



Information Technology (IT)

IT (Information Technology) departments are essential to any business. They help to ensure that the company's computer systems (computers, internet, email, etc.) are maintained and doing their job. Very small companies may rely on outside IT support but most companies will have at least one person who is responsible for the IT systems - larger companies will have a whole department.

The IT department can be responsible for a number of things, including:

- Maintaining the business hardware (computers, printers, scanners, etc.) and software (IT programmes)
- Setting up and installing the software
- Training staff on how to use the different IT systems and resolving any problems or errors
- Maintaining other systems (e.g. telephone systems, photocopiers, etc.) and ensuring that all systems are secure and customer details are protected.

All businesses rely on IT to some extent so this function is very important. Larger corporations will have specialist software systems designed for the company. For example, a financial services company might have their own software for raising (creating) invoices or sending account statements to customers. This could have been purchased from a supplier or developed by the IT department to meet the specific needs of the business.

Typical IT positions include:

- IT Director
- IT Manager
- Network Manager
- IT Technician
- IT Helpdesk

The **IT Director** oversees the whole IT strategy of the company and the overall structure of the IT department.

The IT strategy covers decisions such as how company growth is managed; where services are located – possibly provided by another company or located in another country. The IT Director will take advice from other IT Managers in deciding upon the strategies and policies to be implemented.

To become an IT Director it is important to have experience in working in different IT departments, as well as an understanding of the technical demands on the IT department.

Salaries range from between £58,500 - £92,000 or more depending on the size of company.

An **IT Manager** is responsible for running and maintaining the company's IT systems. This will involve coordinating members of the IT team to carry out specific tasks such as helping users, scheduling hardware and software upgrades, applying security and anti-virus updates, researching and installing new systems and ensuring that all software is fully licensed (i.e. has been paid for and can be legally used by the company). They may also be responsible for the maintenance of the company's website.

Again experience is important in this role as well as a good educational background and advanced knowledge of key computer systems. Strong team leading skills and the ability to prioritise tasks and work under pressure is also very important.

Salaries can start at around £33,000.

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Information Technology (IT) cont'd

The **Network Manager** is responsible for designing and maintaining the company's internal network (known as an intranet) and in the case of an organisation with several companies, the network connecting one company to another. This network helps to connect the business with its employees allowing them to share information, contact details and files within the company and not with the public.

Work would include assessing network requirements, advising on and implementing the necessary network hardware and software, monitoring performance and supervising technical support staff (see below).

This is a senior position so experience is important. Good GCSE's, A-levels and a degree in computer systems will also be needed, as well as an interest in IT.

Salaries can range from between £33,000 - £50,000.

IT Technician and IT Helpdesk help to find and correct IT problems to ensure that the network systems run smoothly. They may work within the office or remotely by phone or email. Larger companies will have a number of technicians working for them with teams likely reporting in to a manager.

To work in any IT role it is important to have an interest in and understanding of IT along with some basic college level IT qualifications. Candidates will also be expected to keep up-to-date with new hardware and software systems.

Salaries vary with experience but normally start at around £17,500.

Employability SKILLS

There are a number of skills needed to work in an IT department, including:

- **Strong IT skills and the commitment to update skills and knowledge**
- **Detailed knowledge of the business's IT needs and systems**
- **Effective communication and the ability to deal with complaints - with patience!**
- **Ability to prioritise**
- **Problem solving abilities**
- **Team work and independent thinking**
- **Ability to manage a project and take responsibility.**

A key employability skill in order to work in an IT department is of course the ability to use computers and work directly with software. This knowledge and understanding, and the commitment to continue professional development, is essential.