

MVE — MOST VALUABLE EMPLOYEE

DELIBERATELY INCREASING YOUR VALUE TO AN EMPLOYER KEEPS YOU IN THE GAME

BY LADD TIMPSON

For students at every stage of life, education is all about improving your current condition and securing your future. Whatever background we come from, each of us wants stability now and security in the years ahead. More than anything else you control about your life, education is what will make those desires a reality — and in 2015, technology education is just about the best kind you can have. Each concept you study is a brick in the pathway that leads to academic and technical credentials now, a reliable full-time job in the short term, and comfort and safety down the road.

Sometimes that can be hard to envision. The potential for a high-paying job seems impossibly out of reach. You may find yourself asking questions that sound a little terrifying. What do I have to offer? Am I smart enough to get this done? What chance do I really have to better my circumstances? Where do I start? Why should I even try? For any student, overcoming this uncertainty and building a successful future begins with the quest

to make yourself invaluable.

In 2013, I retired from a billion-dollar technology company where I had spent 27 successful years in a variety of leadership and executive management roles. Over that time period, the company experienced significant changes in business direction, personnel and leadership. With the amount of turnover that occurred over those nearly three decades, very few people worked there as long as I did. So, when I eventually retired and took a leadership role at TestOut, my new CEO asked me, “How were you able to last so long at a company where so many others didn’t?” My answer was simple: I continually made myself invaluable.

In spite of ongoing evolution and change within the company, I constantly sought after those areas with the greatest demand. Even if challenges calling for immediate attention fell outside of my job role, I looked for ways to inject myself into those pockets of demand in a manner that would benefit the company. As I perceived significant business needs, I worked to

put myself in a position to address those needs. Over and over again, I asserted myself in ways that continually made me invaluable to the company.

What is valued?

The question then becomes “What is considered valuable in today’s job market?” Value has a number of different definitions. One is something of great usefulness, importance, or worth. Another definition of value is something that provides a solution to a known problem. One major known problem in today’s workplace is the existing skills gap in information technology (IT).

SmartSource recently reported that by the year 2020, approximately 2.5 million IT jobs will go unfilled due to the widening gap between the number of jobs available and the number of workers with the skills to fill them. According to a report released last July by tech hiring facilita-



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tor Dice.com, even though the national unemployment rate at the time was about 7 percent, the unemployment rate for IT workers was below 3 percent. Additionally, 62 percent of IT hiring managers reported that filling open positions took even longer than in 2013, with some positions remaining open as long as six months. One of the key reasons those jobs go unfilled is the ongoing difficulty in finding trained and certified candidates.

Some students might still have misconceptions about what an IT career is really like. IT has come a long since the days when Saturday Night Live gave us Jimmy Fallon as Nick Burns, the nerdy computer guy who goes around telling “lame” office workers how to use their computers and printers. Whether it’s systems analysts, network administrators, security managers or database administrators, jobs in IT have become a mission critical aspect of nearly every modern business. As a business grows, its reliance on — and demand for — skilled IT personnel increases.

How to leverage the IT Skills Gap

To take advantage of the IT skills gap and become invaluable in today’s job market, you need more than just IT knowledge. Being able to answer multiple choice questions on a certification exam doesn’t make you job ready. To become invaluable, you need IT knowledge augmented by hands-on skills, experience and competency.

Hands-on skills are best developed, of course, by getting your hands on technology, but that can be tricky. And that’s where TestOut and its performance-based

model of training and certification can really help. TestOut training can get you the hands-on skills and experience you need to secure meaningful, high-paying employment.

The flight simulator of IT education

The key differentiator that TestOut provides is the experience-based learning and performance-based certification that helps you learn via what I like to call the “flight simulator of the IT education world.” This IT flight simulator, known as TestOut LabSim, creates real-world IT environments in an online virtual fashion that makes it cost-effective for educational institutions to provide realistic experience-based learning and hands-on testing. Using these virtual simulations, anyone with a mouse can install a motherboard, replace devices, troubleshoot a system, set up a network, configure network switches, set up system security, and a lot more.

In addition to the power of LabSim,

TestOut further enhances the IT learning environment by providing an end-to-end, ready-made training curriculum. That curriculum leverages the TestOut experience-based learning environment and prepares users to earn the performance-based certifications they need to show that they’re job ready. Since different students learn in different ways, we’ve made a variety of tools available to cater to various learners’ individual needs. We provide video instruction, instruction via demos, read-through summaries of each lesson, courseware mappings between LabSim and widely used text books, and easy-to-follow outlines that align with popular Windows, Cisco, and CompTIA certifications.

Making a difference in your future

Any person contemplating an IT career, wants training tools that will prepare them to meet the demands of the current and future job market. I strongly believe

that the best way to become invaluable is to continually pursue the knowledge, skills and experience needed to succeed in a real-world business environment.

Building a career foundation using the best IT training and certification tools available is critical to becoming an invaluable future employee. With the high growth and demand for certified and skilled people in IT, it only makes sense to join forces with the thousands of IT learners who’ve already discovered how performance-based IT training and certification can make a life-changing difference in career preparation. ■

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