A BRIGHTER FUTURE

FOR DIGITAL IT APPRENTICESHIPS

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Network Engineer at PCM Stack

Digital IT Apprenticeship standard: BCS
Network Engineer, Level 4, with Distinction

At the age of 23 I've accomplished so much more than I ever expected.

At school I was the joker, the mischievous one who got into trouble. Sadly, this meant I left with just one qualification to my name – a merit in ICT. I knew I wouldn't get far without any grades and so I enrolled myself on a Level 2 NVQ course in business and hospitality. Completing this got me a ticket to Liverpool City College where I studied for GCSEs in law, IT, sociology, psychology, physics and chemistry. Passing these showed me that I could achieve anything I set my mind on.

I first got a taste of network engineering at 15, when as a carer for my disabled uncle, I took it upon myself to get him online. I wanted him to have the best possible service at a fair price and so I researched, bought and configured everything for him in just three months. This home project sparked my passion for technology, starting me on my path towards becoming a network engineer.

After getting my GCSEs I completed a Level 3 apprenticeship, this opportunity changed my life and I progressed onto a Level 4 Network Engineer apprenticeship.

"If you work hard and persevere you can achieve whatever you want – you just need a little curiosity and the right mindset"

I'm extremely proud to be the first person in the country to complete the Network Engineer Apprenticeship level 4, and with a distinction. I truly believe that apprenticeships are one of the best options for young people, as they provide a great environment to grow – both as a professional and an individual.

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bcs
The Chartered Institute for IT

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You're able to gain experience working with other professionals, develop your understanding and knowledge of a wide range of technologies, achieve new qualifications and earn while you learn. The money isn't too great at the beginning, but you need to focus on everything you're getting out of your apprenticeship and remember that your income will improve as you develop and move up in the industry.

I also think you end up with more than a graduate leaving university – sure, they'll leave with a degree, but won't have any experience to support it. As an apprentice you gain several years real-world experience plus you get equivalent – if not better – qualifications.

"Live within your means, but also appreciate what you have got in the moment – remember the value of what you're doing"

On completion of my apprenticeship I was awarded RITTech appearing on the register of professional competence and became an Associate Member of BCS. These credentials enable others to easily see that you're a qualified professional. However, the most important thing about being a BCS member isn't the letters after your name, it's the people you meet and the experiences you gain.

BCS membership has helped develop my career and also given me confidence in my own ability. Both the staff and members are there to support you throughout your journey, and I've had the chance to attend important events and learn from professionals across the industry.

For example, at the Big Chip Awards I had the opportunity to sit and talk with BCS President Chris Rees and have met others at BCS, who took the time to give me great career tips and advice.

"Development never stops"

One thing I have learnt is that development never stops and achieving my appearance on the RITTech register is just the first part of my journey as an IT professional. I learn something new every day, and eventually I'm aiming to achieve Chartered Professional. With RITTech now under my belt, my next step is to work towards vendor qualifications such as HP Aruba through my employer.

I'm also keen to support my colleagues' professional development and am currently helping a data engineer to achieve his training and certifications to become a network engineer.

I left school with no GCSEs and today I'm a qualified network engineer. This shows you that no matter your age or background, if you're willing to work for it you can always improve your skills.

Top tips for would-be apprentices:

- Take responsibility for your own development. You can go as far as you want to as long as you put in the time and effort.
- You'll always have ups and downs and doubts in yourself but if you stay curious and work hard you can fill any gap in your knowledge.

www.bcs.org/apprenticeships

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