

Медийна, предизборна и интернет комуникация
Media, Election and Internet Communication

Professional Identity in Flux: Preliminary Analysis of the Evolution of Communication Roles on LinkedIn

DOI 10.55206/UHUY2598

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Abstract: This article explores the transformative evolution of professional identity and communication roles shaped by digital transformation and advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). LinkedIn, a leading social media platform for business and employment, serves as the focal point for examining the shifting landscape of professional skill sets and the qualifications demanded by modern organizations in three areas – marketing, communications and content management. By examining job postings, the preliminary analysis underscores the growing intersection between technology and professional identity in today’s dynamic workplace. Drawing on publicly available data from Germany - supported by the author’s research, practical experience, and the nation’s significant economic and technological influence - the analysis highlights emerging competencies that define expertise in this evolving field.

Keywords: professional identity, communication roles, LinkedIn.

Introduction

In an era marked by unprecedented technological change, the concepts of professional identity and communication roles are undergoing a significant transformation. Traditionally rooted in static job titles and predefined skills, these constructs now reflect a more evolving interplay between adaptability, technological literacy, and strategic thinking. Platforms like LinkedIn which hosts more than 15 million job listings at any given time, with a significant portion updated weekly [1], illustrate this evolution, showcasing how professionals redefine their roles to align with digital demands and organizational goals. The author delves into the shifting landscape of communication roles, exploring their categorization, required competencies, and the broader implications for professional identity. By analyzing industry trends and job postings, it offers insights into the skills and strategies necessary for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Brief terminological overview

Professional identity encompasses individuals' self-concept in relation to their roles, shaped by intrinsic values, ethical principles, and broader societal expectations. Far from being static, it is a dynamic construct that evolves through lifelong learning, professional engagement, and shifts in cultural and occupational contexts. More recent work, such as Trede, Macklin, and Bridges' [2], emphasize the role of reflective practice and workplace experiences in shaping professional identity, while Kogan, Kay, and Michaelides [3] highlight the influence of digital transformation and changing professional landscapes. This evolving identity reflects a continuous interplay between personal development and external factors, underscoring the adaptability required in modern professional environments.

Communication roles play a pivotal role in shaping professional identity by defining how individuals craft, interpret, and disseminate messages within organizational or social contexts. Contemporary research, such as that by Falkheimer and Heide [4], highlights that these roles are essential in ensuring collaboration and strategic alignment within increasingly complex communication landscapes. The dynamic nature of these roles aligns with the growing emphasis on strategic communication as a process that integrates informational, interpersonal, and decisional responsibilities. Informational roles, such as analysts and spokespeople, focus on the accurate dissemination of essential information, while interpersonal roles, including facilitators and mentors, prioritize relationship-building and interaction management. [5] Decisional roles, such as leaders and managers, involve critical tasks like problem-solving, negotiation, and strategy development, reflecting a comprehensive approach to communication in modern organizations.

In the context of communications, one of the most prominent theorists James Grunig [6] highlights how digital media has transformed traditional communication practices. One-way communication models have given way to two-way, symmetrical communication strategies that emphasize participation and dialogue. The Excellence Theory highlights the importance of strategic management in public relations, advocating for practices that foster stakeholder relationships and adaptability in an evolving digital landscape.

To bridge theoretical concepts with practical application, this analysis will examine one of the most globally recognized platforms, serving as a prominent example of the intersection between professional identity and communication roles in the digital age. LinkedIn enables users to build professional profiles, network with peers, share content, and explore job opportunities. [7], [8] By offering functionalities such as professional networking, content sharing, and recruitment, it serves as a critical tool for fostering professional growth and collaboration in an increasingly interconnected world.

Redefining Communication Roles in the AI-Driven Workforce

“*We’re living in a world of constant change*”, futurist Crystal Washington remarked at PRSA’s ICON 2024. She highlighted how companies once reinvented themselves every 75 years but now must refresh business models every four to seven years to remain competitive. [9] As AI reshapes industries, she emphasized, “*AI won’t replace humans, but humans using AI will replace those who don’t.*” This transformative era demands a culture of curiosity and continuous learning to thrive.

The most recent industry report on the trends is the European Communication Monitor 2024/2025 [10] describes three main skill areas for the communication professionals:

1. Importance of Technical and Human Skills

- Necessity for communication professionals to develop both technical and interpersonal skills. For example, AI adoption in communication departments highlights the need for technical proficiency in utilizing tools like data analytics, generative AI for content creation, and media monitoring systems.
- Interpersonal skills remain vital, particularly in managing sensitive topics like geopolitical risks or navigating stakeholder relationships during crises. Communication leaders must possess diplomacy, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to mediate tensions.

