

The NAGC Communicator



National Association of Government Communicators

January 2009

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50% Membership Discount for Military

To honor the service of our military, NAGC is offering a 50% discount on annual membership to active duty military and reservists. Visit www.nagconline.org for more details.



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All Expenses Paid to Orlando!

Here's how you can win

by Jennifer Callhan, NAGC President-Elect

New and renewing members are now eligible to win an ALL EXPENSES PAID trip to the April 2009 NAGC Communications School in Orlando, Florida! When you join or renew your membership for 2009 in the National Association of Government Communicators, your name will automatically be entered in the **Just One!** drawing.

The **Just One!** drawing was previously only available for current members who get Just One! friend or colleague to join NAGC by February 28, 2009. Since memberships expired on September 30, NAGC decided to reward returning and new members by also entering them in this drawing.

NAGC's annual membership renewal period is the perfect time to recruit a fellow communicator to join! They start receiving the benefits of NAGC membership and you are both entered in the **Just One!** drawing.

If you joined after May 1, 2008, or already renewed your membership, your name has been automatically entered and you do not need to do anything else. For those who have yet to join or renew their membership, the online application form and a downloadable PDF version are now available on the new, secure NAGC Web site: www.nagconline.org.



Just One!

The Science of Communications

by John Verrico, NAGC Director of Communications

As government communicators, we are responsible for providing important information to our constituents and the citizenry of our geographic or demographic areas. At times, we may find ourselves having to communicate critical information that people must act on for their own safety. In times of crisis, we are spewing information at lightning pace about what people need to do to remain safe.

But do people understand the urgency? Do they believe what we are telling them? What is actually going on in their minds when they are told to evacuate or take shelter? Whose instructions do they follow during an emergency? How can we be sure that what we are saying as communicators is actually what they are hearing?

These and similar questions were part of an in-depth discussion and workshop led by NAGC last summer in Washington, DC. Working in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Science & Technology Directorate, NAGC brought together panels of researchers and communicators for the first "Science of Communications" workshop. Among the panelists were noted sociologist Dr. Dennis Mileti; risk and crisis communications expert Dr. Tim Tinker; human behavior researcher W. Michael Dunaway; Time magazine reporter and author of *THE UNTHINKABLE: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes*—and Why, Amanda Ripley; former U.S. Navy Chief of Information who

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George Selby
NAGC President

President's Perspective

Excitement, Enthusiasm, Energy

My handy-dandy desk dictionary (not a Funk and Wagnall's) defines the word "retreat" as: 1. An act of going backward or of withdrawing. 2. A quiet, private, or secure place: REFUGE. 3. A time of seclusion, retirement, or solitude. Your NAGC Board of Directors held its annual Board Retreat at NAGC-ASMI headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia last September, but "retreat" may not be the right word to describe it.

We may have withdrawn to Falls Church, but were decidedly looking ahead, not backward. It may have been a private, secure place, but it was anything but quiet. And, finally, the retreat – our annual get-together to do some long-range planning and thinking – was definitely not about solitude, but about the exchange of ideas, information, and a time for "coloring outside the lines."

Perhaps in an idea-generating session it is better not to plan too much and to allow for the free flow of serendipity and creativity. However, as your president, I felt that for us to achieve much in a compact period, the board and our members would be better served with some guidelines and guideposts in place. I wanted everyone to have a common understanding of where we had been, where we wanted to go, and how we would get there. The odds would be more in our favor of actually reaching those goals if they were clearly stated.

In addition, it was my greatest desire to empower each and every member of the board to make of their individual directorial positions what they would. As volunteer jobs, you make of them what you will. And, it's been my experience in terms of what you put in, the payback is often much greater. Networking, building the standards for one's profession, getting your thoughts published and read, being respected by your peers, and even sought out for your opinions.

After several conversations with our board members, I tried to provide succinct "marching orders."

- Let's do it
- Let's be specific
- Let's be enthusiastic!

