

LISSETTE RUSSO

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Special Hiring Authority: Noncompetitive Eligibility under 5 CFR 315.607

U.S. Citizen ♦ Veteran's Preference: N/A ♦ Highest Grade: FP-03 (GS-13 Equiv.)

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Dynamic and accomplished bilingual COMMUNICATIONS / PUBLIC AFFAIRS / AUDIO-VISUAL SPECIALIST with 10+ years of experience developing and executing communication strategies, marketing campaigns, and audio-visual production. Manage projects, evaluate programs and audience information, and provide consultation for developing communication activities and campaigns. Specialize in increasing awareness of federal resources and programs among marginalized and underrepresented communities using advanced writing and graphic design skills to engage and inform targeted audiences.

Develop impactful communications and collateral materials; create graphics and content for various platforms. Progressive experience in communications with advanced writing skills. Experience writing, editing, and publishing news articles, press releases, newsletters, speeches, briefing papers, op-eds, and video scripts. Conversational writing style. Developed and implemented cross-office communication campaigns and resources to support organizational objectives.

Managed all facets of social media platforms and content generation, successfully driving social media reach in service of the organization's message and brand and skillfully interacting with media representatives, contractors, and the public to transmit information clearly and concisely, adjusting the complexity of messaging to best fit the intended audience. Monitor, analyze, and interpret public perceptions to determine communication strategies. Recognized expertise in public speaking and cross-cultural communication.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communication, Graphic Design, and Marketing; Paier College of Art, Hamden, CT

LANGUAGES Bilingual; Native Speaker of Spanish / English

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook); Adobe Creative Suite; Premiere Pro; PowerBI; CRM Systems; DAM; and Social Media Platforms.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

01/2024 – 07/2024, **SUPERVISORY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST**, FP-1035-03 (GS-13 Equiv.); Peace Corps, Programmatic Communications Office (PCO), 1275 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20526, 40 hours per week, Supervisor: Gaye Whyte, 914-474-4997, may contact.

Directed the Programmatic Communication team, consisting of three Public Affairs Specialists. Provided strategic leadership and coordination across sub-offices to foster development and enhance communications to meet the agency's vision, mission, and goals. Performed the full range of managerial and technical supervisory duties. Led the public affairs team to identify new opportunities and facilitated group discussions and planning sessions. Demonstrated inclusivity and created a positive work environment where team members felt valued and engaged.

Conceptualized, researched, wrote, and managed speeches, press releases, media campaign roll-out plans, talking points, Q&A, and general messaging for a broad audience, including internal communications and public outreach events to increase public awareness of the agency's mission and interacted with stakeholders, partners, and individuals from various audiences with unique communication styles to assist in message development and clarity. Reviewed, revised, and

recommended improvements in leadership communications to posts, volunteers, and blogs before release. Provided recommendations for improved delivery of critical messages to the public.

Conducted comprehensive studies that impacted agency operations, utilizing skills in communication, fiscal planning, and media analysis. Applied program analysis and evaluation methodologies to communication campaigns and increase brand awareness, focusing on intercultural competence, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (ICDEIA) and underserved communities. Translated complex programmatic information into accessible and engaging content for diverse audiences.

Advised senior leadership on critical issues and provided data-driven recommendations. Maintained continuous dialogue through various platforms to keep leadership informed and engaged, resulting in more brainstorming and creative alternatives for new projects. Quickly digested and repackaged highly complex information into easily understandable language. Actively listened and exercised diplomacy in resolving differences of opinion.

