



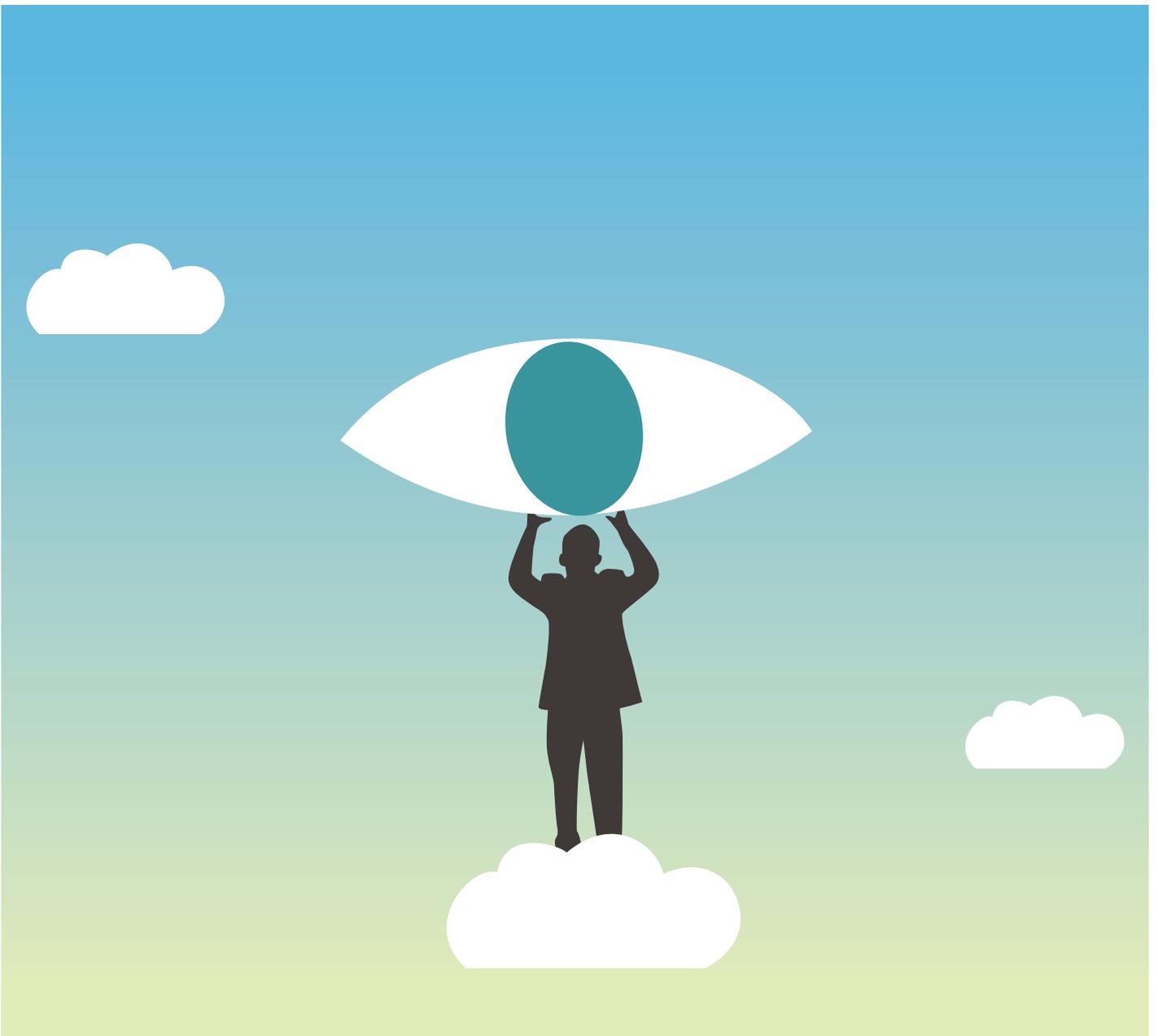
VMA
GROUP

in partnership with

IABC

Corporate Communications in Asia Pacific

Career and Salary Report 2012 / 2013



Introduction

Since VMA Group opened a practice to serve the Asia-Pacific market in September 2011, the corporate communications landscape in the region has changed considerably.

The demand for skilled communications professionals is high and organizations are restructuring to enable local decision making, rather than having to revert back to a global function, often based in Europe or USA. There has also been a significant demand for internal communications specialists.

