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Job Satisfaction in Newspaper Ad Departments

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Results indicate newspaper advertising employees are not as dissatisfied as their editorial counterparts but they are the least satisfied of any group in the advertising industry.

The erosion of job satisfaction in newspaper editorial departments has been well reported and documented over the past 10 years. But that really tells only part of a story. What about newspaper advertising departments which may employ as many or more people and, certainly, command as much or more space in the publication? This study will try to tell something about that part.

In the mid-1980s research showed a high attrition rate from newspaper journalism with many defectors switching to public relations.¹ In 1989, Laury Olson's study, comparing journalists at three newspapers in the San Francisco Bay area with public relations personnel in the same area, showed the PR people significantly more satisfied with their jobs and profession.²

In 1992, Margaret DeFleur analyzed data gathered from graduates of a large, private school of communication and reported newspaper journalists rated their job satisfaction lowest (mean=3.399) among those in nine career categories. Others were photography (3.751), public relations (3.615), magazine (3.565), advertising (3.502), electronic journalism (3.500), film (3.482), television (3.426) and radio (3.424). The newspaper journalists' rating was only slightly higher than that of communication graduates who had gone into non-communication fields (3.376).³

In 1993, Keith Stamm and Doug Underwood searched for reasons in an on-site survey of 429 newsroom staffers at 12 West Coast daily newspapers. They found that if journalism was perceived as taking a back seat to business, job satisfaction was lower.⁴ Two major studies reported in **Editor & Publisher**

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in 1993⁵ found that newsroom morale had plummeted since 1985. One study, commissioned by the Associated Press Managing Editors and conducted by

MORI Research, Inc. found that more than a third (36 percent) of surveyed journalists said they were dissatisfied with their jobs, up from 26 percent in 1985. Similarly, the second study, a Freedom Forum survey conducted by David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit reported 21 percent of journalists wanted to leave the field in five years - compared to 11 percent a decade before and 7

percent two decades before. Looking at satisfaction from the other side, Weaver and Wilhoit reported only 25 percent said they were very satisfied with their jobs, about half the high satisfaction rate of 20 years before. "Job satisfaction in newspapering," they said, "appears to be in significant decline."⁶

However, there are many more people involved in *newspapering* than the ones in the news and editorial departments. They are the newspaper advertising people whose job satisfaction certainly needs separate study from news and editorial employees. They have, after all, different goals to pursue and different people to please. Management cannot assume that the factors which satisfy or dissatisfy are the same for employees in both vital parts of their organizations. It would seem, for instance, advertising people would be more, not less, satisfied if business were perceived as the driving force of the total enterprise.

Yet job satisfaction among people in any area of advertising, including those in newspaper advertising departments, has had very little study. In spite of research showing that predictors of job satisfaction vary across organizations and job types⁷ and in spite of the many unique aspects in the nature of advertising work, the advertising industry seems to be a neglected pocket in a heavily researched area.

There are known effects of being satisfied or dissatisfied with one's work. Edwin Locke summarizes these as effects on an individual's attitude toward life, toward family and self. Job satisfaction, he says, may be related to mental health and adjustment and plays a causal role in absenteeism and turnover. It may affect other types of behavior as well. However, according to Locke, it has no **direct** effect on productivity.⁸

That last statement usually comes as a surprise to those not familiar with the field because of the easy assumption that happy workers are more productive workers. As Robert Baron reports, "Most studies designed to examine the possibility of a link between job satisfaction and productivity have yielded negative results." However, he is quick to add that since job satisfaction has been shown to influence both absenteeism and turnover and may affect

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additional aspects of job performance, "it is well worthy of managers' careful attention."⁹

Baron's definition of job satisfaction will be used. He calls it, "attitudes held by employees about their work" and expands on that to say it is "the extent to which a worker is content with position, conditions, cooperation and general treatment relative to others in organizations."

