
Breaking Into IT Through Online Education and Certification

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According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, information technology-related jobs are expected to be among the fastest and largest growing jobs in the economy through 2016. In fact, computer software engineers, computer systems analysts, network systems and data communication analysts should see significant gains in both employment and annual salary. You can position yourself to take advantage of this industry growth with an online education or professional certification.

Online Education was Made for IT

A variety of factors are combining to move technology education from the campus to the Internet. According to the most recent statistics compiled by the Sloan Consortium, nearly 3.5 million students were enrolled in online courses in the fall of 2006 and two out of every ten college students in the country took at least one online course during that period. For more details www.profit-pulling-niches.com In fact, more than more than two-thirds of all higher education institutions have some form of online education in place.

When you consider it, the distance learning format is especially suited for the IT industry simply because it offers you a rich technological component that you generally can't get from the traditional campus route. Logging in to your classroom, accessing networks of research and study tools, and conversing via chat with professors and fellow students can prepares you for the challenges of the profession during each class and study session.

Certification versus Degree

Ironically enough, preparation for an IT career poses a unique conundrum for potential professionals. Should you follow the traditional academic route and earn a bachelor's degree? Or is a professional certification your best bet? While the answer is not an easy one to determine, taking stock in your career goals may shed some light on the issue. You should ask yourself three important questions when considering a degree or certification:

* **Where Do You Want to Go?** If immediate employment is a critical factor, an IT certification might be the way to go. If professional variety is more appealing, a degree in computer science or programming, for example, offers you a broad base of knowledge applicable in several roles.

* **What is Your Time Frame?** If you're an established professional looking to augment your skills for a quick lateral or upward position change, certification can give you that freedom. For more details www.workplace-warriors.com However, a traditional degree might be smarter if your fresh out of high school, or a mid career changer, and you plan on committing yourself to the IT industry.

* **What Kind of Learning Do You Seek?** IT certification is typically marked by an association with like-minded professionals who can help you shape your professional direction. With the degree route, you can benefit from the student-oriented experience of which colleges and universities are best known.

Potential Career Paths

While pure IT careers are still viable, you should recognize that future opportunities mimic the ways technology applies to business. As the business world continues to fuse with the computer world, IT pros should enjoy unique opportunities in the near future. For example, the maturity of the industry should create a host of new job titles and activities. In other words, IT may no longer be a subset, but rather become integrated into traditional business roles.

While integrated IT roles may soon find their way into the workplace, there are two key factors to consider when pursuing an IT career path. First, the average IT career sees about 10 job titles in a twenty year span. That means you should be flexible and knowledgeable enough to adapt to the professional flow within the IT industry. Second, positions such as LAN technicians and network support are typically transitional positions--meaning entry-level graduates can easily fill them. In turn, mastering an IT specialty may provide for true staying power in the IT world.

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