Web Content Writer

General overview

      A *web content writer* specializes in writing publishable material for websites. Depending on his or her employer, a content writer may be required to specialize in one topic area. Unique job titles are associated with distinct kinds of content writing; these titles include *copywriter*, *technical writer*, *ghostwriter, professional writer,* and *blogger*. Content writers may alternatively be called *content developers*; however, this title also denotes jobs outside of the scope of content writing (such as content editing).

Typical employers

      Non-profit organizations and companies that use websites alike hire web content writers. Sometimes they are hired by designated search-engine optimization firms or marketing firms ("6 Entry Level Careers In Social Media And Digital Marketing," n.d.). They may be hired permanently or contracted to complete specific projects. According to O*NET, the top industries for writers and authors other than technical writers are self-employed and information industries ("Writers and Authors," n.d.). The top industries for technical writers are professional, scientific, and technical service industries and the manufacturing industry.

      It is possible to be self-employed as a content writer—even without making it one's career. For example, an individual can run advertisements on a personal website and be compensated per page view.

Job duties and responsibilities

      The specific tasks of a web content writer include researching, writing, rewriting, and publishing content according to instructions provided by a client or employer. Some non-profit organizations hire content writers to provide educational content (wikipedia.org and brainpickings.org are examples). Companies, on the other hand, hire content writers to generate profit. Copywriters are hired to produce advertisements and publicity material to generate profit directly ("Copy Writers," n.d.). Content writers are hired by search-engine optimization firms to increase page views or as part of a team that writes enticing content to "go viral." In turn, companies are paid more by advertisers based on increased page views.

Typical workday

      Content writing can feasibly be done from home, in a café, or anywhere with Wi-Fi; however, some employers require content writers to work in an office. The typical workday of a content writer varies depending on whether he or she is salaried or freelancing. A freelancer could be paid be the assignment, hour, or word and should manage his or her time accordingly.

      A content writer spends a sizable portion of his or her day writing. While such work can be completed in solitude, it may be necessary to work with others while completing an of the following tasks: receiving assignments, consulting external sources, collaborating, networking, having work revised, and responding to feedback ("Web

Content Writer: Job Description, Duties and Requirements," n.d.).

Web content writers use technology such as word processors to write and revise their work on the computer; the Internet to do research; and email to communicate with others electronically (for any of the reasons described above).

Educational requirements and other qualifications

Many salaried content writing jobs require applicants to have a bachelor's degree in any subject ("Writers and Authors," n.d.). A subset of these requires a specialized bachelor's degree in English, Creative Writing, or Journalism. Technical writers may be required to have a background in science or engineering. Copywriters may be required to have a background in advertising or marketing.

Related skills, interests, and qualities

Hopeful content writers should be exceptional writers in the language required by their employers. This will enable them to produce content that is both easy-to-read and engaging. They should have good reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, judgment and decision-making, and time management skills ("Writers and Authors," n.d.). These skills will help them to research for their articles, make decisions about what to believe and what to include, and complete their articles on time with a reduced level of stress. Furthermore, content writers should be socially perceptive, dependable, and achievement-driven; this will allow them to work harmoniously with others and develop positive working relationships with clients or employers. Finally, they should pay attention to detail and be persistent.

Relevance of Psychology undergraduate degree

Having an undergraduate degree in psychology is useful for hopeful content writers. First, it fulfills the educational requirement of having a bachelor's degree. Students also develop necessary skills such as reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, judgment and decision-making, and time management skills ("Writers and Authors," n.d.).

There are also specific courses that would benefit the hopeful content writer. For example, Introduction to Research Methods in Psychology (PSYC 2001) and Introduction to Statistics in Psychology (PSYC 2002) are required courses in psychology. Students learn how to interpret data; this skill would be invaluable when researching for a writing assignment or when trying to make sense of website analytics. In Introduction to Psychology I and II (PSYC 1001 and 1002) students learn about a wide variety of psychological concepts that will be useful in research and in working with others. In Introduction to Cognitive Psychology (PSYC 2700) students learn about specific methodologies that could be useful for them to understand. For example, eye-tracking studies are constantly telling us more about how to catch a reader's eye. In Psychology of Motivation and Emotion (PSYC 3405), students might learn information that would help them to understand, for example, what makes a webpage "go viral." They could apply this knowledge to write enticing articles.

Salary potential

In the United States of America, the median salary of writers and authors

(including copywriters) in 2012 was $55,420 annually or $26.89 hourly ("Writers and Authors," n.d.). The median salary of technical writers was $65,500 annually or $31.49 hourly.

Job outlook

The projected demand for content writers is growing—at a projected rate of 3-9% over ten years ("Writers and Authors," n.d.). There is more information being published now than at any other point in history and search-engine optimization firms are being created to keep abreast of changes being made to Internet search algorithms.

To apply

To apply for this job, look for postings on social media, including LinkedIn, and career search websites by typing in key words such as "web content writer," "content developer," "technical writer," or "professional writer." Directly contact websites of interest to see if they are hiring. Have a portfolio prepared to share with anyone who you contact!

To know more

The TalentEgg Career Incubator article, "4 Paths to a Career in Technical Writer" is a good starting point for anybody who is interested in technical writing: http://talentegg.ca/incubator/2013/03/05/4-paths-career-technical-writing/

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook*—specifically the section titled "Writers and Authors" contains a job description and more information (including salary information, job prospects, and more): http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/writers-and-authors.htm.

For a Canadian job description, see Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's webpage "Unit Group: 5121 Authors and writers": http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/ProfileQuickSearch.aspx?val=5&val1=5121&val65=*

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