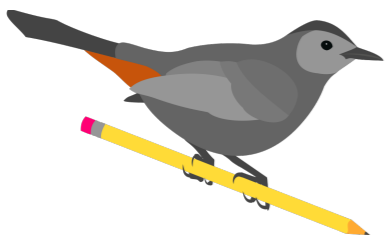


Example report, 8+ years experience



Content Design Skills Report

by **Catbird Content**

This report is based on your answers to Catbird Content's survey of skills for content designers, and on my experiences working as a content designer and leader.

Content design covers a broad range of skills. The skills in this survey and report were collected from sources including job descriptions, other people's skills audits, and more. As the discipline matures, roles sometimes have wildly different responsibilities - even within the same organization.

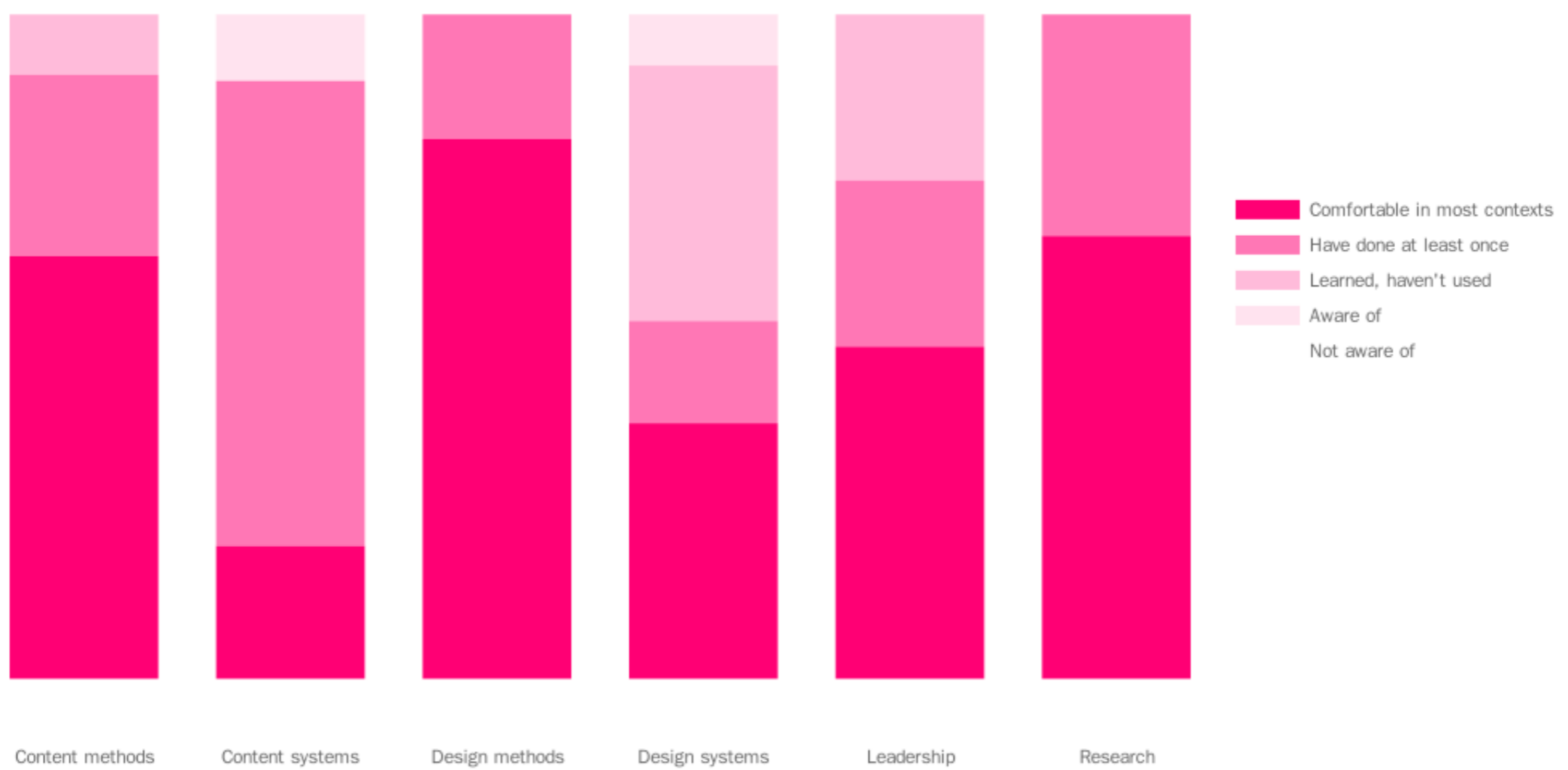
No person is expected to have 100% of all possible content design skills.

