JOB PREP

"The Voice of Career Insight"

GLOBAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

TOP 5 FIELDS to Find Entry-Level IT Jobs

Global I.T.'s Monthly Thought Provocation

"Work hard, stay positive, and get up early. It's the best part of the day. "

- George Allen, Sr.

When considering a new career, you're bound to be a bit apprehensive. Will your time spent in school pay off? Can you combine multiple interests and passions into a worthwhile career you'll enjoy? You may be hesitant to invest your time and money into education when there's no guarantee a job will be waiting for you after graduation.

However, if you're interested in working in technology, you're in luck. The industry is currently one of the most optimistic industries for job-seekers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Employment in computer and information technology (IT) jobs is expected to grow 12 percent through 2024, which is faster than the average rate of 7 percent.

So whether you have some experience and training, or none at all, there may be a career in IT out there for you. We used real-time job analysis software to examine more than 30,000 entry-level IT job postings from the past year.* The data helped us identify the top five industries offering entry-level IT positions. We also found some of the most in-demand positions for each industry.

Once you've equipped yourself with the proper information, skills and education, the opportunities are

Special Points of Interest In This Issue of 'JobPrep'

- Michigan Announces Implementation Timeline Change for MI Health Link

- Six Smart ways to gain IT experience

- Top 5 fields to find entry level jobs

- Why a Good Java Developer is hard to find?

IT professionals are everywhere

One of the perks of working in IT is that you are not confined to one industry. From schools to hospitals to the government, almost every industry today utilizes technology in some way, shape or form. This means you'll have the flexibility to work in IT nearly anywhere in the United States.

An IT career can also provide you a unique opportunity to concentrate on a field that interests you. By conducting some quick research beforehand, you can narrow your focus and begin building a network within your industry of choice.

Keep reading to learn more about what you might expect in each industry.

1. Management, scientific and technical consulting services

Employees in this field work for organizations that provide specialized services for their clients. These are activities that require a high degree of expertise and training such as legal services, scientific and technical consulting or engineering and architectural services.

While all organizations in this field aren't necessarily technology companies, they all incorporate technical aspects in one way or another, which requires IT personnel to oversee the operations. Some examples of top employers of IT professionals are IBM and Accenture.

2. Insurance carriers

Employees in this field work for companies that provide insurance policies. This includes the underwriting of insurance policies and selling insurance and other employee-related benefits packages.

These companies use computer networks to store confidential information and records. Because of this reliance on technology, IT professionals are needed to help ensure system security and troubleshoot any issues. Some examples of top insurance companies with entry-level IT job openings are United Health Group and Anthem Blue Cross.

3. Hospitals

Establishments within this field provide medical, diagnostic and treatment services for both inpatients and outpatients. Most services can only be provided using specialized facilities and equipment. Some examples of top hospitals employing IT professionals are the Mayo Clinic and UNC Health Care.

IT professionals in hospitals support the technical equipment. Nearly every hospital has integrated an electronic system for medical records, resulting in many entry-level IT jobs to help manage and maintain these highly confidential databases.

We accept Veterans/GI Bill, Post 911 bill, and other military benefits.

This industry category covers the establishments that provide instruction or training in a vast assortment of subjects. These may be publicly or privately owned institutions that operate for profit or not for profit. This includes schools, colleges, universities and training centers.

With technology integration into the classroom through the use of tablets, SMART boards and online course platforms, IT professionals are necessary to support, troubleshoot and forecast future needs. These days, it's safe to say that every educational institution employs an IT department.

5. Software publishing

Companies in this field produce and distribute computer software for individuals or companies. Virtually every organization today utilizes some sort of software to operate their business more efficiently. Software publishing companies handle everything from designing, installing and providing support to customers.

The software publishing industry is made up of two categories: applications software and systems software. Applications software refers to individual programs for computer users, while systems software is made up of entire operating systems and all related programs that allow computers to function. Some examples of companies in this field hiring entry-level IT professionals are Oracle and Microsoft Corporation.

Why is a Good Java Developer Hard to Find

Java is consistently a top choice for enterprise applications. Yet finding Java developers can be a massive headache for chief information officers and IT project managers.

While there are many developers with a host of experience working with the second most popular coding language, Java developer remains one of the most difficult jobs to fill.

A changing of the guard?

The career trajectories of many developers are changing. In the past, Java was often a budding developer's first "Hello, world!" Today, it's not always the first coding language they learn — or even the second or third. While Java remains popular for enterprise applications — with its massive library serving as the cornerstone for Android apps in particular — that strength may be why many developers don't use the coding language for their personal projects.

Many talented software developers are active in one or more of the many communities dedicated to exploratory programming, and they may want to work with a different language in their free time. Languages such as Python and C++ are outstripping Java for developer dabbling and may appeal to technology professionals looking to start out fresh on a career in programming.

Does this mean that Java is seen as the buttoned-down business programming language, while one like Python is regarded as the hipper kid in town? Maybe. And businesses struggling to hire Java developers can benefit by approaching candidate evaluations and project hires with this perspective in mind. For example, they may want to discuss other languages a developer might be able to use at the company if hired.

At the very least, understanding what today's de-

veloper might be looking for can help businesses take stock of their own software programming direction.

What are you looking for in a java developer?

High demand for programmers in general means that top candidates can be selective in committing to a company, whether for a project or full-time employment. If a project doesn't offer an interesting application of his or her skill set, the developer might decide to stay away.

Clearly, a more by-the-numbers project can still catch the interest of an able programmer, but you don't ever want to cut yourself off from attracting top-tier talent. Be willing to grow a professional's responsibilities as that person becomes more comfortable in the role.

