

/expert_advice

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Marketing qualifications

I'm interested in carving out a career as an online marketing professional. Is there a formal set of qualifications to get, or am I better teaching myself through books and hands-on experience?

From: Jonathan

Dave Chaffey: Formal qualifications are sneered on by some, but they certainly provide a way to differentiate yourself in what's a tough marketplace – whether you're looking for a new job for a company, agency or you're trying to win a pitch as a consultant. I have a list of formal qualifications on my site to review (netm.ag/marketingquals-218). These qualifications tend to explain the concepts which are great for developing online marketing strategies which fit business needs rather than using the latest tactics in a random way.

However, I'd say if you want to actually run online campaigns using marketing channels such as Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, mobile and email then there's no substitute for getting your hands dirty and working on real campaigns. Webinars and more practical online certifications available from US providers such as www.marketmotive.com or www.marketingprofs.com could be just the thing you're looking for here.

Hiring a consultant

I need to hire a marketing consultant who is an expert in lead generation, email marketing and SEO. How do you suggest I assess their expertise?

From: Patrick

Dave Chaffey: That's an interesting question, particularly since many consultants will focus on just one of these since they're all quite different techniques. Of course, a person's track record is the most important, so make sure you see real recommendations from previous clients based on results that cover all three areas. It's also difficult since there aren't any qualifications I'm familiar with which cover all three of these in depth. A knowledge of analytics is common to all three, so you could look for someone who has the Google Analytics Individual Qualification (GAIQ).

I would argue that you can't be a true expert in these topics unless you've reviewed and optimised the results of past campaigns in Google Analytics. Even if they don't have the qualification, quiz them on how they would optimise your existing activities using analytics and optimisation. Ask which process and which KPIs they will use to diagnose and improve your current activities to get a good understanding of exactly what they're capable of.

Cookies

I was wondering if you have any advice regarding the upcoming legislation regarding cookies and potential methods for allowing users to opt in a method that isn't intrusive or decreases the users' experiences.

From: Ben Webb

Paul Duffy: After the latest edict was handed down by the Information Commissioner's Office on cookies, we've been running around like blue-arsed flies just trying to work out what in the hell we're supposed to be complying with, thanks to the vaguest description of what requires notification, no indication of how much notification is required, no idea of whether we even do anything which requires notification in the first place and no time to work it out in. I still don't fully understand what this new directive means.

Jon Fell: The law relating to the way in which we use cookies changed on 26 May 2011 when the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 came into force. The new regulations came into being as a result of an EU Directive and it is now a legal requirement that anyone using cookies on a website needs to get the informed prior consent from each visitor to its site before a cookie is set

Focus on... Your presentation skills



Profile

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It's vital to your career that you can show that you're more than just a skilled coder or designer – you need good presentation skills. I started as a junior graphic designer at a small agency. Six years and five promotions later, I have propelled myself to a lead position at a global company. These four tips have helped me grow and can help you, too:

1 To build your personal brand, think of yourself like a new product. Do you show up to work on

time and in clean, organised condition? When someone comes to you with a job request, are you pleasant, or do you always seem rushed and stressed? Think of going to a store and picking up a product. If the packaging looks open, the batteries are dead and you've read poor reviews online, this isn't something you'll buy. This is how people view unreliable colleagues.

2 Manage your time. We're all moving too fast to remember what the next important task should be. Safeguard yourself from this messy chaos by scheduling work time on your email calendar as you would a meeting. We owe it to ourselves to save precious time to actually complete deliverables before their due dates and track them in order of priority. If you save blocks of time on your calendar as soon as you get a project, you won't have to stress about remembering what to do next.

3 Track results to show you're a strategic thinker. As a designer, I don't welcome spreadsheets and formulas. However, I take extra care to follow up on projects I've worked on to see how they're performing. Why? Because there's always something that can be tested, or a design that could have worked better. If you can track clickthrough rates or coupon downloads, use that knowledge to make you smarter about the next time you have to tackle a similar project. If you can explain the logic behind your design decisions, you can prove that you're a strategic thinker.

4 Brush up on your public speaking. I can't stress enough how valuable being able to present your own results are. None of us went into the web profession to be rock stars, but the truth is, if you can't present your own work in a calm, professional manner many will think you don't have anything

/your experts



Design
Usman Sheikh
Information architect

and managing director Usman is the MD at Contrive Digital Ltd. www.contrivedigital.com



Development
Kenny Meyers
Kenny works for Facebook as

a marketing webmaster and discusses nerdy stuff at thenerdary.net. kennymeyers.com



Legal
Jon Fell
Partner
Jon works at commercial law

firm Pinsent Masons, and is one of the founders of legal advice site OUT-LAW.com. www.pinsentmasons.com



Marketing
Dave Chaffey
Digital marketing consultant, author and

commentator Dave advises businesses on all aspects of digital strategy and practice. www.smartinsights.com



Business
Wendy Tan White
Entrepreneur

Wendy is the co-founder of free site builder Moonfruit and marketing director of Gandi.net. www.moonfruit.com

on that user's machine. Some people have expressed doubt that regulations require prior consent, as opposed to consent after the event. However, it's difficult to see how the wording of the new regulations can be interpreted in this way.

