

Women in communications field give guidelines for market entry

By **Tonnie Dakin**
Of the Emerald

Women slowly have been breaking into the field of communication, a field once dominated by men, say women who are currently involved in the field.

Barbara Matt, who studied radio and television journalism at the University, has been a reporter and news anchor at KVAL for six years and has seen the competition in her field stiffen over the years, she said.

In the last few decades the field of television news expanded, and many jobs became available to women because of affirmative action, she said.

But a few years ago the media felt the impact of a bad economy, and there were hiring freezes, making it difficult to get a job or move upward in the field, Matt said.

"As a result of that... it's gotten very competitive; not just in the Northwest, but all over the country," she said.

In order to ensure job stability, television news anchors tend to stay on the air longer and don't try to move to higher positions, Matt said. This creates a freeze in the number of positions open, especially to women, she said.

"Women started out behind the eight-ball anyway, and this did not help," Matt said.

There has been little progress in the number of women who are on-the-air network correspondents, Matt said. Only 17.8 percent of these jobs were held by women in 1979, and in 1985 the number remained the same, she said.

The outlook for women in the field of public relations is different, said K.J. Kent, who received her bachelor's degree in English from the University and now does promotional and marketing work at the Eugene Hilton. Currently, 55 percent of the employees in the industry are women, and 27 percent of the top jobs in the field are held by women, she said.

Working in public relations

'Entering into the market, your image and presence is really important... you really have to shift from the school mentality to the professional mentality.'

— K.J. Kent

gives women the chance to experience a diverse range of jobs in the communications field, Kent said.

"The high visibility allows you to get into the network... you have an opportunity to get involved with the media all over town... it gives you an overview if you ever decide to change your field," she said.

The job outlook for public relations in the hospitality industry — working in hotels and motels — is also good, although the outlook in Eugene is bleak, she said.

It is advisable to go to a bigger market where the turnover is higher and there is a better chance to break into the field, she said.

This also holds true in the field of television news, Matt said.

"Unfortunately, the way it still works is if you want to make more money and you want to get more experience, you have to move on to a bigger market," she said.

Although women are slowly making progress in television news, Matt believes that valuable changes could be made in the newsroom if women applied for more powerful positions such as that of news director, she said.

"I happen to believe that a woman's place is in the news director's office," Matt said. "But unfortunately, not very many are."

While the position may not seem as glamorous as others in the newsroom, the decision-making and the power that comes with the job can help make important changes, Matt said.

"You really can shape what happens on a newscast... not only for you but for the other people there," she said.

Lauren Kessler, an associate professor in the journalism school, believes it is hard to make generalizations about what would happen if women had more power in the field of communications, she said.

"I think that people interested in careers, be they

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