

## A new career in IT training?

by Tony Moss, Director of Professional Services, IITT  
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Limited hard and fast advice can be given to those considering a career in IT Training but there are a number of key issues that you should be aware of and some basic questions that you should answer for yourself before making any firm decisions. Here, Tony Moss, Professional Services Director of the Institute of IT Training, provides some background information to help you get started. - You will not be embarking on a '9 till 5' type of career but one that gives a real sense of job satisfaction!

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Technical knowledge or competence  
If looking to enter a role as a technical trainer then a technical qualification is extremely useful and many training providers will encourage or require this is to be achieved early on.

Requirements for technical certification are not so prevalent within applications training, partly because the level of technical expertise required is not so high/extensive.

Either vendor certification (e.g. Microsoft MCSE) or work/business experience or a mixture of both is a good demonstration of technical competence.

The type and level of position looked for, and employing company, will to a large extent determine what vendor qualifications are required. Any reasonable employer will have a staff development programme that will, over a period of time, give employees the opportunity and incentives to gain vendor qualifications alongside relevant technical experience to support pure qualifications.

Vendor qualifications are plentiful and normally involve some study work culminating in a formal exam administered by/for or adjudicated by the vendor. A glance through the job adverts in relevant journals (like IT Training, Computer Weekly, Computing) will give you an idea of qualifications being sought (and associated salaries!). A visit to the associated vendor's web site should then tell you of what the qualification comprises, how it is achieved and who it is aimed at.

Many vendors (Microsoft, Cisco, Lotus, Novell) operate schemes that are visually marketed by the participating company through badges and logos. These represent a variety of schemes which it is as well to understand so that you can determine its relevance when choosing a training provider to take training with.



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Within IT training there are two general categories of expertise - technical training and desktop applications training. While these are not mutually exclusive, training jobs tend to fall into one or other of these areas and your own background and interest would normally nudge you towards one of these disciplines.

If you are not sure, then it may be worth considering desktop applications as this area tends to be the easier route to get started in without precluding moving into the technical training arena at a later stage.

Technical training normally includes such subject areas as:

- Designing and building system architecture
- Administrating and maintaining overall systems
- Developing and building networks
- Designing, creating and maintaining databases

Qualifications include: Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE), Microsoft Certified Systems Developer (MCSD), Microsoft Certified Trainer (MCT), Cisco Certified Instructor (CCI), Cisco Certified Network Engineer (CCNE) Novell Network Authorised Engineer (NNAE)

Applications training normally includes such subject areas as:

- Word processing
- Spreadsheets
- Databases
- Email
- Slide Presentation creation

Qualifications include European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS)

The Institute of IT Training operates a nationally-recognised Training Provider Accreditation Programme and this is a good starting point to benchmark a training company's commitment to quality and customer service that you are considering taking training with.

The Accreditation programme is underwritten by a published Code of Practice and integral complaint process and a list of training companies that are currently accredited can be found on the Accreditation pages of the IITT website.

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#### Training Delivery skills

A mixture of educational qualification and experience also addresses the second critical skill area of being an IT trainer - effective delivery. The difference here is that the employer may not be so formally proactive in investing time or money in developing these skills, although some provision of industry recognised training/coaching may be offered.

The employer may be looking for already experienced trainers or individuals who hold training certificate(s) or are members of an appropriate Professional Body such as the Institute of IT Training. A company's policy on investing in staff training with regard to their soft skills may take a variety of forms:

- Fully funded training course(s) - internally or externally provided
- Time off for a course deemed appropriate



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- Sponsorship of qualification personally undertaken
- Nothing at all!

The importance of not just having the technical skills but also being able to communicate these effectively is now widely recognised and with it the increasing requirement for training or educational qualifications to help verify it.

This training can take a variety of forms, from a few days intensive training through to long term part time or full time course at a college or university. The Institute of IT Training awards its own certification against the Trainer Assessment Programme (TAP) and has compiled a full list of recognised qualifications to give you an idea of some of the other structured and measurable courses that are available.

The route taken will depend on your circumstances and potential employer's stance. For more details on our nationally recognised TAP certification, contact The Training Foundation.

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Investing your own money - what to look out for

Many training providers will offer technical training programmes that comprise a series of courses resulting in successful achievement of vendor certification such as MCSE or A+. The level of pre-course advice and commitment regarding terms and conditions should be closely scrutinised and questions asked such as:

- How much money am I committing to and over what period?
- What refunds are available if I do not complete some/all of the courses?
- What are the defined/recognised time scales for completing each course/exam?
- What is the provider's published success rate for certification achievement by previous delegates?
- Can you talk to previous delegates for their opinion?
- Is the certification being offered well recognised by the industry? Does it feature in job adverts?

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What you should expect from your employer?

When taking on a new job within IT training apart from the normal aspects of conditions, salary and benefits there are a number of questions worth asking:

- What you can expect by way of investment in personal development - does this include both technical and soft skills?
- What would be typical time ratio spent classroom training against other activities?
- How much travel is expected and what are the parameters for this - accommodation, personal travel time, time off in lieu etc?

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The Interview



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Once you have caught a prospective employer's attention through your application and associated well compiled CV and are invited for interview there are a number of processes that you should expect.

- Attendance at one or more interviews
- Verification of your technical competence
- Give a short training/presentation session to prove your delivery skills

The face to face interview and associated training/presentation session is where technical competence tends to take a back seat to how you come over as suitable in their eyes to fit in or be moulded into their training team. Technical expertise can be developed but if you come over as not confident in presenting yourself or unable to communicate effectively then maybe a training role is not for you.

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#### The Rewards

If you enjoy being self sufficient but with team support then IT Training is one of the more multifaceted and rewarding jobs you can do!

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#### About the Author

Tony Moss started in engineering and design and progressed into Computer Aided Design and Manufacture covering a variety of roles including training, support and consultancy functions at practitioner and management levels within large and small software companies. In his current role of Director of Professional Services with the IITT Tony manages the team tasked with delivering the Institute's Accreditation programmes and oversees individual membership strategy, processes and forward development.

#### **About Oxford IT Training Academy**

OITTA works with students to transform career potential by developing their knowledge, skills and attitude. From individual places on the most comprehensive range of Microsoft and Cisco skills courses, to bespoke learning programmes and services, OITTA is dedicated to meeting the extensive learning and development needs of individuals and organizations throughout the UK.

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