

SEA Specialist

FF04 Marketing, communication and content · ISCO-08 2431 · CBS 0311 Marketing, public relations, and sales consultants · seniority medior · Also known as: Paid Search Specialist, PPC Specialist

Deploys advertising budget on search engines and ad networks, manages bids and audiences and optimises daily on cost per conversion.

The SEA specialist manages paid search and works with short feedback loops on hard numbers. Unlike the SEO specialist, this role steers with budget directly, so mistakes cost money immediately. Selection often only asks for platform certifications, while in practice the role fails on numerical rigour around margins and resisting internal pressure to keep spending in channels that do not return.

Key figures for this profile

24 skills · 3 competencies to measure · 5 knockout skills · centre of gravity: Business operations, commerce and entrepreneurship 41%, Communication and influence 31%, Cognitive ability and problem solving 13%

1 Competencies to measure

These are the behavioural and ability constructs in this profile. Each one shows which hrmforce questionnaire measures it.

Competencies to measure	Target level	hrmforce instrument	Assessment method	Behavioural anchor at target level
Creative thinking Competency (50-framework): Creativity	 N4	Big Fifty, Competency Check	Personality questionnaire	Puts several unusual solution directions side by side for a stuck problem and works out the most promising direction further.

Competencies to measure	Target level	hrmforce instrument	Assessment method	Behavioural anchor at target level
external awareness Competency (50-framework): Environmental Awareness	 N3	Big Fifty, Competency Check	Structured interview	Follows sources outside the organisation systematically and uses those signals when adjusting working methods within the team.
Flexibility Competency (50-framework): Flexibility	 N3	Big Fifty, 15PF, Competency Check	Personality questionnaire	Revises the approach independently when the request changes, keeps stakeholders informed and still delivers the result within the boundaries.

2 Full skill profile

Every skill in this profile, sorted by weight. The behavioural anchor under each skill belongs to the target level.

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
T	Managing digital advertising campaigns Sets the standards for advertising purchase and measurement and decides on platform choice and annual budget.	 N5	5	yes	Work sample test	Work sample test, Portfolio
V	Written expression Independently writes texts with opening, core and closing, chooses a tone per audience and applies fixed terms consistently.	 N4	5	yes	Work sample test	Work sample test, Competency Check
V	Content creation for target audiences Determines message, form and channel per audience, produces the content and improves it based on reach figures.	 N4	5	yes	Portfolio or evidence	Portfolio, Work sample test
V	Content marketing Creates an own content calendar per target group, writes the texts and steers on reach and engagement.	 N4	5	yes	Portfolio or evidence	Work sample test, Portfolio
V	Marketing analytics and attribution Builds a dashboard per channel, checks the measurement setup and explains which campaign delivered which result.	 N4	5	yes	Work sample test	Work sample test, Knowledge test (client-specific)

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Quantitative interpretation Translates monthly figures into three concrete findings, names the measurement uncertainty and warns when numbers are too small.	 N4	4	no	Work sample test	Ability Scan, Work sample test
G	Creative thinking Puts several unusual solution directions side by side for a stuck problem and works out the most promising direction further.	 N4	4	no	Personality questionnaire	Big Fifty, Competency Check
V	Editing and plain language Rewrites a formal letter to plain language level B1 and explains to the author which choices were made.	 N4	4	no	Work sample test	Work sample test
V	Storytelling Builds a story with starting situation, turning point and outcome around a client case and links it to the message.	 N4	4	no	Simulation	Work sample test, Competency Check
V	Data analysis Selects analysis methods for an open question, turns raw data into a working file and supports every conclusion with figures.	 N4	4	no	Work sample test	Ability Scan, Work sample test
V	Customer segmentation and targeting Builds a segmentation from customer data and behaviour and explains the need and the value for each segment.	 N3	4	no	Work sample test	Work sample test

