

Characteristics of a good content writer-what to look for?

The role of a content manager and the process of developing content for a web site is often an unclear task.

Generally, when a company decides to redesign their site, they do not take the task of content creation and management fully into the scope of the project, and very rarely understand the nature of the role, the process or the deliverables involved.

It is extremely difficult to find the perfect resource – but you need to know what you are looking for in order to find the right person. Finding someone to manage the content process for your website requires the person to have (some of) the following characteristics:

? **Self-Running:** The person in this role needs to be self-running and 'get it' by understanding what is required to develop website content. Each project and situation is different. This person will need to manage a very daunting and deadline driven process. Digging for information, pushing to make deadlines and running solo without much guidance is par for the course.

? **Organized:** The content manager needs to have the organizational and management skills to manage the process of content development. This generally requires a project management or producer mentality – the ability to set and make deadlines, manage resources and budgeted time, set expectations and communicate effectively. This person needs to be detail-oriented and able to handle multiple deliverables at one time.

? **A writer or editor:** The ability to write and edit is a critical component of the role however this person may hire other copywriters to actually produce final content if his or her style or writing ability does not match the needs of the project. Editing skills are necessary to help conform the style and tone of various marketing materials or previous site copy. Having a background in marketing is helpful but not mandatory.

? **Web savvy:** The content manager doesn't need to know the ins and outs of HTML but should be familiar with enough markup to call out links and bolded or italicized text. They need to understand how web writing differs from regular marketing copy. Navigational copy needs to be addressed (some call it 'navitorial copy') along with

descriptions of images and page titles. Paragraphs need to be short and action oriented.

? **Versed in information design:** The content manager and/or copywriter should work very closely with the information designer on the web team. The content manager, if this is one of his or her skills, may actually produce what will become the content outline and the initial wire frames for the project. This means the content manager needs to understand the nuances of navigation, labeling and action-oriented copy.

? **knows the client's industry:** This is preferred, though not required. A smart individual can interview, research and gain insight into the client's industry fairly quickly. It is a bonus if the content manager has background in the client's particular industry, along with the audience who will be interacting with the site.

This list of characteristics represents a best-case scenario for a web project -- especially one with no existing content and a tight deadline. If you invest in the right resource, you can also expect this person to help write and manage the creation of content for marketing efforts (on and offline), product documentation, site updates and more. It is a worthwhile effort to screen and hire the right individual. Be aware: You might need to go through more than one or two people to find an ideal fit.