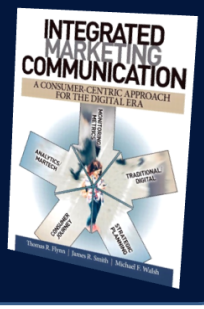
Flynn, Smith & Walsh • Course Support

IMC's Job Outlook for 2022 & Beyond

New from Kendall Hunt Publishing | Higher Ed



IMC-Related Career Opportunities in Advertising, Digital Marketing and Public Relations Looking Positive—If You Have the Right Mix of Skills

From the employer viewpoint, people with college degrees are nice, but people with degrees and skillsets are even nicer.

February 2022 **By James R. Smith and Thomas R. Flynn**

During the height of the pandemic's first wave, job seekers faced doom and gloom as announcements of layoffs seemed a depressing daily routine.

The good news is, even with a jagged economic recovery, the hiring tide has apparently turned. Both brands and marketing communication firms are hiring again and at most levels competition for talent is fierce.

While the signs are positive, don't break into your *happy-dance* just yet. The hiring flurry is not across all job categories. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) agencies and brands are seeking candidates with specific skills—mainly data-driven, digital skills.

2021 U.S. ADVERTISING & PR AGENCIES

ITEM	ADV	PR
Number of agencies	85,900	51,200
Market size	$59bn	$16bn
Number employed	250,400	95,100

Source: ibisworld.com, 2021, numbers rounded

At the end of 2021, the U.S. advertising and public relations sectors alone had an estimated total workforce of 345,000+ employees.[1] Given the unknown number of independent consultants, graphic artists, copywriters and small businesses with advertising and marketing employees, it's safe to say most IMC workforce projections are underestimates.

IMC covers a vast landscape of skills and specialties ranging from data analytics, ecommerce and social media to copywriting, graphic design, multimedia production and sales. There's an armada of support industries that are often not directly considered IMC such as; audio production studios, augmented reality (AR) production firms, event management and promotion companies, marketing software suppliers, modeling agencies, and traditional media outlets.

What's the Magnitude of Demand for IMC-Related Jobs?

Two of the most popular job-listing sites for advertising, marketing and public relations are Indeed and Linkedin. At the start of 2022, over 160,000 IMC-related jobs were listed on Indeed. The actual number for Indeed is likely lower as the same position is often cross-listed in both advertising and marketing sectors.

Certain data-related and marketing technology (martech) jobs continue to show high demand. These categories are often listed under information technology, data analytics or computer science umbrellas.

For example 44,293 *data science* jobs were listed on Indeed at the start of 2022. Some of those job listings showed a $100,000+ salary.

IMC JOB VACANCIES

Sample US Listing Counts-Start of 2022

- **Indeed Advertising 28,836 jobs**
- **Indeed Marketing 144,120**
- **Indeed Public Relations 23,376**
- **PR Week US Public Relations 927**

Notes: Many employers list the same job in multiple categories and on multiple sites. Numbers can vary on a daily basis.

Increased emphasis on multimedia marketing has energized the production sector. In early 2022 Indeed listed about 1,500 jobs for *podcast producers or managers* and over 13,000 positions for *webinar or visual event producers*.

There's also rather consistent demand for core, but often viewed as less glamorous, IMC skillsets. About 19,000 open email marketing manager positions were listed on Indeed in early 2022.

Some job announcements are not listed on either Indeed or Linkedin. Middle to senior level openings are regularly listed with professional talent recruiting firms, while others might exclusively appear on a company's website. No matter how you carve the numbers there are plenty of IMC job openings.

What are the Hot IMC Job Categories for 2022 & Onward?

Top IMC Jobs Listed on LinkedIn

Mid-2021

1. Digital Marketing Specialist
2. Digital Account Executive
3. Social Media Manager
4. Digital Marketing Manager
5. Copywriter
6. Marketing Associate
7. Account Supervisor
8. Marketing Assistant
9. Digital Strategist
10. Marketing Manager

Source: https://www.linkedin.com/business/marketing/blog/linkedin-ads/top-in-demand-marketing-jobs-training-skills

A mid-2021 LinkedIn analysis of postings on its site showed many of the top job categories involved digital skillsets. The top job categories included entry level slots like marketing assistant and mid-level positions like social media manager. While some variation is anticipated, these categories will likely remain strong through 2023.