2. AI and Skill Evolution:

- The integration of AI in communication tasks is altering skill requirements. Communicators are expected to master AI tools for efficiency while maintaining deep human competencies like creativity, strategic thinking, and ethical judgment. Concerns about losing essential skills due to over-reliance on automation were raised, underscoring the need for ongoing training and development.

3. Leadership and Learning:

- Continuous learning is a central theme for Chief Communication Officers (CCOs). Leaders are encouraged to adopt managerial learning strategies that balance acquiring technical competencies with enhancing traditional communication skills. Time constraints and the lack of structured learning opportunities remain barriers.



Figure 1. Visual representation of the communication capabilities declared by the latest AI report from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) developed by the author using OpenAI's DALL-E tool [11]

The Future of Jobs Report 2023 [12] emphasizes profound shifts in marketing and communications driven by digital transformation, evolving consumer demands, and economic trends.

In Germany, green and digital transitions are reshaping professional roles, with marketing and communication emerging as one of the fastest-growing job categories globally. Roles such as “Growth Marketing Manager” and “Customer Success Analyst” have seen significant growth, reflecting a broader organizational pivot toward personalized, data-driven strategies. The prediction is that by 2027, over 75% of companies plan to integrate big data, digital trade platforms, and similar technologies. These innovations allow professionals to focus on strategy, creativity, and customer experience rather than routine tasks.

At the same time, analysts [12] declare that many professionals are still in the early stages of AI adoption, with only 10% having a clear roadmap for

implementation. This limited progress reflects a transitional phase where traditional communication roles are evolving to encompass AI-driven competencies, such as automated customer interactions and data-informed personalization. The shift is evident on LinkedIn, where professionals increasingly emphasize AI expertise, using terms like “AI-savvy marketer” to align their identities with emerging industry demands. AI is not merely a tool but a catalyst for redefining communication roles, as individuals adapt their skills to leverage its potential in content creation and customer experience enhancement. Many professionals’ express concerns about the lack of transparency in AI processes, with 75% identifying this as a critical issue, and 63% citing regulatory compliance challenges. These obstacles often influence how individuals present their competencies on public platforms like LinkedIn, complicating the narrative around professional identities.

Additionally, there is a notable divide in organizational leadership’s readiness to prioritize AI, creating further tension for professionals trying to align their roles with broader company strategies. Despite these challenges, LinkedIn is becoming a critical space for professionals to showcase their evolving roles, highlighting success stories and metrics like improved efficiency and enhanced targeting through AI. Emerging specializations, such as “AI Communication Strategist”, underscore the role of AI in driving a redefinition of professional identities, as individuals adapt to these transformative changes in their industry. [13]

Content marketing has also evolved significantly, with the emergence of specialized roles that address the complexities of digital and data-driven strategies [14]. These transformations underscore the interplay between professional identity and communication roles, emphasizing adaptability, technological proficiency, and strategic foresight as critical to navigating the modern professional landscape. In this rapidly evolving environment, embracing innovation and fostering strategic communication will be the cornerstone of organizational success.

CATEGORY	ROLES	FOCUS/CONTRIBUTION
Analyzers of Content Performance	Data Analysts, Analytics Specialists, Competitive Analyzers	Measure content performance, derive actionable insights, and understand audience behavior to bridge creative production with strategic business outcomes.
Strategists and Translators	Chief Content Strategist, Business Translators	Align content efforts with organizational goals, maintain a high-level perspective, and communicate effectively across multiple stakeholder groups.
Audience Advocates and Customer Experts	Audience Advocates, Customer Gurus	Focus on understanding audience segments, building relationships, and addressing needs through tailored messaging and customer insights.
Content Creators and Innovators	Content Updaters, Objective Creators, Writers	Craft compelling narratives that blend storytelling with strategic goals, ensuring content contributes to measurable business objectives.
Content-Adjacent Specialists	PR Specialists, Designers	Collaborate within multidisciplinary teams to enhance the quality and reach of communication efforts, playing a crucial role in the content marketing process.
Operational and Maintenance Roles	Content Operations Specialists, Project Managers, Content Maintainers	Ensure seamless workflow, adherence to timelines, and ongoing relevance through updates and optimization of content assets in competitive digital ecosystems.

Table 1. Categories of roles and functions in the field of content management. Adapted from: Content Marketing Institute. (2023, September 20)

The identified roles illustrate a broader trend toward specialization and the blending of analytical, strategic, and creative skill sets. For LinkedIn communication professionals, these developments highlight the importance of showcasing versatile expertise, including strategic thinking, analytics proficiency, and audience-centric communication. The evolution of these roles reflects a redefinition of professional identity in response to technological and organizational shifts.

