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SCHOOL LEAVERS GUIDE

2017

IN ANY BUSINESS, IN ANY INDUSTRY - MORE AND MORE IT IS THE PEOPLE WORKING IN I.T. THAT ARE KEEPING EVERYTHING AFLOAT.
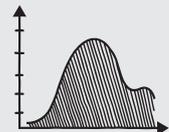
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Think about it, our whole world operates on computing systems and other technology. It also plays a part in most of our everyday lives. It is the I.T. industry that keeps all this functioning.

Alongside other technology based sectors, I.T. is one the fastest expanding career areas as every part of society adopts more, and new, types of technology.

There is currently a skills shortage in the industry meaning that there are many opportunities to begin your digital career.

The industry is also growing faster than most others, with an expected growth of 1.62% each year up to 2020 (nearly twice as fast as the national average). And with 40% of people in technology and I.T. based roles working outside of the industry in areas such as retail, finance, the public sector and marketing no two jobs will even be exactly the same.

According to the Tech Nation Powering the Digital Economy 2015 report more than a million roles were advertised in Information Technology in 2014, a 28% rise from the previous year.

Having the right technical skills in things like coding and IT systems can open up many different opportunities, in many different companies in many different industries.

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TYPES OF IT JOBS

The area of I.T. covers a wide range of roles, these are just some of them:

• SOFTWARE ENGINEER

Software Engineers design and programme the software that you use – operating systems, database systems etc. They know how both software and hardware work.

• TECHNICAL SUPPORT

This is probably the area of work that most people think of when they think I.T. ! Technical Support are basically the troubleshooters of the I.T. world, solving issues and problems with I.T. hardware and software for both consumers and businesses.

• NETWORK ENGINEER

This is one of the more demanding areas of I.T. with people working in this area set up, administer, maintain and upgrade communication systems and networks.

• WEB DEVELOPER

This covers everything to do with building websites and the infrastructure behind them. Web development is seen as one of the more cutting-edge and exciting areas of I.T.

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YOUR ROUTE INTO AN I.T. CAREER

A-levels and equivalent

Taking subjects like science and maths will be very useful, and should you decide to go to university some institutions require them for more technical degrees. In general any STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) are of specific interest to Technology employers.

There are specific A-levels and equivalent qualifications such as BTECS in related subjects such as ICT and Computing which are obviously a good basis to move into more advanced areas of Technology.

Apprenticeships

If you already know you want to work in the Technology sector and want to start work right away, but still need to learn more – apprenticeships are for you.
With an apprenticeship you can earn while you learn, working in a Technology company directly while learning the skills you need to succeed.

Like other industries more and more companies are taking on apprentices, with vacancies up by over a quarter in the last year. You can take an apprenticeship after GCSEs or A-levels.

The average salary for apprentices is £170 per week after tax and you'll also get a nationally recognised qualification with a local college, university or private training provider.

Apprenticeships are available at three levels:

- Intermediate or level 2 apprenticeships take a year to complete and are equivalent to 5 GCSEs.

- Advanced or level 3 apprenticeships take at least a year to complete and are equivalent to 2 A levels. You'll typically need five good GCSEs to get on one.

- Higher or level 4 apprenticeships typically take 18 months to two years to complete. They can lead to qualifications such as HNDs, as well as foundation or even full degrees. This depends on who you work for. You'll typically need two good A levels and five good GCSEs to get on one.

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One employer offering I.T. apprenticeships for school leavers is IBM, one of the world's largest technology companies.

They offer an apprenticeship to train as a Technical Solution Specialist which will provide you with the Advanced Apprenticeship for I.T. Professionals, plus knowledge from experts in a world renowned company and the chance to work with big name clients.

The scheme lasts three years with a starting salary of £18,000, increasing as you progress.

You'll work in a team to build, design, test or implement systems, or as a field engineer you might visit clients to fix issues with their technology. You'll have the opportunity to rotate around different roles and from day one you're hired as an permanent employee so after the apprenticeship has finished, you continue being an IBMer working on meaningful projects you're inspired by.

On an IBM Apprenticeship, support comes every step of the way, with an Early Professional Manager looking after your development and assessing how you're doing. IBM Buddies are professionals you can talk to about anything you need help with and they help particularly with building your network and expertise.

