Industry survey: biggest challenges facing UX content experts

Key insights from UX writers and content designers around the world

Content designers and UX writers face difficult challenges...but those challenges may not be what you expect.

After about 24 months of layoffs, downsizing and shrinking budgets, jobs are returning. Contracts are available. Entry-level opportunities are starting to emerge.

Yes, artificial intelligence is a looming pressure on UX writers and content designers. They're being asked to upskill and learn how this new technology fits in their day-to-day work.

But many content designers and UX writers face challenges related to strategy, "soft" skills, communication, and relationship-building. At a time when design teams have fewer people, they're being asked to do more.
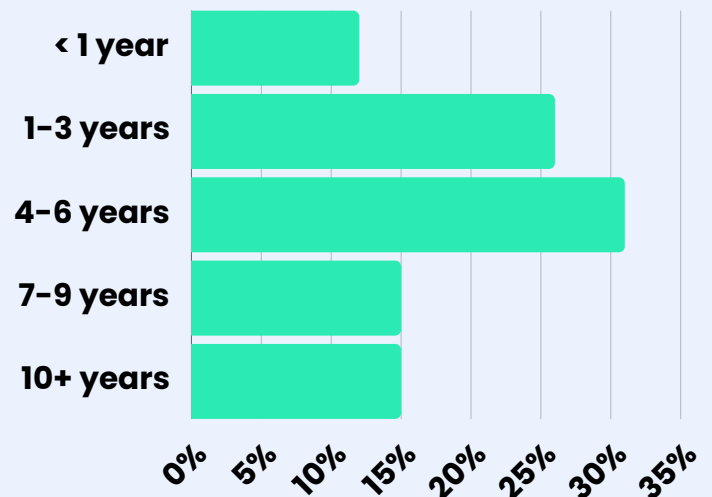
We launched our 2024 survey so we could learn more about how UX writers and content designers work and think about their industry. Now, we're sharing the results.

We hope the comments, thoughts, and findings in this survey can help UX writers and content designers feel less alone - and hopefully make the future seem a little less scary.

About our survey...

80+ survey respondents

18 countries across 5 continents

Years in industry

< 1 year	
1-3 years	
4-6 years	
7-9 years	
10+ years	

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35%

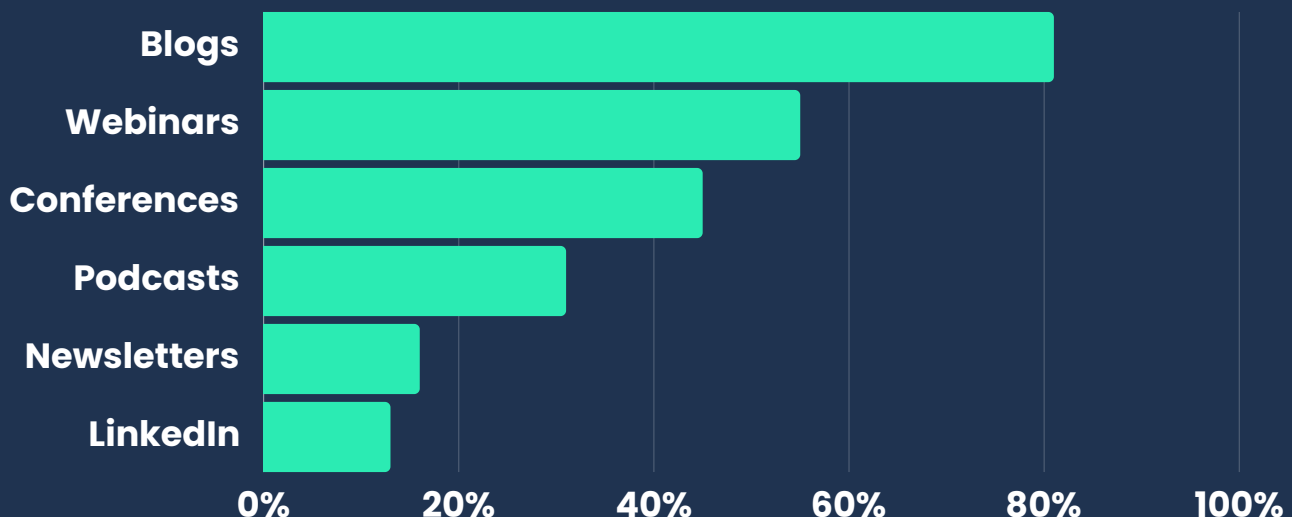# Most UX writers and content designers teach themselves

Sometimes we might feel as though everyone is attending a fancy conference or industry event, but the truth is that most content designers and UX writers are teaching themselves - and they're mostly doing it with blogs.

When asked how they keep up to date, the vast majority of respondents cited blogs as their main source of information, followed by free webinars. Conferences and podcasts are also popular.

When asked how they learn new skills, respondents said they most commonly find new information and resources from being self-taught, and not from courses, webinars, workshops, or books.

UX writers and content designers are eager to learn new skills - respondents said so when asked how they hope to overcome various challenges in their work. But they're mostly doing it by seeking out blogs and free resources on those topics. So if you're hoping to make an impact, a blog is a good start.

How do UX content professionals learn?

Source	Percentage
Blogs	~82%
Webinars	~54%
Conferences	~45%
Podcasts	~31%
Newsletters	~16%
LinkedIn	~14%

Content design still has an advocacy problem

One of the most common complaints among UX writers and content designers is advocacy - they have a hard time helping others understand what they actually do.

