

Katie Killingsworth

Professor Stanley

IDS 493

October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025

## Content Analysis of Professional Writing Job Advertisements

### 1. Introduction

The current climate of the job market is highly competitive. Knowing what skills employers desire most helps a resume stand out against hundreds of qualified applicants. Job seekers need to know how to incorporate keywords and desired skills to pass AI resume screenings. AI does not make the final decision in the hiring process, but it reviews a resume before an actual human ever sees it. Content analysis of job ads uses quantitative and qualitative evidence to “read between the lines” (Stanley) and reveal what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) employers want (Lipovac and Babac). This analysis will compare two job advertisements to determine what skills are most desirable in the world of professional writing.

### 2. Methodology

Content analysis is a research method that highlights keywords and categorizes patterns found in data. Content analysis refers to locating sources, collecting data, analyzing, and presenting results (Lipovac and Babac). The four key components of analyzing job advertisements are: Job Title, Company, Job Description, and Salary (Lipovac and Babac). The wording of job advertisements can be confusing. This method of research is appropriate for this

analysis because content analysis counts keywords and word types that appear most frequently. These patterns help applicants connect the dots and better understand the deeper meaning of job advertisements.

### 3. Background

The New Economy is driven by knowledge and innovation (Atkinson). Atkinson's article, *Measuring Up*, is over a decade old, but this observation remains true today. When the article was published in 2007, the managerial and professional jobs total had increased to 34.8% by 2003 (Atkinson). Atkinson's also hits on the change in employable skills from, "job-specific to broad and changing." Employers seek candidates that have not only the hard, technical skills required to perform the job, but also soft skills. Soft skills, like communication, are equally as desirable as hard skills because they are essential to a functional work environment (Birt). Professional writing as a career is very dynamic, and students studying this degree are, "energetic, driven, creative, and innovative" (Purdue University) and find opportunities in various positions. "Today, Professional Writing graduates find work as usability specialists and user experience designers, information architects, technical documentation managers, and social media coordinators in addition to work as documentation and content authors, editors, technical writers, and organizational researchers" (Purdue University). Professional writers are excellent communicators with skills in both classical rhetoric (or the art of persuasion) and new-age digital writing. The goal of this analysis is to pinpoint which skills professional writers possess that are the most employable across multiple disciplines.

### 4. Analysis

The job advertisements compared in this analysis were located on indeed.com, but the data analyzed was retrieved directly from the company's website. According to Lipovac and Babac, choosing a relevant source is the first step in collecting data for content analysis.

The first ad is from the Virginia Living Museum (VLM) for the position of Grant's Officer. The Virginia Living Museum is an open-air museum located in Newport News, Virginia. The museum combines the elements of a native wildlife park, science museum, aquarium, botanical preserve, and planetarium (Virginia Living Museum). The museum's goals include conservation efforts and providing hands-on education (Virginia Living Museum). The grant's officer is responsible for securing financial support for the museum by writing grants for funding opportunities. This job advertisement focuses on requirements rather than promoting the museum's mission. The most frequent words that appear in this job ad include: Grant, Museum, Grants, Officer, and Support (Voyant Tools). Based on this information provided by Voyant Tools, it is safe to assume that technical skills related to grant writing are of high importance in this position.

The second job advertisement is posted by ITA International for the position of Proposal Manager. A global company, ITA, is headquartered in Newport News, Virginia. ITA International uses subject matter expertise, data analytics and technology to provide customer support to its client base (ITA). The responsibility of the proposal manager is to lead the development and submission of proposals in response to government and commercial solicitations. On the contrary, this job description heavily focuses on company branding with the first excerpt being all about why the candidate should want to work for them. The top words found in this advertisement are: Proposal, ITA, International, Process, and Government. This information

acquired by Voyant Tools further supports the company's desire to brand itself and highlights the importance of hard skills relevant to writing proposals and government experience.

Using the example from Lipovac and Babac's article, this analysis uses four skillsets to analyze the text of each job advertisement. Those skillsets are: Social and Communicative Skills, Personal Competence, Professional and Methodical Competence, and Decision-making and Responsibility (Lipovac and Babac). Social and communicative skills are number one in the U.S. and are the most represented in job ads in three out of four countries sampled (Lipovac and Babac). Social and communicative skills are soft skills gained through personal relationships and professional experiences (Birt). Examples of social and communicative skills are oral and written communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and customer service (Lipovac and Babac). Some common keywords and phrases used in job ads to identify the need for this skillset include, "Works well with others," "Team-player," "Communication," and "Problem-solving." Team-player means an employee exemplifies a cheerful outlook when working in teams, and communication refers to performing regular verbal and written correspondence with team members and customers alike (Purdue OWL).

The VLM ad for the grant's officer position heavily represented these soft skills, specifically communication and teamwork. Examples from the ad are, "Excellent oral and written communications skills," "Exceptional interpersonal and organizational skills," and "Must be able to hear and speak clearly to communicate effectively with employees." Many of the requirements also began with action verbs; for example, "Develop and strengthen donor relationships" and "Collaborate to develop effective donor communications." Coincidentally, and to no surprise, the proposal manager position reflected similar findings. Examples of communication found in the ad are, "Write and edit proposal content to ensure clarity, accuracy,

and persuasiveness, tailoring messaging to meet the needs of various stakeholders” and “Strong writing, editing, and verbal communication skills.” The ad also used action verbs to describe duties; for example: “Maintain effective communication with internal and external stakeholders throughout the proposal process, providing updates and gathering feedback” and “Collaborate with cross-functional teams, including technical, financial, and business development, to gather necessary information and create compelling proposals.”