It is safe to say that the Board Retreat was characterized with excitement, enthusiasm, and energy; with people taking the initiative (the 2010 NAGC annual Communications School is now being planned); taking on new and unfamiliar challenges (one of our directors was spotted carrying a copy of *Grant Writing for Dummies*); and our Executive Director, Beth Armstrong, went on the record to say that she had "never seen so much accomplished by a board of directors of a nonprofit before."

For me, in my first term as your president, it was a wonderful thing to see and experience.

By the end of the day-and-a-half meeting, the walls of our conference room were smothered with sheets of flip chart paper that were covered in category headers; the headers led to bullet points; and the bullet points were numbered and prioritized! No retreat here!

So, what did we discuss? In short: A LOT. Among the issues –

- New member benefits, including a proposed *FREE* resume evaluation service
- New-member Mentoring Program
- Increasing member involvement in NAGC operations and committees
- Future plans and changes for the Blue Pencil-Gold Screen awards and banquet
- CGC (Certified Government Communicator) certificate program and credits
- NAGC impact at the local community level
- Building partnerships with like-minded organizations
- Regional workshops and seminars
- Core values and challenges, including serving as advocate for our profession

You'll be hearing about all these items and more over the coming months. If you have any questions about any of these topics, or have your own ideas on how to make NAGC an even better association, please do not hesitate to drop me a line or call me at (301) 763-4461.

I look forward to hearing from you, and seeing you in person at the 2009 Communications School in Orlando, in April.

The NAGC Communicator is published quarterly to keep members apprised of special activities in the organization. Your comments, story ideas and information are always welcome.

Contact Editor John Verrico at jverrico@comcast.net.

Always visit the NAGC Web site at www.nagconline.org for the most current and up-to-date information.

A SNEAK PREVIEW OF THE 2009 COMMUNICATIONS SCHOOL

The most cost-effective educational training you can't afford to miss!

For three days in April, attendees of the 2009 Communications School will experience the most exciting professional training NAGC has ever offered. On April 22, the Communications School kicks off with exceptional pre-conference workshops. Jim Mintz, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Marketing, will lead a full-day crash course in creating a social marketing plan. In half-day workshops, you can opt for a stimulating media training session with Dr. Joe Trahan, get a scientific perspective on public reactions to emergencies from renowned sociologist Dr. Denis Mileti, or learn how to write for the Web from E-Write co-founder Leslie O'Flahavan.



Peter Mitchell

The opening keynote speaker on Thursday morning is former Wall Street Journal reporter Peter Mitchell who will talk about Changing Mass Behavior. Mitchell, who is currently chairman and chief creative officer of Salter-Mitchell/Marketing for Change, was the initial marketing director for the anti-tobacco initiative in Florida which ultimately became known as "truth." The effort transformed tobacco control and got replicated on a national scale after Florida showed the first statewide drop in teen smoking in 19 years. Mitchell has since developed and directed dozens of social marketing campaigns across the globe, first as a senior marketing specialist for the Academy for Educational Development, a large international non-profit, and later as a founder of Marketing for Change, which is now part of Salter-

Mitchell. A graduate of Colgate University, Mitchell spent a decade as a reporter and served as the policy coordinator for the president of Florida's State Senate. He has designed behavior-change campaigns domestically and in Bangladesh, India, Jordan and Tanzania, for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Chesapeake Bay Program, Florida Healthy Kids Corporation, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and many other organizations.

Body language expert Janine Driver will wrap things up on Friday afternoon with a unique keynote called, "You Have the Right to Remain Silent." Driver has been seen on NBC's *The Today Show*, and has been dubbed the "Lyn' Tamer" because...she knows when people are lying! Her background is as fascinating as the subject matter she teaches. By day, she spent more than a decade as an award-winning Federal Law Enforcement Officer for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), training over 30,000+ cops, lawyers and judges in the fine art of separating fact from fiction. By night, she thrilled audiences as a stand-up comic who shared the stage with Chris Rock, Robin Williams and Ray Romano. Today, she teaches her recently de-classified body language strategies to thousands of businesses around the globe. Driver says, "If I can teach cops to get the bad guys to confess, then I can teach YOU to easily get the people in your life to say 'YES!'"