However, despite this surge in demand it is still a market in its infancy. As such, little information exists about the recruitment and expectations of corporate communications professionals across the region. This makes it difficult for both candidates and clients to effectively benchmark themselves or their organisation.

Furthermore, because it is a market unlike any other, not least because of the great cultural and language variations that exist throughout the region, data from western counterparts is often irrelevant. This is why a study of this nature is so important.

VMA Group has become the leader in contemporary analysis and data for the communications profession. This is our first dedicated study into corporate communications in Asia-Pacific. In doing so we wanted to present a market overview to help candidates and clients better understand the market and effectively benchmark themselves and their organisations. I am confident it will not be our last as the market matures.

This study provides an overview on a range of topics covering:

- Salary, bonus and benefits
- Remit and resources and;
- Training and development.

It concludes with some predictions on what we expect from the market over the next 6-12 months.

Should you have any questions about the findings, please contact me or any of the team located in the region.



Katrina Andrews
Director
VMA Group Asia-Pacific
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IABC

It is a most exciting time to be in Asia.
And to be in communications.

Despite slowing growth, Asia is still poised to perform better than the developed world and positive economic prospects will continue to deliver successful businesses, wealthy families, creative communities and empowered societies.

In the midst of change and transformation in Asia, communications has a critical role to play. To tell stories that not only inform, but more importantly empower, engage, connect and inspire people.

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), founded in 1970 in the US and established in Hong Kong in 1985 to support a growing network of professional communicators, partnered with VMA to draw insights on the value of our work as communicators.

In a world where communications has become essential, we have a real opportunity to use our skills and strengths to drive the growth of businesses, galvanise people towards shared goals, or champion sustainability for the greater good.

We hope you find this survey interesting and useful as you chart your path in this dynamic profession.

Laine Santana
Chapter President,
IABC Hong Kong



Background

The online survey of corporate communications professionals based in Asia-Pacific was conducted in partnership with IABC during July and August 2012.

Respondent overview:

Respondents worked across 19 different industries. The most common industries were: professional services (14%) and banking (13%), reflecting the high populous of global organisations within the region. Manufacturing (7%) and IT (7%) were also popular and we expect this figure to rise.

Three quarters of respondents were educated to Bachelors degree standard or above, highlighting the great importance placed on education in the region. Employers favour candidates with an international education, in particular a Masters qualification in communications is highly valued:

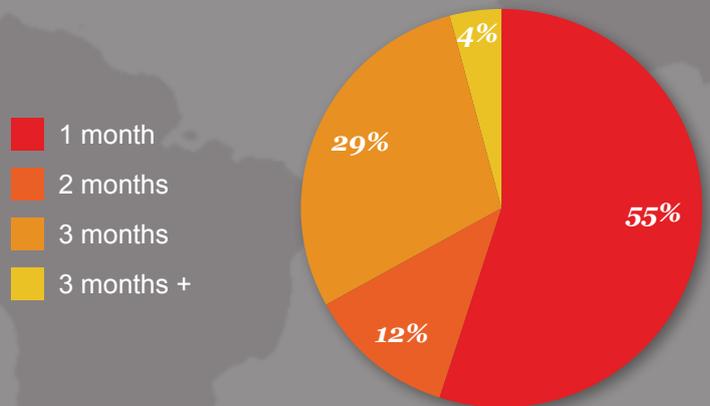
Notice periods typically fall between one and three months. However, the law in Hong Kong allows employers to 'buy out' employees from their existing contracts and we are seeing this across all notice periods, driven by the business needs of employers:

Respondents Level of Education



- Bachelors degree or equivalent (BSc/BA)
- Master degree (MA/MSc)
- MBA
- PHD
- Other

Respondents Notice Period



- 1 month
- 2 months
- 3 months
- 3 months +

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Respondents

73%

27%



female

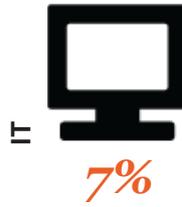


male

62%

of respondents had worked in communications for nine years or more.

Respondents Industries



Respondents Location

6%
China

38%
Hong Kong

13%
Singapore

4%
Other

39%
Australia

Salary, bonus and benefits

The Asia-Pacific economy has not yet felt the full effect of the global economic crisis in the same way as its western counterparts. This is reflected in the steady increase in salaries for corporate communications professionals across the region.

