Dear Readers,

You are cordially invited to relive the sold-out 38th Annual EXCEL Awards Gala through this creative cover design experience.

BY DANIELLE MOORE

04 UNDER THE COVERS

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08 HOME PAGE

Opportunities Come with Strength

New AM&P president announces Strategic Vision Task Force to ensure AM&P remains relevant to members at all career levels.

BY LARRY HOFFER
2018 EMERGING LEADERS

Danielle Gudakunst  Dorea Reeser, Ph.D.  Sara Mischo
A NEW CLASS OF LEADER

The AM&P Emerging Leaders Award celebrates outstanding association communication professionals under the age of 35 who are already making a clear difference in their organization.

As part of their award, these three individuals attended the 38th EXCEL Awards Gala and received full-conference registrations for Association Media & Publishing’s Annual Meeting.

After the glamor of the awards gala, here’s a chance to get to know these rising stars a little better.

**signature**: Who or what do you look to for inspiration when it comes to leadership?

**Reeser**: My No. 1 inspiration is my boss, Editorial Director Amanda Yarnell. It amazes me how much she gets done, especially given how many people she works with and how supportive and encouraging she is. If I can grow into even a fraction of what she is, I’d be very happy with that.

**Gudakunst**: I’ve had a lot of inspirational bosses and professors. That’s why I always try to be open and available. I want my team and coworkers to be comfortable coming to me with anything. Something that I think about a lot is that my professors and bosses trusted me. They gave me autonomy, even when it wasn’t the way they would have done it. It’s amazing what people can accomplish if you open up your expectations.

**Mischo**: I don’t look to specific people for inspiration, necessarily. But I always admire those who seize opportunities. I’m a firm believer that we all have perfect opportunities that open themselves up to us, but not everyone recognizes them. Seizing those opportunities is what allows us to grow, gain new experiences, and become better leaders.
DANIELLE GUDAKUNST  
Managing Editor, International Association of Chiefs of Police

Gudakunst is responsible for editorial planning and coordination of Police Chief magazine. She coordinates a rotating cadre of column leads and internal and external guest editors. She is also leading a full overhaul of Police Chief, including an editorial reboot and a visual redesign. Gudakunst’s efforts have led to increased collaboration with the meetings team, sponsorship team, and membership team. She has instituted monthly meetings with guest editors and has involved leadership by implementing assistant director reviews and an editorial review board, both of which did not exist before Gudakunst took the helm of the magazine.

DOREA REESER, PH.D.  
Audience Engagement Editor, Chemical & Engineering News, American Chemical Society

Reeser started a brand-new role at ACS — audience engagement editor — in the summer of 2017. She is responsible for developing campaigns and curating content to drive and grow engagement with ACS’s flagship magazine, Chemical & Engineering News. She manages C&EN’s social media channels, weekly and popup newsletters, and is leading future personalization experiences on C&EN’s primary website product.

SARA MISCHO  
Program Manager, National Student Speech Language Hearing Association

Mischo’s responsibilities include the full lifecycle of the development, implementation, maintenance, and communications/marketing of NSSLHA’s digital communications products (blog, website, social media channels, and online communities), student governance (of up to 114 student leaders), and programs and activities (scholarships, honors program, and special events). At the same time, she contributes to the overhaul of the new NSSLHA brand and maintains that branding across the national organization and through 300-plus local NSSLHA chapters. She serves as the point of contact for NSSLHA’s members-at-large, student leaders, chapters, and professionals in the fields of communication sciences and disorders.

signature: What is an important trend affecting your role as a communicator today?

Gudakunst: I would have to say budget. With advertising declining, we have had to experiment more and become more creative. We recently started adding a web article every week because it’s more cost friendly than including it in print. Now we are always looking for ways for our print and digital to work together. We are looking for new ways to drive readers from one to the other, to make them talk to each other, and to maintain the value of each.

Mischo: NSSLHA’s audience is a perpetual rotation of 18- to 24-year-olds, so it’s especially important for us to focus on the social media channels they are using instead of getting complacent with the channels we’re comfortable with. We have to be nimble and ready to change our tools if the ones we’re using aren’t working for our audience.