Managed the project life cycle and led the development of multiple projects. Identified subject matter experts (SMEs) and ensured resources were available and timelines were met. Developed measurable performance standards, maintained a project tracker, provided ongoing guidance, and delivered the final report. Applied excellent project organization and time management skills to deliver projects on time and within budget.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Developed and implemented a strategic transition plan to successfully facilitate the seamless transfer of nine Public Affairs Specialists from the Office of Volunteer Recruitment & Selection (VRS) to various sub-offices in External Affairs to expand the Communications Office, including the newly established Programmatic Communication Office (PCO). Did a competency review of each employee and matched them to an appropriate role in the Communication Office. Created the FY24 Communication plan and budget, which included recruitment support, brand awareness, press campaigns, and PCO-PAS individual performance plans.
- Spearheaded the development and implementation of a comprehensive new information database and advanced PowerBI dashboard. This user-friendly dashboard provides information for targeted media communications, recruitment strategies, and outreach planning, serving as a groundbreaking resource that significantly streamlines operational efficiencies and enhances strategic decision-making across the agency.
- Led the FY24 Strategic Plan, Force Multipliers initiative, which included outreach to partnering stakeholders, focusing on fostering a commitment to diversity and overcoming communication barriers to support the VRS Recruitment and partnership teams. Directed six marketing campaigns consisting of over fifty collective automated emails and implemented enhanced text messaging to engage potential candidates; efforts resulted in an 85% increase in engagement. Spearheaded the development of a messaging bank of FAQs to facilitate the creation of a future chatbot for the recently revamped website.

3/2021 – 01/2024, **SUPERVISORY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST**, FP-1035-03 (GS-13 Equiv.); Peace Corps, Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Washington, DC, 40 hours per week, Supervisor: Darren Franklin, 202-476-9016, may contact.

Managed a nationwide remote team of 10 Public Affairs Specialists. Created a positive, inclusive work culture that encouraged teamwork and excellence. Identified individual strengths and assigned projects according to skillset, streamlining workflow and increasing productivity. Worked with staff to develop realistic objectives and timeframes. Delivered strategic, technical, and creative leadership in developing communications products and events. Reviewed all deliverables before submission and made revisions to improve coherence, flow, and clarity.

Monitored social media platforms to evaluate public perception of the agency. Collected and regularly reported findings to senior leadership and communication team. Developed creative strategies to address negative perceptions and answer frequently asked questions (FAQs) to help maintain a favorable image of the Peace Corps. Delivered a clean messaging aesthetic across internal and external materials, including website, social media channels, newsletters, and presentations.

Demonstrated use of evaluation & planning processes & techniques, offered valuable insights on media and public reactions to news coverage of volunteers or agency policies. Designed & managed media engagement and developed crisis communications strategies and messaging. Assisted with handling challenging or controversial issues; designed approaches to address specific communication problems. Drafted talking points and advisories to ensure staff were well-equipped to respond to media inquiries effectively. Created and disseminated policy and program materials. Reviewed internal communication needs to determine the best way to structure and organize content and information.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Elevated the agency's public profile by developing and directing comprehensive press campaign rollout plans and public affairs initiatives. Promoting the agency's historical return to service after the COVID-19 pandemic by focusing on the invited volunteer's stories and promoting them to their hometown news outlets and alma maters. Achieved an outstanding 95% success rate in earned media placements within six months.
- Identified communication gaps, developed outreach plans for underrepresented communities, and created Spanish-language marketing materials for recruitment purposes and a comprehensive "Family and Friends Guide" in Spanish, offering information to non-English speaking influencers of volunteers.
- Authored Statement of Work (SOW) documents, which outlined the establishment of two new expert role positions within the agency; SOW delineated the introduction, objectives, and justification for these new positions, encompassed background requirements, qualifications, performance plans, scope of work, duties, and responsibilities. The SOW facilitated the transition of 2 end-of-term staff members into expert roles.

01/2017 – 03/2021, **PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST**, FP-1035-04 (GS-12 Equiv.);
Peace Corps, Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Washington, DC, 40 hours per week, Supervisor: Elizabeth Chamberlain, 202-692-1346, may contact.

Supported ten recruiters in the Southeast Region, developing strategic communication plans aligned with quarterly recruitment plans. Served as project manager for Volunteer Recruitment and Selection Office (VRS) outreach activities and collaborated with senior executives to provide staff training on media relations. Managed and promoted outreach activities to contacts, potential leads, and the local community: increased event registration and attendance by 65%.

Employed well-developed communication and interpersonal skills to evaluate and present information in an articulate, persuasive, and knowledgeable fashion. Authored reports, articles, and press releases; developed web and social media content; tracked and analyzed online performance data to refine social media strategy; and reviewed and edited recruitment presentation materials for events and engagements. Ensured messages were aligned with the agency mission and all branding guidelines were respected. Stayed current in industry best practices and evolutions; promoted new media uses of internet technology.