To be eligible you must have at least five GCSE's at grade C or above including Maths and English and either have obtained or be predicted at least 160 UCAS points from A-levels or equivalent. You must also be authorised to work in the UK.

IBM also offer the Futures (Gap Year) scheme which is a 12-month paid placement giving you experience as a taster to working in I.T. and for IBM. This is perfect if you are unsure of which career route you want to take next.

Find out more about what IBM offer school leavers at:

www-05.ibm.com/employment/uk/school-leavers/index.shtml

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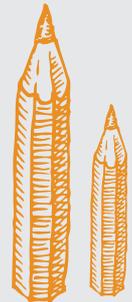
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UNIVERSITY

Traditional degrees are still a great route into the Technology industry with a wider array of directly related degrees than ever before.

Many employers offer specific schemes for graduates with fast track career progression in a number of roles. The application criteria and details of the scheme will depend on the individual employer.

TIPS FOR GETTING AN I.T. JOB

Research the role and the company you are applying to

It will help you stand out as a candidate if you can show that you understand what you have applied for, and you can demonstrate your particular interest and motivations based on your research.This may seem time-consuming, but sending out a high number of generic applications is unlikely to prove successful. You need to take the time to consider why you want a particular role and include evidence that supports your reasoning.

Review your application

Review your application form in detail, using a spellchecker to check your spelling and grammar. If you can, ask someone else to read through it as well. If you're applying via an online application form that doesn't have a spellchecker, copy and paste everything you have written into a document that does, and then print this out to complete final checks. It's easier to read printed copy than text on a screen.

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Make sure your application demonstrates your interest in IT

This is not limited to formal qualifications you are studying. Are you in a computer club at school? Have you taught yourself how to code in your spare time? Have you helped friends or family get up to speed with a new piece of Tech? All of these experiences are of interest to employers and demonstrate your motivation and capability to work in the IT sector.

Demonstrate transferable skills

As well as any qualifications you are studying for, employers are interested in finding out what transferable skills you have - skills that can be useful in any role. For example, are you in a school sports team, showing long term commitment and teamwork? Have you worked in a shop, developing communications skills dealing with the public / trusted to handle cash transactions? Are you a prefect at school, or have you organised a charity event, showing leadership and responsibility? All of these skills are of interest to employers.

Highlight all forms of work experience

As a school leaver you might think you haven't got a lot of relevant work experience, especially if you haven't yet worked in an IT related job. However, for an employer any form of work experience is of interest e.g. a week's work experience, a paper round, a weekend job in a shop, voluntary activities in your local community. These can all help to demonstrate some of the transferable skills mentioned above. Be sure to highlight what you have learned from each experience.

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Apprentice Case Study

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Howard Jackson

UNIVERSAL CREDIT SUPPLIER SUPPORT

● HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO WORK IN IT?

It was when I was in sixth form that I realised I wanted to work in IT having enjoyed studying this more than any other subject. University never really appealed to me due to the amount of studying that would be required and not being guaranteed a job at the end of it. Having done my research I applied for the IBM scheme, was successful in my application and have not looked back since. Since joining IBM it has opened many doors and has been a great place to start what will hopefully be a successful and rewarding career in IT.

● WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

My current role is working as enhanced application support for a large public sector organisation on one of their business critical applications. This role requires both technical and consulting skills as well as good process knowledge. I do not work at a client or IBM site, but work at another IT suppliers site which puts me in quite a unique place for an IBMer. A day in the life of my role will mainly focus on dealing with incidents which are reported by users of the application and trying to resolve at there earliest point in the incident lifecycle.

● HOW DID YOU GET YOUR JOB?

One of the great things about IBM is that hard work won't go unnoticed; after working in my first role for I was identified as someone who would do well in another area by a manager. Having discussed with my team we agreed that I had done everything I could in that role and needed a new challenge to get my teeth into. I have found that working hard reaps its rewards and you have lots of opportunities opening their doors for you.

