Building a modern website is not a one-person show. Behind every polished launch is a full pipeline of specialists — designers, writers, coders, testers, administrators, and executives — each commanding a different market rate. Here is what every role in that pipeline actually earns, based on the latest federal wage data.

The Full Web Team, From Bottom to Top

Every salary below is a **median annual wage** drawn from the U.S. Occupational Outlook Handbook, May 2024 survey. “Median” means half of workers earn more and half earn less. Actual pay swings with geography, experience, industry, and company size — but these numbers are the most reliable national benchmarks available.

We have ordered the roles from lowest median to highest, roughly mirroring how a web-focused team is organized from the ground up.

Graphic Designer **($61,300/yr)**

Graphic designers are the ones who make your website *look* like your brand. Logos, icons, illustrations, infographics, banners — if it is visual, a designer touched it. They live in tools like Photoshop, Illustrator, and Figma, translating brand guidelines into pixel-perfect assets that hold up across every screen size.

On most web projects the designer is one of the first people involved. Before anyone writes a line of code, someone has to concept the look and feel, build mood boards, and produce the imagery that everyone else will implement. Designers collaborate closely with writers on visual-copy pairings and with front-end developers to make sure their work translates cleanly to HTML and CSS. Nationally there are about 265,900 graphic designer jobs, with a projected growth rate of 2 percent through 2034. A bachelor’s degree and a solid portfolio are the typical entry ticket.

Content Writer / Copywriter **($72,270/yr)**

Content writers fill every page of your website with words that do double duty: speaking directly to a human reader while quietly satisfying search engine algorithms. Service descriptions, blog posts, landing pages, product listings, email campaigns, help docs — a writer touches all of it.

Good web copy is not the same as good print copy. Online readers skim headings, bullet points, and bolded phrases before deciding whether to commit to a full paragraph. A skilled writer structures content accordingly, working with SEO specialists on keyword strategy and with designers to make sure copy fits layout constraints. About 135,400 people hold this role nationally, with 4 percent projected growth. Entry usually requires a degree in English, communications, or journalism — plus demonstrated writing chops.

SEO Specialist **($76,950/yr)**

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You can build the most beautiful website in the world, but it is worthless if nobody finds it. SEO specialists handle that — auditing site architecture, researching keywords, analyzing competitor rankings, optimizing metadata, building backlink strategies, and watching search console dashboards like a hawk.

There is no standalone “SEO Specialist” occupation in federal data; the closest match is the Market Research Analysts category, which covers professionals who study market conditions to assess potential demand. That category tracks 941,700 jobs and 7 percent growth, reflecting surging demand for data-driven marketing insight. On a web team, the SEO person influences almost every other role — telling writers what to cover, advising developers on speed and crawlability, and feeding performance metrics to management. It is easily one of the most cross-functional seats at the table.

Front-End Developer **($95,380/yr)**

Front-end developers take a static design file and turn it into something real — an interactive web page you can scroll, click, tap, and swipe. They write the HTML structure, CSS styling, and JavaScript behavior that visitors see in their browsers. Responsive layouts, accessibility, animations, form validation — when a button reacts on hover or a menu collapses on mobile, a front-end developer built that.

Federal data groups this role under “Web Developers and Digital Designers,” a combined category with a $95,380 median. Broken out, web developers earn about $90,930 while digital interface designers earn $98,090. The category tracks 214,900 jobs and 7 percent growth — well above average. Modern front-end work increasingly involves frameworks like React, Vue, and Angular, which raises the skill floor and, with it, compensation expectations. A bachelor’s degree is common but not universal — plenty of talented developers entered through bootcamps or self-directed learning.

Systems Administrator **($96,800/yr)**

Think of sysadmins as the modern-day “webmasters.” They keep the lights on — configuring and maintaining the servers, networks, firewalls, and cloud environments that actually host your website. When the site goes down at 2 a.m., the sysadmin is the one whose phone rings.

Day to day they manage OS patches, DNS records, SSL certificates, load balancers, backups, and monitoring dashboards. On a web team they bridge the gap between the developers who write the code and the machines that serve it. There are about 331,500 jobs in this category, though the projected outlook is a 4 percent *decline* through 2034 as cloud platforms and automation consolidate some traditional tasks. The upside? The roles that remain are more specialized — and better paid — than ever.