The new regulations include a provision that allows for consent to be signified by the changing of browser settings or another application to show consent. It's not clear how this will work exactly and the government is currently in discussions with the browser providers as to how compliance may be achieved. It's unlikely that browser settings will provide a complete solution even once changes have been put in place.

The Information Commissioner has issued short high level guidance on how to comply (www.ico.gov.uk). In it he suggests a number of different methods that can be used for obtaining user consent. The guidance does, however, fall short of providing a preferred method. The ICO has used an accordion drop-down menu from the top of its pages that tells visitors about its use of cookies and asks for their consent. It demonstrates the approach adopted by the regulator.

The good news is that while the regulations came into force on 26 May,

“Always check the terms of any licence before using any photos to make sure that you have the necessary rights” Jon Fell

the Information Commissioner has given everyone a 12-month amnesty period and won't take any enforcement action until next year. In the meantime, you need to audit your site to identify the cookies used by you and then work out how you obtain the necessary consents. Everyone is feeling their way at the moment, so keep an eye out for what others are doing, especially government sites.

Review site

I've been wanting to start up a completely independent review website/blog where I would initially review a product, then give people the chance to add their reviews also. In the review I would like to add a picture of the product. What are the legal implications of this? The products are sport supplements from England and America.

From: Stuart Woodward

Jon Fell: It rather depends on where you have got the pictures from. Photographs are protected by copyright. This gives the owner of the images (presumably the sports supplements owners) the right to control the use of the pictures. However, many product owners provide images for use in relation to promoting their wares, so you may be able to download free authorised pictures for use. Always check the terms of any licence before using any photos to make sure that you have the necessary rights. An alternative is for you to take pictures of the products in question.

Under English law there is an exception. There is no copyright infringement when the use is fair and is for one of a list of specified purposes. One of which is where it's for the purposes of review and criticism. However, this exception is particularly narrow and you need to be careful when relying upon it. The most important thing is to remember that if the owner of the copyright in a picture complains of your use of it, take the picture down straight away. This will reduce your liability for wrongful use.

Trouble getting paid

I'm having trouble getting a large digital agency to pay for the final sum of a freelancing contract I completed with them recently. I know a friend who is also a freelancer hasn't been paid from another agency and is owed a fair bit of money! It seems like a common issue. Can you recommend anything that can be done and the legal issues around it? If it get's serious and they're not paying at all, what can you do?

From: Dave Promonet

Jon Fell: The first thing that you need to do is look at your contract to make sure that there are no provisions giving the agency the right to withhold payment such as accepting any commission undertaken by you. Assuming that there is no dispute as to the work done by you, then most likely the money owed you is a simple debt. The contract will no doubt set out the terms on which you get paid, for example, submission of time sheets, invoice and payment terms. Assuming that you have complied with your obligations then you can take proceedings against the agency for payment.

In my view you should contact the agency and remind them of their contractual obligation to pay you. You should ask if there is any reason why payment has not been forthcoming. It may be that there are internal sign off processes which have to be gone through. However, remember internal processes are just that and are not a reason for not paying you. If you have no joy in getting paid, then you will need to up the ante and say that unless you have received payment within 14 days you will issue proceedings for the debt together with interest and costs.

However, only make this threat if you intend to actually carry it out. Issuing proceedings in the small claims or county courts is relatively straight forward and the court officers will help you with the claim forms. Alternatively, you may like to get the assistance of a local solicitor to guide you through the process. >>>



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important to say. Whether you're talking to three people in a meeting or a crowd of 200, your presentation skills get noticed! Google your local chapter of Toastmasters, a group designed to give you public speaking practice. ●



You will find useful advice at www.londonfreelance.org on freelance fees and in particular late payment and problem debts. See also www.freelanceuk.com.

Making it official

If I was to start up a website design and build business on my own or with a friend what are the steps required to make it official and how do I go about it, are there any good articles or explanations on how to do it that you could point me to?

From: Gareth

Jon Fell: The good news is that there's nothing that you need to do to make it 'official'. However, depending on how you set up your business there are certain consequences which you need to bear in mind. The simplest model is to trade as a sole trader. This means that you are trading on your own account and the contracts you enter as a business are entered into by you personally. It's sensible to keep separate accounts for your business and to ensure that you take out insurance as appropriate. In this case you are personally liable for all the debts of the business.