Reeser: Associations, in general, are really coming up against a limitation of resources. There is software that allows you to do incredible things with personalizing communication, targeting, live tracking, and so much more. But it’s expensive. Then you need someone to use it. Everyone is already wearing so many hats. I think those limitations also make it much harder to experiment and evolve.

signature: How do you see the role of associations or association leaders changing in the coming years?

Mischo: I think there’s an emerging trend of distrust between consumers and the organizations or associations they’re a part of or follow. Consumers are more inclined to trust what their peers have to say about an organization or product, rather than what the organization itself is sharing. This puts associations and association leaders in a place where they have to be more proactive and less reactive about conversations that are happening
within their fields. We need to actively drive the narrative, but also allow a space for others to share openly — then it’s the association’s role to respond appropriately, if and when necessary.

Reeser: If I had more people on my team, I’d spend a lot more time on social media talking to people. Engaging them in actual conversations is so important to creating that sense of belonging. There is also a wealth of feedback you can’t get any other way. If you can create an authentic connection, it changes the way people view you. For example, from my personal experience, I recently started using a Fitbit. I wrote a complaint about it in my feed. No tags of any kind. Within 5 minutes, they messaged me and helped me with the problem. Because of that, I’m now a die-hard Fitbit fan.

“ASSOCIATIONS GET STUCK ON TRADITIONAL MARKETING MESSAGES... LOOK FOR NEW TRADITIONS.” — Reeser

Gudakunst: We must think very carefully about where our members are and how we’re reaching them. Older members, older readers are active and participating. They are not as digitally inclined, so you need to make sure you’re reaching them where they are. Younger members, the new members you need to ensure your association sticks around, want digital. If we don’t create value for all our members and potential members, then the association has no future.

Reeser: The behind-the-scenes view — showing how passionate association staff are. Instead of just toting our successes, we could show there are real people working every day to make things go. We could create an authentic experience that more people would engage with. Associations get stuck on traditional marketing messages only. It would require a desire to grow, to explore new approaches, and look for new traditions.

“WE DON’T TALK ENOUGH...THERE IS SO MUCH WE COULD LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.” — Gudakunst

Gudakunst: We don’t talk to each other enough. There are some on the AM&P listserv and I love the opportunities you provide, but I don’t think the wider association publishing professional audience is talking enough. There is so much we could learn from each other. Challenges that associations overcome could provide guidance for others. For example, I work with police; just because someone else works with retailers doesn’t mean we can’t learn a lot from each other.

Mischo: Associations aren’t taking full advantage of their own members. Members have a lot to offer — whether it be volunteering through committees, providing feedback on what their associations are doing, being a source of content, etc. By launching our blog this past January, we’ve opened up another channel for them to share their stories with their peers. This allows us to gain insights into the topics that are most important to our members, and we can then think about new benefits, programs, activities, content, and advocacy efforts that they’d be most interested in.

“ALWAYS BE LOOKING AHEAD, ALWAYS BE THINKING ABOUT WHAT PROBLEMS YOU CAN TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO SOLVE.” — Mischo

Mischo: In grad school, we were required to read “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” by Stephen R. Covey. One quote that has remained with me to this day: “People who end up with the good jobs are the proactive ones who are solutions to problems, not problems themselves, who seize the initiative to do whatever is necessary, consistent with correct principles, to get the job done.” Not only are good leaders proactive about solving problems, but they have the foresight to look ahead and problem solve before a problem even presents itself. My advice is to always be looking ahead, always be thinking about what problems you can take the initiative to solve.

Reeser: Talk to your coworkers. Ask about their challenge points. Being an active part of a larger team means more collaboration and helping them with what they are working on. It goes both ways. I work a lot with social media. Not everyone, especially more traditional thinkers, is interested in social media. It’s important to look at things from their point of view. It allows me to offer news ways to help them.

Gudakunst: Look for opportunities to lead that are not traditional ways. Remember, they don’t have to work for you for you to lead them. I use guest editors. They are people who have more expertise in the field. They reach out to other experts and help curate content. Some of them outrank me, some of them are peers, and none of them work for me on paper, but I lead the whole group.