Careers in Information Technology

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Prior to enrolling at McKendree I spent ten years in the military, which was a major deciding factor in my pursuing a higher education. During this time I served as systems and server administrator. Serving with both military and contracted civilians, I realized if I were to ever progress and truly have an income I could be comfortable with I would require a degree. I chose to pursue a degree in Computer Information Systems as I feel like it most closely mirrors the experience I have already garnered. The goal is to be able to capitalize on my previous experience, certifications, and a degree to truly have a career I can be happy with. Though programming is something new to me, working with technology isn’t.

Preferably I would be able to find a career working as a server administrator, more specifically on Windows based servers. Server administrators have a wide breadth of responsibilities. In simple terms, a server administrator ensures that users can access and utilize network resources when required (“Server Administrator: Job Description and Education Requirements,” n.d.). However, often times they will be managing several systems. With the introduction of virtualization technology the amount of services that be maintained by a fewer amount of people has grown exponentially. For instance, a server administrator may find themselves managing one if not all of the following; Exchange services, Active Directory, SharePoint, building images and performing security audits. There’s many more examples, but this gives an example of the scope of services which may be involved in a server administrators day-to-day operations.

# Educational requirements for this career path are like many positions in the information technology world. A person can obtain certifications and be able to find work at a respectable business. However, in most instances in order to truly do well an individual will be required to have a degree (“Server Administrator: Job Description and Education Requirements,” n.d.).

As with most careers, the more education an individual has the more potential that person has to achieve higher positions at their employer. With the advancement of your degree you will be presented with what could be considered better opportunities. For instance, to keep true to your examples. An individual with a four year degree may work at a local AT&T office administrating their servers. However, the server administrator working in downtown St. Louis will more than likely have a master’s degree, to take it a step further, the AT&T national headquarters probably has several server employees with doctorates. The median salary for a Windows based server administrator with a 4 year degree is near $77,000 (“Windows System Administrator Salary,” n.d.).

Soft skills which apply to this career are not much different than any other career. However, it may be the frequency which is most different. Having good people skills is a fundamental skill in life, not just career specific. Though, as a person progresses through this career track they may find themselves attending meetings in order to give reports and updates on the health of their systems. Critical-thinking, which is the hallmark of what we as technology students do, is perhaps the most important soft skill we can possess (“Soft Skills for IT professional – Introduction,” n.d.). Being able to think outside of the box when an issue is presented will be a huge asset not just to the employee, but also to the employer. From my experiences prior to McKendree I realize being able to utilize all of your soft skills in coordination is the best approach to being successful in any career. Rather it be working in the technology field or working in the business industry. I recall an instance where our Exchange server was failing to authenticate users from a domain located in Hawaii. This was a fairly difficult problem as there were multiple layers involved. Inbound and outbound firewall rules, switches, routers and the Exchange servers themselves were all tied together in this issue. Through clear communication, teamwork, and critical thinking we were able to work with our counterparts in Hawaii to come up with a solution to this issue.

I’m looking forward to the opportunities and challenges associated with attending a college or university. The opportunities that will present themselves with a degree from McKendree are boundless considering the current state of the information technology market. Though the market is promising, there’s a lot of competition for the most desirable positions. However, through hard work- regardless of how difficult it may seem, I know that I can look forward to an exciting and rewarding career post McKendree.

References

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