In 1959, Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner and Barbara Snyderman published their landmark book, **The Motivation to Work**.¹⁰ In it they divided factors affecting job satisfaction into two groups. In a later work, Herzberg explained the division in this way. "Five factors stand out as strong determiners of job satisfaction - achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement." He named them *motivators*. "The major dissatisfiers," he said, "were company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions." He named these *hygienes*.¹¹

An argument still rages over a basic tenet of this *Motivation-Hygiene* theory because Herzberg insisted the former represent almost exclusively satisfying elements and the latter almost exclusively dissatisfying elements. Others have been equally insistent that elements classified under both labels can either satisfy or dissatisfy. After reviewing the evidence, Locke concluded, "Herzberg's insistence on the idea of two unipolar continua ... seems indefensible... ." But he also says, "Herzberg's theory, however, does provide a useful distinction between physical and psychological needs and identifies cognitive growth as a major psychological need that can be fulfilled through work."¹²

In another important study, Arne Kalleberg identified six detailed dimensions of job satisfaction, 1) intrinsic 2) convenience 3) financial 4) career opportunities 5) resource adequacy and 6) relations with co-workers.¹³ Although these six dimensions can easily be classified under Herzberg's more general headings (1 and 4 under *motivators* and 2, 3, 5 and 6 under *hygienes*), they provide important detail in evaluating measures of job satisfaction.

The focus of this article will be on newspaper advertising personnel. Since, as far as the authors can determine, it is the first to try to assess job satisfaction among this group, there can be no comparison with the past. However there will be comparisons with job satisfaction in general, with newspaper journalists and with those in other areas of the advertising industry.

Research objectives

With a wealth of background on the general topic and the topic as it applies to other fields, this study will address job satisfaction in the newspaper advertising departments by pursuing these objectives:

1. To compare job satisfaction in newspaper advertising departments with job satisfaction in editorial departments as well as to make comparisons based on categories such as gender, age, job title and type and size of organiza-

tion. Differences between males and females are particularly interesting since past studies of job satisfaction have revealed gender differences¹⁴ and more recent studies have shown gender discrepancies in salary within the ad industry.¹⁵

2. To identify dimensions of job satisfaction in newspaper advertising departments and compare them with dimensions revealed in prior research.

Method

Questionnaires were sent to personnel directors of seven types of organizations: advertising agencies, advertising departments of companies and the advertising departments of magazines, radio stations, business publications, newspapers and television stations. Directors were requested to copy and distribute the questionnaire to employees. As an incentive the authors promised to send participating directors a copy of the overall results, and they promised to break out the results of individual organizations for any company providing at least 10 responses.

It was believed this two-stage sampling technique would personalize solicitations, increase the total number of responses and be the best way to reach into organizations to get responses from rank and file employees.

To insure confidentiality and candid responses, employees were instructed to return the completed questionnaire in a sealed envelope which would be mailed, unopened, either in bulk or under separate cover. No responses were included in this analysis if they were not received in an individual sealed envelope. Requests were sent in two waves. The first wave went to 184 newspapers. A follow-up mailing several months later went to non-responders in the first wave.

The sampling frame for the newspaper portion of the survey was an up-to-date Standard Rate and Data Service (SRDS) for daily newspapers. Only daily newspapers were selected to maximize the efficiency of the mailing and to maintain some consistency in the types of experiences and conditions shared by respondents. A random selection process chose every Nth company out of the SRDS alphabetical index.

The questionnaire consisted of 34 items measuring various aspects of job satisfaction which were taken from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) used by Rene Dawis and Lloyd Lofquist;¹⁶ and the action tendency scales developed by Locke.¹⁷

The overall job satisfaction level in newspaper advertising departments is the lowest score among the seven types of advertising organizations measured.