While the total number of available jobs in any IMC sector might remain relatively stable, the skillsets employers need most does fluctuate.

A number of job categories in 2022, like content marketing strategist and social media community manager, didn't exist in 2015. As marketing and technology continue advancing at a rapid pace, there will be job titles in 2025 that didn't exist in 2022.

The prudent job-seeker should also examine the type of jobs that are not trending upward. The general decline of print media is good example. Try a search for newspaper feature writers and see what happens.

Hubspot, a major provider of marketing technology software, examined the skillsets and job titles likely to be in high demand from 2022 forward. Content and creative specialists topped their list, partly due to the dramatic increase in marketers' use of digital content marketing. [2]

Other IMC In Demand Job Titles

- Content Creator
- Content Strategist
- Content Marketing Mgr
- Creative Assistant
- Digital Brand Mgr
- Creative Director
- Marketing Data Analyst
- Marketing Technologist
- Digital Marketing Mgr
- Social Media Coordinator
- Social Media Strategist
- Community Mgr
- SEO Specialist
- SEO Strategist
- SEO/Marketing Mgr

Source: https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/marketing-job-titles-and-skillsets

To define the abilities needed for working in a fluid future, McKinsey & Co. conducted a survey of 18,000 respondents across 15 countries. Results confirmed what many consider common wisdom. A mix of soft and hard skills is required, with particular emphasis on most things digital.

"Overall, survey participants with a university degree had higher average proficiency scores across 56 distinct elements of talent, suggesting that those with higher levels of education are better prepared for changes in the workplace.

High incomes were most strongly associated with proficiency in the four skill groups where overall proficiency levels were lowest among respondents—namely understanding digital systems, software use and development, planning and ways of working, and communication…." [3]

If higher incomes and middle to senior management positions are desired, a relevant college degree is generally table stakes. According to the McKinsey report, in some job categories completing certification programs might suffice.

The Big Picture—the Evolution of IMC's Job Market's Boom Cycle

Even before the pandemic, advertising, media and PR agencies were adopting new technologies. Agencies were also reorganizing their workflows and workforces. Brands were analyzing marketing budgets and adding more sophisticated digital capabilities. Marketers were launching more digital audio, mobile and video marketing initiatives. Given the flurry of consumer privacy regulations, brands feverishly focused on driving consumers to brand-owned apps, content and websites to gather opt-in consumer data.

Traditional media and communication channels, like broadcast television and print, were in a decline stage long before the pandemic. Streaming channels, such as Netflix and Spotify, had secure footholds but consumer demand literally skyrocketed during the pandemic.

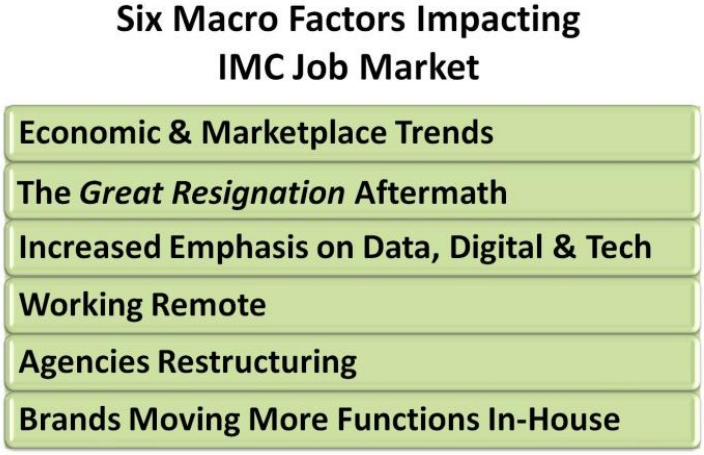
With pandemic-driven lockdowns and travel bans in place; movie theaters, professional meetings, restaurants, retail, tourism, travel, and stadium-based sports attendance all went into suspended animation. Brands slashed marketing budgets and layoffs hit most IMC sectors.