Established relationships with local media and community organizations. Responded to media inquiries with timely and accurate information. Regularly networked with reporters and community organizations by engaging on social media and providing news stories and press releases. Consistently achieved over 85% earned media in significant news outlets.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Designed, created, wrote content, and expanded 60-page conference training manual that included multi-tiered, cross-functional, and tailored sub-office agendas and session descriptions, facilitator biographies, employee development resources, and local attractions and dining options. Conference booklet design became the agency template for internal conference manuals for the recruitment division.
- Designed and wrote content and branding guidelines for the Peace Corps university stakeholders and partners. Ensured all resources were formatted correctly for printing and uploading to the agency's online resource database.
- Co-organized development of the agency's new digital asset management (DAM) portal. Managed online library database of agencies' digital resources, assets, and video imagery.
- Participated in the contract review board and selection of a cloud-based marketing automation software provider. Evaluated five potential companies to determine if the products offered aligned with agency needs and government

regulations. Worked closely with the selected company during the buildout of cloud portals. Developed marketing content solutions throughout the transitional period to provide staff with templates tailored for target markets and ensure brand consistency at every touchpoint.

11/2014 – 11/2016, **MARKETING MANAGER**, Boca Flasher LED Lighting, 508 South Military Trail, Deerfield Beach, FL, 33442, 40 hours per week, Supervisor: Lakeisha Mixon, 561-876-8018, may contact.

Managed the company's rebranding. Generated a new logo design, communications, public relations, marketing sales collateral materials, and website to raise awareness, sell products and services, and create a dynamic brand. Developed multimedia content to communicate scientific product information to the public in easy-to-read layperson's terms. Created product spec sheets, marketing sales collateral materials, sales packages, and brochures for over 50 LED lighting products for Account Executives and outside sales force. Increased company exposure globally resulted in a \$4M+ increase in revenue from 2014 to 2015.

Audio Visual Production Specialist: Produced, directed, and scripted manufacturing training videos, informational product safety videos, and message media production projects used for patent procurement documents.

Developed an interactive, responsive website comprising over 50 product information landing pages. Designed the overall layout and aesthetic of the multi-page company website. Collaborated closely with product engineers, sales director, and fabrication manager to translate complex technical terms, product design, and services into a user-friendly and visually captivating website. Generated site mock-ups for review and confidently rectified any functional anomalies, notably eliminating "dead links." Conducted quantitative analysis of site metrics & implemented search engine optimization techniques & terms to increase engagement. Took complete ownership of the project, ensuring ongoing updates and site maintenance and creating backup files of the site design.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE

Creative Director, Carl's Furniture, Coconut Creek, FL, 40 hours per week, 03/2008-07/2014

Served as creative art director and audio-visual production specialist for 12 South Florida and West Coast retail furniture stores. Managed a multi-million-dollar advertising budget and negotiated ad space pricing and placement with local television stations, newspapers, and industry-specific trade magazines. Ensured prime locations for advertisements and maintained brand awareness. Designed new product line logos, sales spec sheets, catalogs, and promotional materials, providing clean, consistent branding that personified the company's reputation for excellence.

Produced, directed, and scripted weekly TV, radio, and print commercials, ensuring consistent brand messaging. Designed sets and lighting for visual merchandising, selected voiceovers and sound effects, directed commercial storyboards, and edited videos utilizing Premier Pro or First Cut Pro.

CERTIFICATIONS

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary: Communication Specialist | Publication Specialist | Public Affairs Specialist | Spanish/English Interpreter | Web Content Specialist | Instructor.

PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER AFFILIATIONS

Employee Resource Group, American Dreamers Board Member, Peace Corps, 2024-Present
Federal Executive Board Member, Southern Region, 2019-Present
Samaritan's Purse, International Relief, 2018-Present
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Sector Miami, 2015-Present

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Presidential Gold Volunteer Service Award, 2021 ♦ Coast Guard Unit Commendation, 2019
Award of Commendation, Peace Corps (5) ♦ Meritorious Service Award, (5)