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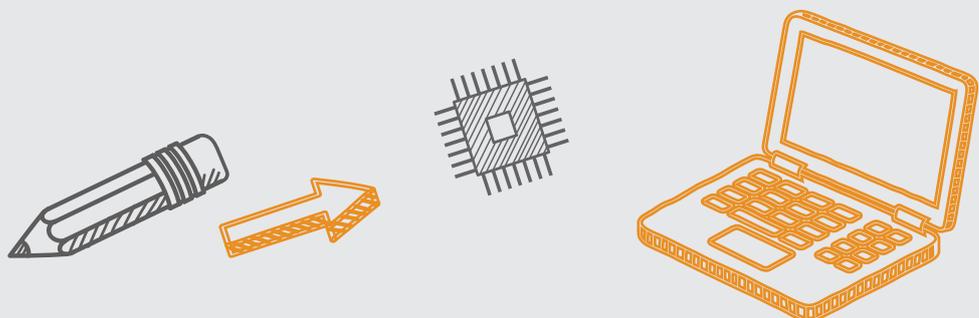## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM WORKING AT IBM?

IBM was my first job, so the experience I have gained has been invaluable. I have learnt how to conduct myself in a business environment, the importance of time keeping and ensuring that deadlines are met. Working in such a large corporate organisation you realise the knock on effects on work not being delivered on time, which in some cases is just not an option. I have been able to learn both technical skills such as Oracle PL / SQL and also soft skills such as stakeholder management.

WHAT IS THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT LIKE AT IBM?

The working environment at IBM can vary from day to day, most days, will be relaxed and you can be left to get on with your work and trusted to get it done as an autonomously - this is something I very much enjoy. However, there will be times as deadlines approach that things can get escalated and individuals need to come together to work collaboratively to get the best outcome for the particular task.

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

The best part of my job is when I come to work I know that I will learn something new each day, I feel that this is an important part of the IBM Apprenticeship scheme and as an apprentice in any organisation learning should be crucial. I also feel that equally as important for me is the work that you do each day and how you can see the value that you are adding for the customer. Every role I have completed, I have had good engagement with the client and this has been important for me to be trusted with that responsibility from an early stage.

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WHAT NEW SKILLS HAVE YOU LEARNED IN YOUR JOB?

In each role that I have performed I have developed skills which are unique to that particular role, but more importantly skills which can be used in life and in business. My interpersonal skills were always good, but I have learnt about managing expectations of stakeholders. These skills are important within my business line where we are client-centric. My attention to detail has grown and has been a key aspect in me being selected for my next role.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

My first goal is to complete my apprenticeship, and in terms of the future I like to keep an open mind, having tried a handful of different roles I could see myself having a future in any of them. I would like to be an IT consultant so that is where I would like to be in 5 years time. Having gained crucial experience from the apprenticeship as well as external, industry recognised training this has and will all help me to get to that goal.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE LOOKING TO GET A JOB LIKE YOURS?

If I was advising someone on a way to join IBM, or any IT apprenticeship I would recommend considering your options as early as possible while in college. If like me you realised that university is not for you then take a look at apprenticeships. The IBM Apprenticeship scheme has an entry requirement of only 160 UCAS points which is very achievable. One final point I would say is that you do not have to be technical to be successful at IBM. There are so many different pathways available, and a role for anyone who is willing to learn.

Find out more about what IBM offer school leavers at:

www-05.ibm.com/employment/uk/school-leavers/index.shtml

Apprentice Case Study

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Katie Fielding

SYSTEMS PROGRAMMER @ IBM

HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO WORK IN IT?

No, when I was really young a wanted to be a vet. Then as I grew up I planned to be a dancer completing my BTEC in Musical Theatre. I ended up working in a bar and hotel for four years before travelling for a year and coming back and applying for an apprenticeship.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

My role includes maintaining the system and infrastructure for IBM Resiliency Services customers. RS provides our customers with a secondary site that allows them to continue running their own systems in the event that they go down due to a man-made or natural disaster. My regular jobs include monitoring the systems for any security violations, Customising of operating systems to meet customer requirements, Installing and configuring all System updates and storage hardware and managing, maintaining and testing the RS equipment in Warwick and Greenford.

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR JOB?