Best practices for hiring web developers all apply here — offer interesting work, competitive compensation and benefits the candidate can't find just anywhere. You may even consider investing in a promising candidate who may not have 100 percent of exactly what you're looking for. In a tight job market, someone who can bring most of what you need may work out fine with some on-the-job training.

For more information call Global Information Technology at 1-866-GO-GIT-GO.

Career Guidance Column

Andrei - I'm embarrassed to share with my friends and family that I need a job. What are your thoughts on this? Smart job seekers aren't afraid to mention career aspirations to their book club, their parents' friends or their dentist. One never knows whose golf partner might be the ticket to getting a foot in the door. Even friends may learn more about you and perhaps think of you for a lead that they might have overlooked. But the answer is always no if you don't ask.

6 smart ways to gain IT experience

1. Do it yourself

IT isn't a field of abstraction. While knowledge certainly matters, the real bottom line for hiring managers is what you can do. This could be why so many entry level IT jobs still expect their candidates to have experience. So what you need is a way to show employers that you can walk the walk.

"Start tinkering," suggests Ben Landers, CEO of Blue Corona. "Build something. Buy some servers or get some donated from a company and do something with them. The best way to learn is often to stop contemplating and to take action."

Computer systems and networking equipment are upgraded so frequently that businesses, schools and even consumers often give away outdated equipment. Obtaining used equipment can provide great material for practice and experimentation.

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"Build a lab at your house," advises Stephen Tullos, Service Manager at My IT. "When we interview inexperienced applicants who have the 'book smarts', a home lab shows passion, hunger and hands on knowledge." Tullos adds that they ask about home labs even while interviewing more experienced professionals. "It shows initiative to continue their education."

Getting your hands dirty on projects at home will allow you to hone your skills without the fear of damaging a company's expensive investment. Once you feel comfortable on your own equipment, expand your services to your friends or family.

2. Earn certifications

Earning industry certifications is a great way to gain and showcase your IT experience before getting hired somewhere, according to Anthony James, CEO and Founder of Linux Academy. "Students gain skill sets in a specific technical area and receive a credential within a matter of days," he adds.

These certifications don't have to be extensive in time or effort either. Some precise skills can be earned in the form of micro-certifications, which are essentially badges that signify you possess a certain skill. James cited a recent Linux Academy survey of 6,000 IT professionals in which 94 percent of employers said they believe micro-certifications give entry-level candidates an advantage.

And it's not just for the rookies either. IT certifications are often necessary even among seasoned professionals in the field to stay current with technological advances. So you might as well add a few to your resume now. Passing these industry exams also helps showcase a specialized area of technical study.

3. Volunteer your services

Similar to the "just get your hands dirty" idea, volunteering allows you to build IT experience along with a collaborative, team-oriented attitude. One great way to do this is by volunteering to help small businesses create a new program, web site or mobile app for free, according to Joanna Buickians, VP of Operations at JBA Talent. "Small businesses generally are open to receiving free help," she says.

If you manage to make these volunteer hours happen while in school or working other jobs, that is even more appealing to employers. "Working in IT can sometimes be a 60-100 hour per week job," Buickians points out. "So learning to work on extra projects keeps your mind sharp, helps you develop skills and work on fun projects in the area you want to get into."

4. Become an intern

"For information technology students who prefer a more organized approach, the best way to gain industry experience prior to graduation is an internship," Landers says. And don't stress about whether or not the internship comes with cash or school credit.

"Paid, unpaid, summer, during the school year, for-credit or not, it doesn't matter," Landers says. "And for students who think the internship market is competitive, just wait until you are competing for a full-time position."

5. Network, network, network!

Never underestimate the power of meeting in person—especially in the tech industry. IT is a surprisingly collaborative field, so candidates who can represent their ability to connect with other professionals (e.g., dropping a comment like "my mentor suggested…" in a job interview) will stand out from candidates who go it alone.

"Go to professional networking events for the areas you want to get into," Buickians advises. Whether for BSA, project management, software engineering, QA or another niche, it's helpful to learn about the projects these professionals are working on and think about ways you may be able to help them. Consider asking to shadow them if they're open to it. "You may also find a mentor to help you in your career development," she adds.

Forming professional relationships is also a great way to keep a pulse on what's happening in the IT industry. If you are unsure of where to start, do some research on IT events in your area. Follow industry leaders and organizations on social media and maybe even reach out to some directly. Many professionals are happy to share their wisdom and career advice with the next generation of tech pros. Landers says he wishes more students would reach out.

6. Get educated

You likely know by now that a technology degree is not essential to getting your start in the tech world, but it can be a big differentiator on a resume. When faced with a decision between two candidates for one position, possessing a degree could very well be the deciding factor.

Most technology degree programs place a strong emphasis on hands-on training, which will allow you to acquire practical experience within the safe confines of a classroom. Many courses are also facilitated by professionals currently working in the field. Being able to develop your skills under expert supervision is just one of the many benefits to earning your degree.

Best of all, tech job opportunities and salaries increase with education level, so you could enjoy more options and better earning potential once equipped with the proper credential.

"The one thing that always amazes me [when talking to students] is the irrational fear they have," Landers says. "They worry about failing, losing a few hundred dollars or looking like a fool."

If concerns like these are holding you back from offering your work to a nonprofit organization, cold calling a professional for advice or even from buying up some old computers and tinkering around, Landers says you should shake it off and take a leap of faith. Many of these methods for gaining some IT experience won't require a large commitment of time or finances.

Start small, and you'll have a much better idea of what you need to land your dream tech job. It could be something you haven't even considered yet. Want to learn more about what an information technology career has in store for you once you get yourself established?