

Tech vacancies are booming – why now is the time to make a career change and tips for doing so

Of all the messages in the Chancellor's Autumn Budget, one was particularly clear - we urgently need to address the UK's digital skills gap. The announcement of a £3.8B investment in training and T-Level courses was welcome news for the tech sector and in the future will undoubtedly go some way to alleviating the crippling skills shortage our industry faces.

But in the more immediate term, it will do little to address the current mountain of tech vacancies available. More than 100,000 roles are advertised each week on job website Adzuna, with businesses accelerating recruitment in cloud, AI and cybersecurity positions as they expand their IT and tech teams to meet the pandemic-fuelled demand for digital.

Indeed, the tech talent required to fill the demand for the shift to digital has proved challenging to find – according to recruitment firm Talent Works, fewer than one quarter of UK tech leaders find it easy to identify suitable candidates.

Since the pandemic, consumer focus has rapidly moved towards online products and services. Businesses and industries had to respond in turn, and the events sector was no different. To make this shift a success, companies need to find and recruit people with the right digital skills. From experience recruiting people who could help my company - *Hyve Group plc* - to expand our digital offering, I know how difficult the process of finding candidates with the right tech skills at the right time can be.

Employers are now casting the recruitment net wider than they might normally, to encompass candidates from other sectors who may already have transferable soft skills.

What this means for people outside the industry - who may have previously considered a career in tech - is that there's never been a better time to make a career change.

A lucrative move

Opting for a career change in the tech industry could be an extremely shrewd financial decision. A recent Tech Nation report found that the average advertised digital tech salary is £50,663 - 44% higher than non-digital. Indeed, tech is one of the few sectors which both pays well and has widespread availability for positions.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there has been a 40% increase in tech vacancies to the extent that 10% of all jobs advertised in the UK are from the tech sector - the second highest number of vacancies in any industry after healthcare. Therefore, investing in training programmes or courses on the specific digital skills jobs are looking for could prove invaluable in the long term.

Many people, particularly the younger generation, think of positions in front-end web development or app design when it comes to tech jobs. But there is much more to the job market, and many lucrative positions are in back-end roles or other areas such as product, digital design and UX. So it is worth researching the type of tech roles which are most in demand and identifying the skills you'll need as a successful candidate.

You may already have the skills employers are looking for

Tech and digital skills are not all about learning to code. In an increasingly digital world, employers also value more human, soft skills to maximise the

benefits of technology and make it work for people. In 2013, Google released a study which found that the most important qualities of the company's employees were being a good coach, communicating and listening well and possessing insights into others.

Indeed, there are many skills from other sectors which are valuable in tech, including project management, negotiation, creativity and commercial awareness. If you have a technical mindset and work in a role which requires these skills, you're an attractive proposition to a potential tech employer.

As well as transferable soft skills, there will be other ways in which you can frame your professional and personal story so that it applies to tech. Identify the specific skills an employer is looking for in the job description and consider how they match up to your experience. Often, this will require you to amend the details of projects you've been involved in – rather than the sales technique you used to secure a deal, perhaps you'll instead focus on how you negotiated or communicated with a client.

Use your network too – you might have contacts from previous roles who have opted for a move into tech before you. Referrals are particularly powerful when moving industries as they encourage employees to view potential candidates less as outsiders.

Consider apprenticeships

Many of the tech giants offer schemes that enable established workers to make a sideways step in their career. There are also great programmes available like Camden Council's partnership with Google's Career Certificates, which aims to give people the skills needed to secure quality, well-paid employment in high-growth tech and IT roles.

Ideally, we want to reach a stage where digital programmes such as these and apprenticeships are valued alongside a university education as credible routes into the industry – for this to happen, we will need a top-down approach from the government with targeted messaging and strategy. But employers already value such programmes highly, and so it is worth finding out what skills you'll need in a tech job of potential interest and then searching for schemes where you can develop them.

There's never been a better time to switch into a tech career – vacancies are booming, salaries are high and the industry is only set to grow. Whether it's a position as a web developer, data scientist or interface designer that appeals to you – identify the skills you need and then decide which you need to learn and which you have already.

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