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Applying brand positioning and visual identity Tests publications from team and suppliers against the brand principles and corrects deviations with an explanation.	 N3	4	no	Portfolio or evidence	Work sample test, Portfolio
V	Idea generation Leads an idea session for the team with a suitable format, collects dozens of ideas and groups them by theme.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Competency Check, Work sample test
V	Visual communication and data storytelling Chooses a fitting chart type per message, removes unnecessary styling and writes the conclusion above the figure.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Portfolio
V	Stakeholder management Assesses influence and interest per party, chooses a fitting form of contact and discusses conflicting wishes before a decision is taken.	 N3	3	no	Assessment centre	Competency Check, 360 Feedback
T	Social media communication Manages a channel independently, replies to questions within an hour and uses statistics to choose posting moments.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Portfolio
G	external awareness Follows sources outside the organisation systematically and uses those signals when adjusting working methods within the team.	 N3	3	no	Structured interview	Big Fifty, Competency Check

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Prompting and task delegation to AI Splits a work task into steps, decides which step AI does and which not and improves the instruction based on outcomes.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Portfolio
V	Improving customer journey and experience Maps out the customer journey for a service, names the three largest bottlenecks and implements improvements with those involved.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, 360 Feedback
V	Marketing strategy Draws up a marketing plan for a service or market with goals, channel choice and budget and adjusts it on results.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test
T	Email and marketing automation Builds an own sequence with conditions and triggers, tests it and improves it based on open and click rates.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Work sample test
V	Budgeting and cost control Makes the budget for an own project, follows realisation per period and proposes measures in case of deviation.	 N3	3	no	Work sample test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
G	Flexibility Revises the approach independently when the request changes, keeps stakeholders informed and still delivers the result within the boundaries.	 N3	2	no	Personality questionnaire	Big Fifty, 15PF, Competency Check
K	GDPR and privacy in practice Processes personal data only according to the applicable work instruction and refers doubtful cases to the privacy officer.	 N2	1	no	Knowledge test	Knowledge test (client-specific)

3 Levels per seniority

The same profile with the job family seniority adjustment applied. Target levels are clamped to 1 to 5.

Skill	junior	medior	senior
Managing digital advertising campaigns	N5	N5	N5
Written expression	N3	N4	N5
Content creation for target audiences	N3	N4	N5
Content marketing	N3	N4	N5
Marketing analytics and attribution	N4	N4	N4
Quantitative interpretation	N3	N4	N5
Creative thinking	N3	N4	N5
Editing and plain language	N3	N4	N5
Storytelling	N3	N4	N5
Data analysis	N3	N4	N5
Customer segmentation and targeting	N2	N3	N4
Applying brand positioning and visual identity	N2	N3	N4
Idea generation	N2	N3	N4
Visual communication and data storytelling	N2	N3	N4
Stakeholder management	N2	N3	N4
Social media communication	N2	N3	N4
external awareness	N2	N3	N4
Prompting and task delegation to AI	N2	N3	N4
Improving customer journey and experience	N2	N3	N4
Marketing strategy	N3	N3	N3
Email and marketing automation	N2	N3	N4
Budgeting and cost control	N2	N3	N4
Flexibility	N2	N3	N4

Skill	junior	medior	senior
GDPR and privacy in practice	N1	N2	N3

4 The proficiency scale

Level	Label	Autonomy	Complexity	Scope	Depth of knowledge
N1	Guided	works under supervision and follows instruction	routine, one variable at a time	own task	basic understanding of terminology
N2	Applying	works independently within set frameworks	familiar situations with limited variation	own role	working knowledge, applies standard approach
N3	Proficient	sets own approach and seeks input proactively	several variables, some ambiguity	own team or process	thorough knowledge, weighs alternatives
N4	Advanced	directs others and decides on the approach	complex, with conflicting interests	several teams or a department	in-depth knowledge, advises others
N5	Leading	sets the standard and the policy	strategic, under high uncertainty	organisation, value chain or profession	authority, advances the profession