Overall, professionals are leveraging AI tools for tasks such as automated content creation and audience analysis, allowing them to focus on strategy and interpersonal aspects. [15] LinkedIn has played a central role in these transformations, with AI-assisted tools like Recruiter 2024 and Sales Navigator enhancing decision-making and relationship-building. The platform’s evolution reflects the broader shift toward self-branding as professionals adapt to a competitive and precarious job market. Simultaneously, communication roles are diversifying into five distinct categories: Communicator, Ambassador, Advisor, Manager, and Coach. Each role emphasizes specialized functions, from managing reputation to offering strategic advice. Digital transformation has introduced a pressing need for competencies such as technology literacy, data management, and AI integration, reshaping how communicators operate in data-driven landscapes.

Research Methodology

In November 2024, the author analyzed 60 LinkedIn job postings for open roles in the marketing and communications industry in Germany. To ensure relevance, the study applied targeted filters: the postings were active during the analysis period, and included the keywords “marketing”, “communications”, and “content management.” This focused approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of industry trends and skill demands. Data was organized using an Excel spreadsheet, with insights extracted through the application of GPT-based model technology.

The distribution of experience and educational qualifications required for the reviewed roles is visualized in the chart below. The data shows that mid-level experience dominates (38), reflecting a preference for professionals with 3-5 years of experience. Educational qualifications (19) such as bachelor’s or master’s degrees are also significant. Managerial roles (7) emphasize leadership and executive skills, while senior-level positions (6) demand extensive expertise. This suggests a strong focus on mid-career professionals with solid academic credentials.

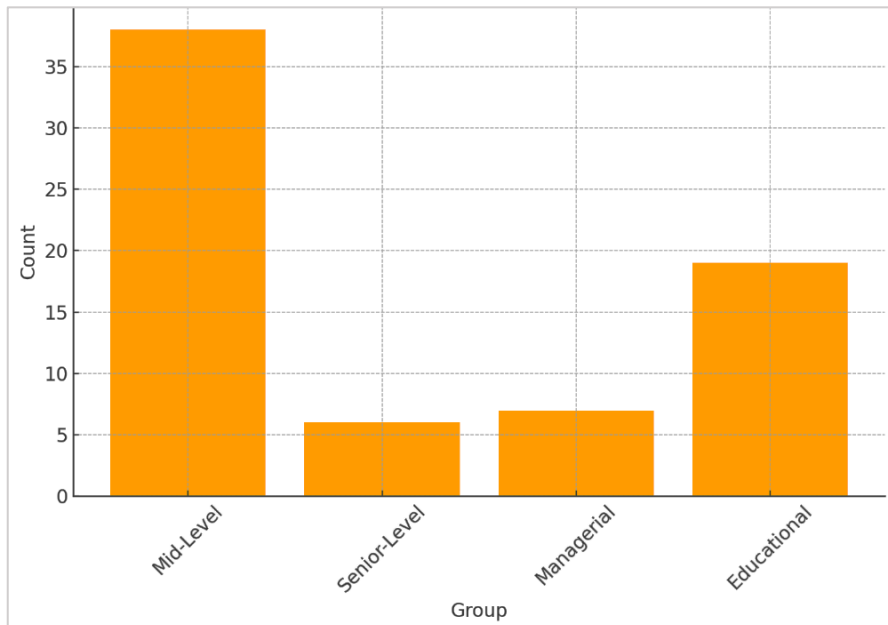


Figure 2. Job postings classified by experience and educational qualifications

The analysis of the data reveals a notable emphasis on communication and interaction skills, with “communication” and its variations ranking among the most frequently mentioned competencies. This reflects the central role of two-

way, symmetrical communication in modern public relations, as advocated by James E. Grunig. Strategic and managerial skills, such as project management and organizational abilities, are also prominently featured, underscoring the demand for professionals capable of planning and executing comprehensive communication strategies. Grunig’s call for public relations to transition from a tactical, interpretive role to a strategic management function resonates strongly with this trend.