Personal Competence was the second most wanted skill by employers and is the first in Hong Kong (Lipovac and Babac). Personal competence can mean many different things but what employers are looking for is reliability. Reliability is demonstrated by self-discipline, motivation, and flexibility. Employers also rate personal competence in candidates as a desire for professional growth and a willingness to learn (Lipovac and Babac). Candidates must have credibility to prove this skill. The VLM job ad requires personal competence skills in the form of flexibility and motivation. Examples to support this are, “Ability to work occasional evenings/weekends” and “Research funding sources, growing opportunities to meet operating goals.” The proposal manager position also requires a need for personal competence in soft skills like self-discipline in the role description, “This role requires a strategic thinker with strong writing skills and a proven track record in managing proposal efforts from start to finish.” A proven record equates to a candidate’s credibility and completing tasks from start to finish is an example of self-discipline.

Professional and methodical competence is represented in job advertisements by the hard skills employers want in addition to soft skills like time management (Lipovac and Babac). When the job ad mentions, “Attention to detail,” “Analytical,” “Product Knowledge” and “Project Management,” these are keywords that represent this competency. The grant’s officer

must have analytical experience and diligence. Examples of this from the VLM ad are, “Strong analytical and research skills with an eye for detail” and “Database software experience desirable.” Also, project management which is represented in the requirement, “Manage annual grant calendar of grant proposals and report deadlines.” The proposal manager position at ITA requires soft skills, like time management. For example, “Develop proposal schedules, ensuring timely completion of all proposal components and adherence to deadlines” and “Demonstrated ability to manage multiple proposals simultaneously and work under tight deadlines.”

Decision-making and responsibility are the least represented skills in job advertisements although these skills are highly desirable by employers. These skills show up in leadership skills, stress-management skills, and in the desire for candidates who are results-driven, have positive attitude, and an enthusiastic demeanor. Examples from the VLM job that represent responsibility are, “Coordinate internal staff teams for successful grant fulfillment” and “Be a positive and enthusiastic representative of the Virginia Living Museum,” and “Results-oriented and goal-driven.” Similarly, in the ITA job ad, decision-making is a desired skill. For example, a qualification of the proposal manager position is, “Execute and manage the proposal process for government and commercial contracts, in alignment with corporate standards and strategic direction set by leadership.”

## 5. Conclusion

Completing a content analysis of these two vastly different jobs within the professional writing sector gives job seekers a clear image of what are the most desirable skills these types of employers are after. As it relates to my own personal skillset, I feel confident that my resume exceeds a few expectations. I learned how important it is to dig deeper behind companies’

cultures and values (Silva) and how content analysis breaks down job advertisements into quantitative and qualitative data (Lipovac and Babac). Analyzing the data collected in my research has helped me better understand what skills employers really want and how I can strategically use keywords (Silva) to demonstrate my knowledge, skills, and abilities to match.

#### Works Cited

Atkinson, Robert D. "Measuring Up." *The IEDC Economic Development Journal* (2007): 5-12, Digital Media.

Birt, Jamie. "Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills: What's the Difference? ." *Indeed.Com*, 2025, [www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/hard-skills-vs-soft-skills](http://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/hard-skills-vs-soft-skills). Accessed 04 Oct. 2025.

"Careers in Professional Writing." *Careers in PW - College of Liberal Arts - Purdue University*, [www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/pw/undergraduate/prof-preparation/careers.html](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/pw/undergraduate/prof-preparation/careers.html). Accessed 04 Oct. 2025.

IDS 493 - IDS Electronic Portfolio Project, taught by Jessica Stanely, Fall 2025, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.

Lipovac, Ivona and Marina Bagić Babac. "Content Analysis of Job Advertisements for Identifying Employability SKills." *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems* (2021): 511-525. Digital Media.

"Proposal Manager." *ITA International*, careers-ita-intl.icims.com/jobs/4397/job?utm\_source=indeed\_integration&iis=Job%2BBoard&iisn=In

deed&indeed-apply-

token=73a2d2b2a8d6d5c0a62696875eaebd669103652d3f0c2cd5445d3e66b1592b0f&mob

ile=false&width=1220&height=500&bga=true&needsRedirect=false&jan1offset=-

300&jun1offset=-240. Accessed 04 Oct. 2025.

Silva, Rita Santos. "Decoding Job Ads: Hidden Clues on What Employers Really Want." *Career*

*Compass* (2024). Digital Media. <[https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/decoding-job-ads-](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/decoding-job-ads-hidden-clues-what-employers-really-rita-santos-silva-xrqt/)

[hidden-clues-what-employers-really-rita-santos-silva-xrqt/](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/decoding-job-ads-hidden-clues-what-employers-really-rita-santos-silva-xrqt/)>.

"Understanding Job Ads Part 2." *Understanding Job Ads Part 2 - Purdue OWL® - Purdue*

*University,*

[owl.purdue.edu/owl/job\\_search\\_writing/skilled\\_labor\\_job\\_search\\_resources/reading\\_and\\_](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/skilled_labor_job_search_resources/reading_and_using_job_ads/understanding_job_ads_part_2.html)

[using\\_job\\_ads/understanding\\_job\\_ads\\_part\\_2.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/skilled_labor_job_search_resources/reading_and_using_job_ads/understanding_job_ads_part_2.html). Accessed 04 Oct. 2025.

"Virginia Living Museum, Inc. - Grants Officer." *Paylocity Payroll + HR,*

[recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Details/3599968/Virginia-Living-Museum/Grants-](https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Details/3599968/Virginia-Living-Museum/Grants-Officer?source=Indeed_Feed)

[Officer?source=Indeed\\_Feed](https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Details/3599968/Virginia-Living-Museum/Grants-Officer?source=Indeed_Feed). Accessed 04 Oct. 2025.