The MSQ items tapped respondents' feelings about characteristics of their work and conditions of the work environment, including quality of job facilities, wages, supervisors and co-workers. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements worded to represent extreme satisfaction or dissatisfaction on a five-point Likert-type scale. The action tendency scales asked individuals how they feel like acting rather than asking them to recall how they feel in certain situations or about specific job characteristics. These items focused on a common dimension of job satisfaction: job commitment.¹⁸ One question asked respondents to rate their job satisfaction overall. The remaining questions requested demographic and classification information.

Results

Research question 1 - comparisons

Of a total of 1,746 respondents, 193 were from newspaper advertising departments representing 21 different newspapers. Newspaper respondents ranged in age from 19-68, with an average of 37. Fifty-nine percent were female, 41 percent male. About 46 percent earned between \$30-45,000 annually (not counting bonuses) with about a third earning less than that. About 55 percent were college graduates with another 30 percent having some college background. Of those listing a college major, advertising was the highest (19 percent), journalism (17 percent), business (12 percent) and marketing (10 percent). Twelve percent of newspaper respondents were high school graduates.

The overall job satisfaction level in newspaper advertising departments, based on a composite score of all 34 measures, was 3.4. This is somewhat above the neutral, midpoint of the scale but it is the lowest score among the seven types of advertising organizations measured and compares with an overall advertising job satisfaction level of 3.6. (see **Table 1**)

Seventeen percent of advertising employees in this study reported very high job satisfaction compared to 25 percent in the Weaver-Wilhoit study. However, 19 percent disagreed or disagreed strongly that they were satisfied but considerably fewer who are dissatisfied.

Sixty-four percent of newspaper advertising personnel agreed or strongly agreed that they were generally satisfied with their jobs. This compares with 65 percent of the general work force who said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs in recent research conducted by Watson Wyatt Worldwide.¹⁹ It can also be compared with 69 percent satisfied or very satisfied advertising employees in this study who work for other organizations besides newspapers.

Table 1: Comparisons in job satisfaction by organization

Groups	n	Mean
Consumer magazines	113	3.83
Business magazines	83	3.72
Agencies	1029	3.67
Advertisers	152	3.65
Radio	114	3.60
TV	55	3.52
Newspapers	193	3.43
Overall	1739	3.65

Looking at the 34 measures individually, respondents were most satisfied (above 4.0) with how their work contributed to the larger goals of the company and conditions in the workplace, including relations with co-workers. They were least satisfied (below 3.0) with the reward systems in place, including recognition and advancement opportunities (but not salary) their inability to get ideas accepted and overall employee morale.

The single, overall question produced a slightly higher average satisfaction score than the composite 34 item measures (3.57). The added reliability of multi-item measures will make them the measures of focus for the remainder of this study.

Research question 2 - dimensions of job satisfaction

Regarding the second research objective, factor analysis with varimax rotation produced a four-factor solution based on the criterion of eigenvalues more than one or more than 10 percent of variance explained.²⁰ (see Table 2). A total of 53 percent of variance was explained by the factors, with reliability scores ranging from .92 to .62.

Table 2: Factor analysis

	Factor 1 Ldgs Company goals	Factor 2 Ldgs Intrinsic rewards	Factor 3 Ldgs Daily tools	Factor 4 Ldgs Co-worker relations
Proud of work	.837	*	*	*
Loyal to company	.794	*	*	*
Reluctant start day	.738	*	*	*
Be elsewhere instead	.733	*	*	*
Support company goals	.732	*	*	*
Feel like walking out	.727	*	*	*
Rather work here than anywhere	.712	*	*	*
Sense accomplishment	.577	.393	*	*
Lunch early	.546	*	*	*
Do things vs conscience	.542	*	.446	*
Pleasant work condition	.487	*	*	*
Fair pay compared to others	*	.668	*	*
Pay comparable to co-workers	*	.657	*	*
Variety of tasks	*	.636	*	*
Inadequate rewards	*	.613	*	*
Opportunity	.394	.541	*	*
Cooperation	*	.477	*	*
Recognition	*	.447	*	*
Variety of rewards	*	.440	*	*
Info. to do job	*	*	.593	*
Boss delegates	*	*	.589	*
Boss helps	*	*	.582	*
Resources adequate	*	*	.564	*
Improvement encouraged	*	*	.532	*
Ideas accepted	*	*	.525	*
Mgmt seeks input	*	.444	.508	*
I'm seen as a leader	*	*	*	.673
Contributions recognized	*	*	*	.642
Friendliness of co-workers	*	*	*	.638
Tasks clear	*	*	*	.568
Variance explained	34%	8.1%	5.8%	4.8%
Reliability (alpha)	.92	.84	.80	.62