Across industries, stakeholders realized the post-pandemic world would have a new normal. Many of those that lost their jobs either switched industries or left the field entirely. Quitting a current job is not always smart, as its far easier to move from one job to another than plot a return to the workforce after a long absence.

With the economic rebound IMC firms not only wanted those employees back but needed to fill new slots in high demand areas. With higher demand, came a major shift in the employer—employee balance of power. For now, the balance tilts more in favor of employees and job seekers.

What Forces Systematically Impact the Future IMC Job Market?

Certain forces influencing IMC's job market promise to remain in play for the longer-term. Here are six macro-factors for job seekers to consider.



Economic and Marketplace Trends

It's no secret that job trends are generally correlated with economic trends. That said, not every business sector experiences massive job cuts in a crisis or economic downturn. Certain industries grow and prosper during hard times. Digital streaming, ecommerce channels and social media experienced boom cycles during the pandemic.

In addition, there are tens-of thousands of small to medium businesses (SMBs) that have either not started or only partially completed their digital transformations to data-driven, consumer centric companies. Their needs span numerous IMC job categories.

In some sectors, agencies and brands are scrambling to find talent. Now there is high demand for seasoned professionals, such as those skilled in; content creation, crisis communication, automated media ad buying and placement (programmatic), marketing-related data science/analytics and social media marketing,

The Great Attrition, The Great Resignation and *The Great Reskilling*

Early in the pandemic, some IMC workers were either temporarily furloughed or outright fired. Many of those remaining on the job experienced burnout due to increased workloads—overworked, underappreciated and comparatively underpaid. In late 2020 and early 2021 employees in numerous industries started turning in their resignations. As resignations mounted, the overall trend gained labels like *The Great Attrition*, *The Great Reshuffle*, and *The Great Resignation*. Employee turnover rates approached stratospheric levels. [4]

Where did all those people go? Some, particularly in the Baby Boomer cohort, left the job market or opted for early retirement. Those in the middle age groups, particularly women with school aged children, typically sought better paying, family-friendly work from home (WFH) positions. Others started their own businesses or opted for freelance work.

Having extended periods of time away from office environments prompted employees to seriously review the life—work balance. The live-to-work approach was losing ground to work-to-live. For varied reasons, a substantial number concluded their in-office jobs were exhausting and basically sucked.

It couldn't have happened at a worse time for IMC agencies and the marketing-related tech industry. The digital world continued its breakneck innovation pace and IMC data analytics and other specific skills became even more

important. Many leaving their jobs were the skilled staffers with 2-10 years of experience. Here, consider what it would be like for an army to lose over 30% of all the sergeants and lieutenants within a 12 month period.

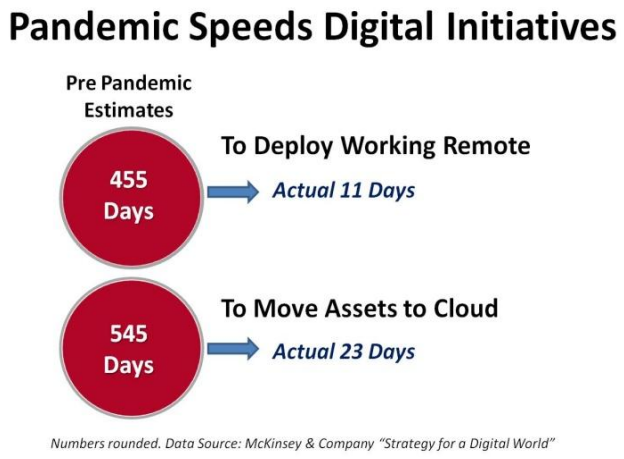
Agencies and brands have generally looked to college internship programs as a source of entry-level talent. The shortage of experienced analytic and advanced digital marketing talent, however, has prompted many agencies and brands to assume educational responsibilities. [5] Companies ranging from Levi-Strauss & Company and Unilever to Verizon are offering training programs aimed at *reskilling* current employees to meet present and future needs.

From the employer viewpoint, people with college degrees are nice, but people with degrees and skillsets are even nicer.

Nearly every sector of IMC is touched by digital transformation and the ever-increasing need for skills related to data and digital marketing. IMC employers want people able to deploy their skills immediately after a brief on-boarding orientation.