5 Behavioural anchors per skill

Anchors sit at N1, N3 and N5. N2 and N4 are deliberately not anchored: raters interpolate between them, following the O*NET convention.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Managing digital advertising campaigns Sets up campaigns in advertising platforms, configures audience, bid and budget and steers on cost per click, lead or sale.	Sets up a campaign following a fixed step plan and checks whether budget and end date are set correctly.	Manages several campaigns side by side, tests advertisement variants and shifts budget to the best performing combination.	Sets the standards for advertising purchase and measurement and decides on platform choice and annual budget.
Written expression Putting thoughts into correct and readable text with a logical paragraph structure, fitting tone and word choice suited to the reader.	Writes short messages and reports free of language errors after using a checking tool and a review round by a colleague.	Independently writes texts with opening, core and closing, chooses a tone per audience and applies fixed terms consistently.	Draws up the writing guide and house style for the organisation, approves publications on content and develops the writing skill of teams.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Content creation for target audiences Creating text, image and video for a defined audience and channel, with a message that prompts reading, viewing or action.	Creates a post following an existing format, selects a fitting photo and checks rights and accessibility.	Determines message, form and channel per audience, produces the content and improves it based on reach figures.	Sets the content strategy and brand guidelines, allocates resources across channels and accounts for results to the executive team.
Content marketing Devises, creates and schedules text, images and video for the channels of the organisation so the target group is reached and engaged.	Publishes supplied posts according to the content calendar and checks language, imagery and links before publication.	Creates an own content calendar per target group, writes the texts and steers on reach and engagement.	Determines the content policy and brand voice of the organisation and decides on the use of editors, agency and channels.
Marketing analytics and attribution Measures the effect of marketing efforts with dashboards and models and attributes revenue and leads to channels and campaigns.	Pulls the standard reports from the analytics tool and puts the key figures into the weekly overview.	Builds a dashboard per channel, checks the measurement setup and explains which campaign delivered which result.	Chooses the attribution model for the organisation, weighs its limitations and steers budget allocation on the outcomes.
Quantitative interpretation Explains what figures, charts and key indicators mean for the question at hand and states what they do not show.	Reads a standard report and names which values lie above or below the agreed norm.	Translates monthly figures into three concrete findings, names the measurement uncertainty and warns when numbers are too small.	Decides which key indicators steer the organisation, demonstrates the pitfalls in the measurement and corrects improper use of figures.
Creative thinking Looks at an issue from unusual angles, combines existing elements in a new way and comes up with own ideas.	Contributes an own idea in a meeting for a small improvement within the own task.	Puts several unusual solution directions side by side for a stuck problem and works out the most promising direction further.	Breaks through common assumptions in the field, brings in renewing solution directions and gives others room to experiment.
Editing and plain language Shortening, reordering and rewriting existing texts in plainer language without losing content, nuance or legal meaning.	Removes redundant words and repetitions from a text and corrects spelling according to a given checklist.	Rewrites a formal letter to plain language level B1 and explains to the author which choices were made.	Introduces an organisation wide plain language approach, measures readability of core products and adjusts standards based on user testing.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Storytelling Bringing a message in narrative form with characters, tension and a core point, so that the listener remembers and retells the content.	Uses an example from practice to make a figure or a rule understandable for colleagues in the team.	Builds a story with starting situation, turning point and outcome around a client case and links it to the message.	Develops the story of the organisation, has it recur across all channels and teaches managers to tell it themselves.
Data analysis Prepares and analyses data sets to find patterns, relationships and outliers and connects the outcomes to the original question.	Carries out a predefined analysis step on a supplied data set and records the outcome in the agreed format.	Selects analysis methods for an open question, turns raw data into a working file and supports every conclusion with figures.	Sets the organisation's analysis standards, reviews the analyses of others and establishes new analysis methods in the profession.
Customer segmentation and targeting Divides customers and prospects into groups with comparable needs and value and chooses which groups the organisation will target.	Assigns customers to existing segments using recorded characteristics and reports doubtful cases.	Builds a segmentation from customer data and behaviour and explains the need and the value for each segment.	Establishes the segmentation model for the organisation, links it to offering and channels and revises it when markets shift.
Applying brand positioning and visual identity Determines or safeguards what the brand stands for and ensures that language, imagery and behaviour in communications match it.	Uses the prescribed logos, colours and templates and checks with others when in doubt about a publication.	Tests publications from team and suppliers against the brand principles and corrects deviations with an explanation.	Recalibrates the brand positioning of the organisation and sets the guidelines all publications must meet.