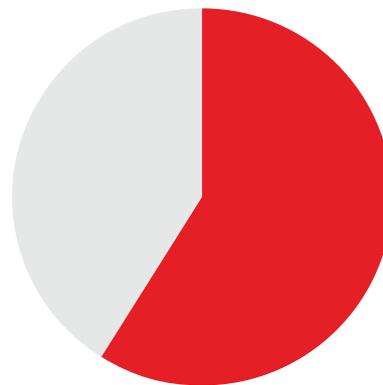
Two years ago over half (51%) of all respondents reported having a salary below USD100k, compared with 33% today. Similarly, 35% reported a salary between USD100-150k two years ago, compared to 44% today. While 14% earned over USD150k two years ago, rising to 25% today.

However, salaries are not the only indicator in this market, with bonuses and other benefits a crucial part of the overall remuneration package.

The average bonus was USD24,437, with 21% of respondents reporting a bonus range between 1-10% of their base salary and 34% between 11-20%; just 11% said their bonus was 30% of their base salary.

As the market matures we think bonus expectations of candidates will need to adjust. Bonuses are a standard and expected part of the remuneration package across Asia-Pacific and are awarded regardless of how an individual or a company has performed. As the market matures, we believe employers will follow the example of their western counterparts and award bonuses on merit and/or company performance only.

An anomaly of the Asian (not seen outside Asia) market is the benefit of a 13 month salary addition, where an extra month's salary is paid to employees. However, our findings would suggest that its popularity is on the wane as only 16% cited receiving such a benefit.



59%

of Asia-Pacific respondents feel they were adequately remunerated

In addition to pay and bonuses, we found that the most common benefits were: flexible working arrangements (45%), pension contribution (45%) and private healthcare (44%).

For western counterparts, flexible working arrangements often equate to home working and a combined mix of shorter and longer work days. Not so in Asia where working from home is an unknown concept. Flexible working arrangements are much more likely to apply to the amount of travel undertaken in a role and the ability to be at home during the weekend.

Holiday allowance is in line with European counterparts; with 15-20 days as standard. However, 15% of candidates reported receiving more than 25 days annual holiday.

Levels of satisfaction with the overall remuneration package were high, with over half (59%) of respondents saying they were adequately remunerated.

Remit and resources

In order to get a sense of what is happening in the workplace for communicators in Asia-Pacific, we asked respondents to rank the volume of time they spent on communications activity by discipline.

Internal communications was cited as the number one area of focus by exactly half of our respondents. This was followed by just over a quarter (27%) citing media relations, followed by external communications (20%).

Although surprising that internal communications featured so highly above other more well-established disciplines, it does indicate a broadening of communications disciplines in this region. It also confirms the soaring demand for mid to senior level internal communications professionals that we've experienced over the past six months. Furthermore, we note that internal communications is starting to appear as a module on university curricula in the region, and has done so in Australia for several years.

For a market in its infancy, it is no surprise that corporate communications teams are small; seventeen per cent of the sample said they were the only person working in communications in their organisation.

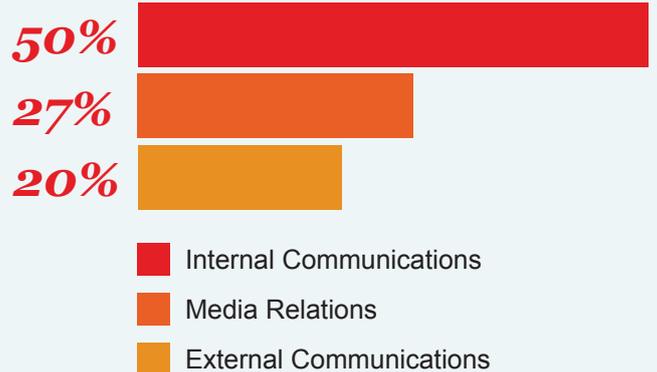
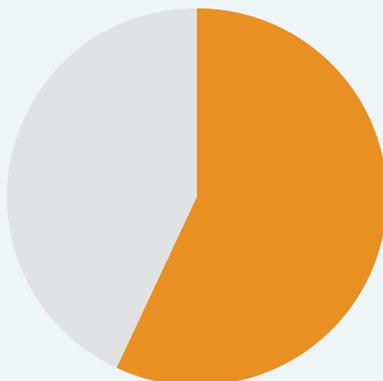
Team sizes of between two and three people were the most common, cited by 37% of respondents. This was followed by team sizes of between four and seven people (22%). While some 14% reported team sizes of 16+, which is consistent with the large multi-nationals we work with across the region.