You'll see two groups of skills in this report: skills you're especially good at, and skills you could consider learning or practicing. For each, I listed impacts you may be able to make with those skills. If you have a different experience, I'd love to hear about it, and update future reports! Please let me know.

Thank you for taking the survey. I hope you find this report not only reflective of your skills, but also empowering and celebratory.



Torrey Podmajersky
President, Catbird Content



Skill summary

The more comfort you reported with doing a particular skill, the darker the color of that bar.

The total height possible for each bar is 100% of skills asked about, regardless of number of skills in any category.

Skills that were reported as “Not aware” don’t appear, which makes the bar for that category shorter.

Content methods are the content-specific tools, techniques, and ideas that help us solve problems and capitalize on opportunities, from annotating to writing.

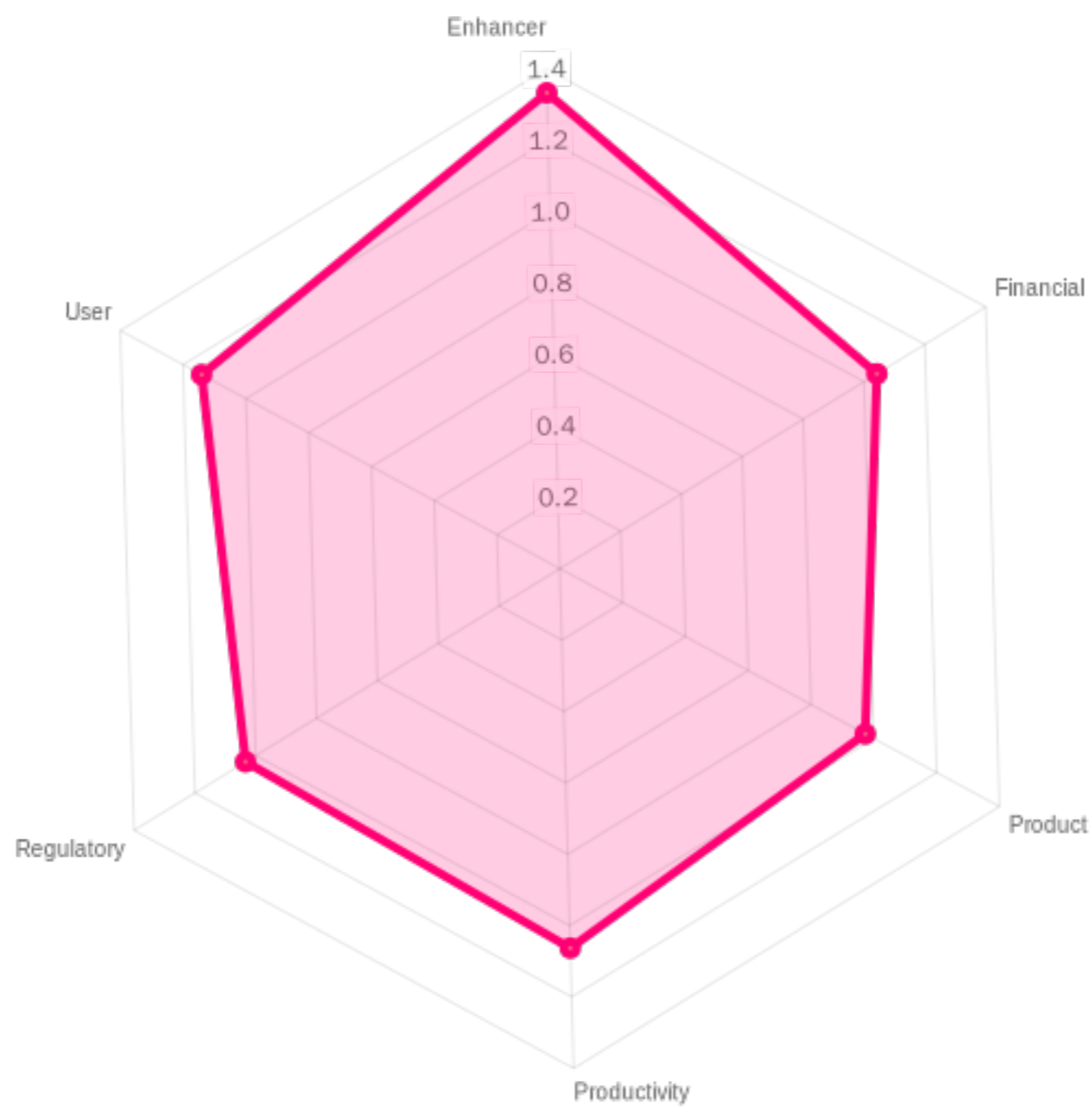
Content systems are the systems of content, content management, and operations that help us solve business and user problems with content.