Janine Driver



David Michaelson

Dr. David Michaelson, president of Echo Research Inc., will lead a plenary discussion on Media Monitoring. This important topic shows communications professionals how to measure the effectiveness of their outreach efforts. Michaelson has an international reputation in public relations and corporate communications measurement and has published in the academic and professional worlds on investor relations, advertising, and content analysis. For more than 28 years, he has conducted high quality, actionable research for numerous Fortune 500 companies, universities and philanthropic organizations, with extensive focus on communications testing, message development, measurement of communications effectiveness and branding. Earlier in his career, he was Managing Director, Head of Research for Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide, a



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School

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managing director at GCI Group, and director of research at Burson-Marsteller. He is a member of the US Commission on Public Relations Evaluation and Measurement and holds a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the New School for Social Research. Michaelson was elected to the first class of research fellows of the Institute for Public Relations and is the 2008 recipient of the Jackson, Jackson & Wagner Behavioral Science Prize given by the Public Relations Society of America.

Other highlights include representatives from Southwest Airlines who will talk about turning potentially negative press into quality customer relations; and 15 break-out sessions on Web 2.0, advanced speechwriting, podcasting, using social media, writing FAQs, developing media relations, learning from behavior-based research, intrapersonal communications, and much more. There will be presentations from a wide variety of fellow government communicators such as Nancy Ritter from the U.S. Department of Justice, Ellen Dougherty from USDA, Joseph Hice from the University of Florida, CJ Lucke from the Port of San Diego, as well as returning favorite speakers like Joan Detz, John Verrico, Larry Tracy, and Glen Thomas.

Registration Coming Soon!

Visit www.nagconline.org/CommunicationsSchool

Science

Continued from page 1

was on duty at the Pentagon on 9/11 2001, Rear Adm. Stephen Pietropaoli; Emmy award winning journalist Tony Dorsey; USA Today homeland security correspondent Mimi Hall, and veteran radio reporter and producer Max Cacas.

The panelists presented research and real-life stories of how people behave during an emergency and how they translate what they hear from others into action, or not. Sociological and behavioral research reveals that people do not necessarily react to the situation as they are advised by emergency responders, but apply their own perceptions, beliefs, standards, ethics, past experiences, and their opinions of the communication sources before they react or respond to the information they received.

Mileti noted that even in times of real and apparent crisis, people examine all of these factors before they make a decision. He calls this "milling." When the fire alarm goes off, they think about whether or not to pay attention to it. They mill about and look to see what their coworkers are doing. They don't want to be the first to leave and look like a coward or a fool. They may ask others what they plan to do. Then they may take time to shut down their computers, grab their jacket or purse, check to see if they have their keys or other things they think they may need later, and then finally take some sort of action. All panelists agreed that people's perceptions of the importance of the information, the way the message is delivered, and the credibility of the sources all have significant impact on people's behavior.

So, how do we establish that credibility and communicate messages that people will believe and take action on when we need them to? That will be the focus of the "Science of Communications" workshop NAGC is hosting in Bellevue, Washington, on February 23. NAGC will bring researchers together with communications practitioners to examine these issues. This is a unique opportunity for both researchers and communicators to share their usually separate perspectives.

Those who are responsible for crafting messages can learn what to include and what to leave out. Those who deliver messages can determine the best ways to report the information. There will also be a scenario exercise where participants will craft and deliver messages that will be evaluated by the researchers. More importantly, communicators will have an opportunity to help direct the next areas of research.

It is not too late to register for this workshop! Visit the NAGC Web site for registration details at <http://www.nagconline.org/AboutNAGC/documents/NAGCWorkshopRegForm022309.pdf>.



Don't miss the next iteration of

"The Science of Communications" Workshop

February 23, 2009.
Meydenbauer Convention Center, Bellevue, Washington.

