10 Questions about Content Strategists

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Who’s Carl?

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Who’s Carl?
What is a content strategist?

It’s a job title
• Often found in UX orgs (I’m one example)
• Often a senior IC role
• Found on both sides:
  • Presales/MarComm focus
  • Postsales/product design, usage focus

It’s a set of competencies
We’ll look at these in detail later, but broadly speaking:
• Knows content development and publishing at expert level
• Highly collaborative, cross-team focused
• Knows the business value of content delivery (revenue and growth)
• Articulate in a business-relevant vocabulary

Unscientific survey – In my LinkedIn network:
• 1st connections (of 328): 6 content strategists (@ MS, Amazon, Facebook), all senior positions
• 2nd Connections: 622 content strategists
What is a content strategist?

• This visualization started my own journey as a content strategist in Autumn 2014:

“Content strategy means content that’s always purposeful, always productive—both for your customers and your business.”
---Kristina Halvorson of Brain Traffic
Where did this title come from?

- Identified as a UX specialty with digital content focus since the 2000s
- A specialization that drew from related fields such as:
  - Information Architecture (structured content)
  - UX design/usability/research (content interaction)
  - Information science (taxonomies)
  - Technical communication (content development, governance)
  - Instructional design (needs/gap analysis, design validation)
  - Content marketing (business focus, metrics)
How is a Content Strategist different from a Technical Writer?

“Content strategy is to copywriting as information architecture is to design.... The main goal of content strategy is to use words and data to create unambiguous content that supports meaningful, interactive experiences. We have to be experts in all aspects of communication in order to do this effectively.”

-- Rachel Lovinger, 2007

Some value-added capabilities of a content strategist:

• Brings data-driven and value-focused methods to content development

• Focuses on the interactive experience of finding and using content
What is the daily work like?

Yellow: unstructured work time and obligatory meetings

Red: KB content backlog grooming with content stakeholders

Green: Writing, curating content for our primary product’s KB

Blue: Special project

Black: Me time!

Deadline-driven work

Content lifecycle maintenance

Junior tech writer training/mentoring
What is the daily work like?

- Individual tech writing
- Curation
- Governance, editorial
- All other
What is the development process like for a project?

My essential questions for every major content project (product assistance focus in my case):

1. Is this deliverable needed? Who says?
2. OK it’s needed. What’s the best deliverable to meet the stated need? Then...
3. How will we validate the effectiveness of the deliverable? Then...
4. What does “Done” look like? (Negotiable! OGF, High/Low Road, graduated, other) Then...
5. Where’s the pressure release valve in this project? Then...
6. OK, begin workflow shown on next slide.
What is the development process like for a project?

Content Development Workflow

1. **SME**
   - Groom product KB backlog; select deliverable for work
   - Do we have existing content we can repurpose?
   - Who can produce it?
   - IF SME: Write it
   - Consult, tech review
   - IF TECH DOCS: Write it

2. **Tech Docs**
   - Give editorial and production support
   - Publish it

3. **Customers**
   - Use content, provide feedback
What are the work deliverables?

At the highest level, according to Abel and Bailie:

- **Governance** Guidelines that determine who has ownership and responsibility for various aspects of an organization (Swisher). Think old-school publisher or managing editor of a journal or newspaper. Agile: *The singly wringable neck.*

- **Taxonomy** A hierarchical classification scheme made up of categories and subcategories of information plus a controlled vocabulary of terms, usually used to describe a specific area of knowledge (Lovinger).

- **Content audits** The process and result of conducting a quantitative study of a content inventory (Eisen). I approach this from the customer’s perspective.
What are examples of what someone would develop?