After my assessment centre, I received an email offering me a job as a disaster recovery engineer. Thinking I was lucky to even get into the apprenticeship scheme in the first place, I jumped at the chance to take this role. When I went to my final interview, I was told what it would entail and that I would be in this role for 3 years. I am so glad I was given the opportunity to take this role. It has been extremely challenging but exceptionally rewarding.

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WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM WORKING AT IBM?

The main thing I have learnt whilst working at IBM would be that if you want something, you have to go out there and make it happen. From day one I have pushed myself out of my boundaries and thrown myself into my role. I have also volunteered for activities outside of my role which has helped improve my visibility within foundation and helped grow my confidence.

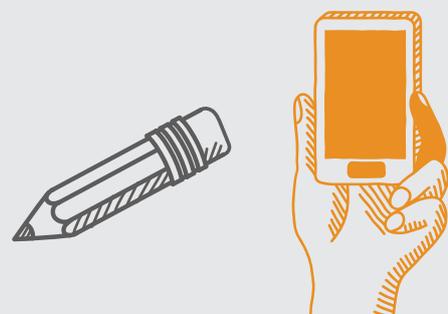### WHAT IS THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT LIKE AT IBM?

I work with a lovely bunch of guys who made me feel part of team from day one. Being the only female team member, I was a bit worried I wouldn't fit in, but I couldn't have asked for a nicer group of people to work with. It's a really good atmosphere and everyone is always willing to help you.

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

I love that everyday is a new challenge for me. I have new problems to solve and new skills to learn. No single day is boring. I also love having the chance to go out to schools and colleges and share my story and experiences with them, whilst promoting apprenticeships.

WHAT NEW SKILLS HAVE YOU LEARNED IN YOUR JOB?

One skill I have learnt is navigating around the mainframe systems, considering I knew very little about how computers worked, I have come a long way. Another skill I have improved is my communication. I am now able to talk in front of groups of people with confidence.
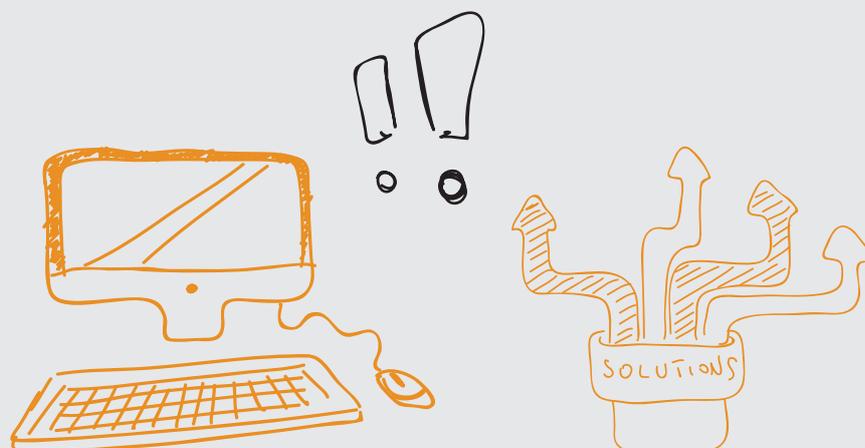
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- ## WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

  In 5 years I would like to be further up my career ladder as a z/OS Systems programmer. I would also like to be involved a good amount in the apprentice programme, helping mentor future IBM apprentices.

- ## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE LOOKING TO GET A JOB LIKE YOURS?

  Don't be scared to go for a role you think you won't be able to do. Everyone has to start from somewhere, you just need to be dedicated to learning your job role and don't be afraid to ask questions.

Find out more about what IBM offer school leavers at:

www-05.ibm.com/employment/uk/school-leavers/index.shtml

Need more help with your careers choices?

You can find a wealth of help and opportunities at the following places:

IBM

IBM has over 400,000 employees globally, operates in 170 countries and is the largest technology and IT organisation in the world.

THEBIGCHOICE.COM

Find quality advice and opportunities in apprenticeships, part-time jobs and training on this youth careers portal.

SCHOOL LEAVERS GUIDE

This interactive app guide brings together expert advice, guidance on career steps and positions from top employers via your tablet or smartphone.

NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

The official place for careers advice and information in the UK.

NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE

Everything you need on apprenticeships and the best vacancies on offer.