

2. VIRTUAL ORGANIZATION LEADER

The Internet has drastically shortened product cycles, increased globalization, and created a need for more real-time communications services. As such, entrenched, single-purpose teams aren't necessarily the most effective or nimble solution to many of today's business problems. Jumping from project to project, virtual organization leaders assemble teams of experts from around the world to achieve specific goals. When the task is complete, the leader disbands the team and moves on to the next problem. The work is typically coordinated online, where the manager can oversee results and cut back on international calling expenses to boot.



Helen Stefan, an account manager with the high-tech PR firm Copithorne&Bellows, began managing virtual PR teams to cope with changes the Internet has imposed on the PR industry, such as accelerated

product launches, and clients' requests for announcements on everything from the Melissa virus to market news and industry mergers.

Now, Stefan can absorb that increased demand, and catch unplanned, quick-turnaround projects by assembling virtual teams of employees from the firm's global offices in places such as Boston, Singapore, and Paris, plus a roster of outside contractors. Team sizes can range from just a few people to as many as seven experts. Research materials, progress reports, budget information, and communication is handled through the corporate intranet, while Stefan manages the project from her office. Overseeing disparate team workers hasn't been difficult, Stefan says, because most are highly skilled and experienced contractors, accustomed to working on targeted deadlines.

"We can jump on major projects, and we never have to say no," says Stefan. "It's almost a bottomless resource."

Evolution: Companies need to maintain a lean staff and still compete in a rapidly changing business climate. Virtual teams give companies access to specific expertise from specific people as needed, no matter where they are, with potential applications in areas such as marketing and product design.

Skills needed: Virtual organization leaders must understand the business' goals and strategies, and know how to find the resources to complete a project quickly. Highly developed people skills also help leaders handle the various personalities of contractors and clients, and serve as the main

contact for the project sponsor.

Favorite part of the job: "I get to work with the best of the best."

Toughest aspect of the job: "Not knowing how busy you're going to be from week to week—but that's also the exciting part." **Salary:** \$60,000-\$90,000

3. CONTENT ENGINEER

If Websites were houses, content engineers would be the architects. These polymaths are responsible for the overall organization and presentation of a Website's content. Content engineers work with almost every part of an Internet business, hashing out infrastructure requirements with the IT department, assisting with marketing campaigns, strategizing with executives, and working directly with suppliers to gather product information.

"You bring things from the theoretical phase, talking about ontologies and how to classify materials, to actually creating a system and trying it on hundreds and thousands of users," says Thomas Kudrycki, vice president of engineering, who manages the content engineering department for Chemdex. Creating an online "catalog of catalogs" for laboratory and life-sciences supplies is particularly complex. Chemdex content engineers start the process by suggesting to marketing and executive teams specific supplies or vendors needed for the site. Once those departments secure the necessary deals, content engineers design automated interfaces to collect product information directly from suppliers, systematically categorize that information ("building the ontology," according to Kudrycki), choose additional materials to add context, and ultimately design the presentation and layout of that content, handing off the plans to a separate group of Web designers and builders.

Evolution: Content engineering combines traits of old-fashioned catalog marketing with computer science, creating something unique to the Web.

Skills needed: Content engineers must have some technical background. But a deep understanding of the content they are working with, and the audience they are serving, is most important. For example, Chemdex content engineers all hold advanced degrees in life sciences.

Favorite part of the job: "It's a fusion of so many different traditional job descriptions, which provides for variety and potential career growth



into multiple areas."

Toughest aspect of the job: "Bringing together in a standardized manner the plethora of information and formats is a very significant challenge. And doing it all in an Internet-time environment takes a lot out of you."

Salary: \$50,000-\$80,000

4. CHIEF COMMUNITY STRATEGIST



Building Web communities has always been a slippery task, but for some sites they're a vital business resource.

Some companies have created a position to develop and manage all aspects of building a sense of community online. A chief community strategist is equal parts policy maker, minister of culture, ombudsman, and operations manager. Matthew Bannick, vice president of customer support, handles this role for eBay, the site that is the ultimate in convergence of community and business. He is a direct link between eBay's 3.8 million community members and the company's top executives. He and his team develop reports for managers based on feedback from eBay message boards, customer email, and monthly face-to-face meetings with community members. The company uses that information throughout its operations. For example, chat from eBay's "discuss new features" message board is collected, organized, and delivered to the company's product marketing team. And the majority of changes to eBay's Website come directly from community suggestions, such as a new feature that allows users to rate their satisfaction with other traders to create a collection of positive and negative comments that becomes each trader's community reputation.

Bannick also sits in with eBay's executive management as a community advocate. But that task isn't difficult if the community strategist has successfully embedded community issues into the corporate culture.

Evolution: Businesses that once scoffed at community as a touchy-feely concept now recognize it as a major force in e-commerce. Its role is likely to gain importance as Websites focus on customer retention. **Skills needed:** General management skills and operations experience are important, but understanding how the community interacts and how it relates to the company is essential. Bannick traces the development of his community instincts to a stint as a diplomat with the U.S. State Department, where he reported on economic and political developments after German reunification.