The Apptio Community/Product Central examples on next few slides show some examples of:

**Tangibles**
- IA and site taxonomy
- Effective customer nav experience: Land then drill down; big bet on unified Search
- Content metrics data

**Intangibles**
- Results of “Who does what” and “Where do I fit?” negotiations
- Results of content governance
- Consistency with style guide
- Alignment with branding
Product Central hub on Apptio Community
Anatomy of a KB hub page

Our site hierarchy:
- TBM Connect
  - Apptio Community
  - Product Central
    - Product knowledge bases
    - KB assets, Q&A forums

Hub banner and site nav
Search box
Most recent product release details
Feed of known product issues, status
Feed of recent Q&A posts, links to full Q&A Forum
Customer-submitted product ideas, Links to propose new idea or “+1” vote
Search query

Search results include:

Customer question

KB article (from Engineering group)

Customer question

Demo video (from Training group)

Received Apptio answer, follow-up discussion

Received Apptio answer

Search for:
- People
- Places
- Content
  - All time
  - 30 days
  - 60 days
  - 1 year
  - Last modified
  - Relevant

Sort by:
- Relevance
- Last modified
- Content

Search Tips

Received Apptio answer, follow-up discussion

Search this community

TBM Connect

About
TBM Council
Apptio Community

Search for:

view variance

Hiding our org seams

Line items - variance, actuals
Created 4 months ago by [Name] in IT Planning Knowledge Base

Analyze a budget plan or forecast in Summary View
Created a year ago (modified 7 days ago) by [Name] in IT Planning Knowledge Base

Can I view variances by year?
Created 7 days ago by [Name] in IT Planning Knowledge Base

Reading the Summary View (4 min)
Created 3 months ago (modified 3 months ago) by [Name] in IT Planning Knowledge Base

Received Apptio answer, follow-up discussion

'view variance' by grouping (as set by the View By setting). The current plan appears at the left...
What is the educational and work experience track like to become one?

Based on recent top 5 “content strategist” JDs on monster.com:
• BA/BS required, Master’s preferred
• 10+ years relevant industry experience

Specific skills and experiences itemized in the JDs:
• Project management, Agile
• Collaborative, v-team approach
• Synthesize the complex into simpler forms
• Demonstrated CMS, SEO, and content development skills
• Run content inventories, gap analysis, user research, stakeholder management
What’s the pay range like?

According to Glassdoor.com:

Content Strategist Salaries

230 Salaries

Updated Oct 13, 2017

National Avg
$107,348*
Min $68k
Max $180k

Seattle, WA Area Avg
$112,287*
Min $74k
Max $178k
What’s the pay range like?

According to Glassdoor.com:

**Senior Technical Editor Salaries in Seattle, WA**
- National Avg: $72,502
- Min: $50k
- Max: $111k
- Seattle, WA Area Avg: $114,024

**Senior Technical Writer Salaries in Seattle, WA**
- National Avg: $75,717
- Min: $57k
- Max: $100k
- Seattle, WA Area Avg: $83,573

**Senior Content Manager Salaries in Seattle, WA**
- National Avg: $85,845
- Min: $59k
- Max: $120k
- Seattle, WA Area Avg: $100,544

**Senior UX Designer Salaries in Seattle, WA**
- National Avg: $103,734
- Min: $71k
- Max: $145k
- Seattle, WA Area Avg: $116,619
What else should we know about this profession?

• This is a senior role. No such thing as “entry level content strategist.”
• Lots of people do this, but often not with this job title.
• To help get yourself from Tech Comm to Content Strategist, give equal weight to technical skills and business/organizational skills.
• I’m not sure it (the job title) will stick.
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Resources & references

Historical (2007) look at Content Strategist job title:
https://contentacademy.com/is-ux-content-strategist-a-real-job-title/

Great foundational references:
• http://www.jonathoncolman.org/2013/02/04/content-strategy-resources/
• http://braintraffic.com/content-strategy
• http://contentini.com/content-strategists-what-do-they-do/
• http://www.jonathoncolman.org/2013/02/04/content-strategy-resources/
• http://boxesandarrows.com/content-strategy-the-philosophy-of-data/