Full agenda & registration details at:

www.nagconline.org



Commentary:

Who do you touch?



John Verrico
NAGC Director of
Communications

Change is one of the most difficult things to try to communicate, especially to an internal audience. Yet, communication is the only tool that senior leadership has in order to make changes effectively.

Why change, you may ask? You've heard the saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Unfortunately, no organization can maintain the status quo for an indefinite length of time. Things will happen that will cause a need for change. They may be good things,

they may be bad things, or they may be just different things. People retire or move on to other jobs or even die. Equipment breaks down or wears out and parts are no longer available if the equipment is too old. Technology changes at lightning speed and suddenly your old software is no longer compatible. Supplies run out; a new competitor arises or an old one folds; trends, fads, and fashions change on a whim; people hit the lottery, strike oil, discover a gold mine, or lose their life's savings in the stock market or in Las Vegas.

Any of these events will cause a change in someone's life or an organization's operation. An example is the coming change in the television broadcasting industry. Television signals will no longer be broadcast in analog mode, which will require that in order to continue to receive television signals, people will have to use a digital signal converter. Your old 'rabbit ears' (or your makeshift antenna made from a wire hanger) will no longer function.

Change is very uncomfortable for most people, even if it is a change for the better. You can count on the fact that someone will resist the change. Any time a decision is made or an action taken, resistance of some sort should be expected.

In a previous position, I worked for an organization that that underwent six major organizational changes, and multiple smaller ones, in a four-year period. In 2001, the agency had an in-house workforce of about 650 people, a majority of whom (about 70%) were blue-collar tradesmen who were geographically spread out among 11 military facilities in the Washington, D.C., area. The average employee was 52 years old with more than 26 years of experience.

Over the next four years, the agency piloted a new computer system; realigned its geographic regions which expanded its area of responsibility over 200 miles; fired more than 330 career blue-collar workers and replaced them with contractors; merged with another agency of about 300 white-collar workers that contracts out the same kind of services normally performed by the original agency's in-house workforce; and absorbed an additional group of about 150

formerly independent engineers. To add to the complexity, the new combined organization operated on two different funding systems and had four different commanding officers during this time frame.

In implementing this series of major organizational changes – some directed by higher authority and others self-inflicted – as well as the resulting fears, animosities and procedural problems they caused, the agency's executives found it increasingly difficult to maintain control and credibility.

The management skills they had used to use to run the organizations in the past – manipulating resources, coordinating processes, and realigning people to maintain work output – would no longer work. Whole new skill sets of dealing with disgruntled and fearful people had to be learned and handling personnel issues became the primary function for supervisors and managers at all levels. Weak strategies, a lack of vision, and inadequate communications at all levels caused much of the distress.

Interestingly, the senior executives thought they were communicating. They held town hall type meetings to talk about how the new organizational structure will better serve the nation. They talked about the benefit to their customers. They made charts and graphs with dollar signs and timelines and milestone tables with red, yellow, and green dots. They told people what they were doing at every twist and turn in the process.

What they forgot, however, was compassion. A great majority of the 330 employees who were subject to the RIF were within only a couple of years away from full retirement eligibility. Although

they could be put on the Priority Placement List for a job with another government agency, their skill sets were not in high demand in the federal agencies in and around Washington, D.C. Their current employer was one of the only federal agencies around that had even used them. To add to the problem, the other agency that merged with them was the one responsible for recommending the RIF and the conversion to contract in the first place. There was more than just tension between the organizations. There was outright hatred.

Big picture messages about the future of the organization just don't cut the mustard when people have a personal stake in the changes.

So, remember when you are communicating change, that you are likely about to make someone very uncomfortable. They may be confused, frightened, and even angry. Put yourself in their position. Ask yourself, "What would I want to know?" and be sure that your communications efforts addresses those concerns.