Design methods are the broader design tools, techniques, and ideas that help us solve problems and capitalize on opportunities.

Design systems are the broader systems of design and design operations that help us solve business and user problems with design thinking.

Leadership skills are related to persuading, directing, planning, strategizing, and otherwise getting people and systems aligned to solve problems and drive business.

Research skills are related to how we systematically come to understand the problem or opportunity, the users, the business context, and the design validity.



Impact summary

This radar chart shows the categories of impact you could reasonably expect to make with the content design skills you reported, so that you can choose where to focus your energy.

To read this chart, think of each axis of the chart as a different impact, reaching from the center to the outer edge. The farther out your pink point reaches along that axis, the bigger proportion of that impact you're prepared to make, according to the impacts assigned to the different skills.



Enhancer impacts are about the skills that make almost any endeavor more successful



Financial impacts involve money: impacts to revenue, costs, and sales



Product includes impacts to the strategy, brand, and market share for a product



Productivity is about impacting the time it takes to align around, develop, design, and release the product



Regulatory impacts acknowledge corporate liability for quality, compliance, and sustainability promises



User impacts are about improving the understanding, confidence, and outcomes for the people who use the product

Strengths that differentiate you

You're already capable of making significant contributions with content design!

Celebrate these skills that help you make unique impact in your career.

These are the top skills for which you report the greatest comfort, the same or greater than content designers with the same years of experience.

- 1 Writing content to train LLMs
- 2 Coding content
- 3 Providing feedback about AI generated content to train LLMs
- 4 Researching conversation design
- 5 Prototyping user experiences

Writing content to train LLMs

Creating original content to train Large Language Models (LLMs) or other AI, providing seed content structure, style, and substance for including initial training and emerging subjects.

For example, writing, collating, or formatting examples of online chat conversations with sales agents, so that those conversations can be used as example "good" content for a new AI/LLM.

Conditions for use

An organization can use this skill when they are using or transitioning to use a generative AI large language model (LLM.) These models require extensive example source material to be trained on subject matter and content style for a particular brand. Generative AI needs to have example content to be able to generate content that is factual and appropriate.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer can work within any scope that will produce enough content with which to train the LLM. The LLM can generally be trained on pre-existing content, so that content may need to be gathered and made available to the LLM, which may require some coding. As information changes, the LLM will need new training content about the new information. For example, when a new feature or product version is released, it needs to have example content about the new features and products, and how they are different from the previous.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Reduce risk to brand perception

Generated content that misleads customers can create a distrust of the brand. When the LLM is trained on accurate content, it's less likely to mislead customers.



