



Job description: Chief content officer

Reporting structure

As the leader of a cross-functional discipline, the chief content officer typically reports to the chief executive officer or chief operating officer (in smaller enterprises), or the chief marketing officer or vice president of marketing (in larger enterprises). Other reporting structures are possible, though, depending on how nimble, sophisticated, or well-entrenched content marketing is within the organization.

Position summary

The CCO oversees all marketing-related content initiatives, both internal and external, across multiple platforms and formats to drive brand awareness, engagement, sales, retention, and other positive customer behaviors.

Ideally, this individual should have leadership experience in all things related to content – including channel optimization, brand consistency, segmentation and localization, analytics, and meaningful measurement.

In addition, this collaborative position functions across multiple organizational departments – including public relations, communications, marketing, customer service, IT, sales, and human resources. Thus, the CCO should expect to have a hand in defining, governing, and deploying the brand's story, both from the organization's perspective and the audience's interpretation.

Responsibilities

The CCO owns all marketing-related content initiatives (in all forms and formats) that the company undertakes to drive the business forward.

As an executive-level function within the enterprise, the CCO's primary responsibility is to determine the business model and particular approach to content that will offer the greatest value for the organization. These decisions will factor into just how hands-on a role the CCO will ultimately play while leading the company's content program, including:

- Developing and documenting the content marketing strategy. This includes defining the audience personas and content mission, setting clear marketing objectives for content, and understanding how the organization's content integrates with the rest of its business objectives.
- Outlining a channel plan. Identifying the primary channels for how the organization will communicate with customers (across digital, social, print, and in-person initiatives). Developing and executing a plan for how the business will tell its story on each appropriate channel (including setting the tone and voice, as well as establishing acceptable operational policies and practices.
- Establishing standards, systems, best practices, and work flow processes for managing the content marketing lifecycle, including requesting, producing, distributing, promoting, measuring, and retiring content. This includes ensuring all content is on-brand; is consistent in terms of style, quality, and tone of voice; and is optimized for search and user experience across all appropriate channels.



- Collaborating with the company's senior creative team leaders (e.g., the creative director, brand manager, or chief design officer) and channel owners on all initiatives to identify content needs and opportunities and ensure efficiency and consistency across channels, verticals, and functional departments.
- Working with the company's technical/IT team to implement an efficient content management system (CMS), and any other essential tech systems (e.g., marketing automation, email management, social media management).
- Managing and maintaining all content inventories and matrices, and driving the overall content calendar for the organization.
- Participating in the hiring and supervision of content/story leaders in all content verticals, as well as in managing the efforts of all other team writers, editors, producers, and content managers.
- Establishing performance goals and overseeing ongoing measurement protocols to evaluate and optimize content effectiveness. This can include gathering data and handling analytics (or supervising those who do), as well as making recommendations based on performance results.
- Ensuring a consistent global experience and implementing localization/translation strategies where appropriate.

Success criteria

Ultimately, the success of this position relies on the ability to create a better customer for the organization. Performance expectations should be based on the continual improvement of customer nurturing, converting, and retention through storytelling, as well as by increases in new prospects brought into the enterprise through the consistent development and deployment of content.

Primary criteria for success are customer and employee affinity, measured by lifetime customer value, customer satisfaction, and employee advocacy. Additional criteria for gauging success may include:

- Positive brand recognition and message consistency across chosen published channels
- Gains in defined customer engagement metrics (measured by users taking a desired action – conversions, subscriptions, purchases, etc.)
- Website and social media traffic growth
- Conversion metrics definition and growth
- Improvements in positive social media sentiment
- Positive customer feedback and survey data
- Increases in important search engine keyword rankings
- Reductions in the time it takes customers to move through the sales/buying cycle
- Creation of new up-sell and cross-sell opportunities through content analysis and application
- A stronger enterprise-wide focus on driving sales, saving costs, or creating happier customers through content



Experience and education

An effective CCO must be able to balance a customer-first marketing mentality with the story-focused mindset of a publisher, while serving as a team mentor, performance driver, and champion of the overall brand experience with content.

Requisite experience and training includes:

- 10 to 15 years as a successful leader in multichannel content creation (publishing, journalism, etc.)
- Creation of compelling messages for multiple demographic targets. Crisis communications experience is a plus
- Demonstrated ability to hire, onboard, lead, manage, and inspire a team of creative personnel and content creators
- Work with audience development and subscription strategies
- Superb analytical skills and strong capacity for creating, understanding, and communicating measurement strategies across multiple content initiatives
- Outstanding communication and interpersonal skills, including proficiency with negotiation and mediation to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders
- Thorough knowledge of core marketing principles, as well as brand, product, and service management functions
- Deep understanding of fluctuating market dynamics
- Passion for serving as a customer advocate; intuitively understanding the audience's needs, and deftly crafting messaging and other means of delivering value to them
- Entrepreneurial spirit.

Desirable skills and capabilities

As the CCO operates as the leader of corporate storytelling, he or she must be capable of fully understanding and skillfully addressing customer pain points through the creation and distribution of content. The ability to uphold high-quality standards is critical to the success of this role, as is a working knowledge of content trends, techniques, and best practices.

Skills and traits particularly useful include:

- Proven editorial abilities, including an outstanding command of the English (or primary customer) language, as well as a working knowledge of fundamental marketing principles, practices, and techniques
- Training as a print or broadcast journalist and/or a well-developed “nose” for the relevant story. This includes an understanding of how to create content that will draw an audience (it is critical that the CCO retain an “outsider’s perspective,” much like that of a journalist), and the ability to screen out sales pitches and messaging
- Intellectual curiosity and a passion for staying on top of the latest industry advances and trends – including an active interest in the latest media platforms, technology tools and marketing solutions, as well as how to apply them to content creation and distribution



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- A high level of comfort with long- and short-form, and real-time (immediate) content creation and distribution strategies and tactics
- Familiarity with common internet coding languages, such as HTML, XHTML, CSS, Java, web publishing, and Flash
- Knowledge of working with web analytics tools (Adobe Marketing Cloud, Webtrends, Google Analytics), social media marketing applications (Hootsuite, TweetDeck, etc.), and leading social media monitoring platforms
- Understanding of search engine optimization, including strategies, best practices and current trends
- Comfort with speaking about/advocating for content marketing at both internal and external meetings and events, and as part of your organization's content initiatives (i.e., willing to become a cheerleader for organizational change around content)