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents reported that the size of their team had increased by at least one person over the past five years. While this growth might be considered slow in comparison to other markets where the corporate communications function is more developed, it is a positive sign and a contrast to some western countries where recruitment has declined or stalled.

However, we have found that some roles remain unfulfilled because of the very specific needs employers have for language skills and/or previous Asia-Pacific experience, this is particularly true in China. This is something for candidates to bear in mind when considering a move.

50% of respondents cited Internal Comms as the number one area of focus

57%
of respondents reported that their team size had increased



Moving on

There's certainly no lack of willingness amongst Asia-Pacific communicators to work overseas; a very high 89% said they would consider a role in another country for either their current employer or in a new role.

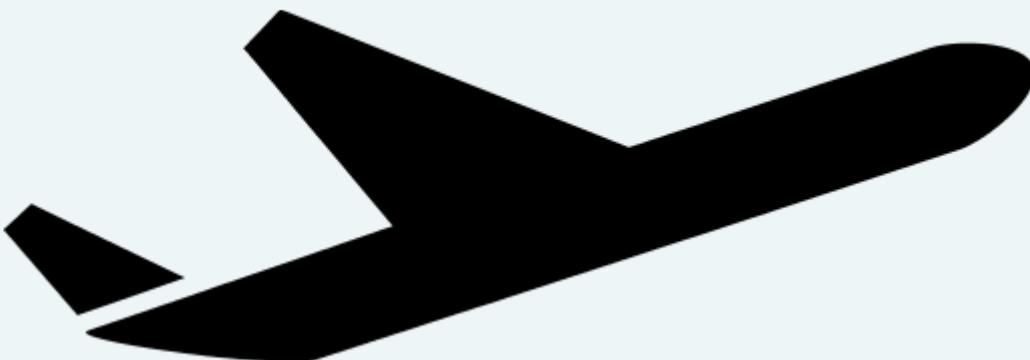
We regularly see candidates based in Beijing and Shanghai willing to move to Hong Kong. Similarly candidates also don't see it as any great deal to relocate between Hong Kong and Singapore.

We asked respondents to rank what was important to them when considering a new salary package or promotion. Both personal bonus (42%) and work-life balance (39%) featured highly. It was interesting to note that pension contribution was the most frequently cited existing benefit amongst respondents (45%), yet only 6% said it was important to them when moving on.

When asked what the minimum percentage increase in salary they would look for if moving roles, respondents looked for an average 17% increase, this is slightly higher than the market our placements show that 12-15% is more realistic.

89%

of candidates said they were internationally mobile - moving mostly between Hong Kong and Singapore



Training and development

This study also looked at training and development; we asked respondents to tell us the areas where they felt training would be beneficial for either themselves or their teams.

At 63%, social media development was the most popular area. Considering it is not a widely used business communication tool in the Asia-Pacific market, we were somewhat surprised by this.

However, a recent UK PR agency study showed the massive growth of social media in the consumer market throughout the region over the past few years.

Interest may also have been piqued by some recent high profile examples of the disruption social media can cause a business.

Towards the end of 2011, airline Qantas appointed four dedicated social media specialists to monitor Twitter and Facebook, following a mid-air engine explosion over Singapore. The plane landed safely, but within minutes of the explosion inaccurate reports that a Qantas plane had crashed were tweeted worldwide.

Other areas of interest for training and development were: coaching/managing senior leaders (52%) and communications planning/strategy development (48%). Both of these areas continue to be of critical importance throughout Europe and the US; they are also the subject of much discussion in VMA Group's annual ground-breaking global study into the communications market: Business Leaders in Communications Study.

63%

social media development was the most popular area



The Future

While the Asia-Pacific region has been sheltered from the economic turbulence which has hindered growth in the west, there are signs of a continued slowing economy.

