

A younger person recently expressed an interest in editorial work, and this is what I wrote to her:

Hi Lizzie,

My background in editorial work is primarily in the marketing discipline. I kind of fell into it as I started on a graduate retail management course and hated it! (I didn't like selling and I wasn't interested in the products!) But, I was creative and I got a job in the head office of the company writing instructions to the stores about how to display the products correctly. I then got the opportunity to work with graphic designers who were producing the point-of-sale and leaflets.

I didn't realise at the time, but I was just getting in there at the start of the desktop publishing revolution. Marketing communications was the discipline that grew out of this, and it suited me as I could write and edit. I also liked being involved with the branding and design / visual advertising side of getting messages across to audiences.

I moved from retail / business to consumer (b2c) to business-to-business (b2b) marketing, where the writing skill became far more important. Instead of writing a few words to a store manager about how to dress the shop window, I was turning technical jargon about telecoms and IT into articles for sales people in the air transportation industry.

Later, I moved into a role where I was a town centre manager in Bedfordshire, which involved promoting the local businesses. I had to do marketing tasks I hadn't done before, including event management (fun, but doesn't require creative writing skills) and public relations (PR). PR does require competent writing skills as you are trying to sell your event / company into the media, but the writing isn't very creative as it is more a case of giving the journalist the facts for them to write the story from.

In some jobs though, the marketing comms and PR skills come together well. For me, as a self-employed person, that is pretty useful e.g. for one client now, I manage the PR for selling the new homes they build and I also help with writing the sales brochures and proofreading the ads.

In summary, there is a need for people with good writing and proofreading skills in business generally. Now digital media is so big, and companies need people to write their website content and their social media etc. It also used to be the case that there was more money to be made in the business world than book publishing.

However, my background is not in book publishing, although, during the last two years I have edited a bestselling [Kindle](#) novel, and I have also edited the first in a series of travelogue cookbooks. This type of work is satisfying for anyone interested in the written word. It is so obvious that I hardly need to explain, other than to say: business and marketing writing is very sales orientated, whereas editing books always feels more personal.

Both are very intense work and you need to have high concentration levels. You also need to develop a thick skin as the publishing world is very tough, and marketing is one of those areas where people think they know more about what you are doing than you!

If you think you would like to find out more about marketing communications opportunities, it might be worth looking at student membership of a professional institute e.g. the [Chartered Institute of Marketing](#) (CIM), or the [Chartered Institute of Public Relations](#) (CIPR). You could also do a postgraduate qualification in journalism, and there is also a specific CAM Foundation qualification in marketing communications from the CIM. It was enough to have a first degree when I started work but, nowadays, employers are also looking for professional qualifications.

In the 'old days', publishing was very distinct from marketing and advertising (although the skills overlapped). Now, with the digital age and self-publishing etc., these are more closely linked (good news for someone like me as I have business experience as well as editorial expertise J). So either path can take you down some interesting publishing routes... It also means that you need to be multi-skilled and familiar with all the MS programmes, WordPress, design packages, content management systems etc. So get as skilled up as you can!

I had a quick look at graduate / intern jobs in both publishing and marketing – see the overlap for yourself: <http://jobs.theguardian.com/>

Remember to get a good [CV](#) written up with all relevant stuff. Proofreading the words is only part of the job – you are also required to ensure the photos and images support the written content and brand identity. (You are not always asked to that but it adds value, as designers often ignore the words in favour of the pictures.)

There is also a great link between psychology and marketing. Some practitioners specialise in this e.g. the reasons people make the buying decisions they do and the various communications models. My degree is in English; then I studied psychology for one year with [The Open University](#), and I ended up as a Chartered Marketer, so I guess I am proof of that!

Keep thinking and dreaming about what you want to do and don't be put off by negative people or feedback. Remember that when you go for interviews the other person is no smarter than you are, and they have just learnt to hide their fears behind a façade.

Sorry that this is a bit of a brain dump but is hard to be linear as everything ties up!

Just ask if you want any more thoughts from Chairman Dawn ☺

Good luck and work hard.

Dxx