Increase consistency of experience

When the LLM is trained on content that adheres to brand voice and usability standards, the content it generates for the UX is also more likely to adhere to brand voice and usability standards.



Reduce liability around sensitive topics

When the LLM is trained on content that demonstrates sensitivity and careful, consistent language about sensitive and regulated topics, it is more likely to generate sensitive, consistent language for those topics.



Increase quality perception

When the LLM is trained on high-quality content, the content it generates will consistently adhere to the designed brand voice, style, and content, which increases customers' perception of the brand.



Improve user outcomes

When a user experience depends on AI generated content, starting that LLM with accurate, appropriate, and user-centered content makes it more likely to create user outcomes that are predictable, appropriate, and successful for the user.

Coding content

Making the content ready to be served electronically, whether in an app, on the web, or elsewhere. This usually involves understanding a markup and/or coding language. Some complex content needs complex formatting, and some CMSes expect coding knowledge.

For example, using Markdown, XML, HTML, json, or other languages to encode content.

Conditions for use

An organization can use people with this skill when they serve content from digital tools or systems, in apps, on websites, etc. Most content needs to be coded in some way, though many content management systems obscure that layer of work. Being able to fix bugs in the code, or create content formats with high complexity, either takes a developer's time to look into it, or a content designer with this skill.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer needs to have access to the development tools, and the trust of their development and/or production teams. Some organizations require this skill of their content designers, based on their own, internal development systems.

Impact to focus on making with this skill



Reduce time to develop

To be served electronically, content needs to be formatted. When content designers code their content alongside developers, the developers' time can be used for non-content tasks. When content designers can fix their own content or localization bugs in code, production can be faster,

Providing feedback about AI generated content to train LLMs

Examining and adjusting AI generated content to provide training to Large Language Model (LLM) or other AI models.

For example, judging the AI generated content for accuracy, adherence to brand, and relevance to the user's context, and rewriting/recreating responses to be accurate, brand-appropriate, and relevant.

Conditions for use

An organization can use this skill when they depend on LLMs to generate content. That content won't be reliably truthful, relevant, or appropriate for the brand without feedback.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer needs to have the scope to personally know or be able to research the accuracy of the content generated by the AI, and have knowledge of the wider brand guidelines and strategy. They need the authority to correct the AI, and the tools and access with which to do so.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Reduce risk to brand perception

When an LLM relies on source material but has no additional correction, it can make inappropriate connections, use inappropriate language, and make promises that aren't good for the organization.



Increase consistency of experience

When an LLM is trained with feedback, it can reliably generate content that meets its style and brand guidelines, emphasizing the cases that aren't well represented in its source content.



Enable non-specialists to create design artifacts

When an LLM is trained with feedback, it can be prepared for people who don't usually design content to create reliably brand-appropriate, accurate, and relevant content.



Reduce liability around sensitive topics

When an LLM relies on source material but has no additional correction, people who seek to damage the company's standing can prompt it about sensitive topics in ways that manipulate the LLM to generate content that increases risk for the organization.

Researching conversation design

Analyzing users' responses to designed conversations and doing foundational research about how people talk or ask questions about particular topics.

For example, using Wizard of Oz testing as foundational research to uncover users' likely response to conversation.

Conditions for use

An organization can use this skill when they are creating conversations (IVR, chatbots, voice assistants) that need to meet purposes for the business and user.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a conversation designer needs no particular scope or authority. They need the authority to make evidence-based recommendations about conversation design choices for their scope.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Increase adoption & usage

One of the big problems with conversational interfaces is that some people avoid them (for example, chatbots or voice assistants) because their experiences with similar experiences have been inadequate. Researching which conversation starters or calls to action achieve the most adoption will allow the conversations to have their impact at scale.