If you wish to work with a friend then a partnership will be created automatically and the profits and liabilities of the business will be shared equally between you unless you agree otherwise. The down side of being either a sole trader or a partnership is that you retain personal liability for any losses or claims made against the business. There are a number of other options available such as setting up a limited liability company or a limited liability partnership at Companies

House. The process is relatively simple and there are clear instructions on the Companies house website which can be found at www.companieshouse.gov.uk.

It's always useful to get professional advice when you start up a new business and I would recommend that you speak to an accountant in the first instance. There's a lot of useful information on www.out-law.com on all aspects of the laws relating to your new business venture. In addition www.bootlaw.com arranges monthly meet ups in London for new and fledgling internet companies. Finally, good luck!

What to learn

I want to learn how to build websites with the eventual aim of making a living from it, although I'm a long way off that yet. I've been learning how to use Dreamweaver over the last few months and I'm starting to get the hang of basic HTML and CSS. But where's the best place to go from here? WordPress? HTML and CSS templates? Or should I just pile in and start coding from scratch? Is there any book or online course you'd recommend I follow?

From: Billy

Usman Sheikh: I think there are a couple of things that you need to consider first. If your aim were to eventually take web design on as a career and possibly work with an agency on a full time basis then you would need to specialise in a particular area within the overall broad umbrella of "web design". Just to consider the top-level areas, there's design, frontend production and backend development. HTML and CSS coding sits primarily within frontend development and

if that's your area of interest, then I would suggest that you focus on that and continue to advance and improve your skills in that one area.

One good way of benchmarking your current skill level is by looking at some of the most popular websites and trying to reproduce some of their web pages. You can always view the source of any live website to see how any particular element has been coded. This would allow you to assess that if you were working on a live project of that scale would you be able to cope with complex layouts? Once you start feeling perfectly comfortable with HTML and CSS then you can start looking at other front-end technologies like JavaScript for instance.

Just keep in mind that there are tons of step-by-step tutorials on the web so no matter which direction you decide to go in you'll find help online. Alternatively, if you feel more comfortable learning in a more structured environment then look for courses which are being conducted by actual industry professionals rather than by a pure academic.

Photo gallery

I need to design a photo gallery that can be managed remotely by the client. They need to be able to add or remove photos themselves (and they're not particularly technical people). It will start small but should have the potential to scale up in future. What sort of CMS or other solution would you recommend I use?

From: BB

Usman Sheikh: A photo gallery is probably one of the most common elements that people ask for so nearly all CMSs out there have this feature available either by default or in the form of an additional plug-in. You probably need to consider the exact requirements that your client has in mind and then choose a CMS that works best for them and their needs.

Alternatively, if your client is simply looking for a photo gallery and nothing else,

"It's sensible to keep separate accounts for your business and to ensure that you take out insurance as appropriate"

Jon Fell

Expert tip of the month

Hexadecimal values

Hi, can you tell me how you go about working out the hexadecimal values of colours?

From: Frank J

Usman Sheikh: Hexadecimal colour values are basically based on RGB values but defined by using the hexadecimal numbering system. The values are made up of three sets of two characters, with each set representing the values of Red, Green and Blue respectively. There are various online calculators that would allow you to convert the normal RGB number range of 0-255 into their hex values (including Google itself).

Also, most graphic editing tools such as Photoshop allow you to pick colours from any source and view their corresponding RGB, CMYK and Hex colour values. Apart from the actual software themselves, there are plenty of free online tools as well as plug-ins that allow you to either pick colours by pointing your mouse cursor at a colour source or by simple typing in values in any of the colouring systems and it displays all the other values for you. The Uber Simple RGB Hex colour tool is one of those tools and is available both as an online service as well as a browser plug-in: netm.ag/hex-218. ●



Google it Just type "255 into hexadecimal" into google and it will automatically convert it for you

then you could just use a standard gallery script that dynamically picks up photos from a specified location and then simply allow your client to upload photos to that directory by using an FTP client. Keeping in mind that your client is not technically savvy, this would be the easiest solution for them – especially if you set up the FTP client for them. All they'll need to do is open the software, connect and then simply drag and drop the photos to make them available in their gallery.

Breaking into the industry

I've been an avid reader of your magazine for years now, it's definitely the best around! I've been a developer/ designer for a while now trying to get work within a digital web design agency. It's frustrating and almost impossible at the moment! Is there any advice you can give me? What am I doing wrong? My portfolio is www.tunde-akinbode.co.uk.