UX/UI Designer **($98,090/yr)**

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UX and UI designers decide how a website *works*, not just how it looks. They run user research, build wireframes and prototypes, conduct usability tests, and create the interaction patterns that guide visitors from landing page to conversion. The UX designer asks “Can someone finish this in three clicks?” The UI designer asks “Do the colors, spacing, and type make that path obvious?”

Federal data captures this under the “Web and Digital Interface Designers” subset, reporting a $98,090 median. UX/UI designers work hand-in-hand with front-end developers to make sure prototypes get faithfully implemented, and with writers to craft the microcopy — button labels, error messages, tooltips — that reduces friction. Demand is especially strong in e-commerce, SaaS, and healthcare, where a small usability tweak can move the revenue needle significantly.

Project Manager **($100,750/yr)**

If the web team is an orchestra, the project manager is the conductor. They define scope, build timelines, allocate resources, run sprint ceremonies, track milestones, manage budgets, and serve as the primary communication channel between the client and the production team. When scope creep threatens a deadline, the PM steps in.

In web work, PMs need enough technical literacy to understand what developers and designers are telling them — and enough business sense to translate those details into language stakeholders actually care about. With roughly 1,046,300 jobs nationally and 6 percent growth, this is one of the largest categories on our list. You will find project managers in virtually every industry, but web and software projects are among the most common environments they operate in.

QA Engineer / Tester **($102,610/yr)**

Somebody has to make sure everything the rest of the team built actually works — and that somebody is the QA engineer. They write test plans, execute manual and automated test cases, file bug reports, verify fixes, and certify builds for release. Cross-browser testing, responsive layout checks, form submissions, payment flows, accessibility audits, performance benchmarks — QA covers all of it.

Modern QA engineers increasingly write automated test suites with tools like Selenium, Cypress, or Playwright, blurring the line between testing and development. The combined developer-and-QA occupation tracks 1,895,500 jobs and 15 percent growth — well above average. Organizations that skip QA almost always pay for it later in emergency patches, lost revenue, and damaged credibility.

Database Administrator **($104,620/yr)**

Every dynamic website sits on a data layer, and the database administrator (DBA) keeps it healthy. They optimize queries, manage indexing, plan storage capacity, schedule backups,

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handle replication, and enforce the integrity rules that keep your data trustworthy. MySQL, PostgreSQL, SQL Server, MongoDB — whatever the platform, the DBA makes sure data is fast, safe, and recoverable.

DBAs also play an increasingly important role in compliance. Databases store the personally identifiable information that privacy regulations like GDPR and CCPA are designed to protect. The combined “Database Administrators and Architects” category lists 144,900 jobs, with administrators specifically earning $104,620 and architects earning $135,980. Growth is projected at 4 percent through 2034.

Creative Director **($111,040/yr)**

Where a graphic designer executes, a creative director strategizes. They own the overall visual and experiential vision — setting the design language, approving assets, guiding brand consistency, and mentoring the designers and UX specialists on their team. Should the brand feel minimalist or bold? Playful or corporate? The creative director makes that call.

Federal data tracks this under “Art Directors,” reporting 135,000 jobs and a $111,040 median. Entry requires a bachelor’s degree in art or design plus at least five years of experience, usually starting as a graphic designer or photographer. In a web context they also evaluate emerging design trends, commission photography and video, and partner with marketing on campaign aesthetics. At agencies it is common to oversee creative for multiple clients at once — high-pressure, high-visibility work.

Information Security Analyst **($124,910/yr)**

Security analysts protect your website — and everything behind it — from threats. They monitor for intrusions, run vulnerability assessments, implement firewalls and encryption, manage access controls, respond to incidents, and keep you compliant with standards like PCI-DSS and HIPAA. In a world where one data breach can cost millions, this role is non-negotiable.

This is also the fastest-growing occupation on our list, with 29 percent projected growth through 2034. The $124,910 median reflects the premium organizations place on keeping their systems safe. On a web team, security analysts audit code, configure web application firewalls, manage certificates, run penetration tests, and train other team members on best practices. A vulnerability in *any* layer can compromise the whole stack, which is why these folks work closely with sysadmins, DBAs, and developers alike.

Back-End / Full-Stack Developer **($133,080/yr)**

Back-end developers build the server-side engine that powers every dynamic feature on your site: user authentication, database queries, API endpoints, payment processing, CMS logic, automated emails, and business rules. They work in languages like PHP, Python, Node.js, Ruby, Java, or C#. Full-stack developers roll back-end and front-end skills into one seat.