Extract insights to inform strategy

When researching conversation designs, user responses can be aligned to some expectations, and wildly different from others. The key is to find out that those differences will happen, and if possible, why those differences happen, so that business-appropriate outcomes can be designed for.



Reduce liability around sensitive topics

Conversation design research can seek important information about how people are willing to talk about sensitive topics, for example health symptoms or security issues. Research can inform design about the patterns, language, and mitigations that could be effective to reduce risk in these conversations.



Increase quality perception

When a conversation design is based on foundational research, developed with user feedback, and/or validated with user testing, it is more likely to be appreciated by the people who use it.

Prototyping user experiences

Creating interactive experiences that look like the final experience, and can be tapped, clicked, or spoken to, but aren't actually hooked up to real functionality.

For example, creating prototypes in Figma, InVision, Adobe XD, ProtoPie, or Framer.

Conditions for use

This skill is frequently performed by people in product design or dedicated design engineering roles, rather than in content design roles. An organization can use this skill when there are research questions or stakeholder doubts about how a person will use or appreciate an experience, feature, or pattern. A prototype can be used with stakeholders to demonstrate the value users could perceive in the experience, and to test potential design solutions in user research.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer can work within any scope, needing only the authority appropriate to the prototype, which can be across features or within a single moment.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Reduce cost of design and content

When there are significant open questions about if users will use and appreciate a design, it is less expensive to prototype and research solutions before the designs are built than it is to engineer a solution, have it fail with users, and then build the next solution.



Extract insights to inform strategy

When a strategic idea is prototyped and tested with users, stakeholders, and the marketplace, strategic insights can be gleaned that affect the organization's investments and planning. When a prototype exists for an experience, many aspects of the experience can be tested directly with users to learn about their enthusiasms, concerns, and questions, to create a greater likelihood of success.



Improve user outcomes

When a prototype is used to test and refine a user experience prior to developing it, the experiences work better for the user when they are released.

Skills to learn or practice

Developing these skills would give you the opportunity to build your career in measurable ways.

These are skills that content designers frequently use in their roles, chosen because of the impacts we've assigned to them and your responses.

These aren't the skills that "everybody else can do better" - which isn't actually a helpful metric.

These are the skills that can add the most potential impacts to your skills list, increasing your impact for employers, for your users, and for your own satisfaction.

- 1 Monitoring content performance metrics
- 2 Researching content trends
- 3 Editing to style guide
- 4 Editing for accessibility
- 5 Prompting AI (LLMs) to generate content

Monitoring content performance metrics

Tracking the performance of content, whether inside an app, on social media, on a website, or elsewhere.

For example, tracking the pageviews of an online article, tracking the conversion rate between A and B versions of button text in an app, or tracking the "likes" and other engagement on a social media post.

Conditions for use

An organization can use this skill when their success depends on users actually using, understanding, and preferring the experience. The UX content, whether it is in the UI, in notifications, emails, or support centers, can be related to the users' usage of the experience. For example, relating open-rates on email to usage of the features it relates to can create insights about effective ways to draw people back into the product.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer needs at least the scope that matches the breadth covered by the measurements available. This means that if a content designer works on a piece of a UX flow, but the measurements are only available at the entire-flow or entire-feature level, there is a mismatch in how those metrics can be understood with respect to that content designer's work.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Reduce support operations costs

When customers use self-service how-to or troubleshooting content instead of contacting a call center or using an AI chatbot, the cost to the company is reduced. When content performance metrics are tracked, the company can make iterative improvements so that self-service content becomes more and more helpful.



Extract insights to inform strategy

When content performance metrics are tracked, patterns can be found in the data that enable the company to understand users' needs and understanding of the product and features. Patterns in user behavior can be detected that provide insights into what and how users use the product and features, and how users connect and understand topics and subjects within the content.



Increase organic traffic

When metrics about SEO are tracked, improvements can be made iteratively.