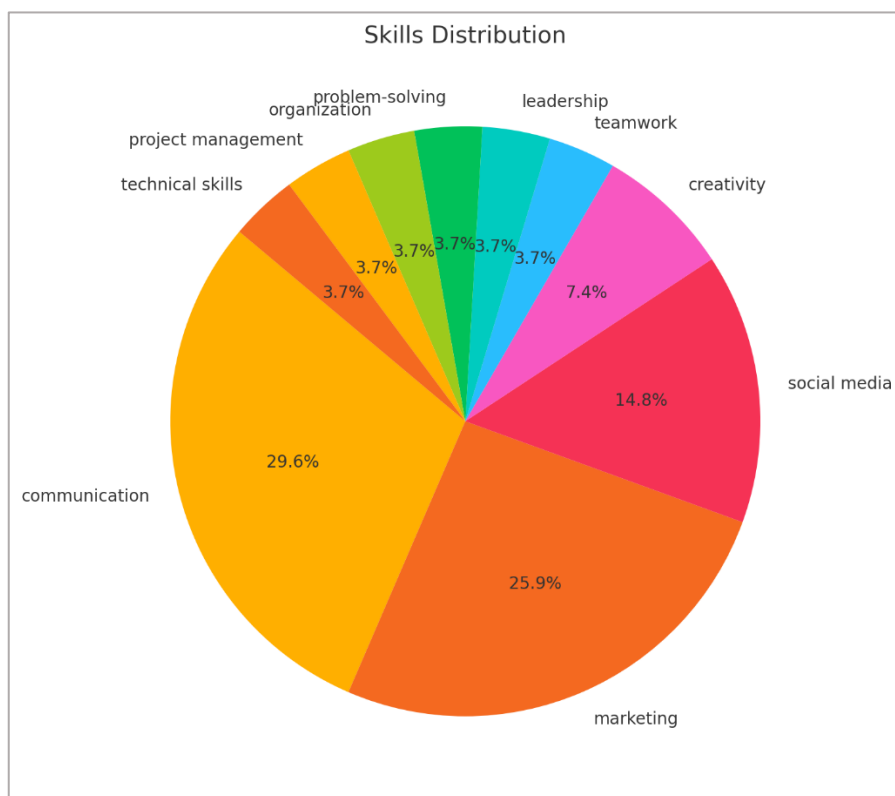


Figure 3. Distribution of required skills

Additionally, digital adaptability stands out as a key requirement, with social media expertise and technical skills frequently appearing in job descriptions. This aligns with Grunig’s recognition of digital media as transformative tools that, when used interactively and ethically, enhance dialogical communication and stakeholder engagement. Collaboration and teamwork also emerge as essential competencies, highlighting the importance of integrated communication efforts within organizations—a principle central to Grunig’s model of public relations excellence. Comparing these observations to Grunig’s paradigms, it becomes evident that the industry is gradually aligning with his strategic management approach. While traditional, interpretive practices that focus on messaging

and perception management persist, the growing emphasis on strategic roles and skills like problem-solving and leadership reflects a shift towards more effective and impactful communication practices. Many of the roles analyzed emphasize interaction and stakeholder engagement, echoing Grunig's advocacy for two-way communication as a means of building trust and cultivating relationships. Ethics and social responsibility, although not always explicitly stated, are implicit in roles that prioritize Diversity and inclusivity, though not directly addressed in the job postings, remain integral to Grunig's vision of effective public relations. The emphasis on teamwork suggests a collaborative environment that likely values diverse perspectives, even if this is not explicitly stated. The findings indicate that organizations increasingly recognize the value of aligning their public relations practices with Grunig's paradigms, particularly by embedding research and listening into their processes, leveraging digital tools for interactive communication, and prioritizing ethical practices. In conclusion, the data suggests a gradual but clear shift in public relations roles towards strategic, ethical, and digitally focused competencies. This transformation aligns with Grunig's paradigm of strategic management and two-way symmetrical communication, emphasizing the growing importance of fostering relationships and achieving organizational goals through integrated, ethical, and inclusive communication practices.

