

# START A CAREER IN SOCIAL MEDIA

As the corporate need for social media professionals continues to grow, learning institutions are adjusting offerings to meet demand



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**BY EMMA PROCTER**  
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In a world in which change is so rapid, early career choices can be confusing for new graduates. Different communications disciplines are converging, and new technologies are constantly evolving.

Amid the shifting professional landscape one area is soaring in importance: social media. There is now a high demand for experts in social media across most job markets and institutions are doing all they can to be the hot choice for budding Twitter and Facebook specialists.

In terms of salaries, there is plenty of scope to do well in this area. In the UK, the salary for a social media manager starts at around £25,300 (Dh123,000) per year. Meanwhile, in the US, the salary for the same role starts at around \$50,000 (Dh183,000) per year. Naturally, the bigger the firm the greater the

opportunities to make big bucks.

Stephen King, Lecturer in Media at Middlesex University Dubai, says that although communications skills have always been in high demand, today competence and confidence in the management of social media is increasingly a prerequisite for marketing teams and that this is especially the case in advertising and public relations.

"Social media platforms offer highly efficient channels to promote products, services and ideas to a global audience. They also help marketers keep a finger on the pulse and provide important insights to help drive customer-centric product innovation.

"Our undergraduate degrees in advertising, PR and journalism offer students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with a number of platforms and to increase competence over their three years with us. Students learn to use many different channels, including Google, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. They explore digital advertising, augmented reality, VR, targeting, social listening, influencer selection, content creation and scheduling."



**Stephen King**  
Middlesex Dubai



**Ray Eglington**  
Four Communications



**Aliya Khatri**  
Intern, J. Walter Thompson



**Dr Elena Novelli**  
Cass Business School

Things are moving fast in this area, says Ray Eglington, Group Managing Director at Four Communications and Chairman of the Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA).

"Five years ago, you'd have been hard pushed to find too many social media executive positions, especially at graduate level," he explains. "Today, I suspect most communications agencies see social media skills as a core competency.

"We look for a passion in the role. So that means people with a genuine interest in communications.

"Fifteen years ago, we wouldn't hire a graduate who didn't follow the news — today we aren't going to pick someone who doesn't actively engage with social channels."

## ACQUIRE LEADS

For Aliya Khatri, a Dubai-based second-year student who is interning as a community builder at advertising firm J. Walter Thompson, real-world experience is proving invaluable.

"My job mainly includes engaging with online communities and creating excellent content for social channels," she says.

"Apart from the traffic that social channels generate for my client's brands, I think social media is incredibly important for engaging with your community and can potentially lead to new customers.

"There have been many instances where a brand's good social standing has made me want to be part of their community and support their business by purchasing their products or services for instance.

"If you are a start-up, it makes sense to invest your time and money in social media. It does wonders for your brand visibility and overall search performance."

Dr Elena Novelli, Associate Professor (Reader) in Strategy and Co-director of the Digital Leadership Research Centre at Cass Business School, City, University of London, puts the high demand for social media



## Top courses in social media

### MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY DUBAI

For advanced learners, a one- or two-year Masters (MSc) in Digital Marketing exploring e-marketing, social media, analytics, consumer psychology and digital advertising.

**Course fee** Dh78,750

### DIGITAL MARKETING INSTITUTE (GLOBAL)

A range of in-depth courses from diploma to masters covering all aspects of social media and its application in business

**Course fee** from \$2,525 (Dh9,273)

### DIGITAL VIDYA DUBAI

The one-month Certified Social Media Marketing Master (CSMMM) course here focuses on demystifying community building and creating online media strategies.

**Course fee** \$950

### DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY, IRELAND

An intensive one-year MA in Social Media Studies delving into how social media is linked to the economy and what role it plays in politics.

**Course fee** €15,000 (non-EU, about Dh64,200)

### LOGICKS, DUBAI

A one-day Facebook 360 course looking at the potential marketing power and functionality of the leading social media platform.

**Course fee** Dh2,200

professionals down to the fact that today's engagement with business partners and customers happens as much online as it does offline.

## CROWDED SPACES

"Digitisation and connectivity have provided broader access — everyone can have a social media profile and contribute to the conversation — but being noticed and heard in a world where everyone has an online social presence is actually much more difficult than it was in the past.

"The risk is that a company's brand voice on platforms such as social media can be lost in the sea of voices. This is why organisations need a full-fledged social media strategy and professionals who can help design and implement it." ■