

Are You in Demand? The 2008 IT Skills Outlook

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In IT, as in other professions, it's all about the skills. Ensuring you are current on the latest and greatest technologies can open doors to new job opportunities, help you advance within your organization and lead to a more attractive compensation package.

So, how does your IT expertise stack up in today's environment? According to the Robert Half Technology 2008 Salary Guide, the following skills will be in strong demand in the coming year.

Microsoft .NET Development

As companies increase their investments in application and Web initiatives, individuals skilled in developing for the Microsoft .NET Framework are a hot commodity. In fact, candidates with these skills often can command a 10 percent premium over their counterparts without these skills. Expertise in .NET is valued in such positions as Web developer or designer and software developer or engineer.

SQL Server Development

The growth of applications and Web development is also fueling the need for SQL Server development skills. Firms need professionals who can write code, including stored procedures, database scripts and triggers. While some positions focus purely on SQL Server development, often these skills are applied to other roles, such as database administrator, applications architect and applications developer.

Windows Administration

Are you a pro with Windows Server 2003 or XP? Do you have Active Directory expertise? If so, you're in luck. Robert Half Technology's latest IT Hiring Index and Skills Report found that Windows administration knowledge is the technical skill set most in demand in IT departments. It's highly valued in positions such as system administrator, desktop support analyst and help desk manager. People who can install, configure and manage ongoing maintenance of Windows servers are typically offered 10 percent more than candidates without the expertise.

Network Administration

Network administration skills also are highly sought after, particularly experience with Cisco networks. Network engineer, systems administrator and telecommunications manager are the types of roles that often require the ability to maintain and troubleshoot

Cisco routers, hubs and switches. Research in Robert Half's guide shows that individuals with Cisco network administration skills earn an average of 12 percent more than professionals who don't have that training. Many employers also seek applicants with related certifications; network security experience is a plus.

Database Management

Businesses are recognizing the value of keeping their data well organized and secure, and they need individuals with the necessary skills to achieve that objective, such as business intelligence analysts, data architects and database managers. Oracle database and Microsoft SQL Server expertise are in notable demand, with professionals commanding salaries at least 10 percent more than candidates without such knowledge. Database management skills are needed to handle everything from implementation and upgrades to data analysis.

Wireless Network Management

As wireless devices, such as tablet PCs, portable e-mail and smart phones, become more prevalent in the workplace, there has been a corresponding increase in the need for professionals with wireless network management abilities. Fifty-two percent of chief information officers polled by Robert Half Technology recently cited these skills as the most sought-after skills in their IT departments.

Employees such as messaging administrators and network engineers are helping organizations keep their staff, customers and clients connected. Wireless network management skills are critical to ensure products are compatible with a firm's network and security infrastructure.

Professionals with the knowledge and abilities outlined above can not only expect to see solid salary growth, but they also may be presented with special bonuses, equity incentives and other perks when receiving job offers. Individuals staying with their current employers may notice a more active effort to retain their talents through pay raises or professional development opportunities. Strong competition for candidates with the hottest skill sets means there's a lot to look forward to in the coming year if you've kept your expertise up to date. ☺

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