Increased Emphasis on Data, Digital and Tech

Pandemic induced shutdowns accelerated the entire data-heavy ecommerce sector. As new audio and video social channels emerged the demand for multimedia production skills increased. Podcasts and webinars became must-haves rather than nice-to-haves. The recent *metaverse* buzz is igniting demand for those with virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) skillsets.



Numbers rounded. Data Source: McKinsey & Company "Strategy for a Digital World"

With more firms shifting to sophisticated data-driven marketing, IMC's need for data analysts, data scientists and martech software specialists also increases.

Leading agencies and brands have already adopted marketing software packages like Salesforce and the Adobe Experience Cloud that feature real-time capabilities. Google Analytics is another key tool in widespread use.

Data analysis, digital and software skills are expected to remain in high demand. The main reasons are straightforward.

Developments in data and marketing technology have been relentless. It's easy for typical IMC employees to spend 20-30% of a workweek just trying just to keep up with data and tech-related advances in their specialty areas. Another 10-20% might be devoted to educating and interacting with internal and external clients.

According to a recent study by the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), "proficiency in analytics and data has dropped the most, declining 6% to a score of 29%." This means about 70% of those in IMC-related jobs are below the necessary digital skill levels.

CIM 's director of marketing Gemma Butler says, "The risk of getting left behind needs to be highlighted on the basis that technology isn't going to wait. The need to continue upskilling in order to just stand still was apparent

before the pandemic – the risk now is that it will only continue to grow and the skills gap could become unmanageable." [6]

Working Remote

For IMC and many brands, working remote or working from home (WFH) was the common model during the pandemic's crisis period. Now many agencies and brands want that workforce back in the building. While some IMC professionals longed to return to the office environment, the desire was certainly not widespread. A recent survey of over 400 marketing executives by *We Are Rosie* found only 2% of respondents desired a complete back-to-office situation.[7]

Some agencies and brands are taking a comparatively hard line about returning to the office. Most, however, are now finding it necessary to offer more flexible work options in addition to higher pay, if they expect to hire top-talent.

Some Brands Took a Harder Line About Returning to the Office

"If you can go into a restaurant in New York City, you can come into the office," and, "If you want to get paid New York rates, you work in New York… "– I fundamentally believe the way you and I and others in this room have developed our careers is by mentoring and watching ...those coming before us…I don't believe you can do that sitting at home yourself. We will be flexible when flexibility is called for…. "

James Gorman, CEO Morgan Stanley, July 2021

Source: https://www.efinancialcareers.com/news/2021/07/morgan-stanley-james-gorman-back-to-office

Stanford University economics Professor Nicolas Bloom has monitored and researched WFH for over two decades. Data from his latest study of over 17,000 employees across various industries points to growing issues with hybrid or flexible schedules that mix in-office and WFH. According to Bloom, "There's going to be huge battles over which days people work from home and who decides that…." [8]

What do employers need to do in order to reduce talent turnover and adjust to the newer flexible working environment? Anetra Henry of the Institute for Public Relations says, "Moving forward, organizations must realize that flexibility and productivity go hand in hand—and should stay current on technology trends to build cohesive networks for seamless internal communications." [9]

First-time job seekers might desire a full-time work from home position, but should not expect being offered the option. There are benefits to in-office situations. Working in-office allows new hires to; learn workflows, better understand client relations, gain new software skills and establish stronger interpersonal relationships with their managers and co-workers.

Agency Restructuring

It's a dynamic landscape in the agency world. The huge agency holding companies regularly review their portfolios and areas of core competency. These mega-firms are also making substantial moves into newer areas, such as artificial intelligence (AI), competitive intelligence, content marketing, ecommerce and data driven creative services.

Smaller agencies are adding new functions. For example, public relations agencies found increased demand for managing and executing social media campaigns, coordinating social influencers and supervising social communities.

Brands Boost In-House Capabilities and Options

Where will you work? Just five years ago, college graduates in advertising, marketing and public relations anticipated landing their first job at an IMC-related agency. Given the rapid growth of brands taking many agency functions in-house, job seekers would be foolish to ignore brand or client-side openings.

Brands taking more IMC functions in-house, like digital media buying and email marketing.

