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Lesson Proper for Week 13

IT JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

Information technology (IT) professionals are responsible for helping organizations maintain their digital infrastructure and providing troubleshooting assistance to technology consumers. IT employees are in demand to help others keep up with technological advances and security procedures.

Now that you are beginning to explore your potential career options, you might be strongly considering turning your interest in computers and technology into a viable career path. The good news is that there are a lot of options when it comes to information technology careers—the only challenge may be finding the right path for you. To help you get a better understanding of what is out there, we will differentiate the different types of IT job and opportunities.

Common Focus Areas

Information technology is a broad subject that houses a lot of specialized roles and expertise. These can be broken down into a few sub-groups:

- **Cyber Security:** This area focuses on keeping the data of organizations and users secure, as well as the preventative measures taken to reduce harm in the event of a breach.
- **Software development:** This programming-focused branch of IT revolves around building or modifying software applications to meet users' needs.
- **IT infrastructure:** This focus area refers to the design, planning and implementation of IT-related hardware, usually done at an organization-wide scale.
- **IT support:** This refers to the professionals who assist end users (or other IT support specialists) with day-to-day technical issues.

- **Data management:** Professionals in this area focus their work on the design of structured database systems, creating data-loss contingency plans and the analysis of gathered data.

It should be noted that the dividing lines between these focus areas aren't always clear-cut, and many roles in IT may have significant overlap with multiple categories—for example, the programming skills used in software development can be applicable to data analysis roles, and knowledge of cyber security best practices is a key consideration for IT infrastructure planning.

Types of Information Technology Jobs

1. Software Developer

Software developers are the professionals tasked with creating and modifying computer programs. They use a mix of programming and logical planning skills to write the code guiding how these programs work. Some may focus more on writing individual code components, while others focus their time on the big picture work like mapping the needs of users and determining the core functionality needed to meet them. Additionally, they may spend time troubleshooting code and performing regular maintenance of a program. This career requires a mix of coding skills, logical planning ability, collaboration skills and creativity.

Typical duties:

- Analyzing user needs and creating computer programs that meet those needs
- Analyzing and recommending possible improvements or fixes to existing programs and systems
- Planning and mapping out how individual pieces of an application or system will work together
- Monitoring and addressing application functionality through maintenance and testing
- Creation of reference documentation

2. Computer Network Engineers

Computer network engineers, or computer network architects, design and build networks including local area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WANs) and Intranets. These sorts of networks might be small connections between offices or large enterprise-scale networks. Computer network engineers also work on any issues that arise within the network and anticipate future networking needs.

Typical duties:

- Creating plans and layouts for data communication networks

- Communicating plans and network needs to management or other stakeholders
- Assessing security needs and creating plans to address them
- Upgrading hardware as needed
- Researching new network technologies to determine future needs

3. Computer User Support Specialists

Computer user support specialists are on the front lines of IT as they assist users with a wide variety of day to day issues—whether that's trouble connecting to WiFi, configuring a new workstation or troubleshooting issues connecting to the new printer. Additionally, they may assist network and systems administrators with larger scale software or hardware rollouts. They are natural problem solvers and strong communicators who troubleshoot and evaluate computer problems promptly and efficiently, serving a critical role within any organization.

Typical duties:

- Listening to users' description of computer problems, ask questions, and evaluate their needs
- Walking users through steps to solve their problems
- Setting up and repairing computer equipment and devices
- Training users on computer hardware and software

4. IT Project Managers

IT project managers play a unique role in this field. They're responsible for the planning, initiation and execution of complex IT projects and initiatives. To do this, they must serve as a bridge between the technical teams who will be carrying out the work, and the organizational stakeholders who are setting the overall vision and goals of a project. They help both sides understand the potential hurdles facing a project, create overall project plans for how this work will be completed, and hold teams accountable for meeting deadlines and budgets. IT project managers have a strong blend of technical knowledge, organization ability, planning, and problem solving and communication skills.

Typical duties:

- Meeting with organizational stakeholders to determine scope and timing of IT projects
- Working with technical teams to identify potential barriers or issues and determining options for how to overcome them
- Conducting regular check-ins to monitor project progress and address unexpected issues
- Creating overall IT project work rollout plans
- Conferring with technical teams to identify what resources are needed for a project

5. Web Developers

Web developers design, create and maintain websites. Web developers often fall into one of three categories: back-end developers, who work mainly with the technical construction of the website, front-end developers who are responsible for the look and design of a website, and webmasters, who maintain and update websites—though many of these roles may blend together, depending on the organization. This career calls on excellent coding, creativity and communication skills in order to create websites that meet the needs of users and organizations alike.

Typical duties:

- Meeting with clients and assess their website needs
- Creating and testing web applications
- Writing code for the website
- Collaborating with web site stakeholder teams
- Creating user friendly, functional, and accessible layouts
- Monitoring site traffic or other key performance metrics

6. Information Security Analysts

A constantly evolving and critical position, an information security analyst protects an organization's network and systems from security breaches and the potential fallout from them. These analysts work to create a disaster recovery plans, conduct assessments of security threats, create plans remedying potential threats and keep a close eye on new and emerging threats in the industry. This role requires extensive knowledge of how hardware and software interface, their potential weaknesses, and the ability to drive proactive change within an organization to address information security concerns.

Typical duties:

- Monitoring for security breaches or potential weaknesses
- Overseeing the organization-wide implementation of protective measures such as firewalls and antivirus programs
- Creating reports documenting any security breaches and providing guidance on what can be done to prevent them going forward
- Testing for potential vulnerabilities in systems
- Developing security best practices for an organization and creating training documentation



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