

DEMYSTIFYING JOURNALIST JOB TITLES: A GLOSSARY FOR PR PROS

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Third in command on an editorial desk/for a publication. Responsibilities will include editing, writing and commissioning.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Senior editor, who will commission, write and edit. Often used for journalists who aren't full time, or who are equal in seniority to the Assistant/Deputy Editor where those titles are taken.

COLUMNIST

A columnist writes a regular article each week/month. The columnist will choose their own subject, often relating to something that's happened in the news recently.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

A journalist who contributes content to a publication but is not on staff. Contributing editors are often specialists in their field, or celebrities/influencers.

COMMISSIONING EDITOR

Another senior journalist either on a specific desk or part of the senior editorial team. They will be responsible for lots of commissioning, but also usually edit and write, too.

DESK EDITOR

A desk editor holds the same responsibilities as the editor (see below) but for their specific department – travel, culture, health, money, business etc. They will be more hands on with commissioning and assigning writers to pieces. They will also revise all articles for content, language, flow, style and furniture, and sign off the design for all pages.

DESK DIRECTOR

Has the same responsibilities as a desk editor, but is more senior, and usually has a greater role in commercial relationships with advertisers.

EDITOR

The boss of the publication. The editor makes the ultimate call on what content goes in the publication and sets the editorial tone.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sets the creative direction for a publication but won't be so hands on in day-to-day running. Probably still signs off pages and will be present in conference.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

The most junior member of the desk, the editorial assistant provides support to the entire editorial team. Responsibilities include all the admin (payments, expenses, post etc), researching stories, writing. Often monitors the generic email address.

FREELANCER

A writer/picture editor/designer/sub editor who isn't attached to a specific publication. Writers will pitch ideas to outlets, and then write them if commissioned. Designers/picture editors/sub editors are more likely to do shifts at a publication.

MANAGING EDITOR

Runs the wider operations of the editorial staff including budgets and HR.

PICTURE EDITOR

Commissions and manages photographers for shoots, does all the picture research for their section, selecting the most appropriate for the story. They also contact PRs for images when their clients are featured.

PUBLISHER

Oversees the advertising and editorial teams, as well as the marketing and sales strategy for a publication. Publishing houses often have several titles: for example Hearst publishes Red magazine, Good Housekeeping and Harpers Bazaar.

PRODUCTION EDITOR

Oversees the publication process going from articles written on a journalist's computer to a newspaper or magazine. They coordinate words, pictures and design coming together on the page, set print/digital deadlines and oversee the publication's team of sub editors. Once the editor has had the final read of the pages, the production editor will send the pages to press.

STAFF WRITER

A journalist who is a permanent member of staff, but traditionally responsible only for writing articles, not editing. They are the engine room of a section, churning out a lot of the copy the publication runs.

STRINGER

A stringer is a freelance news reporter/photographer/videographer who regularly contributes to a/several publications. They often specialise in one area, or geographical location.

SUB EDITOR

These production journalists edit articles after they have been written by a journalist on a specific desk. They check the text, specifically looking for spelling, grammar and punctuation. They also write the furniture on the article (headlines, standfirsts, quotes), check facts and generally make sure journalists don't make idiots of themselves.