John Verrico is currently the Media Spokesman for the Science & Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



Make it personal

by Glen Thomas, Supervisor, Communications and Public Relations, Memphis Light, Gas and Water



Glen Thomas
NAGC Director of
Development

Have you ever tried to talk to someone who was in the middle of a text-messaging conversation? Did you resist the urge to choke that person or to launch their phone into orbit? We are living in an impersonal world these days. The advent of technology has pulled us away from one-on-one conversations and into the realm of texting, anonymous blog posts, and online services.

You never have to leave your home. If you have internet access and a comfy couch, you can:

- Get a job, and earn thousands working from home! (that's what the e-mail from Madagascar said)
- Pay your bills online
- Find your spouse at www.russianbrides.com/www.russianhusbands.com (disclaimer: these sites are just an example, and I take no responsibility if you just typed it into your browser. Besides, you should be reading this article instead of surfing the web at work.)
- Order a casket from Amazon (you can really do this)

Same People, Same Problems, Different Medium

There are some pitfalls to embracing the age of information overload. Take online dating, for example. It's appealing to some because they feel there's less risk and it's a little less personal. For someone who's had some trouble in the romance department, online dating might be seen as a way to meet "The One." The bad news is that it is the same people you meet at the club or church or the blind date set up by your college roommate! Bradpitt2001 is really a 45-year-old father of four in Ohio. Rockyworldgal is on probation for assault and is already conspiring to bake your goldfish. Same people, same problems, different medium.

At work, we are increasingly removing the personal element by using technology such as IVRs, e-mail auto-replies, payment kiosks, and those on-hold telephone messages, "Your call is important to us. Your wait time is estimated to be ... 3 hours 14 minutes or half as long as *The English Patient*."

Share!

So, how do we regain that personal element in an impersonal world? It all starts with you, in your department. Share information. Don't try to change your company's communication structure before you change yours. Share every bit of information you can get your hands on with your co-workers.

- If you are a supervisor or manager, you probably get periodic reports from your employees, which you then compile into a single report that you forward to your boss. But do you also send it back to the employees? Share them with every employee, so everyone knows what everyone else is doing.
- Engage your employees by sending them to meetings and events to take notes, then share those notes.
- Share meeting minutes with employees and customers. This will help improve your transparency.
- Form an internal communication committee of key company employees to provide feedback and exchange info.
- Create a communications blog on your Intranet that discusses media coverage, industry news, company updates, and includes talking points on key subjects, downloadable newsletters, etc.

Use the Technology, Make it Personal

Using technology doesn't mean that you have to lose the personal touch. In fact, it can help you reach people in new and innovative ways.

- Use e-billing customers as a focus group for your website.
- Respond to e-mails personally instead of a canned response.
- Respond to letters to the editor. Write the customer, not just the newspaper. If the newspaper's Web site has a "comments" section for readers, post a response there so that your side of an issue is communicated.

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Hear more from
Glen Thomas
about inter- and
intra-personal
communications
from Glen Thomas
at the 2009 NAGC
Communications
School, April 22-
24, in Orlando, FL.

Personal

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- Use discretion, but respond on blogs that comment about your company. It's not always going to end up a lovefest, but people usually appreciate that you've taken the time to read their thoughts. One key consideration: once you've made your point, move on...don't get lured into an online argument.

- Start a blog. There are a million articles out there about blogging, so I won't take a lot of time with it. All I will say is give your blog a different, yet complementary, identity to your Web site. Memphis Light, Gas and Water's blog (www.mlgw.blogspot.com) is focused heavily on the environment and energy education.

Help Customers Directly

It doesn't get any more personal than one-on-one interaction with your customers. Not only is it the right thing to do, but you can have a direct positive impact on someone's life. A few things we're doing at MLGW include:

- Reaching out to seniors to increase personal interaction, enroll them in assistance programs, and provide them with services and information to help them save energy and money.
- MLGW's Project MAX program uses employee volunteers to build wheelchair ramps and perform weatherization repairs for elderly and disabled customers.
- We also piggy back off other community agencies, such as the local meals-on-wheels program, and provide energy conservation and contact information that is delivered with those meals.
- For the last two summers, we've donated air conditioners and box fans to senior customers through area community agencies.

