

The Web Content Specialist – Job Description

Purpose of the role

The Web Content Specialist (WCS) is responsible for creating and/or acquiring content for websites, email newsletters and other online communications media such as podcasts.

The nature of online content

Online content can take many forms, including plain text, links, database content, still images (illustrations, photographs, diagrams), animation, audio, video, interactive devices (forms, forums, chat rooms, polls, questionnaires, etc.). The main responsibility of the WCS will be for the creation or acquisition of verbal content (primarily textual but also audio), although a close relationship with other media specialists, such as graphic designers, will almost certainly be required.

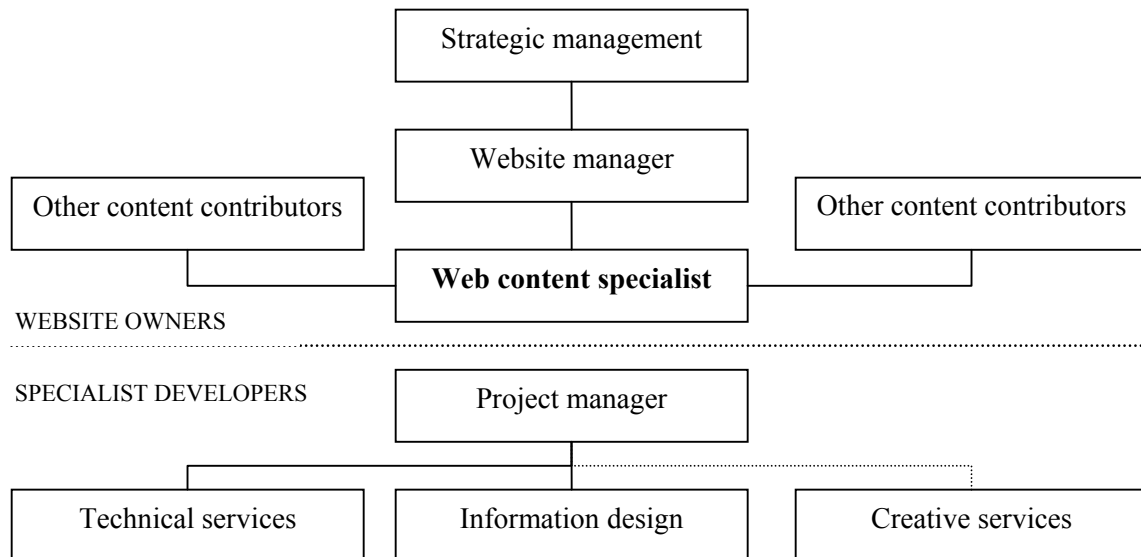
Parties in a website project team

There are two main parties in a website project team – website owners and specialist developers:

- **Website owners** are typically responsible for strategic direction, audience research, editorial policy and content ownership.
- **Specialist developers** are typically responsible for project management, information design, providing creative services (graphics, sound, video, etc.) and providing technical services (systems design, programming, etc.).

The overall project may comprise a single, integrated team or, more usually, a customer/supplier relationship, using internal or external specialist services.

Reporting relationships



The most usual reporting relationship for the WCS will be within the team of the website owners, reporting to the website manager / editor. In some circumstances, the website owners may outsource some or all aspects of the role to the specialist developers.

The WCS role may be full or part-time. It may be combined with other duties within the team of the website owners or the specialist developers. For example, the responsibilities of WCS may be integrated within a more general role such as marketing specialist or journalist, or be extended to include some technical or creative responsibilities (such as website authoring or graphic design).

For the purposes of this job description, we will assume that the position of WCS is full-time and has not been extended to include any other responsibilities.

Other content management responsibilities

The role of the WCS is complicated by the fact that all members of the website team have some content management responsibility:

<i>Role</i>	<i>Content management responsibility</i>
Strategic management	Forming editorial policy
Website manager	Co-ordinating all activities Acting as overall editor
Website content specialist	Implementing editorial policy Creating and sourcing content
Other content contributors	Supplying additional content
Project manager	Co-ordinating the development team
Information design	Defining the structure of content
Creative services	Creating graphical and audio-visual content
Technical services	Creating / sourcing content management solutions

Work elements

1. Design and development

[Note: The WCS is unlikely to be primarily responsible for design and development. They will, however, contribute an important user-orientated perspective to the process.]

- Contribute to audience research as a basis for design of the site.
- Contribute to the top-level and detailed design of the website (or e-newsletter, etc.), with a particular focus on the ways in which the goals for the site and the needs of users can be met through the provision of appropriate content.
- Contribute to the process of information design, to ensure that content is appropriately structured to meet the goals for the site and the needs of users.
- Contribute to documentation of the design.
- Contribute to the selection or design of appropriate content management software.

2. Co-ordination and planning

[Note: The WCS is more likely to be responsible for implementation of editorial policy than its formation. However, they may still have a degree of latitude in scheduling content creation/acquisition, in managing the work of additional content contributors and in working within agreed budgets.]

- Schedule the creation/acquisition of content in accordance with editorial policy.
- Allocate tasks to additional content contributors.
- Manage the creation/acquisition of content in accordance with the schedule.
- Manage costs within agreed budgets.

3. Content creation

- Prepare textual content for websites (including feature articles, advertising copy, database content, links, FAQs, etc.).
- Prepare textual content for e-newsletters.
- Design web forms.
- Prepare textual content for distribution as SMS messages.
- Prepare scripts for audio voiceovers, for downloading from the site or distribution as 'podcasts'.
- Specify the multimedia content needed to support or work alongside textual content.
- Locate and select appropriate, existing multimedia content, including still images, animations, music and video.
- Liaise with multimedia specialists in the creation of any new multimedia content.
- Edit copy received from additional content contributors.
- Clear copyright for the use of any existing content.

4. Website promotion

- Use metadata and other methods to optimise search engine positions.
- Communicate with other site owners in order to maximise incoming links.
- Ensure the site is listed in relevant indexes and directories.

5. Communication with users

- Respond to user enquiries, comments and suggestions.
- Moderate forums.
- Moderate chat sessions.
- Edit and/or approve content contributions made by users.

6. Content maintenance

- Update and maintain time-sensitive material.

- Maintain menus, indexes and directories within the site.
- Archive and backup content (where this is not automatic).

7. Evaluation

- Conduct or commission ongoing audience research.
- Compile and analyse website usage statistics.
- Obtain and analyse user feedback.
- Recommend changes in editorial policy and site design.