Reduce carbon footprint of content

When content performance metrics are tracked, the organization can detect when a particular piece of content isn't being effective. That content can be retired, removed from data storage and no longer indexed by search engines or served to users. By removing ineffective content, the organization pays less in money and energy, which also saves in carbon emissions.



Improve user outcomes

When content performance metrics are tracked, improvements can be made in the content to maximize the user outcomes that demonstrate understanding and persuasion.

Researching content trends

Finding out how the use of specific content is being used in organic search, media, and advertising.

For example, using Google Trends to determine the frequency of use of a particular word or phrase, including what other words/phrases are similar.

Conditions for use

An organization can use this skill when they have products or services that need to be understood and discoverable online in the short term. Trends can shift rapidly, so this may need to be used repeatedly to maintain its effects.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer needs no particular scope or authority. It's a usable skill across an entire brand or for a single idea within a single feature. It also requires only the most minimal authority within the team: The authority to make evidence-based recommendations about the words that will be most effective at the content designer's scope.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Increase organic traffic

By using terms that are already commonly used when people search for similar ideas, the team can optimize their content and app to appear high in search results.



Reduce liability around sensitive topics

When an organization is planning to introduce a new feature or product, researching how the words, metaphors, or emoji surrounding that potential feature or product is already used can help the team avoid unintended liability. For example, the makers of a vegetarian cooking app might want to use emoji, but would be wise to research how eggplant emoji are commonly used.



Increase user understanding

By finding out the words people already use for similar products and concepts, the content within the UX can leverage the understanding those people already have.

Editing to style guide

Editing content to meet a particular, consistent style for grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

For example, using AP or MLA or Chicago styles, and/or plain language guidelines.

Conditions for use

An organization can use this skill when it makes content available as part of its products, marketing, services, or other professional presence. Many organizations leverage existing style guides that are maintained by other organizations, such as the AP style guide, and many organizations also create and maintain style guides in-house.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer can work within any scope, from a cross-product purview to a single notification. They need the authority to hold up the style guide as one authoritative input to UX content choices.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Increase consistency of experience

Editing content to a style guide creates consistency in every detail of the content, from the placement of punctuation to consistent spelling of words that have multiple correct ways to spell them (for example, “movable” vs. “moveable”).



Increase quality perception

When a style guide is uniformly applied, the effect is subtle and powerful on the perception of quality.



Increase customer confidence

When users perceive higher quality in the product, marketing materials, or other content, they have greater confidence that the product will be useful and trustworthy.

Editing for accessibility

Editing content to avoid unintentionally excluding people; seeking out and removing barriers and roadblocks to content.

For example, updating instructions or UX affordances so that they don't rely on people recognizing a color ("use the blue button") or position on a screen ("look in the lower right").

Conditions for use

An organization can use this skill when it makes content available as part of its products, marketing, services, or other professional presence. Many organizations have accessibility guidance that has been created in-house, and international standards exist for Web Content Accessibility (WCAG 2.0) to meet a basic bar for content accessibility.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer can work within any scope, from a cross-product purview to a single notification. They need the authority to hold up accessibility and/or inclusive design guidelines as an authoritative input to UX content choices.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Expand potential audience/user base

When content is accessible, more people can use the product, service, or experience than would be able to use it before. Many governmental and enterprise customers only buy accessible services and software to serve the accessibility needs of their user populations.



Reduce liability around sensitive topics

When content is not examined and updated for accessibility, the organization can be subject to legal action about the inaccessibility of their website, products, or experiences. For example, in the USA, the National Federation of the Blind is an organization that proactively pursues legal action against companies that don't create accessible experiences.



Improve user outcomes

Content accessibility benefits all users by making experiences clearer and easier to use, much like curb-cuts in sidewalks benefits all people walking on sidewalks.

Prompting AI (LLMs) to generate content

Writing the instructions (prompts) that cause an AI (usually a Large Language Model, or LLM) to create the desired content, whether that is text, video, image, code, conversations, or other content.

