

SECTOR: Information Technology (IT)

About the industry

Information technology is an enabler that is required for the effective functioning of all areas of society. It therefore has a major impact on the South African economy. In fact, the industry is a key factor for economic, social and technological progress and for the sustainability of economies all over the world.

According to a recent study conducted by the International Data Corporation (IDC), there are an estimated 14 000 companies working in the IT industry in South Africa, employing approximately 375 000 people.

Microsoft plays a significant role in the local IT industry with Microsoft related IT activities accounting for more than 153 000 jobs in 2007. This constitutes 43% of the entire South African IT workforce. Over the next four years, IT-related jobs in South Africa are expected to increase by nearly 90 000, offering substantial opportunities to graduates and school-leavers wanting to make a career in the industry.

Qualifications

A tertiary qualification greatly increases the career options available within the IT sector. At the very least most employers expect candidates to have at least a national diploma although many IT graduates have either a B.Sc. in information science, a B.Com or similar qualification. In addition, the Microsoft-certified MCP and MCSE qualifications are highly regarded while Linux qualifications are a definite advantage.

South Africa has a shortage of qualified IT graduates particularly .Net developers, Linux networking specialists and field technicians. There are numerous employment opportunities available to IT graduates including quality management and standards, education and training, software testing, database design, configuration and change management, systems development, project management, business analysis, system

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Organisations in the IT sector in Careers SA:

- Microsoft *see also p107*
- Rectron *see p143*

administration, java development, quality assurance, sales, marketing and web design, to name but a few.

Not everybody who joins the IT industry has an IT background, but they are united in their belief in the power of technology to positively impact people's lives

Personality traits

Many people are initially attracted to the IT arena by their love of technology, a love which is developed from a young age through science fiction films, books and magazines. The cutting edge of IT today is an exciting place: increasingly organisations are exploiting the commercial possibilities of artificial intelligence which has quickly led to speech recognition software and intelligent agents in web browsers.

People who do well in the IT sector are those that are passionate and committed to their own success and who understand the impact this has on the business. They need to be driven and passionate about technology and how to use it as an enabler. Individuals who do well in the sector are analytical problem-solvers, flexible and able to adapt. In addition, they pay attention to detail and are willing to learn.

According to Microsoft South Africa's Jabulani Ndhlovu, employees are attracted to Microsoft for numerous reasons including the culture of diversity and inclusion, a strong employer brand, smart people, great innovative products and a passion for helping customers reach their potential.

FACT:

A career in IT provides an exciting challenging job with a huge range of options. As IT is used by all businesses, tiers of government and educational institutions, the choice of industry to work in is as large as the economy itself.



Pros and cons

- + The advantages of working in the IT sector are that as IT qualifications are in short supply, graduates have a good chance of finding suitable employment.
 - + Remuneration packages are attractive as employers struggle to retain good staff.
 - + The industry is fast paced and exciting and graduates have opportunities to grow and advance in their careers.
 - + Furthermore, South Africa's IT sector is well regarded internationally.
- On the negative side, the industry's fast pace and rapid rate of change makes it a stressful working environment.
 - IT skills are less highly remunerated with age and it has become the norm for industry employees to change jobs on average every 18 months.

'People often ask me if we're nearing the end of the digital revolution and if the rapid advances in technology of the past decade or two are finally at a point of diminishing returns,' says Ndhlovu. 'We believe that exactly the opposite is true and that the incredible advances of the past few decades have really just laid the foundation for more profound change.'

'Technology is increasingly changing the way people live, the way we share experiences and communicate with the people we care about, the way we preserve memories of past events, the way we access entertainment, the way we learn, and how we use healthcare. Simply put,

technology is transforming the way we interact with each other and how we understand the world we live in.'

He goes on to say that as we make technology more affordable and simpler to use, we will be able to extend the social and economic opportunities that come with better access to education, information, healthcare and global marketplaces. 'As more and more of the world's people participate in the knowledge economy, the result will be new innovations that make everyone's lives richer, more connected, more productive and more fulfilling.'

Samkelo Ngcongco – Sales and operations for Microsoft® South Africa

'What's really exciting about working in the IT industry is the ability to make a difference. Seeing how technology can change the way a normal citizen lives is very fulfilling. It's all about making South Africa and the world a better place to be by making the things we do as people simpler.'

'Microsoft SA is an environment with a lot of smart people so intellectually it provides me with the challenge I look for in a career. The people are goal oriented and highly motivated, so there is a great deal of energy in the environment. The leadership is close to the people and encourages openness, and there is no feeling of hierarchy or protocol.'

FOR MORE INFO:

www.careerweb.co.za/Common/Home.asp?O=G

www.jobs.mybroadband.co.za/?gclid=CKC1slej2ZgCFQETGgod8nm9cQ

www.itbusinessedge.com/offer.aspx?o=03430032slead