

# **WOMEN IN GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION: A COMPARISON OF TWO STUDIES**

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## ABSTRACT

In 2000 a research study was conducted to determine the demographic and employment status of women in the Graphic Communication industry. In 2011 the research surrounding this study was revisited in an effort to determine if there were any significant trend changes over this eleven year span.

The 2000 research sample consisted of women attendees and exhibitors at the 2000 Graph Expo Exhibition in Chicago, IL and the female members of the Graphic Arts Technical Foundation (GATF). Data were collected through a paper survey questionnaire from 190 women. The 2011 research sample consisted of women attendees of the 2011 Graph Expo Exhibition, members of RIT's Printing Industry Center, RIT alumnae (women) , and members of the Print Production Professionals LinkedIn group. Data were collected through an electronic survey questionnaire from 349 women. For both studies the survey questionnaire focused on three areas: 1) demographics 2) Graphic Communication industry status and issues for women and 3) voluntary comments.

In a comparison of the key findings from these two research studies we find that the significant changes are: 1) more women in management and senior management positions, 2) a significant increase in the number of women business owners, and 3) a significant increase in the length of time women have been employed in the industry. Rationales for these increasing trends could be related to advances in technology, world demographics and the breakdown of some of the barriers to entry that women previously faced.

The outcome of this research suggests that women make up an integral part of the Graphic Communication industry and will continue to do so. As the industry continues to change and the search for key personnel becomes more competitive, it is believed that more women will pursue careers in all areas of Graphic Communication.

## OVERVIEW

While the Graphic Communication industry has traditionally been male dominated, many women have excelled in the field and are positive role models for young women just starting their careers. Even with this positive trend the question still remains “how are women faring professionally in the printing, publishing and graphic communication industry today?” *Women in Graphic Communication: a Comparison of Two Studies* seeks to compare the significant findings from a 2000 research study on women in the graphic communication industry to the status of women in the industry in the year 2011.

# KEY FINDINGS

From the resultant data and voluntary comments, a comparison between the 2000 and 2011 research studies can be summarized as follows:

Industry/ Demographic Status	2000	2011
Women's presence in the GC Industry	Majority of respondents had been in the industry 1-10 yrs.	The majority of the respondents had been in the industry 20+ yrs
Number of women employed at respondents' companies	More female employees in companies employing less than 100 people	More female employees in companies employing less than 100 people
Key job areas/titles	Sales/Marketing	Sales/Marketing, Business owner, Middle Managers
Women in management	11.4% of respondents in management positions; 62.1% of respondents worked in companies where less than 10% of women were in management positions.	43.1% of the respondents in management positions; 48.8% of respondents work in companies where less than 10% of the women were in management positions.
Women in key positions	Respondents perceived that there has been a significant increase during their career	Respondents perceived that there has been a significant increase during their career
Impact of mentoring	Majority of women have had at least one mentor during their career. Majority of mentors are male.	Majority of women have had at least one mentor during their career. Majority of mentors are male.
Major challenges	Resentment from male peers, being passed over for promotion and pay inequality	Resentment from male peers, being passed over for promotion and pay inequality

The following lists some of the common themes from the voluntary comments from both research studies:

Theme	2000 Research Respondents	2011 Research Respondents
<b>Knowledge</b>	Knowledge is everything! Know your information, products and trends for technology—this makes for job security."	"It is gratifying to see the number of young women in Graphic Communication academics. These women should be educated and trained to demand equal pay and suitable positions within companies."
<b>Mentoring</b>	"Have a mentor whenever possible. Get involved in trade associations/organizations. Learn to be assertive."	"Women need educational opportunities and mentoring in management, technology and emerging new media advances."
<b>Women's Growth</b>	"It's a very exciting time to be in the business. There are a lot of opportunities for women."	"There is no glass ceiling or limit on what you can learn. Never stop striving to learn more about our trade and new technology in our ever evolving field."
<b>Male/Female Comparison</b>	"It was always a male dominated industry, so women will have to continue to persevere."	"It is a great industry, and women should not be afraid to jump in and contribute."
<b>Opportunity for Advancement</b>	"Women don't seem to be getting into management positions – most women have been in CSR positions."	"Women in this field are finally being given the credit they deserve more than ever, however women are still not found in as many key production roles that eventually lead to management positions."

## IMPLICATIONS

The intent of this research was to achieve the same goals as outlined in the 2000 study while comparing the identified trends from both data sets. The information from this study will contribute to the limited research conducted on this very important subject. Further it is hoped that the results will be a validation for the women employed in the field of Graphic Communication who still face challenges from what continues to be a very male-dominated industry. The results have implications for both the academic and business sectors of the industry and can be a useful tool in helping companies successfully recruit, develop and retain female professionals.

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