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## A FUTURE IN 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.

## **OUTLOOK AND TRENDS**

#### **Essential foundation**

Digital communication is a foundation skill for most professions today. Strategic digital communication is a rapidly growing industry and offers numerous new job opportunities beyond traditional media career paths – even in economies where jobs are scarce.

#### **Growth continues**

By the end of 2016:

- Half of the world's population (3.77 bn) had become active internet users
- 37% (2.78 bn) had at least one social media account
- Mobile subscriptions (8.05 bn) had outrun the number of people in the world (108%).

Source: https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview

#### New Zealand's spending on digital

New Zealand's spend on digital advertising and promotion continues to grow at an average rate of 10% per year. There is strong demand for people with specialist knowledge of new and emerging digital platforms. Globally two-thirds of revenue growth from consumers and advertising will be digital for entertainment and media industries.

Source: PWC 2020-2024 Global Entertainment and Media Outlook

#### Start as a generalist

Strong demand for professionals is driven by the sheer numbers of digital media users and the speed of change in the environment. But that change can make specific skill sets outmoded almost overnight.

There's a major trend towards training as a generalist and building interdisciplinary skills and approaches. These include development of higher level critical thinking skills and the ability to analyse, facilitate and manage the whole production cycle.

#### Interdisciplinary skills

High level interdisciplinary skills are hugely important and open up opportunities across a wide spectrum. Students in digital communication learn to be strategic thinkers, future-proof planners and agile project managers. They are familiar with emerging trends and technologies and they foresee how audiences engage with new media before it happens. They no longer merely produce individual communication messages but advise on and manage the entire digital strategy of an organisation.

#### **Digital strategy**

The role of digital communication in developing closer relationships with customers and better understanding of their needs is now central to being a digital strategist. For example, digital profiles of customers in the insurance industry will be used to anticipate and respond proactively to changing demands, shape services and communications around customer preferences and develop more active and enduring relationships.



## WORK SETTINGS

We live in a digital world. Consequently work is available with any organisation that needs help to create digital strategies, from SMEs to large global entities.

There are jobs in entertainment, media, engineering, medical/health, sport and recreation, architecture, gallery/museum and educational institutions, marketing and advertising. They may be corporate, community, non-governmental organisations (NGO) or not-for-profit organisations.

Running your own business or contracting are also strong options – particularly in content creation, app design and game development. Because much of the work is done online, jobs can frequently involve working offsite, sometimes in another country entirely!

## **CAREER ROLES**

**Digital strategist** – responsible for identifying, planning for and fulfilling an organisation's communication needs both internally as operations and externally with customers/clients. Innovates existing communications and workflows with a range of digital strategies that harness an organisation's best potential. Advises on the strategic deployment of digital technologies for the optimisation of the organisation's digital presence and stakeholder's digital interactions.

**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 futurestudents@aut.ac.nz f @AUTFutureStudents

#### **CURRENT AUT STUDENTS**

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864) www.aut.ac.nz/enquire studenthub@aut.ac.nz f@AUTEmployabilityandCareers

#### 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/

**CITY CAMPUS** 55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland Central

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