Our survey found 47% of respondents said their biggest challenge was advocacy. This covered a range of topics, but the most common were:

- Others misunderstanding the nature of UX writing and content design
- Not being brought into meetings or projects early enough to make an impact
- Being expected to "solve" design problems by adding more content

Unfortunately, it seems UX writers and content designers still experience old problems.

💬 "My biggest challenge as a sole advocate for content is being cut out of conversations."

💬 "Budget reductions and lack of understanding of content value by stakeholders."

💬 "Building soft skills around stakeholder management after they've broken down."

💬 "Oftentimes product partners think they can solve a problem by just adding more content."

💬 "Endless battles with marketing, combined with unstructured and unplanned work requests."

💬 "Need more Product Manager, data and UX training."

Interestingly, only 3 respondents said their biggest challenge was learning AI. Instead, the most common complains were:

- Lack of time to upskill
- Having to support a larger number of designers or design teams

More than anything, UX writers and content designers are pressed for time.

> "There will be great opportunities for content designers, UX writers, and content strategists who are willing to adapt and embrace new ways of thinking."

Patrick Stafford
CEO, UX Content Collective

AI is a challenge...but not the biggest

As part of our survey, we asked respondents if they had encountered any new challenges within the past 12 months they hadn't experienced before.

Working with AI was cited as a challenge for some, but it was not the most common - only 12% said it was their biggest challenge.

For most respondents (44%), they're facing old challenges but in new ways. For those UX writers and content designers working with lower budgets, they're now having to do more work with fewer people and support.

Several respondents cited lower training budgets as a barrier to upskilling and promotion:

> **"At my previous role, my learning budget was halved from one year to the next. At my current role, I have zero learning budget." - Respondent**

Other new challenges include struggle in finding the time to upskill (13%) and having to spend more time networking to create industry connections (12%).

For those in UX writing and content design roles, it's clear that lower budgets and headcounts have increased the pressure for people to "sell" themselves to stakeholders.

Most content designers don't have training budgets

Among some of the experiences and challenges shared by respondents, many cited a lack of support for training and learning.

This is somewhat disappointing given the huge amount of technical change happening in the industry, (mostly driven by artificial intelligence.) But given that respondents mostly cited interpersonal skills as opportunities for development, it's clear that organizations are missing key opportunities to train their UX writers and content designers in a broad range of skills required for them to enter leadership positions.

43% of respondents said they had no training budget at all. Among those who do have a training budget, 41% said the amount was the same as last year - but 12% said it was lower. Only 4% said it was higher.

Respondents shared the pressure they feel when being asked to work on new features, but don't necessarily have the backing they need to learn as much as they can or should:

> **"I'm deeply involved in a few AI projects, but not getting the kind of support I need (in terms of knowledge, training, resources) to be able to do good content design for AI-powered features/products. " - Survey respondent.**

In some cases, respondents said this lack of emphasis on training is actually creating larger consequences for organizations as a whole:

> **"Decreased training budget and an increased pressure to increase revenue, which has led upper management to make decisions based on gut feelings over data." - Survey respondent.**

Whether students are learning language models or presentation skills, it's clear there's a thrist for training that isn't being fulfilled.

Many content designers want to upskill...but not in the areas you might expect

Though content designers and UX writers are still very interested in learning new design skills that add to their craft, new tools aren't at the top of the list.

Instead, 31% of respondents said they want to develop their leadership skills - particularly their ability to influence others.

Negotiating with stakeholders, engaging conflict, and influencing without authority are all key areas where respondents want to improve.

Even more common were respondents who said they want to learn skills traditionally owned by product managers. Analytics, data, business planning - these are all in their sights. It's a clear sign that content designers and UX writers are ready to engage at the business strategy level.

How do UX content experts want to upskill?

"Business strategy, product strategy — and how content strategy can advance those. Also, how to work with PMs without feeling like we're competing with one another when it comes to strategy."

"Improving operations and finding a sustainable position within workflows that are changing because of new industry trends, including more use of LLMs across the product development process."

"Stronger understanding of design thinking so I can respond to questions and more easily convince others of my suggestions, better communication about my value to each team and what I will (like what can help with) and will not do (like taking random requests)."

"I want to be highly adept at AI technology/tooling, prompt engineering, and understand the nuances a bit more deeply so I can excel at what I do on a daily basis."

"The sudden uptick of AI use has allowed us to make significant progress with some of the recurrent issues and challenges. Who knows what tomorrow brings..."
- Survey respondent.

UX writing and content design is entering a new phase

While the true fundamentals of the craft never change, UX content professionals are now having to add new technologies and approaches to creating content.

But it's also interesting to note that many of the challenges that UX writers and content designers face are often related to interpersonal skills.

This presents an opportunity. For content professionals to thrive, they need to spend time focusing on building relationships and influence. How can they do this?

Firstly, by continuing to advocate for UX content as part of a product ecosystem. Content experts ought to connect what they are working on to the entire business strategy of an organization.

Secondly, by mapping relationships and building allies in areas where UX content can and should have influence - such as development.

Finally, by connecting day-to-day work with tangible impact that can be demonstrated in numbers.

The more UX content professionals can see the bigger picture and demonstrate impact, influence will naturally follow.

UX content is changing. Are you ready?

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