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Careers in digital marketing, project management forecast to expand in Charlotte over the next decade

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For many people, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed both where and how we work. The adoption of digital collaborative tools has become widespread, teams have dispersed, and employers and employees alike have relocated away from crowded metro areas to parts of the country with more breathing room. Some older workers even decided a pandemic is a good time to retire. But the good news is that in North Carolina, the economic landscape isn't losing momentum.

North Carolina as a whole is looking strong in terms of job growth. The Old North State has averaged close to 600,000 job openings each year since 2018, according to the North Carolina Department



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of Commerce. Jobs in the state are expected to grow by 6.3% through 2028, resulting in 302,000 additional positions that will need to be filled annually.

Part of this growth may be attributed to the spike in entrepreneurship and people innovating new businesses in North Carolina during the pandemic. While some sectors of the economy slowed in the early days of Covid, many budding business owners got creative and launched their own ventures, according to a report from Reuters.

Impressive as the state's numbers may be, the Charlotte region's employment landscape is growing at a much faster rate. As the No. 2 U.S. metro area for economic growth potential, the city averages 160,000 job openings a year. With an anticipated growth rate of 11.3% by 2028, the number of available jobs should increase by close to 137,000.

For many people looking to make a significant career change, it's a good place to take the next step.

Two of the most in-demand jobs, both currently and looking to the future, are project managers, ranked fifth by LinkedIn's global job posting data in Q3 of 2021, and digital marketers, right behind, in the sixth position on a 2020 ranking.

Project managers needed — both globally and locally

A study released by the Project Management Institute (PMI) showed there is a global need for 25 million new project managers — sometimes known as change agents, who organize, plan and oversee the execution of a project — by 2030. In other words, 2.3 million new project managers will be needed per year, just to keep up with demand. This demand is caused by an increasing number of jobs that require project management skills, increased economic growth and rising retirement rates of people currently in those roles. If these positions aren't filled, the result could cost \$345.5 billion in lost revenues by 2030.

Locally, the state of North Carolina has close to 40,000 people employed in the project management field, earning an annual average income of nearly \$80,000.

But the skills needed by today's project managers go far beyond the day-to-day oversight of projects. Technical skills are also a must-have, including use of sophisticated project management software, along with leadership, strategic and business management, effective communication, collaboration, innovation and empathy.

"Project management is a composite of many skills that are more diversified than a single profession," said Wayne R. Brantley, M.S. Ed., PMP, president of 360 Degree Training Solutions and Professor at Wake Forest University School of Professional Studies. "It takes the acquisition of many competencies to become a successful project manager."

Covid-19 accelerates the demand for digital marketers

Even before the pandemic, there was a shortage of digital marketers. A study released by The Economist Group in 2019 revealed that 74% of all marketing organizations were facing a talent shortage. The primary reason for this shortage was a lack of people with the digital skills for those positions. Among the skills employers are looking for digital marketers to have are social media, content strategy, SEO, marketing channels, Google analytics and Google and Facebook advertising.

As the pandemic led to more people shopping and working online, the demand for marketing professionals familiar with the latest digital technologies has escalated further. According to LinkedIn, two of the top four in-demand jobs in the marketing space include digital marketing specialist and digital marketing manager.

The industry's growth appears to show no signs of stopping. In 2020, the value of the global digital market was \$305 billion. However, according to Expert Market Research, the market is expected to grow at a rate close to 18%, reaching \$807 billion by 2026.

"Digital is the new normal, accounting for nearly 75% of all advertising spend in the U.S.," said Ged King, CEO at the Sales Factory, and Digital Marketing Professor at Wake Forest School of Professional Studies. "Five years ago, marketers adjusted campaigns five to 10 times per month. Now, marketers make over

45,000 ad campaign adjustments per month. And most brands run dozens of campaigns. This makes studying digital marketing more important than ever.”

Supplying needed skills

To address the skills gap for two of the area’s most in-demand jobs, Wake Forest University has created and launched the School of Professional Studies, which is launching first with its programs in the fields of project management and digital marketing. Adults seeking to level up or change careers can earn a Certificate in Project Management Fundamentals, Master of Project Management degree, Certificate in Digital Marketing Strategy or a Master of Digital Marketing degree.

These programs, which are offered online, are designed for adults who are looking to add new skills to move into a new field, cross-train to advance in their current field or advance in their current role with a raise or promotion.

“With an incredible need in the marketplace, we wanted our curriculum to be nimble so professionals can learn in the classroom today and apply it in the workplace tomorrow,” said Charles Iacovou, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Professional Studies and Vice Provost for Charlotte Programs at Wake Forest University.

To complete the certificate programs, students take three courses which can be completed in as little as six months. There are 10 courses in the master’s programs, which students can complete in two years. However, since the courses are delivered online, students can take more or less time, depending on their individual schedules and other commitments.

“We designed these programs to meet the needs of working professionals,” said Lauren Burns, Assistant Dean, Marketing and Enrollment Management at Wake Forest University School of Professional Studies. “By offering the coursework online, students can fit the program into their current family, social and work schedules.”

Wake Forest University’s long history as a nationally ranked university with a high regard in the Charlotte area makes the new

School of Professional Studies an obvious choice for those students looking to upskill and add credentials to their resume.

To learn more about career opportunities available as a result of master's degrees, graduate programs and certificates in project management and digital marketing from Wake Forest School of Professional Studies, visit the Wake Forest School of Professional Studies website.