ELEVATE YOUR PATH IN TECH

_JACLYN PATULO

Demand for highly skilled IT professionals continues to rise. Yet, the pool of professionals with the right blend of tech skills and business acumen remains thin. According to a CompTIA's State of the IT Skills Gap 2014, 33 percent of businesses say they are understaffed, and another 42 percent say they are fully staffed but want to hire more in order to expand. However, more than half of businesses (58 percent) report being concerned about the quality and quantity of IT talent available for hire.

The research also suggests that at least eight in 10 U.S. businesses are being negatively impacted by the lack of technology talent. Nearly half of businesses (44 percent) seek significant improvement on the IT skills front. There's a shortage of skilled IT professionals, but no shortage of opportunities — especially among top IT leadership and cybersecurity positions.

According to Robert Half Technology's 2017 Salary Guide for Technology Professionals, CTO salaries have increased 3.3 percent and CIO salaries increased 3.1 percent between 2015 and 2016. It certainly pays to be at the top, but the climb up can be challenging. Thirty-seven percent of CIOs rank 'staying up to date on industry trends' as the greatest source of pressure on IT professionals.

SECURITY LEADERS IN-DEMAND

The number of cyberattacks continues to rise, with some estimates stating that the global cost of handling these attacks will reach $2.1 trillion by 2019. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that cybersecurity IT professionals are in high demand.

$83,934

The amount the average cybersecurity professional earns, compared with $77,475 for IT position

91%

The amount cyber security jobs grew from 2010 to 2014

$6,500

The average cybersecurity jobs pay more than other areas of IT (a nine percent premium over IT jobs overall)

This all might sound like it adds up to guaranteed pay day, but it's not that simple. Let's consider this statistic from the Comp-TIA report: There were 50,000 job openings for security professionals with CISSP certification in 2014, but only 65,000 total CISSP holders in the country.

The report also found that more than one-third of cybersecurity jobs call for an industry certification. You first need to acquire the skillset and knowledge required to fulfill the essential requirements of hiring companies.

The recently launched website Cyberseek, built by Burning Glass Technologies and CompTIA and funded by a National Initiative on Cybersecurity Education grant, is a tool designed to provide actionable data about supply and demand in the cybersecurity job market.

For example, say you're a mid-level cybersecurity analyst. Following Cyberseek's Career Pathway, to become a top-level cybersecurity administrator, you can identify which top skills and certifications requested overlap or which you'll need to acquire to move up. You'll also note a nice average salary increase: from $89,232 to $113,407.

Sensing a theme? Working to elevate your career to reach higher-paying and more senior IT roles begins with professional development. IT career growth is learning to bridge the gap between technology and business to provide direction for your organization.

Over the past five years, the core IT services sector has added nearly a half a million new jobs, according to CompTIA's Cyberstates 2016. To tap into this in-demand market, there's myriad paths to pursue additional training and skills.

Online coding schools offer a great opportunity to add dev tools to your repertoire. Keeping your skills sharp and adding new languages to your development stack demonstrates you're a versatile developer. For instance, **Coursera** offers a nine-course data science class that comes with accreditation, and **Codecademy** offers free resources.

Join a professional organization or association to learn from a mentor or peer that has been in your shoes. VMware users can join the VMware User Group (VMUG), a customer-led global organization that offers in person and online education, webinars, networking and customer communities. VMUG members also have the opportunity to become **VMUG Advantage subscribers**, which can help further your rise to the top and accelerate your success with discounts on training, certifications and product licenses. Getting involved with an association also gives you opportunities to volunteer, establish yourself as a thought leader and shape the direction of initiatives in the industry.

SEEKING OUT CERTIFICATIONS

According to the Robert Half Technology survey, the following skills and certifications are in high demand by organizations in North America:

- ASP
- C#
- Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert (CCIE)
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)
- CompTIA A+
- Java
- Microsoft SQL Server
- MySQL
- .NET

Jaclyn Patulo is the associate editor of *VMUG Compass.*