

## *Turney's Tips:* **Mini-Biographies**

### **Underlying assumption:**

A one-page, narrative summary of someone's professional background, interests and accomplishments is useful in managing relationships or seeking publicity. It can be used to introduce the person as a speaker, to orient newcomers to the organization's management team, or to screen staff for special projects.

### **Working tips:**

- ◆ A mini-bio is not a resume and should not be as inclusive or as detailed. However, a few specific details—e.g., key dates, years of service, size of publications, etc.—can add clarifying perspective that makes the information seem more real and more readily understood.
- ◆ Shape the mini-bio to fit the predispositions of the audience that will read it, as well as the person about whom it's written. Different audiences are likely to be interested in different aspects of an individual's background, so multiple and specially targeted versions of a bio are usually much more effective than a universal version meant to serve all audiences and all occasions.
- ◆ Inclusion or omission of personal data—e.g., age, names of family, hobbies, etc.—should reflect the personal preferences of the subject and the reason the biography is being written. Some professionals see such personal information as inappropriate, but others see it as an integral part of who they are.

### **Format and organization:**

- Name, title and affiliation should be prominently featured—larger and/or bold—at the top of the page. Addresses are rarely included, but phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses may be.
- Single-space the body of the mini-bio and limit it to one page or less.
- Use third-person, news style references—last name only—unless the person is best known and most often referred to by first name, special title, or by a combination of honorific title and name.
- Arrange information in descending order of importance and/or reverse chronological order. Current activities or greatest claim to fame are usually cited first, and achievements are usually described before credentials are listed.
- Previous activities and positions are described in much less detail than current and most-recent ones.
- Describe current activities and titles, if necessary, in enough detail to make their significance clear to readers. Note that this may require describing the organizations in which the subject is active.
- Inclusion of a short quotation can make the person seem more real and show how she/he thinks.
- Date the mini-bio to document how current it is and to avoid any confusion for readers.

### **For additional information:**

Aronson & Spetner's *Public Relations Writer's Handbook*. Lexington Books: NY; 1993; pp. 43-54.  
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