From: Tunde Akinbode

Kenny Meyers: I can't stress this enough: Find a local web event then show up and meet people. Volunteer to help out with the event. There are very few large web agencies so small ones are more likely to hire you if they know who you are. You already share a common interest, so go from there.

Git GUI for Windows

Do you know any good Git GUIs for Windows? Read this month's .net mag article and I'm struggling to find that kind of functionality.

From: Tom Wade via Twitter

Kenny Meyers: Back in my Windows/ Subversion days I used to love Tortoise for SVN. It turns out there is a version for Git too: code.google.com/p/tortoisegit. I would suggest checking that out. The best GUIs get out of your way and Tortoise provides a pleasant experience.

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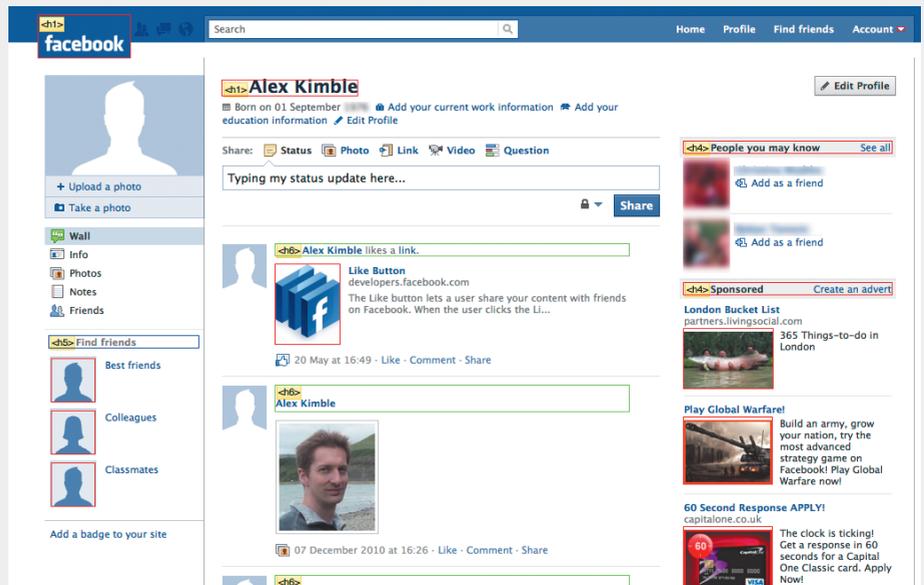
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Access all areas

User-generated content can cause problems for accessibility, but it needn't if you do it right, says **Alastair Campbell**

A lot of sites allow for user-generated content, in fact social networks are virtually all formed from their users' content. This can create a few accessibility issues, to put it mildly, but it really shouldn't.

Most people in the industry know about the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), but whenever a user is creating web content, the Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG) also apply.

An authoring tool is any software or website that can be used by authors to create or modify web content for use by other people. That might bring to mind products such as Dreamweaver, but it also applies to Content Management Systems, Facebook, Twitter, and even a personal blog with comments

The ATAG guidelines include aspects such as the accessibility of the interface, and how the tool (or website) encourages users to create accessible content.

A simple example of this is the Facebook status update.

Facebook as a whole has quite a few accessibility issues. It's not a complete disaster, there are headings (using levels 1, 4, 5 and 6), and even some advanced use of HTML5/ARIA. However, there are also some basics missing, such as alt attributes on some images.

Taking the status update as an example where ATAG applies, the first thing of interest is that posts are plain text. When you look at where the status updates fit into the templates, it becomes obvious why that is: Each update becomes a heading.

At first I thought this was silly, as the content should go under a heading, not be the heading. However, when you look at the common uses of status updates they are generally quite short.

Moreover, they often have links or images underneath which makes using a heading a lot more appropriate.

Other points in Facebook's favour are that you can post status updates without using a mouse, and you can reverse updates. Well, you can delete them, which in this case is enough.

So far so good, but there are a few points from ATAG where Facebook falls down:

When you add an image, there is no means of adding alternative text. Perhaps they assumed that the text portion would cover it, but a caption is not the same as an alternative.

When you add a link you can also add an image from the target page, but Facebook doesn't pull the alternative text through. It should use the alt text if present on the original page, and allow the user to change it.

There is no way of running an accessibility check on the content.

So overall Facebook does not encourage, or even enable, regular users to create easily accessible content.

If you're responsible for a website that lets users create content, now would be a great time to check out the new ATAG guidelines. Version 2.0 is almost ready so it's your last chance to comment on them before it's stamped as official. ●



Profile

Alastair Campbell is director of user experience at Nomensa, nomensa.com. Coming from a usability background, he discovered and embraced technical web standards in 2001.