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Announcer: Welcome to HII Talking Points, a Huntington Ingalls Industries Podcast. Twice a quarter we'll sit down with HII leaders to discuss topics of interest in our company and industry.

Phoebe Richards: Hi, everyone, and welcome to another episode of HII Talking Points. I'm your host, Phoebe Richards, and with me today is HII's executive vice president of communications, Jerri Dickeski. Jerri, thanks for joining.

Jerri Dickeski: Thank you for having me.

Phoebe Richards: So, as head of communications, you're always involved behind the scenes of our podcasts, so it's great to have you on the mic this time in person. So, employees and stakeholders see and hear HII's communications year-round, but they may not know what goes into creating a brand for a Fortune 400 company. I'd love to get your thoughts today on HII's communications strategy and hear how it's been impacted particularly by the coronavirus. So, with that, let's get started. First, talk a little bit about your background and how you came to lead HII's corporate communications team.

Jerri Dickeski: Okay. Well, I actually graduated from college and went right into PR. I worked in a couple different other places, nonprofits, and I came to work for HII, which of course – at that point I came to work for Newport News Shipbuilding – in January 1991 as editor for a magazine they had called *Masthead*. I did that for years. Then I started managing media relations, and then I became director of the department in '99. We merged with Northrop Grumman in 2001, so I ran the sector communications. Then Northrop Grumman put the shipbuilding divisions together, and I became VP for all of communications for the shipbuilding divisions. And of course when we spun, I became the executive vice president for communications for HII. So that all took about 30 years to happen.

Phoebe Richards: What do you oversee in your role today?

Jerri Dickeski: Well, I guess the simplest way to frame that is everything that I do really, for the most part, is externally looking or externally facing. That's advertising, social media, crisis communications, press, public affairs, support-capture efforts with the D.C. group and thought leadership. There's also, of course, enterprise communications. We support earnings releases, earnings communication. So anything that comes out from – to HII all comes out from my team.

Phoebe Richards: So, Jerri, how do you work with other members of HII's executive team?

Jerri Dickeski: Well, very closely, actually. It depends on what the project is, but I work with almost every single member of the executive team in some capacity, and my team works with them. Certainly it's not just me. I think the biggest example I can give you is the work that our team does with the government and customer relations office in D.C. to help achieve our strategic objectives, which for the

most part means authorization appropriations for our products. We do advertising, radio, print, digital, to kind of wallpaper the landscape so when the lobbyists are talking to members of Congress or when our customer relations folks are talking to our customers, there's an opportunity to reinforce those messages to a broader audience. And that's something that was very important, and we spend a lot of time and effort, because ultimately that's what we do. We have to get funded. We have to have our products built, and our job is to help that happen.

Phoebe Richards: So over your decades-long career, how have you seen corporate communications change, particularly with the explosion of digital communications and social media?

Jerri Dickeski: So there're several ways. I think that the first way you just mentioned – social media – has really become the conventional media now. In my opinion, it's overtaken what we used to consider deadlines for papers or the three networks or a 5 o'clock deadline -- something would run the next day. That no longer happens. It's a 24/7 market, so you have to be prepared to respond 24/7. I think the other big thing is when I first became part of this business, you measured success in very subjective methodology like column inches. Nowadays we actually have analytics, where we can actually look at and measure our effectiveness for different audiences, which is great, because that's always been a real challenge for folks in communications. And I think the third thing is nowadays we can target our audiences much more in a streamlined fashion than we used to. You used to have to advertise to everyone to reach a few. Nowadays you can do geotargeting. You can reach 50 people if you want to. There are different ways to do that. Everyone's familiar with using social media to do that. That's probably the best and most effective way, but that's a big change.

Phoebe Richards: And do you see HII doing more with digital and more with social media in the next five, ten years?

