3%	66.0%	7.8%
j. I would like to work for a different employer	37.5%	29.8%	19.2%	13.5%
k. I would prefer to work in a different type of communications	53.2%	28.4%	13.5%	5.0%
l. I would prefer to leave the field of communications entirely	72.3%	22.0%	3.5%	2.1%
m. Sexual harassment is not a problem where I work.	7.1%	3.5%	85.1%	4.3%
n. I believe gender has not played a role in my job opportunities for advancement.	14.9%	12.1%	68.1%	5.0%

Section Four: Professional Development

1. I am a member of these professional organizations related to communications: (check all that apply)

- 30.1% a. North Dakota Professional Communicators (if checked- answer question 1.a below)
 39.0% b. Other: NCA; NDBA; ND Healthcare; IABC; National Press Women; NDSTA; AdFed, Toastmasters, Native American Journalism Assoc.; Cooperative Comm. Assoc.
 30.9% c. None

If you did not check (a) above:

1a. I am aware of North Dakota Professional Communicators:

38.1% ↓ Yes 56.0% No 6.0% Not Sure

1b. If yes, my perception of NDPC is: "It sponsors a contest"; "Not sure what (it) does?"; "It is for communication professionals."; "For women only."; "Mostly newspaper reporters." "Disorganized."; "For women only." "Well organized, very good."; "Not applicable to noncommercial broadcasting."

2. The organization I work for belongs to these communications associations:

- 40.6% a. North Dakota Newspaper Association
 22.4% b. North Dakota Broadcasters Association
 12.6% c. Other: NNA; MN Broadcasting Assoc.; AdFed; Livestock Publication Council; NDSWO; REC; IABC; NAMA; NFPW; NDPC.
 17.5% d. None
 7.0% (missing a response)

Note: Questions 3-5 can be answered more than once.

3. I would like to see professional communications associations in North Dakota address:
(check all that apply)

- 39.2% a. Adopting new technology
- 49.0% b. Leadership training in our fields
- 53.1% c. Developing career opportunities
- 14.7% d. Improving working conditions
- 28.7% e. Improving standards in communication education
- 23.8% f. Improving standards of professional practice
- 15.4% g. Creating a news council to address concerns about news coverage
- 21.0% h. Addressing open meetings/ open records issues
- N/A i. Other: Address bullying issues/abuse; Monopolizing in local/national media; Stress coping skills; Native broadcasting; inclusion of small papers in professional organizations; Sexism in media very few female managers; continuing education; writing training.
- 0.0% j. None

4. I would be interested in these educational opportunities: (check all that apply)

- 39.2% a. Workshops or classes for university credit
- 8.4% b. Undergraduate coursework or degree
- 30.8% c. Graduate coursework or degree
- 53.1% d. Non-credit workshops or classes
- 1.4% e. Other: Interest in educational opportunities; Internet courses or web design; Journalism classes; Computer technology.
- N/A f. None

5. A learning format for continuing education that would suite me: (check all that apply)

- 39.2% a. Distance education coursework or workshops
- 65.0% b. Local seminars
- 35.7% c. State-wide conferences
- 28.7% d. On-campus classes
- 1.4% e. Other: Learning format for continuing education; On-line education; ITV (interactive television).
- 9.8% d. Non
- 7.7% (missing)

Section Five: Vision for North Dakota

1. What do you think the communications professions could contribute to the development of North Dakota?
(check all that apply)

- 69.2% a. Improve North Dakota's image nationally
- 55.2% b. Provide public discussion of North Dakota issues
- 64.3% c. Be an advocate for North Dakota
- 45.5% d. Increase civic participation in North Dakota
- 40.6% e. Take a leadership role in developing new communications technologies
- N/A f. Other: Corporatization of media; ND lacks vision; Provide more in-state communication jobs.
- N/A g. None

2. What problems do you think are faced by the communications professions in North Dakota?

(check all that apply)

- | | |
|-------|---|
| N/A | a. None |
| 62.9% | b. Lack of career opportunities |
| 23.1% | c. Slow adoption of new technologies |
| 36.4% | d. Declining newspaper circulation |
| 38.5% | e. Declining advertising revenue |
| 35.0% | f. Lack of recognition for the need for public relations |
| 50.3% | g. Outmigration of potential employees |
| 6.3% | h. Insufficient unionization |
| N/A | i. Other: <u>Lack of salary advancement; Getting quality writers; Involved electorate and informed public. Lack of competent alternative media.</u> |

3. Please tell us about your ideas about the problems or opportunities for North Dakota related to the fields of communication.

"The opportunities are here. Our decline is cyclical and people will return to work here if the opportunity is right for them."

"There are plenty of opportunities available- in state and out of state for anyone who is disciplined enough to make self-employment/ freelancing work."

"North Dakota needs innovative development of new industries such as wind technology; draw industry into the state with tax incentives, market land values of North Dakota to other regions of the country, i.e., clean air, low crime, etc. Public relations is essential in promoting North Dakota."

"Lack of local ownership of media outlets. Lack of commitment by these out-of-region owners to local communities.

Business and editorial decisions are made based on profit line, not on investing in a community, the employees in that community is covering issues that may be controversial but need to be in the local paper and on local broadcasts. Low rate of pay in small media operations causing trained communication professionals to not apply, not take the positions, or not remain for any length of time."

"The state does a poor job of improving North Dakota's image. Before you can attract business/jobs, you need to project a positive image of North Dakota as a good place to live. This effort should be concerted, and it will take money. Perhaps we need to lobby the legislature for more money to the ND Do Commerce, and play an active role in advising DOC on how to use it."

"Many talented natives leave; [news] papers have trouble attracting talent because of state's poor image."

"I think there are excellent opportunities in our field, but I'm not sure how many and what they are for someone with less experience. I think there is a good undertaking in business about the need for Marketing/Public Relations Communications, but I don't feel salaries are very high. It's better if you go it on your own in many ways."

"ND is losing small town retail, losing population in rural areas. Economic development for small towns with retail opportunities for entrepreneurs to succeed. The communications industry has to step forward and prove that we can help with economic development by helping new business succeed instead of helping them fail."

"There's not a wide variety of options outside Fargo-Bismarck-Grand Forks."

"It is hard to get people to work for what some of the larger corporations are paying- because they are all out of state owners. The young people just don't want to wait around. As long as some of us have to make a decent salary."

"ND is approaching things backwards. We should try to preserve our remoteness and agrarian environment.

This isolation will preserve our culture, the we market the state like the Amish Country! We need to stay the way we are-why change? Let's stay unique- why try to emulate other parts of the country?"