Idea generation Produces many and varied ideas in a short time, alone or with a group, and keeps generating separate from judging.	Delivers several suggestions in an idea round without rejecting or judging them straight away.	Leads an idea session for the team with a suitable format, collects dozens of ideas and groups them by theme.	Sets up idea processes organisation wide, involves customers and partners in them and keeps ideas findable and reusable.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Visual communication and data storytelling Presenting figures and processes in charts, graphs and diagrams that support the message and lead the reader to the correct conclusion.	Creates a chart in an existing template, adds a title and names the unit shown on the axis.	Chooses a fitting chart type per message, removes unnecessary styling and writes the conclusion above the figure.	Sets guidelines for visualisation and dashboard use across the organisation and judges whether displayed figures represent reality fairly.
Stakeholder management Mapping who has an interest in an initiative and maintaining contact with those parties so that decisions keep their support.	Maintains a list of those involved and informs them about progress according to the agreed rhythm.	Assesses influence and interest per party, chooses a fitting form of contact and discusses conflicting wishes before a decision is taken.	Maintains a network reaching governance and political bodies, connects parties with differing interests and safeguards the position of the organisation.
Social media communication Managing business accounts on social networks, publishing posts and responding to reactions within the rules of the organisation and the platform.	Publishes approved posts with the correct tags and reports negative reactions to the administrator of the account.	Manages a channel independently, replies to questions within an hour and uses statistics to choose posting moments.	Sets policy for conduct on social networks, arranges monitoring and leads the response when a public row emerges.
external awareness Following developments among clients, in the market, in technology and in regulation and naming their consequences for own work and the organisation.	Reads the information provided about clients and rules and names what this means for own tasks.	Follows sources outside the organisation systematically and uses those signals when adjusting working methods within the team.	Translates societal and market developments into strategic choices and positions the organisation with relevant external parties in good time.
Prompting and task delegation to AI Divides work between person and AI system, formulates task, context and required output format and adjusts based on the output.	Gives an AI tool a single task with a clear question and required format and uses the result after checking it.	Splits a work task into steps, decides which step AI does and which not and improves the instruction based on outcomes.	Develops organisation wide practices for dividing tasks with AI and trains others in effective and responsible instruction giving.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Improving customer journey and experience Maps the steps a customer goes through, measures where friction occurs and implements improvements in process and contact.	Records customer complaints and remarks in the agreed format and passes them on to the process owner.	Maps out the customer journey for a service, names the three largest bottlenecks and implements improvements with those involved.	Sets the standard for customer experience in the organisation and directs improvement programmes across departments.
Marketing strategy Chooses target groups, message, channels and budget for a period and links those choices to goals for awareness, leads and revenue.	Carries out parts of an existing marketing plan and reports for each action what it delivered.	Draws up a marketing plan for a service or market with goals, channel choice and budget and adjusts it on results.	Determines the marketing strategy of the organisation, allocates the budget across channels and accounts for the return to the board.
Email and marketing automation Configures email sequences, forms and rules in an automation platform that respond to the behaviour of recipients.	Sends a newsletter with an existing template to the correct list and checks the test message first.	Builds an own sequence with conditions and triggers, tests it and improves it based on open and click rates.	Determines the setup and data rules of the automation platform and establishes which sequences apply across the organisation.
Budgeting and cost control Draws up a budget for a task, team or project, tracks spending against that budget and intervenes when overspending threatens.	Tracks spending in the supplied overview and reports deviations above the agreed limit.	Makes the budget for an own project, follows realisation per period and proposes measures in case of deviation.	Sets the budget framework for the organisation, decides on reallocation of resources and accounts for it to the board.
Flexibility Adjusts working method, planning and behaviour when the situation or the request changes, while keeping the agreed result intact.	Switches to a different task as soon as the supervisor asks and leaves the work in hand in an orderly state.	Revises the approach independently when the request changes, keeps stakeholders informed and still delivers the result within the boundaries.	Builds processes and organisational forms that adapt quickly to new circumstances and decides when the overall course changes.
GDPR and privacy in practice Knows privacy legislation requirements for own work, which legal basis and retention period apply and recognises when notification is required.	Processes personal data only according to the applicable work instruction and refers doubtful cases to the privacy officer.	Judges in own processes whether a legal basis exists, applies data minimisation and handles requests from data subjects correctly.	Sets privacy policy, decides on high risk processing operations and represents the organisation towards the supervisory authority.