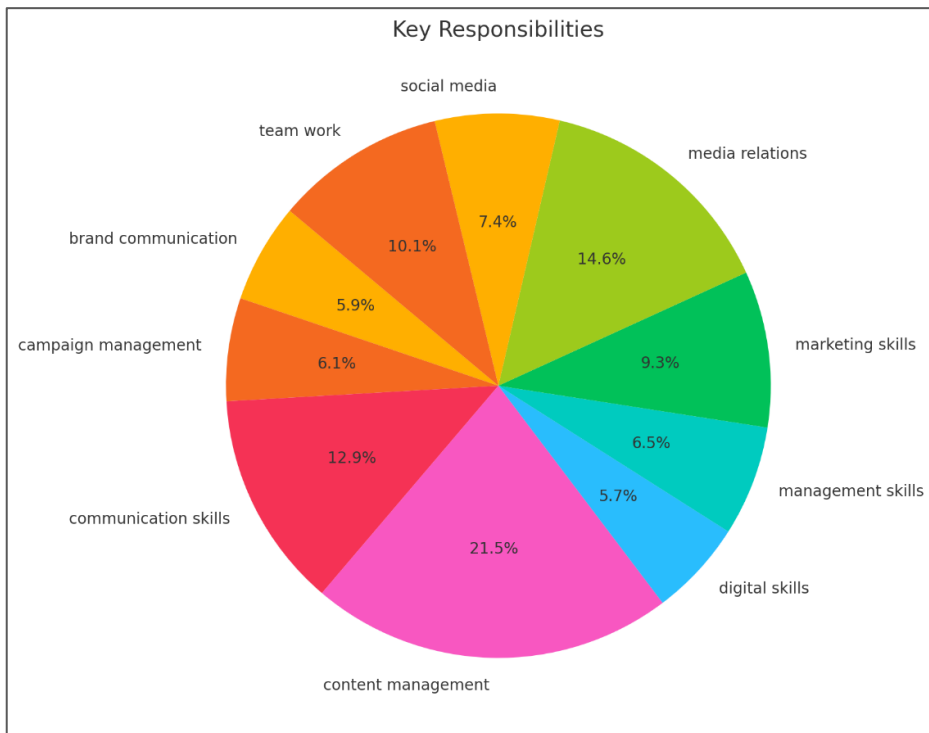


Figure 4. Key responsibilities

The pie chart provides a clear visualization of the distribution of key responsibilities identified from job descriptions, highlighting the evolving priorities within modern organizational roles. Content management emerges as the most dominant category, accounting for a significant share of the responsibilities. This demonstrates the critical importance of managing, organizing, and optimizing digital and physical content to meet organizational objectives in an era driven by information and media consumption. Communication skills and media relations follow closely, reflecting the growing emphasis on effective interpersonal and organizational communication. These responsibilities are pivotal for fostering relationships with stakeholders, managing corporate reputation, and ensuring transparency. Media relations, in particular, points to the increasing demand for professionals who can navigate traditional and digital media landscapes, aligning public perceptions with organizational goals.

Marketing skills and teamwork also hold substantial portions of the chart, showcasing the interdisciplinary nature of modern roles. Marketing professionals are expected to blend creative strategies with analytical approaches, driving customer engagement and enhancing brand visibility. Teamwork, a timeless yet increasingly critical skill, highlights the collaborative environment of contemporary workplaces, where cross-functional collaboration is key to success. Additionally, campaign management and brand communication represent significant themes in the chart. Campaign management reflects the need for individuals who can design, execute, and evaluate targeted marketing and communication initiatives, often tailored to specific audiences. Brand communication highlights the strategic role of messaging in shaping an organization's identity and fostering loyalty among stakeholders.

Finally, digital skills occupy a notable share, emphasizing the growing integration of technology in all aspects of professional responsibilities. From leveraging AI and data analytics to managing social media platforms and creating digital strategies, this category illustrates the imperative for professionals to adapt to rapidly advancing technological landscapes. Collectively, the chart showcases how modern job roles demand a blend of strategic, interpersonal, and technical proficiencies to navigate the complexities of today's organizational environments. This evolving combination ensures alignment between internal capabilities and external expectations, driving sustainable success.

Conclusion

The evolution of communication roles exemplifies the profound changes reshaping professional identity in the digital age. Driven by advancements in artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and shifting organizational needs, these roles now demand a blend of technical expertise, strategic thinking, and interpersonal skills. LinkedIn has emerged as a key platform reflecting these

transitions, enabling professionals to showcase adaptive competencies while aligning their identities with market demands. This study of job postings reveals a clear trend toward specialization, with emerging roles emphasizing AI literacy, data-driven decision-making, and collaborative strategies. Despite challenges such as skill gaps and regulatory concerns, the integration of AI tools is redefining traditional responsibilities, fostering innovation and efficiency. Ultimately, navigating this landscape requires professionals and organizations to prioritize lifelong learning, ethical engagement, and strategic adaptability, ensuring relevance and success in an increasingly interconnected world.

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Manuscript was submitted: 26.11.2024.

Double Blind Peer Reviews: from 27.11.2024 till 28.12.2024.

Accepted: 29.12.2024.

Брой 62 на сп. „Реторика и комуникации“ (януари 2025 г.) се издава с финансовата помощ на Фонд научни изследвания, договор № КП-06-НП6/48 от 04 декември 2024 г.

Issue 62 of the Rhetoric and Communications Journal (January 2025) is published with the financial support of the Scientific Research Fund, Contract No. KP-06-NP6/48 of December 04, 2024.