

How companies are competing for talent in the digital marketing world?

There is a huge problem brewing under the surface of the digital world – a lack of skills. The effect of the pandemic on the digital world is becoming more and more apparent within the digital marketing industry. As businesses closed their doors in the real world, they looked instead to opening new doors online.

If the online space wasn't competitive enough already, 93M more mobile phone users entered the market in 2020. The need for businesses to stand out got that bit more difficult, and to get ahead of their competitors, many businesses sought to boost their digital marketing strategy. More businesses needing marketing means more agencies needed people. It soon became apparent that the talent pool wasn't big enough to sustain this explosion of growth.

What digital marketing skills are most in-demand?

While the need for digital skills spans just about every marketing principle,

there are a few that stand out. If you work in the digital marketing world, you won't be surprised to know that paid social – the internet marketing strategy that places ads on social media platforms – is currently the biggest skill, with demand having increased by a staggering 116.4%. That's huge pressure on agencies who now need to more than double their paid social to cope with workloads.

Unsurprisingly, paid social was the big winner of 2020 that continued to grow in 2021. As lockdown hit, most of us moved online to cure the boredom. There was a whole new market for social media advertising, explaining the spike in need for experienced professionals in the field.

Similarly, content marketing has seen a surge in interest from companies with a 31.9% increase in demand, no doubt related to surging levels of online engagement, and web content writing also rose by 30.3%.

While the demand for these roles is on the rise, the talent pool hasn't grown at the same rate.

What digital marketing skills are least in demand?

More significantly, the need for SEO executives declined in the last year by 12.6%. This doesn't mean that the industry is on a downward trend. Rather, to cope with the competitiveness of moving online, businesses turned to instant gratification with paid media as opposed to the longer-term SEO strategies.

While SEO executives aren't in high demand, this doesn't mean that SEO isn't growing. Many well-established brands, decided to focus on SEO during the pandemic as opposed to pushing ads and product launches through paid media to avoid seeming inappropriate or insensitive to the situation. Of course, they had the existing brand reputation and online presence to do so – smaller businesses didn't have this luxury.

Other marketing roles such as account executives and account managers, seem to be the job titles that are slipping out of the mainstream. This is because the need for digital skills is now outweighed by that of real-world marketing. Of course, we could see this change again as the world continues to move towards pre-pandemic lifestyles.

How are agencies competing for talent?

The need for digital skills has reached a critical point, and the amount of available work doesn't reflect the number of digital marketing professionals in the market. In previous years digital marketing jobs were hard to find, with agencies receiving hundreds of applications for jobs. Now, with more work than ever, there simply isn't enough talent to fill these positions.

Earlier this year, the [*BBC*](#) reported that the UK was headed for a 'digital skills shortage disaster'. This much is obvious when you consider the idea of remote working. Even outside of the digital marketing world, basic digital skills are essential for any kind of office work today.

Within digital marketing, agencies are also driving up salaries to secure candidates. While plateauing recently, salaries are still significantly higher than pre-pandemic salary levels.

They're also trying to incorporate flexible working as a benefit. But while this is certainly an improvement on pre-pandemic working patterns, it's a waiting game as to whether these changes are permanent, or whether some agencies are piggybacking on what they see as a recruitment trend.

What are the challenges facing digital marketing agencies?

In the early days of the pandemic, recruitment was a mixed bag. Candidates were either looking to jump a sinking ship, or we're too worried to leave a stable job amidst an uncertain job market. This inevitably broke when companies started making redundancies and agencies snapped up those digital marketing professionals looking for work.

Today, the drive for digital marketing is still at full speed but the talent pool hasn't really grown in that time. This means that most agencies are now struggling to adapt to the aftermath of the employment boom.

"The recruitment industry is definitely feeling the effects of the digital marketing boom. Every agency out there seems to be hiring for the same roles and finding candidates is becoming more and more challenging, said Sara Smith, Talent Acquisition Manager at Modo25.

"At Modo25, we're still getting lots of applicants which we think is largely down to our entirely flexible approach to working. Even before the pandemic, we embraced flexible working by allowing our team to work wherever they feel

most productive. We also use a 4-day work week model which massively helps considering work/life balance is at the forefront of everyone's long-term career plans following the past year and a half."

What's next for digital marketing agencies?

As we move in 2022, it's unclear as to how the market will adapt. New graduates are entering the market every year which should take off the pressure for many agencies. But the need for ongoing training may put some off making the investment.

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