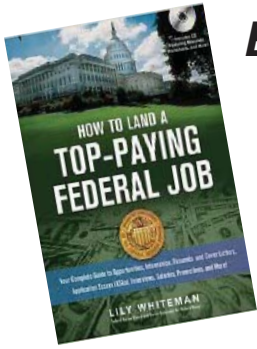
The Odd Couple: PR and the Media

Now, here's one that's going to get some groans, but personalizing your communications with the media can pay dividends. You may think there's evidence to the contrary, but you are dealing with human beings. Get them to see you the same way. How?

- Start by tracking: who is doing stories about you and who is the most objective? What do they usually report on? Have they received any awards for their reporting?
- Monitor blogs using Google or www.technorati.com. Some reporters are getting story leads from bloggers. You need to know who these bloggers are.
- Identify your best media relationships and pitch some exclusives to them every once in a while.
- Use Twitter to generate interest or give updates about your activities. At MLGW, we started a Twitter account. With zero promotion, we quickly had 23 followers, many of them media representatives. Twitter is becoming a popular tool for media outlets to send "breaking news updates."
- Ask media members to come and speak to your staff. You are tapping into their expertise and showing them you want to work with them.
- At MLGW, we have a quarterly media luncheon that provides a more personal setting. We feed them lunch and discuss topics of interest. We control the agenda, but also open it up for questions. It's terrific for building relationships and educating the media, and to get feedback on our outreach efforts. We are planning to do the same thing for key bloggers.

Don't let today's world of technology pull you away from communicating in a personal manner. Remember, despite the bells and whistles, it's the same people using the technology – same people, same problems, different mediums. By focusing on sharing information, adding a personal element to the use of technology, finding ways to help customers directly, and by embracing the "Odd Couple" relationship between you and the media, you can bring personal communications to an impersonal world.





Book review

Job hunting made easy

by George Selby, NAGC President

Until the advent of the Internet, employment with Federal agencies was a frustrating, complex, and prolonged agony for most applicants. The Internet greatly improved that process, as did the Web site, www.USAJobs.gov, and yet finding a good job with the Feds remains a bewildering activity. I should know. I am a 19-year veteran of the Federal Government workforce and currently employed by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Now, along comes a new publication titled, "How to Land a Top-Paying Federal Job," by Lily Whiteman, a Federal career coach and columnist for the *Federal Times*. The subtitle of the book says it all – "Your Complete Guide to Opportunities, Internships, Resumes and Cover Letters, Application Essays or KSAs, Interviews, Salaries, Promotions, and more."

This book will change how you conduct a job hunt, not just for a Federal job, but how you can improve the odds of landing a job almost anywhere. It has very specific advice you can use to help you land the job of your dreams in the public, private, or nonprofit sectors.

As President of NAGC and as a long-term Federal employee and hiring manager, I was offered the opportunity to review this new book and to share my opinion of it with NAGC members. So, here are my thoughts on this 304-page soft-back publication plus CD-ROM.

The Preface is titled: "Common Myths About Federal Jobs." I read the first two bullets and was HOOKED. It states things I have been saying for years.

The first myth to be "busted" was, "Government salaries are low." For many years I served in a marketing communications capacity. Compared to workers in private industry, I was at the top of the pay scale. The only way I could make more at what I did for a living was to own my own advertising agency or public relations firm. The fact that government workers as a whole generally feel well-compensated was underscored by the results of NAGC's own membership survey just last year.

The second myth eradicated was, "Federal Salaries are non-negotiable." Nothing could be farther from the truth! I know. I've done it. I've seen new employees taken take pay cuts unnecessarily, just to work for Uncle Sam! There is no reason to go backwards salary-wise. This book will help you navigate the mine fields of making more, not less, when you go to work for the Feds. As the author related to me, she interviewed Human Resources personnel at government agencies who never even heard of some of the benefits or working conditions that Whiteman has documented that are actually negotiable.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the book is that many of the strategies and techniques recommended are often highly pragmatic and easily implemented.