6 Assessment methods and validity

The validities are the corrected meta-analytic estimates from Sackett, Zhang, Berry and Lievens (2022) in the Journal of Applied Psychology, which replace the older Schmidt and Hunter (1998) figures. The spread matters as much as the mean: with a high SD, validity varies strongly by context.

Assessment method	rho	SD	What it is
Work sample test	0.33	0.09	The candidate performs a representative work sample under standardised conditions.
Portfolio or evidence	-	-	A collection of prior work or results, assessed against fixed criteria.
Personality questionnaire	0.40	0.15	Self-report of behavioural preferences. At hrmforce the Big Fifty and the 15PF.
Simulation	-	-	Simulated work situation, usually digital, with standardised scoring.
Assessment centre	0.29	0.09	Multiple exercises, multiple assessors, dimension-wise scoring.
Structured interview	0.42	0.19	Behaviour-based interview with fixed questions and a rating scale per question.
Knowledge test	0.40	0.13	Test of declarative job knowledge, usually assembled per client.

7 Assessment instruments for this job

hrmforce instrument	Skills	What it measures
Work sample test	19	Representative work sample under standardized conditions
Portfolio	7	Evaluation of prior work against fixed criteria
Competency Check	7	Behavioral-Level Competency Assessment
Knowledge test (client-specific)	4	Professional knowledge test, customized for each client
Big Fifty	3	Personality questionnaire, 150 items, 25 factors
Ability Scan	2	Aptitude Test: Verbal, Numerical, and Abstract Reasoning Skills
360 Feedback	2	Multiple assessments based on behavioral anchors
15PF	1	Personality Profile, a shorter alternative to the Big Fifty

8 How to use this profile

1. Agree the profile with the hiring manager before the first candidate is measured. Weights shifted afterwards make the outcome indefensible.
2. Choose the assessment method per skill from the Assessment method column. Combine at most three methods per candidate.
3. Calibrate the assessors in a two-hour session using the anchors in chapter 5. Anchors without rater training deliver little.
4. Fill in the match calculator and discuss the gaps in the development conversation. Type A and type G are selection criteria, not one-quarter development goals.

Source: hrmforce Skills Framework 2.0, version 2.0.0, built 2026-09-08. Crosswalks to ESCO v1.2.1, O*NET 31.0, Lightcast Open Skills, SFIA 9, DigComp 3.0, EntreComp, LifeComp, GreenComp, AILit, WEF Future of Jobs 2025, ISCO-08 and the Dutch CBS occupational classification BRC 2014 edition 2025. This profile is a starting point, not a standard: align it with your own organisation before selecting on it.