*Factor loadings under .350 are not provided

Factor 1, the most dominant factor with 34.4 percent variance explained, combined *motivators* that clearly reflected intrinsic satisfiers related to a company's broader goals and mission, such as pride and loyalty, with many of the *action-tendency* measures, such as walking out on the job, going to lunch sooner and being reluctant to go to work in the morning. This combination suggests the factor represents workers' interests to exhibit job satisfaction or dissatisfaction openly, whether that be as dissenters or cheerleaders.

Factor 2 was dominated by *motivators* such as recognition for reward for good ideas and hard work. This factor also included the two salary-related items: *fair pay* and *pay comparable to what others like me receive*. This factor's makeup appears to combine Kalleberg's *intrinsic, financial and career opportunity* dimensions.

Factor 3 represented relations with the boss and the resources available to do the daily job, maybe best reflecting Kalleberg's *resource adequacy* dimension.

Factor 4 dealt with Kalleberg's *co-worker relations* dimension, in a bi-directional sense, how an employee is seen as a leader and contributor to the big picture by co-workers.

Differences in sub-groups

Unlike results for the advertising industry overall as well as for other advertising fields such as broadcasting, no differences by sex were found in job satisfaction among newspaper ad personnel on any of the four factors. Both females and males were most satisfied with co-worker relations, least satisfied with the reward systems and daily work conditions, including interactions with supervisors.

Regarding age, the sample of newspaper advertising practitioners was divided into equal thirds for comparison purposes. The youngest (19-32) consistently showed the lowest job satisfaction on all four factors. Significant differences were found for only factor one, concerning their pride, loyalty and enthusiasm about coming to work every day. This single result may hold the greatest implications and concern for newspaper managers given the reliance on this age group for future success.

Company size was measured by using each newspaper's circulation with the assumption a smaller paper has a smaller ad staff. Newspapers with circulations under 75,000, from 75,000 to just over 200,000 and papers above a quarter-million were the three categories for comparison. Small newspaper staffs were the most satisfied overall, with significant differences concerning reward systems and daily work conditions. (see Table 3) However, there were only three larger newspapers among the respondents, limiting the perspective.

The three most frequently listed job titles, ad managers, account executives and media sales people, were compared and, as might be expected, managers were significantly more satisfied than the sales staff on factors one,

two and four. (see Table 3) Managers appeared more satisfied with their contributions to the company's goals, their reward system and their relations with co-workers. Only daily job conditions, which include having the appropriate tools and resources to complete daily tasks, produced no differences in the level of satisfaction.

Other significant comparisons

National studies show discrepancies in income favoring males over females. There are similar differences in newspaper advertising departments. While almost 54 percent of males earned \$30-45,000 annually and another 28 percent made more than that, half of females made less than \$30,000 while only about nine percent made more than \$45,000 per year. The difference is significant at the .001 level.

Not surprisingly, income varied with size of newspaper. Employees at papers under 75,000 circulation earned the least. Employees at the largest papers earned the most.

Conclusions

Amidst an overall sense that newspaper advertising personnel are somewhat satisfied with their jobs, there is evidence that those who are above age 32, those who have moved up to management positions and those who work at smaller newspapers (circulation less than 75,000) are likely to be more satisfied. In a more general sense, this study has revealed both good news and bad news for newspaper managers.