Some tips for landing a great Federal job include:

- o Do you have a "Security Clearance?" If you do – especially top level clearances – you can easily command higher salaries when first entering the job market.
- o Instead of taking the shotgun approach to mailing out your resume, target an agency you like, find out who does the hiring and what's available, and then send your letter and resume to that specific person.
- o Get out of your cubicle and NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK. Create a "Networking Card." These business cards provide a concise list of your credentials and your contact information.
- o Be clear in your own mind about why you want to work for the Federal Government or any other government agency (hint: the right answer has nothing to do with job security).
- o There are often internal agency policies for hiring. If an ad states that the agency is hiring only at the GS-5 or GS-7 level, believe them! Don't waste your time by applying – even if you qualify – if you are looking for higher paygrades.
- o Demonstrate leadership! Volunteer for special projects. You'll become indispensable. Your resume should always show steadily increasing responsibilities and promotions or reassignments. Join Toastmasters and become an officer, or get involved with your local Homeowners Association (HOA).

HOW TO LAND A TOP-PAYING FEDERAL JOB

Your Complete Guide to Opportunities, Internships, Resumes, and Cover Letters, Application Essays (KSAs), Interviews, Salaries, Promotions, and More!

by Lily Whiteman

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Lily Whiteman is an active NAGC member, however, this review was written as a professional courtesy only and was deemed to have value to other NAGC members. No portion of the publication's sales will go to NAGC nor any member of the association's leadership.

See *Federal Jobs*, page 9

Insider info from a two-time BP/GS Awards Judge



Anistacia Barber
US Media Services

by Anistacia Barber, Director of Development, US Media Service

Last year was my second year as an NAGC Blue Pencil / Gold Screen Awards judge. I must confess that I felt a slight advantage over most judges since I work for an award-winning, multimedia production company producing exclusively for Federal Government agencies. I have the distinct honor of being privy to seeing a really wide variety of government communications on a daily basis.

What I can definitely tell you from this vantage point is that the biggest obstacle between your group and that First Place NAGC trophy is what Chip and Dan Heath, authors of *Made to Stick*, call the dreaded “Curse of Knowledge.”

You must effectively and without fail “unring” the bell of your subject matter expertise and put yourself in the mindset of your intended audience. Simplify and demystify the knowledge that you effectively *own* for the audience that you are trying to *sell*. Don’t dumb it down, just find the core message and get creative from there.

Good luck and I’ll see you in Orlando!



NAGC has gotten social!

With network groups now on the Linked-In and Facebook social media sites, you can join conversations, share experiences, seek information, and even post messages to an even wider group of communications professionals!



Federal Jobs

Continued from page 8

- o Use active verbs such as “managed; coordinated; directed; hired; planned.”
- o Follow directions on the job announcement! This one’s a killer. If the application calls for the average number of hours you worked at a previous job per week, then be sure to include it. No hours included, and your application goes into the trash.
- o If you are a member of a minority group of almost any type, your skills are probably in high demand. Language skills, technical skills, and other strengths will only bolster your case. At the Census Bureau, census forms must be written in 48 different languages!
- o If you are in the Federal job hunting market now, save yourself time, money, and unnecessary disappointment. Buy the book. Absorb the information and watch your confidence grow as your success ratio of calls to interviews rises dramatically. You might even find out how much MORE you are worth for certain jobs requiring very specialized skills – even during these uncertain economic times.

The only mild complaint I had is that I found several misspelled words scattered throughout the text. Not just transpositions, but actual misspellings. What happened to spell check?

The book is available from Amazon.com for (at the time of this writing) \$16.47. Get it and watch how fast the pages become dog eared!



2009 Communications School

The Magic of Marketing & Media

Don't miss your chance to attend this outstanding, cost-effective training event held especially for government communicators.

April 22–24, 2009 • Orlando, FL, International Plaza

NAGC
National Association
of Government
Communicators



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