Jerri Dickeski: Absolutely. I think one of the things for me that drives social media for the most part is the fact that we have 42,000 employees, and only about half of them are connected digitally at work. So we have to find other methods to reach them. The divisions and the corporate team have done things like set up apps to try to reach them on their phones, because the generations that we're hiring now, they live and breathe on their phones. So that's a good thing that we have another avenue to reach them, because before it was just we had to mail to their homes, which as everyone knows, not many people really use that as a major form of communication any longer.

Phoebe Richards: Right. So, switching gears a little, in episodes with our CEO Mike Petters, he's talked about the importance of communications when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic. Can you talk a little bit about how the communications team responded and acted in that crisis?

Jerri Dickeski: Yes. Okay. I would say quickly, thoroughly and continuously. And when I say communications team, that means the corporate team and then all teams at three divisions. This was a full-on, full-court-press effort and a very big contact sport, because we were communicating to different audiences, and we had to use every single method that we had at our disposal, because this was happening in real time. We were making changes, benefit changes, providing flexibility, communicating case rates, things like that, in real time.

And that was very important, I think, because particularly in a crisis – which I definitely view this as crisis communications – in a crisis, information is something that people are really, really hungry for, because there's so much unknown. So the team, I think, performed extraordinarily well. Each division set up websites. The corporate team tried to have all that information at one place. It was probably three weeks of 14-, 15-hour days for a lot of us, and that's our job, and so I'm really proud of the team for doing that, and we continue to do it. The pace has gotten a little more regular, because we've put the protocols in place not only to communicate it but also from the division standpoint, particularly the shipyards, to best handle it to keep people as safe as possible.

Phoebe Richards: Why do you think it's important for members of the community or for employees to hear that kind of information from their employer?

Jerri Dickeski: Well, from the beginning we knew we wanted to establish ourselves as the trusted provider of information, because, in particular, at the beginning, you may recall, there was so much information out there, and some of that was misinformation. So we felt like we, more than anyone, particularly since we were staying open and asking people to continue to work, even though we were providing flexibility for them to deal with family issues, etcetera, that we needed to provide them continuous and correct information on a regular basis so we could be the go-to source to find out what was going on both within their workplace, as well as their communities.

Phoebe Richards: So, crises aside, what would you say is your favorite part of your job?

Jerri Dickeski: I think my favorite part, and it always has been, frankly, I remember walking into Newport News Shipbuilding the first time in January of 1991 and just going, "Wow." I mean, I grew up here, but I've never been behind the gates. So I think it's what people do. It's the ability and the great privilege to tell 42,000 stories. We have 42,000 employees, and I've always felt that the greatest benefit to me has really been able to tell the stories of how hard they work, how dedicated and committed they are and how they are every day being something larger than themselves.

Phoebe Richards: Can you give a few examples, even just one or two, of how the communications team pulls these employee stories in and shares them?

Jerri Dickeski: Sure. I'll give you one that's actually very timely, and that's Veteran's Day. By the time this airs, this will already have ran, but we did a Veteran's Day ad, where we pulled together 12 employees from all three divisions and corporate who had formerly served in the military in one of the services, and we had them do selfies to provide the artwork for the ad. Now, this was different. We usually have the cameras, the professional time to take photographs. But given it was COVID-19, we really decided that – "Let's do it like everyone else is doing it. Let's have selfies." So that's an opportunity where we got to show folks that not only served at some point in their life but continue to serve in their divisions and at corporate for HII. So that's just one. There's hundreds upon thousands of examples. But one of the things I've always been really committed to is when we show pictures of people, 99 percent of the time I want it to be our people. I don't want to use stock photography or models or anything. I want it to be our people, because that's an opportunity for us to tell those stories.

Phoebe Richards: That's great. All right, Jerri, thank you for taking the time to chat with me, and thank you to our listeners for tuning in.

Jerri Dickeski: Thanks. Thanks for asking me. I enjoyed it.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to HII Talking Points. This podcast was produced by Huntington Ingalls Industries' corporate communications team. We welcome your feedback and ideas for future podcasts at www.HuntingtonIngalls.com/podcast.

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