

# Growing digital talent

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*Talent is the greatest predictor of a company's success. But what do you do when you can't find the talent you need? You grow it, says Emma Odendaal, digital director at [John Brown Media South Africa](#).*



According to [Harvard Business Review](#), recruitment of talent is the number-one concern among senior leaders. Yet most digital agencies are surprisingly bad at getting this right. Globally, there is a shortage of experienced, senior talent and retention of top performers is difficult in a competitive market.

The situation becomes more dire when you start to look at graduates, who generally aren't equipped to deal with the pace at which the digital landscape changes. Due to the fast-changing nature of platforms, algorithms, audience behaviour and client objectives, the creative we produce one week will not be the same as what we deliver the next. You might've smashed theory in first year, but that's not going to help you devise a TikTok strategy today...

So, I am passionate about growing talent (often school leavers or new graduates) and having our best in-house people teach them the ropes. This is a long-game solution and makes talent retention incredibly important in our business, but it develops efficient problem-solvers with fresh perspectives who are in touch with the audience.

Here's what I look for when hiring:

## Breadth of skills

For a digital content agency to function optimally, all team members must understand how SEO, social media and display work together to move a customer along the journey to purchase. While being proficient in a one area remains important in certain specialist roles, you must be able to see the bigger picture. For example, a copywriter needs a broad operational range that may include SEO to optimise copy for search, business acumen to grasp the business objectives that each creative asset addresses and insight into social media to understand why some words are better triggers than others. You should be able to use a wide variety of resources to inform and improve your contribution to the mix.

## A proactive and positive nature

Be naturally curious and eager to explore new methodologies, processes or ways of storytelling. Say yes to challenges (and figure out the "how" later)... this is where career trajectory happens. Bring a spirit of ubuntu to work every day,

whether dealing with team members or clients.

## Good storytelling abilities

You need to be able to convey an idea or strategy in a way that makes others want to be a part of it. This is deeply tied to being in tune with what is happening in the world around you – politics, socio-economic factors, how people feel and behave. Understand that your great idea needs to exist within a greater context outside of the boardroom.

## Commitment to excellence

We go the extra mile for our company and our clients. Anyone wanting to enter the digital content marketing field should consistently produce work of world-class standards and be innately inquisitive about the craft and the industry.

## A balance of analytical and creative thinking

Never before has data been so important to marketers! Be excited about both the art and science of digital marketing and be able to marry the two to use the data to inform future strategies and then measure success.

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