

A FUTURE IN **DIGITAL COMMUNICATION**





WHAT'S THE STORY WITH DIGITAL COMMUNICATION?

An exponentially growing industry, digital communication consists of telling stories and communicating via digital platforms made possible through computers, mobile technologies and networks. But this field is about more than 'media with digital tools'. It is equally about interaction, user engagement and forming of communities.

Today's digital audiences are no longer receivers of messages that were pre-produced. 'Users' are now 'co-authors'; they co-construct digital communications, a brand, or the hype about a product.

Co-construction occurs daily in large and small interactions between digital companies and users/customers. A bank or an airline might give a space for their customers to co-create content, as might your local bakery or your library. This is about sharing an online social space and not just broadcasting marketing messages.

Digital media professionals optimise digital tools, media and platforms to engage and empower users, customers and audiences. They are strategic thinkers who turn stories into community events.

Are you driven by a thirst for new knowledge and skills in cutting-edge digital platforms? Do you live and breathe social media? Are you a natural organiser and leader? Do you tend to see the big picture? Do you love to tell stories using image, sound and words? A career in digital communication could be a big part of your career story.

Digital designer – co-ordinates and delivers internal and external communication programmes. Establishes and nurtures key digital assets and communities. Manages product content (video, photography, reviews) with all key media channels, and search engine marketing and optimisation. Develops marketing collateral for events, provides design support and services (including for the customer network) and assists with product launches.

User experience (UX) designer – keeps up-to-date with the UX industry and best practice. Conducts user research and usability testing. Gathers and reports feedback from user groups and focus groups. Tests and provides feedback on designs, prototypes and live websites. Continuously monitors the company's online and social media platforms for improvement opportunities and to review projects.

Digital content manager – produces, improves and maintains content to achieve comprehensive communication goals. Develops a content strategy with short-term and long-term goals. Creatively produces, updates, and edits digital content across audio-visual assets and text. Optimises content presentation, distribution and accessibility. Manages content systems for online and social media channels.

Digital analyst – monitors and measures digital presence, media traffic and user engagement. Identifies opportunities, content visibility, customer loyalty, and media outreach. Analyses cross-channel social media usage and identifies new opportunities for customer relations. Performs usability, content and media audits and delivers detailed analytics to the chief digital officer or strategist.

SALARY GUIDELINES

Pay rates vary according to location, size of company and status of clients.

	Salary depending on experience (per year)
Digital marketing manager	\$39,800–\$91,800
Digital designer	\$33,000–\$72,500
User experience (UX) designer	\$34,000–\$122,500

Sources: www.payscale.com, Careers NZ, www.glassdoor.com, 2017 Salary Guides Hudson, Trade Me.

Salary range is indicative of the NZ job market at the time of publication and should only be used as a guideline.

SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

Production and critical thinking skills

- Provide visual, audio and textual narratives, with effective and innovative digital content
- Recognise new creative markets as they emerge and design new workflows
- Identify emerging technologies and turn into innovative communication opportunities
- Evaluate hot spots and review customer engagements with social media campaigns

People and management skills

- Work collaboratively in an interdisciplinary setting
- Encourage and manage role-switching and agile workflows. Communicate and build rapport with people at all levels

Content creation skills

- Produce high quality content for print, moving image, online and mobile applications
- Write, edit, create and manipulate digital assets in platform-appropriate styles
- Implement linear and nonlinear narratives, develop and design digital assets and communications for commercial, entertainment, educational and not-for-profit purposes

Digital knowledge

- Advanced level of digital and visual literacies
- Digital media platforms and strategies
- Digital project management, workflows, best practice

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Digitally curious, early adopter
- A problem-solver and agile thinker
- Creative and imaginative
- Strives in a just-on-time production environment
- Seeks new opportunities and innovation
- Comfortable with constant change

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Digital communication can be studied at postgraduate level. Options include Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in Communication Studies, Master of Communication Studies, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy.

Research specialisations are broad and combine fields related to communication studies with disciplines such as art, design and creative industries, film, television and performance and cultural, social and anthropological studies.

THE AUT APPROACH

Because the Digital Communication major sits in the communication studies degree, graduates have the opportunity to develop high-level communication skills, people skills and team and leadership capabilities.

AUT graduates benefit from experiential learning, input from guest lecturers and industry experts, projects in collaboration with the industry and field trips to innovative tech companies that are advancing the digital media landscape.



Christopher Lloyd

Senior User Experience Strategist, Digital Arts Network

Bachelor of Communication Studies in Digital Media*

Bachelor of Communication Studies (Honours)

"What I find exciting about digital media is that we're beginning to see the boundaries between digital and physical experiences eroding. This means that designing end-to-end customer experiences for human needs is paramount.

User-centric approach

As user experience strategist I help our clients deliver great experiences to their users, staff and visitors across diverse digital channels and devices. This involves moving between big picture strategy and the intimate details of technical and design implementation.

As part of my role I design and conduct different forms of user research, from contextual interviews to co-design workshops. I work directly with business and technology stakeholders to facilitate their alignment around a project vision whether it be through scamps and prototypes or detailed documentation.

Challenges in user experience design

The digital landscape is changing rapidly, and has always done so. There's lots of noise as new technologies such as the block chain, augmented reality, artificial intelligence and machine learning come into the marketplace to supplement our everyday lives.

I believe the challenge that is easy to forget is that we're designing for people, not computers. We need to first identify the human problems we're trying to solve, then apply technology to solve these problems.

Looking into the future, digital is becoming increasingly 'visible' with the current interfaces on our phones and computers giving way to ones that are more embedded, conversational and ultimately more human.

Discovering my passion

I love working in this area but I didn't initially plan to study the Digital Media major when I came to AUT. The great thing about the communication studies degree is that it gives you the opportunity to explore many different avenues. I originally wanted to do TV, but the more I explored digital media the more I loved it. Both the theory and practice really appealed to me.

I've had plenty of career opportunities too, working with clients in finance, education, transport, technology and tourism across New Zealand, Australia and the United States."

EMPLOYER COMMENT

"Chris showed aptitude in both communications and digital product design. He was also able to show impressive extra-curricular experience, including lecturing and commercial project experience. In our experience, Bachelor of Communication Studies graduates are extremely capable, curious and engaged. Chris was a high achiever but he demonstrated a desire to stretch into new areas of digital user experience design, strategy and delivery. This thirst for knowledge is vital to keep pace with digital change.

There is a huge breadth of skillsets needed in today's digital landscape. Students might choose to specialise or be a generalist – developing a specialist craft can give students a better grounding as a career starting point. Whichever the path, students must want to continuously learn."

Stephanie Creasy

Managing Director, Digital Arts Network

USEFUL WEBSITES

Salt

www.welovesalt.com/nz

Commercial Communications Council

www.commscouncil.nz

Designers Institute of New Zealand

www.designersinstitute.nz


FURTHER INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date information on studying digital communication and the Bachelor of Communication Studies, visit www.aut.ac.nz/digital-media

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: www.aut.ac.nz/enquire

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CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information:

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EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

For other Future Career Sheets visit:


www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets

For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through <https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>


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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, September 2020.

