

Woman, Man, Lady, Horse: Jane Stewart, Public Relations Executive

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ABSTRACT: Public relations scholars know very little about the women who participated in formal public relations before the 1970s, not even about such women as Jane Stewart, who served as vice president and then president of Group Attitudes Corporation, an independent consulting firm that became a subsidiary of Hill and Knowlton of New York in 1956. Because she was virtually alone among women at the top consulting firms, Stewart was forced to perform a delicate balancing act.

Jane Stewart prospered in the man's world of a Manhattan agency by accepting the conservative values of the field and the era. But she also developed a collaborative management style and maintained a female, if not feminist, perspective that at times gave her clients a different outlook on public relations problems. This article describes Stewart's career in the context of women's participation in formal public relations.

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In recent years public relations scholars and practitioners alike have expressed concern about the potential for a decline in the status of public relations as women are rapidly outnumbering men in the field. Although it is disturbing to think that the presence of women can devalue any occupation, in