

POST GUILD UNIT forum



Local

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The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

February 1, 2005

Pay at The Post: The Myth of Merit

During the past year, the Guild has been analyzing wage and merit pay data at The Washington Post and sharing our results in a series of bulletins. We have shown that even within individual departments there are great disparities in salaries and merit pay awards by age, gender and race. In this last bulletin in the series, we look a little closer at one aspect of unfairness that many at The Post have found particularly discouraging: Although merit pay is touted as an important tool for bringing highly performing but underpaid employees up to par with their better-paid peers, most merit pay goes to those who already earn the most.

That's important, because management touts merit pay as a key corrective to the microscopic salary increases it tries to foist upon us during contract negotiations. "Sure the guaranteed raises are low," they say, "but those employees who really deserve more will get their reward in merit increases." As the data below show, that's just not true.

Post managers are not shy in bargaining about trying to squeeze every last nickel out of our labor agreement, no matter how high the company stock soars. It used to be easier for us to push back. But many years ago, after a bitter strike by the Pressmen's Union, Post management was able to take away something that had strengthened our ability to win solid annual pay raises: a union shop. Today membership in the Guild is voluntary, and many employees covered by the Guild contract think they are saving money by not joining. That is a bad gamble, especially in a contract negotiating year. If you are not a member, you need to step up to the plate now so the Guild can go to the bargaining table this fall with a clear mandate from all of us: Sure, keep the merit pay flowing, but we also must have solid contractual wage increases for everyone. The Guild represents about 1,400 of us at The Post — that's a big gorilla for them to deal with, if we stick together. But if the many of you who are free riders don't get on board and help, then no complaints in November. You can take what the company offers, and that will be that.

End of speech. Now, here's a recap of key points from previous bulletins in this series, followed by some new information that breaks out merit pay by job classification and salary. (Data are the latest available from the company, covering the three years ending Dec. 2001. We will soon receive from management the new data set they are required to share with us, which will cover the past three years, and we will share those details as we analyze them.) See analysis on page 2. —Rick Weiss

The Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild
Presents

DIVERSITY AT THE WASHINGTON POST
A Black History Month Production

February 10th, 2005 at 12 noon. Lunch will be served

Metro AME Church, 1518 M St, NW

RSVP: tharris@wbng.org

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Fact: Men at The Post earn more than women. The average full-time salary for men covered by the Guild contract was \$62,322. For women it was \$52,240.

African American:	\$43,036
Hispanic:	\$55,790
Asian:	\$56,199
White:	\$65,286

Fact: Race matters even within individual departments, so it's not just that there are more minorities in lower-paid job classifications. Here are some average hourly pay rates by department and race:

	Asian	Af. Am.	Hispanic	White
Accounting	\$24.14	\$17.48	n/a	\$19.51
Advertising	\$23.56	\$19.11	\$21.06	\$24.88
Sys. & Eng.	\$34.44	\$23.86	\$30.70	\$32.34
News	\$32.19	\$31.82	\$34.09	\$37.39

Fact: Men are more likely than women to get merit pay.

About 31 percent of men got at least one merit raise during the three-year period, but only 25 percent of women.

Fact: Men's merit raises are larger than women's.

For each of the three years analyzed, the average salary increase attributable to merit pay (in some cases reflecting multiple merit increases in a single year) was \$2,900 for men and \$1,920 for women.

Fact: Youth and merit don't mix.

Only 9 percent of women under 30 got any merit pay during the three-year period, compared to 23 percent of women in their fifties. (For men, those numbers were 14 percent and 30 percent, respectively.)

Fact: The best way to get a merit increase is to already earn a lot.

Ten percent of women earning \$50,000 to \$59,999 got a merit increase during the three-year period, compared to 64 percent of women earning \$100,000 or more. (For men, those numbers were 20 percent and 69 percent, respectively.)

Fact: The biggest merit pay awards go to those who already earn the most.

For women who got any merit pay during the three-year period, the average weekly amount of that merit increase was \$14 for women earning \$40,000 to \$49,999 but was \$69 for women earning \$100,000 or more. (For men, the numbers for those salary ranges were \$15 and \$100 per week, respectively.)

Finally, here are some data we recently pulled out showing the average annual salaries for some specific job classifications within some of the bigger departments so you can see where you stand among your peers — and the percentage of employees in each of those job classifications who received any merit pay during the three-year period.

	Avg salary	Received any merit over 3 yrs
Columnists	\$117,066	61%
Critic	\$98,989	43%
Reporters	\$87,105	48%
Copy Editor	\$64,355	18%
Outside Sales	\$61,737	25%
Librarians	\$55,874	38%
T-4 Prg./Analyst	\$45,979	17%
Admin. Staff Ass.	\$42,985	26%
Telephone Sales	\$40,634	0%
In/Out Sales	\$38,167	0%
Snr. Staff Assoc.	\$35,924	17%

To read previous bulletins in this series, go to www.wbng.org, click on "Newsroom," then click on "Bulletins," then "Washington Post" and look for the entries dated June 21 and March 29.

The Guild would like to have your home e-mail address to keep you apprised of important news without violating rules on the use of Post computers. Please send your contact information to: tharris@wbng.org.