Standard and Poor's has recently lowered its economic growth projections for Asia-Pacific. This is due to the cooling off of the Chinese economy and in reaction to the continued turbulence in the west, particularly in the eurozone.

However, despite this we do expect to see continued growth in the Asia-Pacific corporate communications market, albeit at a moderate pace. In particular, we expect the recent demand in internal communications roles to continue.

It will also be interesting to see if the western concept of contract working will start to be used in this market. It is common for businesses in the west to use contractors instead of hiring permanent staff when the work is short term and expert skills are needed or, where budgets are uncertain.

As the economic impact takes hold, communicators across Asia-Pacific can expect salary increases and bonuses to be paid at a much slower pace than they have previously experienced.

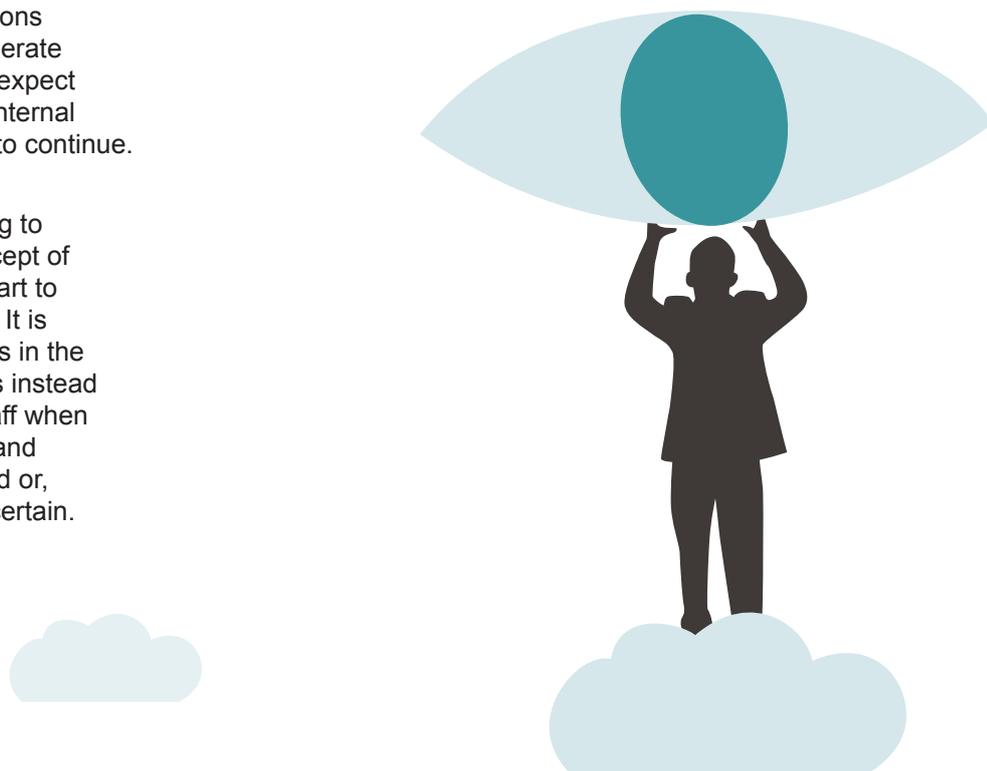
It will also be interesting to watch how companies and communications professionals embrace social media as a way of creating business opportunities and in managing the pitfalls of the medium.

Additional Resource

VMA Group Blog

Six Predictions:
The Future for Communicators

www.vmagroup.com/blog



About VMA Group

VMA Group is the global executive recruitment and professional development partner for corporate communications, PR and investor relations professionals

In 2010, it introduced VMA Enhance - a holistic approach to professional development for communications and HR professionals.

Since its inception as Vicky Mann Associates in 1978, VMA Group has grown to be the leading global resourcing and career partner for communications, PR and investor relations.

VMA Group has become the leader in contemporary analysis and data for the communications profession. VMA Group regularly publishes studies on the disciplines and markets in which it specialises and these have become invaluable resources for the communications profession in planning and decision making.

Specialist practices cover internal communications, external communications, financial services, investor relations, healthcare, public affairs and marketing communications professionals.

With a truly international reach, VMA Group has offices in London, Hong Kong, Brussels, Amsterdam, Sydney, Birmingham and Manchester. We also work with an affiliate partner covering the USA with offices in Washington and San Diego.

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