

Landing a job in digital in 2014

So you want to launch yourself into a career in digital this year... so how are you going to do it, and what do you need to achieve your ambition?

Nikki Cockcroft (Head of Digital at Woolworths and former head of the DMMA), Sam Harper, (Founder of specialist IT recruitment agency Nu Beginnings) and Kat Scholtz (from advertising agency, Quirk) spoke at a Girl Geek dinner event in Cape Town mid 2013, sharing their opinions on what it takes to break into digital. Online education company GetSmarter, looked at this within the context of finding a job in digital marketing in 2014.

Long gone are the days of digital being the new buzzword. The modern marketing landscape now assumes that candidates have a certain level of competence when it comes to managing digital channels and platforms. Yet despite the increasing focus on digital, many marketers are struggling to break into the digital sphere.

Why tertiary education is no longer enough

Most senior marketers who hold a marketing qualification would not have been exposed to digital marketing at tertiary education level; and those who were, would have just scratched the surface. For those who did receive in-depth training in digital at tertiary level, the dynamic nature of the field demands that learning continues post completion of tertiary studies, no matter how recent.

When internal training solutions fall short

A wide consensus in industry suggests upskilling internally as the simplest solution to addressing this gap. For many employers trying to cut it in a harsh economic climate, this simple solution doesn't feature on the agenda. Sam Harper recently commented, "for many new agencies the agenda is to exist". She expands by saying, "the industry is so cut-throat, that there is no time to spare for training, because that hour of training could be spent on a clients' account".



Nikki Cockcroft, Sam Harper, and Kat Scholtz at the Girl Geeks dinner in 2013.

High staff turnover limits employer investment

High staff turnover associated with the modern marketing industry has employers hesitant to invest in upskilling staff members at the risk of not being able to see return of investment. As skilled digital gurus remain in high demand, individuals with a sought-after skill set are finding it easier to change jobs on a regular basis.

What does this mean for the job seeker?

Nikki Cockcroft commented that there is no shortage of jobs in digital. So what gives a candidate the edge? According to Harper, attitude rather than experience is the biggest determining factor in whether candidates get the job or not.



Robyn Allan, Chief Marketing Officer at online education company GetSmarter, agrees: "We often hire for attitude and train for skill. When I look at a CV, one of the first things I look for is a clue that the candidate has a passion for the industry and a drive to succeed. A telltale sign is if they have made some effort to remain current and upskill in a particular area."

Attitude and skills development is key

When it comes to breaking into digital as a career, two things are clear: candidates who are able to demonstrate the right attitude and take the time to invest in skills development stand out from the crowd. Although technical experience may be advantageous, it is surprisingly not the first thing employers look for when considering candidates for digital marketing positions. Professionals able to display a skill set and mindset that is as dynamic and growing as the field of marketing itself will have the competitive edge in the talent market.

Adopt a multi-skilled approach but don't be afraid to specialise

Job seekers are feeling the pressure when met with job application requirements that encompass today's list of execution competencies. Take time to get clued up across competencies, from project management and strategising, creative designing, copywriting and content production, to web developing and web designing, SEO optimisation, and social media management, amongst others.

Finding your niche and specialising has its own advantages. Expertise and ability will make you an indispensable asset to any digital marketing team. This also promotes opportunity for career growth, as senior and specialist positions are reserved for professionals who hold a certain level of strategic insight applied in execution and analysis, utilising a particular area of digital to its full potential.

Visit www.getsmarter.co.za for information on practical, university-approved online short courses in digital marketing, offered by online education company, GetSmarter.

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