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The “Software Developers” category reports a $133,080 median — notably higher than the front-end-weighted “Web Developers” number. The reason is straightforward: back-end systems handle the logic that directly drives revenue and data integrity. A bug in a payment gateway hits much harder than a misaligned margin. With 1,895,500 combined jobs and 15 percent growth, this is one of the largest and fastest-growing occupational groups in the economy.

Digital Marketing Manager **($161,030/yr)**

Marketing managers are the people who turn a launched website into a revenue-generating channel. Paid ads, email programs, content calendars, conversion optimization, social media, marketing automation — they orchestrate all of it, setting KPIs, measuring ROI, and adjusting strategy in real time.

The $161,030 median reflects the direct tie between marketing leadership and company revenue. With 434,000 jobs and 6 percent growth, competition for strong candidates is fierce. On a web team, the marketing manager is the primary *consumer* of the website’s output: they need landing pages built fast, analytics tracking wired correctly, A/B tests running clean, and conversion funnels optimized continuously.

IT Director **($171,200/yr)**

IT directors plan, coordinate, and direct an organization’s entire technology operation. They set tech strategy, manage departmental budgets, evaluate vendors, oversee hiring, and make sure the infrastructure, development, and security teams all point in the same direction as the business.

On a web-focused team, the IT director is the one who decides which CMS to standardize on, whether to host in the cloud or on-premises, how to balance security spending versus feature work, and when to hire versus outsource. There are about 667,100 jobs in this category with 15 percent projected growth — among the fastest of any management role. Entry typically requires a CS degree plus five-plus years of experience, and many hold an MBA or master’s in information systems.

Chief Technology Officer **($206,420/yr)**

At the very top of the technical ladder sits the CTO. They set the long-term technology vision for the organization: which platforms to invest in, when to adopt emerging tech, how to balance innovation against stability, and where technology can create competitive advantage. They negotiate enterprise contracts, represent technical capabilities to the board, and bear ultimate responsibility for every system the company runs.

The $206,420 median is just the starting point — CTO compensation at large enterprises and venture-backed startups often soars well beyond that through equity, bonuses, and profit-sharing. In the web context, the CTO is the person who originally said “We need a professional

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web presence," approved the budget, signed off on the tech stack, and continuously evaluates whether the digital experience keeps pace with the market. It is the role where technology strategy and business strategy become one.

What This Means for Your Business

Let's do some quick math. Even a modest six-person team — a designer, a writer, a front-end developer, a back-end developer, a project manager, and a sysadmin — runs roughly **$560,000 per year** in salary alone. That is before benefits, office space, software licenses, HR overhead, vacation time, sick days, and the cost of replacing someone who leaves. A full 15-person pipeline like the one above? Over **$1.7 million**.

Most small and mid-sized businesses do not need every one of those roles full-time. You might need a designer for a week, a security audit once a quarter, and a back-end developer for a few hours a month. But you still need the *expertise* of all of them at some point. That gap is exactly where a managed web services partner fits in.

Building an In-House Team

- $560K–$1.7M+ in annual salaries alone
- Add 25–40% for benefits, taxes, and overhead
- Recruiting and onboarding take months
- Turnover means knowledge walks out the door
- Specialists sit idle between projects
- Staying current requires ongoing training budgets
- You manage the people *and* the technology

Partnering With Liquid Purple

- Predictable monthly cost — a fraction of one full-time salary
- Every specialist on the list, already trained and ready
- Scale up or down as your needs change
- No recruiting, no onboarding, no turnover risk
- We stay current so you do not have to
- One point of contact for the entire pipeline
- You focus on your business — we handle the web

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The question is not whether you need these skills — every professional website depends on them. The question is whether it makes sense to hire them all yourself or bring in a team that already has them under one roof. For most businesses, the math speaks for itself.

Sources

All salary figures, job counts, and growth projections in this article come from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, based on its May 2024 wage survey. The individual occupation pages referenced are listed below.

- Graphic Designers
- Writers and Authors
- Market Research Analysts (SEO Specialist proxy)
- Web Developers and Digital Designers
- Network and Computer Systems Administrators
- Project Management Specialists
- Software Developers, QA Analysts, and Testers
- Database Administrators and Architects
- Art Directors
- Information Security Analysts
- Advertising, Promotions, and Marketing Managers
- Computer and Information Systems Managers
- Top Executives

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