

Careers in Information Technology for school leavers



Getting in and staying ahead in IT
www.ITpro.lk

Information Technology (IT) is a fast growing dynamic industry sector

Demand for IT professionals is growing world wide at an unprecedented rate. IT is fast becoming one of the most exciting career options available around the world. Over the last 3 years, number of people entered the IT industry in Sri Lanka grew over 20%. And with the ever increasing world wide demand for IT services, a career in IT will remain one of the most exciting and rewarding careers for years to come. The opportunities for career advancement, self development and financial reward in the IT industry are excellent.

Why should you consider getting in to a career in IT?

World wide demand

A good qualification and experience in IT is recognized equally in any part of the world. In fact a degree in IT has become standard across the world and it really does not matter where you earn it for employment. Unlike a doctor, accountant and lawyers, when you migrate to a different country, you don't need to recertify your skills to suit the regulations of the country you are going.

There is a significant shortage of IT professionals in the western countries such as Europe, America, and Australia. If you are thinking of living abroad, getting in to IT would be one of the best ways to achieve it. Countries like UK, Australia and Canada have special visa programs to attract experienced IT professionals as permanent residents.

Great financial rewards

IT is one of the industries which pay well for even the entry level jobs. With an IT degree or an equivalent qualification, one can earn as much as Rs. 25,000 a month at the start. As you gain experience and exposure your salary grows at a very rapid rate. With about 5 years of sound experience, it's not uncommon to earn a salary of over Rs. 100,000 a month!

Career advancement and self development

Most IT companies work with international clients and IT professionals get exposure to a global working environments which helps to learn and advance fast. Companies also invest heavily on training and development of their employees.

With the constant advancement of the IT field, there is something new that is happening everyday.

There are a wide range of areas such as Software Development, Project Management, Testing and Quality Assurance, Business Analysis, Client Management, Networking/Systems Administration, Web Development, Technical Support and Database Administration and many more career paths to choose from. It also quite easy to move around in different areas which allow people to switch focuses to gain experience in number of different areas.

How do you get started?

As a school leaver, there are a number of routes that you can take to get in to IT.

Entry jobs

There are number of jobs that you can start with little training if you have some basic skills. However this is a very unstructured route and success depend on how fast you can learn and make a real contribution to a company. If you are good writer or an artist and have some basic skills in computers, jobs such as Technical Writing and Web Design can be good entry job to the industry. However, while some have found a way to progress by specializing in specific skills areas, some find that the lack of a recognised qualification limits their opportunities.

Vocational training

There a number of vocational training programs which gives you a good foundation to enter the IT industry. Among some of the popular courses are the British Computer Society (BCS) exams, Australian Computer Society (ACS) exams and the National Institute of Business Management (NIBM) Diploma. Most of these provide a very good knowledge and skills to get started in IT. Other programs like Certified Test Engineer (CSTE) from Quality Assurance Institute (QAI) USA, is also gaining popularity as good entry point to a career in Software Testing.

IT Degree

A degree program is a definitive way to get in to IT. Most employers internationally look for a basic degree as a standard qualification. A degree in IT can be earned full time or part time. Following are some options you can consider when starting a degree program in IT.

IT Degree – National Universities

If you full fill the necessary entry requirements of the national universities, you can apply for a place in one of the computing courses. Most of the national universities now offer degree programs in IT.

A list if these programs can be found at: www.ITpro.lk

IT Degree – Private Colleges

There a number of private education institutes that provides IT degree programs of good quality. Many of these institutes are associated with a foreign university to award a degree and follow the curriculum of the affiliated university. Most programs are 3-4 years in duration and award diplomas at each stage of completion towards a degree. Some program also provides you the option of going to the affiliated foreign university in the last year to complete the degree overseas.

A list if these programs can be found at: www.ITpro.lk

IT Degree – Sri Lanka Institute Information Technology

Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) has been set up to promote IT education in Sri Lanka. It's a non profit making institute and cater for large intake of IT graduate with its campus facility based on Malambe. SLIIT is one of the economical alternatives to obtain a degree in IT in Sri Lanka. SLIIT degrees can also be done part time, allowing you to work while study.

IT Degree – External Degrees

External degrees are largely self taught and require you to have a good level of self discipline to complete in a reasonable time frame. One of the advantages of an external program is that you can start work while you learn. Many companies offer internships and trainee jobs for people who have some basic skills and enrolled in a part time degree program.

University of Colombo – Bachelor of IT (BIT)

Colombo university BIT program is an external degree program awarded by the University of Colombo. The University provides the curriculum, broadcast lecture on TV and conducts the exams. Many institutes also teach the curriculum of the BIT program to help you study. You can enrol for the BIT program at the Colombo University and learn the subjects at a private institute.

Open University

Sri Lanka Open University provides number of courses in IT. Open University courses are meant to be for distant learning. Course material and curriculum is provided by the university with some workshops to assist students in learning. Currently there is also an effort underway to provide rich online lessons on the internet for the students.

Anyone can enrol in to a course at the Open University without restriction on entry qualifications. The Open University runs foundation courses for people without a background in IT, Science or Maths to help them get started in an IT degree program.

Foreign Degree

There are a large number of IT degrees that are provided by many universities around the world. Among them, USA and UK take the lead in terms of reputation and quality of programs. Studying overseas is a life experience and many get a head start in employment with a qualification especially from a country such as USA or UK. However, this can be significantly more expensive than studying in Sri Lanka.

India also provides options for studying IT at a relatively lower cost.

Financing your degree

Education in IT is a very prudent investment with great returns. Many banks have recently started education loans schemes to finance local and foreign education. With the high potential to earn after the completion of a reputed degree program, financing your education through a bank loan is becoming an attractive option.

Working and studying

There are many entry jobs such as Web Design, Technical Writing, Testing, Help Desk support etc, which does not require a degree level qualification. Working and studying is one of the attractive options available to further a career in IT.

You can start a degree program from an institute which cater for part time study and learn the basis skills in the first year or two. You can then compliment these skills with a professional certification in Java, Microsoft, Testing or any other professional certification to gain credibility to get a job.

Once you start a job in an entry role, you can continue to complete your degree program part time. Many of the companies who have employee friendly practices allow part time study while working. This

option gives you the advantage of having some solid commercial experience by the time you graduate. Some companies will also part fund your degree program when you are employed with them. You need to be disciplined to focus all most seven days a week if you decide to work and study.

For information on institutes which are providing IT courses and for specific advice from others about your career concerns, visit www.ITpro.lk

Copyright © 2007 by ITpro Version 1.12

ITpro is socially motivated organization to help create employment for masses in Sri Lanka though the IT profession. Permission is hereby granted to reproduce and distribute this leaflet without alterations.

www.ITpro.lk