Exploring CAREERS

Careers in Information Technology

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Social Media Specialist

Dozens of social media–related job titles have flooded employment websites in the past few years. Among the most common are social media strategist, online community manager, search engine optimization specialist, and social media marketing coordinator. In April 2014 a search for the keywords *social media* on the online jobs site Indeed.com returned almost forty-six thousand jobs. It seems as if every business is trying to use social media to improve sales and customer relations. However, the role of the social media specialist is so new that there is little consensus about what skills a specialist needs—or even what the job actually entails. Although this can be confusing for those who are interested in pursuing a career in social media, it also means that job seekers can help define their own jobs.

The most basic task of a social media specialist is to maintain and expand a company's social

At a Glance:
Social Media Specialist

Minimum Educational Requirements
Bachelor's degree or equivalent

Personal Qualities
Excellent people skills; interest in social media; strong written communication skills

Certification and Licensing
None

Working Conditions
Indoors

Salary Range
About $31,860 to $45,373

Number of Jobs
As of 2012 about 229,100*

Future Job Outlook
Growth rate of 12 percent through 2022*

*Numbers are for public relations specialists, a group that includes social media specialists.

strategies and search engine optimization (the practice of using keywords and links to increase the likelihood that content will be returned by a search engine). The more specialists know about the business of online interaction, the more valuable they will be in the job market.

Social media specialists usually concentrate on one or two knowledge areas to set themselves apart. Some specialists focus on advertising, others on customer service. And while all social media specialists must write well and enjoy writing often, many focus on generating great content. Specialists can also focus on analyzing and interpreting the vast amount of data social media sites generate.

How Do You Become a Social Media Specialist?

Education

Most social media specialists have bachelor's degrees, often in communications or marketing. However, social media specialists can have any educational background as long as they can demonstrate their skills in social media—which always includes strong writing skills. Although most large companies expect job seekers to have a bachelor's degree, they still base their hiring decision on a candidate's online presence and experience.

Volunteer Work and Internships

Interning as a social media assistant or volunteering to assist a company with its social media strategy is the best way to gain the experience needed to land an entry-level job in social media. Students can do this while in college—or even while in high school. Experts suggest that anyone interested in a career in social media first become a super user—or an expert with the most popular social media platforms. Next they should seek an internship or offer to assist a company or nonprofit with their social media strategy for free. That experience can be documented in a personal website or blog, which can itself be marketed through social media. Because a personal website will be one of the first things a prospective employer sees when running an online search on a job candidate, it should double as a résumé, highlighting the applicant's accomplishments and professionalism.

Social Media Club

PO Box 14881
San Francisco, CA 94114
website: http://socialmediaclub.org

The Social Media Club's mission is to promote media literacy and standard technologies, encourage ethical behavior, and share best practices among social media professionals. The organization's website contains links to several club blogs and social media events, as well as general educational materials.

Social Media Professional Association

530 Lytton Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94301
phone: (650) 600-3844
website: www.socialmediaprofessionalassociation.com

The Social Media Professional Association is an organization that provides training, education, and certification in social media marketing. The website contains links to articles and research about social media in a marketing context.

Social Media Today

website: http://socialmediatoday.com

Social Media Today is an independent online community for professionals in public relations, marketing, advertising, and other disciplines that rely on social media. The website hosts lively debates about the tools, platforms, companies, and personalities that are revolutionizing the way information is consumed. Articles are contributed by professionals who work with social media.

Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA)

65 E. Wacker Place, Suite 500
Chicago, IL 60601
phone: (312) 853-4400
website: www.womma.org

WOMMA is the official trade association dedicated to word-of-mouth and social media marketing. The website contains information about best practices, regulations, and opportunities within digital media. Various online publications are available to nonmembers at no cost, as is WOMMA's industry blog.

Interview with a Wireless Network Architect

Wil Ankerstjerne is a senior wireless solutions architect for Aspire Technology Partners in New Jersey. He has more than fifteen years of wireless technology consulting experience and has managed more than 250 wireless projects, including Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Panera Bread. Ankerstjerne has been a keynote speaker at several high-profile industry events and recently conducted a webinar for Fluke Networks on the latest wireless networking standard. He spoke with the author about his career.

Q: Why did you become a wireless network architect?

A: I got a break during the Y2K crisis [the concern that computer systems that stored year values as two digits (e.g., 99 for 1999) would malfunction on January 1, 2000] and was hired as a project manager for an IT solutions firm. I was doing a lot of traditional network installations, but after a while it wasn't very challenging. When you have a wired network, the main problem you run into is how to run a cable from point A to point B. But a wireless signal can be affected by anything and everything. When I discovered how cool wireless could be, I shifted my focus.

Q: Can you describe your typical workday?

A: I spend a lot of time walking around with floor plans and doing calculations, and then factoring in all of the elements in the environment that the calculations just can't account for—like the density of the furniture or the moisture in the air. Essentially, I'm making a string

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