

THE CELERITY BLOG

CONTENT STRATEGIST: INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER OR COPYWRITER?

BY PAT HIGGINS, UX CONTENT STRATEGIST — [VIEW COMMENTS](#)



Recently, a colleague told me that during an interview for a content strategist job he was asked this question: "How do you choose the right words to use?" My first reaction was, what a strange question. But then I realized, this question illustrates the misperception about the role of the [content strategist](#) more than a desire to know how a writer chooses words.

Most content strategists evolve into their roles from editorial or communications backgrounds. There are no college majors or certifications for content strategy. My degree in journalism provided a solid foundation for writing for the web even before the Internet was invented. I learned to lead with a strong headline, to place key facts above the fold, and to cut, and cut again, until the story is sharp and concise.

But while a content strategist may be good at writing, the role is not synonymous with copywriter. In journalism, the copywriter in a newsroom writes compelling headlines and captions, but the investigative reporter discovers the facts, interviews subject matter experts, connects the dots, and digs for the truth to write a clear story.

When you picture the content strategists on your team as investigative reporters and not copywriters, you immediately elevate the value of this role in your organization.

This change in perception also helps you position content strategists on the appropriate work teams. In my first job as a content strategist, I was fortunate to be on a web team with product owners, information architects, and front-end visual designers. We worked closely together solving the usability issues of the customers visiting our online storefront.

While we each played the role of investigative reporter to uncover customer needs and actions, we each brought a different lens to our projects. Yes, I focused more on the words while my design partners focused on imagery, but I quickly learned that you cannot separate the *message* (words) from the content *experience*. This is when I decided to use the title *UX content strategist* to define my role on a product team.

UX CONTENT STRATEGIST SKILLS

So, what are the skills that a UX content strategist can bring to your organization? It's a long list that wraps the benefits of an information architecture, messaging strategist, technical content manager, and yes, copywriter, all into one role.

1. Content Evaluation

Determine which content is working, missing, or can be improved through qualitative and quantitative evaluation. Customer and stakeholder interviews, goals setting workshops, content inventories, and competitive reviews are just a few ways to do this.

2. Content Structure

Organize, categorize, and optimize content based on business rules and user needs. Site maps, content audits, content models, taxonomies, metadata, components, and template mapping all fit into this workflow.

3. Messaging Strategy

Create the framework for delivering timely, relevant, and on-brand content to users across devices and channels. Common activities include persona definitions, journey mapping, story-branding, creating and enforcing brand and editorial guidelines, and [personalization](#) and localization strategies.

4. Content Management

Effectively plan, manage, publish, and maintain content across channels and platforms. These technical workflows include workflow creation, [CMS selection](#), governance strategies, and content publishing across multiple channels.

5. Content Migration

Moving and tracking legacy content to new systems and platforms is called [content migration](#). Common activities include auditing and planning, gap analysis, and republishing of the content on the new CMS.

6. Content Creation

This is the one overlap between a copywriter and a content strategist. Common activities include writing and editing microcopy, user guides, knowledge base articles, and webpage content with compelling CTAs that lead to conversion. A UX content strategist will also focus on data visualization and video and image selection and development.

When your organization hires a talented UX content strategist, you'll find a rare team player who is as comfortable creating compelling content as managing that content in a multi-channel, technical environment. That's double the value for your business.

So back to that question, *how do you choose the words you use?* As a UX content strategist, I would answer with: *Think of me as your investigative reporter. Word choice is more than being clever or creative. I craft content based on customer insights, based on your approved messaging framework and desired conversions. I choose words that allow your visitors to quickly accomplish their tasks that drove them to your website, app, or service.*

Have you recently added UX content strategists to your organization? Have you and your colleagues always understood their value? How did you integrate the role into your product and service design teams? Leave a comment below. We'd love to hear your take on this!

Pat Higgins is a certified UX Content Strategist with 25+ years of experience creating and managing content. She focuses on building digital solutions that delight customers from their first interaction with your brand through conversion and account management.

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