In addition to IMC openings at traditional media companies, advertising supported video on demand channels (AVODs) like Roku and Hulu, plus audio streamers like Spotify, have internal agencies. These agencies serve advertising clients and handle promotional duties for the channel.

Some in-house agencies offer content marketing and multimedia production services. There's also a relatively recent breed of in-house agencies called retail media networks (RMNs).

Retailers ranging from Amazon, CVS and Lowes to Kroger, Target and Walmart have internal advertising or RMN operations focused on providing brands access to the retailer's online and in-store advertising options and customer bases. In early 2022, electronics retailer Best Buy launched an in-house media agency, Best Buy Ads, providing marketers with both in-store and online messaging directed to its consumers. It also started Career Pathways; a diversity-oriented program creating various opportunities for minority candidates "seeking advertising careers through internships, mentorship and paid experiences. " [10]

The Wrap

Barring any new dramatic economic crisis, the 2022 through mid-2023 IMC-related job outlook should remain vibrant. The demand for top-talent at all levels in content, digital and data-related positions is likely to continue. IMC employers will need to offer higher salaries and show more flexibility in working arrangements if they want to lure top-talent.

Advertising budget trends are generally a key indicator of IMC job trends. The Winterberry Group's analysts "expect continued (ad spending) growth of 11.8% in 2022 to $487.8 billion." [11] That's a positive signal for general IMC job growth going forward.

Highly successful job candidates are proactive and usually do weekly research to track hiring trends. If they don't already have the right mix of in-demand soft and hard skills they upskill. If upskilling is necessary, job seekers can enroll in one of the many certification programs, like those offered by Adobe and the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB).*

Job searches should include not only agencies, but also the vast array of opportunities offered by; consumer product brands, digital platforms, new media channels, nonprofits, retailers, small and medium businesses, marketing software suppliers and even traditional media.

**https://www.iab.com/training-certification/*

REFERENCES

1. IBISWorld. (2021) Industry Statistics. Retrieved January 12, 2022 from: https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/employment/advertising-agencies-united-states/ and https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/market-size/public-relations-firms-united-states/
2. Becker, B. (2021, December 27). 15 Marketing job titles + the roles that leaders plan to invest in next year**.** https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/marketing-job-titles-and-skillsets
3. Dondi, M. et al. (2021, June 25). Defining the skills citizens will need in the future world of work. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/defining-the-skills-citizens-will-need-in-the-future-world-of-work
4. Field, E., et al. (2021, November 8). The Great Attrition: Same turnover, but the "why" differs by industry. https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/the-great-attrition-same-turnover-but-the-why-differs-by-industry
5. Safian-Demers, E. (2021, June 22). The great reskill. https://intelligence.wundermanthompson.com/2021/06/the-great-reskill/
6. Jefferson, M. (2021, December 20). Marketing's digital skills gap could become unmanageable as proficiency declines. https://www.marketingweek.com/marketings-digital-skills-proficiency-declines/
7. Mandese, J. (2021, June 7). Study finds only 2% of marketing execs want a full return to office. https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/363949/study-finds-only-2-of-marketing-execs-want-a-ful.html
8. Smith, M. (2022, January 7). Expect 'huge battles' over working from home between employees and bosses soon, says Stanford professor who's studied remote work for 20 years. https://www.cnbc.com/2022/01/07/stanford-professor-expect-huge-battles-over-working-from-home-soon.html
9. Henry, A. (2022, February 3). 3 takeways from industry research on the great resignation. https://www.prdaily.com/3-takeaways-from-industry-research-on-the-great-resignation/
10. Kelly, C. (2022, January 4). Best Buy launches in-house media company. https://www.marketingdive.com/news/best-buy-launches-in-house-media-company/616630
11. Sullivan, L. (2022, January 20). U.S. advertising, marketing spend up nearly 22% in 2021. https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/370466/us-advertising-marketing-spend-up-nearly-22-in.html

About the Authors

James R. Smith is Professor Emeritus of Digital Media & Journalism at SUNY-New Paltz and past president of the Broadcast Education Association.

Thomas R. Flynn is Professor of Integrated Marketing Communication at Slippery Rock University and past-president of the Eastern Communication Association.

END