For example, writing a description of an image that is desired: "A photo of a panda riding a red tricycle, smiling and waving at the camera"

Conditions for use

This skill is frequently performed by people in non-content design roles, as a replacement for content design. People can use this skill to create content that may be adequate to its purpose, and then refine the content for brand, purpose, and truthfulness. An organization can use this skill when they need to create high volumes of content rapidly, or lower volumes need to be created by non-content designers.

Conditions for success

To be successful with this skill, a content designer needs to have no particular scope. They need the authority to use LLM tools, which have a greater carbon footprint, lower accuracy, higher GPU cost, and are subject to different regulations than human content creators.

Impacts to focus on making with this skill



Reduce cost of design and content

Prompting LLMs to create vast quantities of content can reduce costs overall, because even though it costs energy and GPU processing to run the AI, it is fast enough to outpace the hourly costs to hire content writers.



Increase consistency of experience

LLMs can generate content consistent with the style, branding, and topics specified in its training and the prompt provided to it, which can create consistency across the experience.



Reduce time to design

When design requires a high volume of fairly similar content, LLM prompting can create initial drafts of that content faster than any human.



Enable non-specialists to create design artifacts

Writing prompts for LLMs can help non-content designers create drafts of content that are believable at first glance.

What to do next

By participating in this comprehensive survey from Catbird Content, you've taken concrete steps to understanding the value of your content design skill set.

Now it's time to internalize these findings and decide what you'd like to get out of this report.

The following pages will give you some insights about how to reflect on this information, explore your next steps, and take action to advance your career.



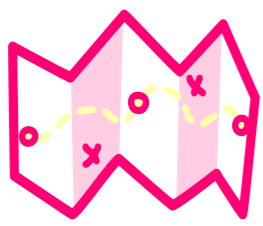
Reflect

How are you celebrating the skills you use, acting confidently and comfortably?

What new skills sound interesting to you?

Are you making all of the impacts you're already prepared to make? If not, how could you position yourself to make those impacts?

What kinds of impact do you want to make in your current (or next) content design role?



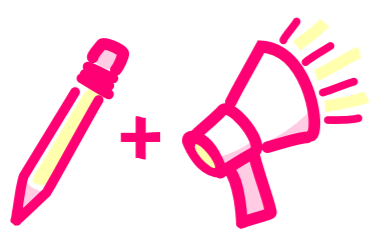
Explore

Set up time with a few people you trust to share your results. These people can be colleagues, mentors, managers, and friends.

Discuss with them what strengths you're proud of, what you'd like to do next in your career, and what skills you're looking to build.

If you decide to build skills, look for opportunities to learn skills in your current role, as a freelancer, or in classes. Learn by reading or watching videos, too.

Resources to learn more about these skills are published on [CatbirdContent.com](https://www.catbirdcontent.com), and more are created by the content design community all the time.

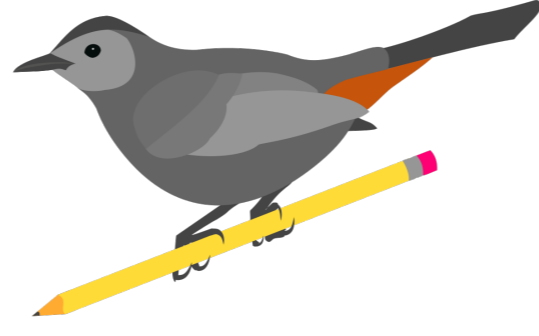


Act

Buying a book or signing up for a class isn't the end of the story; to make impact with our skills, we have to practice and use them.

While you're using any of these skills, take note of the impacts you're making, and celebrate them so that your teams notice.

For your strengths, consider sharing with the content design community the way you practice those skills, and the impacts you've made with them. For example, you could write an article online or a book, make yourself available as a mentor, share at a community event, and speak at conferences.



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