First the good news. Advertising department personnel appear more satisfied than editorial department employees, at least according to the comparisons that can be made between this study and previous research. Meaningful comparisons regarding the magnitude of differences can only be accomplished with future research that uses similar measures, sampling procedures and the like for both advertising and editorial employees.

Also good news is the lack of significant differences in job satisfaction between male and female newspaper ad personnel. There is evidence that, among other advertising practitioners, females are more dissatisfied than males.²¹ Newspaper employees, apparently, see things more equally.

In the bad news department, newspaper advertising employees were the least satisfied group of any this study surveyed, including advertising department employees of other media. And, although newspaper ad jobs attract better educated people who fill more responsible and, one would think, more satisfying positions, the job satisfaction level seems lower, or at best, about the same as that in the general work force.

More bad news may loom on the horizon in regard to gender as well as in other areas. Income discrepancies favoring men exist in newspaper advertising departments as they do across many other job sectors in this country. Failure to address these discrepancies is bound to erode job satisfaction among women, particularly as more women move up the ladder in terms of experience and managerial potential.

Another warning sign for the future of newspapers is the level of dissatisfaction among younger, introductory level newspaper advertising personnel. Although this may be the result of the typical anxieties and pressure associated with a first job, the pressures unique to newspapers may be particularly acute. For example, there may be extra pressure in relying on sales commissions as a large basis for one's salary when advertising space sales are down as advertisers move more of their budgets to other media such as direct mail, the World Wide Web or event sponsorship.²²

In any case, the problem needs to be addressed. Dissatisfaction among young workers may result in the same migration to other related industries experienced by newspaper editorial departments. It is not an enviable position for newspapers to be training ground for other areas of advertising where satisfaction is higher. Worse yet, fresh, energetic talent may completely ignore careers in newspaper advertising.

This study begins to establish a description of what job satisfaction is in the newspaper advertising industry and where it stands relative to other industries. From a theoretical standpoint, this study of job satisfaction in the newspaper industry identified four dimensions: 1) company goals and understanding how one's work fits in with those goals; 2) intrinsic rewards such as opportunities for advancement and recognition plus extrinsic rewards such as salary; 3) daily work experiences, including relationships with supervisors, which, in this industry, can include those within an employee's own company as well as those outside; and 4) relationships with co-workers. These dimensions come closest to matching four of Kalleberg's six dimensions. However, one of the Kalleberg's dimensions (*convenience*) not represented by the four factors found in this study seems less and less appropriate as society becomes more mobile and, at the same time, smaller with electronic communication. The increased popularity of working from home or car makes location of employment practically irrelevant.

Future research can build a better understanding of the dynamics behind some of the dominant factors that emerged in this study. For example, further probing may prove insightful on the relationships between employees and numerous supervisors they may report to on a given advertising project, including bosses inside and outside the company. Understanding the relative contributions of different intrinsic rewards, such as feelings of accomplishment and belonging versus recognition and reward, may help managers better choose programs to implement when job satisfaction seems to wane. Pressures

unique to the least satisfied sales personnel, such as resistance to exceed previous sales levels, may suggest the need to restructure incentive programs.

At least one important limitation of this study needs to be pointed out. Considering almost 200 different companies were sent requests to participate in the newspaper portion of this survey, response from just 21 of them makes the response rate fairly low (about 12 percent). However the lack of a valid list of newspaper advertising practitioners across all levels leaves only membership lists from advertising trade associations such as member clubs of the American Advertising Federation. The authors purposely avoided these lists because members of trade associations are likely to be optimistic and enthusiastic about their jobs and not typical of other personnel.

According to Tibor Scitovsky in **The Joyless Economy**, jobs provide the major source of satisfaction in life.²³ Based on the results of this description of job satisfaction in newspaper advertising departments, employees are somewhat satisfied with life, but there's room for improvement.

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