

Digital skills shortages blight UK jobs market for 20 years

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A lack of technical expertise has fuelled skills shortages across the UK for the last two decades. That is according to comparative analysis of the professional jobs market by The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo (<http://www.apsco.org/>)), which is celebrating its 20th Anniversary this year.

According to a 1999 report ([https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15172/1/Employers skill survey - statistical report.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15172/1/Employers_skill_survey_-_statistical_report.pdf)) from University College London, almost half (47%) of all 'skill-shortage vacancies' that year could be attributed to a lack of technical expertise. For 'associate professional and technical' roles, the need for 'advanced IT' skills was responsible for 31% of vacancies, while a lack of 'other technical and practical skills' were responsible for a further 49% of all open roles.

A separate report (<https://www.computerweekly.com/feature/Java-skills-demand-hits-all-time-high>) published the same year by Computer Weekly revealed that C++ developers were the most in-demand professionals with Java the second most sought-after skill in the IT recruitment market.

Today, research (http://www.edge.co.uk/sites/default/files/documents/skills_shortage_bulletin_2_final_1.pdf) from The Edge Foundation suggests that around half of all employers (51%) have been forced to leave a role open because there are no suitable candidates available, and that tech job vacancies are costing the UK economy £63 billion a year. LinkedIn data (<https://blog.linkedin.com/2018/january/11/linkedin-data-reveals-the-most-promising-jobs-and-in-demand-skills-2018>) indicates that cloud and distributed computing is the most valued skill among employers, with user interface design, SEO/SEM marketing and mobile development also featuring in the top 10.

Commenting on the analysis, Ann Swain, Chief Executive of APSCo, said:

"While the specific skills that employers are seeking have changed dramatically over the past two decades, the fact that talent gaps continue to be aligned with technical competencies suggests that we need to do more to boost Britain's digital capabilities.

"Our members have long reported shortages of talent across the IT and digital fields. For this reason, it is crucial that we ensure that we retain access to the STEM professionals that businesses need in the short term – through maintaining access to global talent and retaining our flexible labour market. However, perhaps more importantly, we must pipeline the calibre and volume of skills we need for the future so that we break free from this perpetual skills shortage. As this data indicates, for the past 20 years we have been playing catch-up – and we must break the cycle if individual businesses, and the wider UK economy, are to fulfil their full potential."

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Notes to editors:

APSCo is the membership body that is dedicated to representing professional recruitment in the UK.

It was formed to give all firms involved in the recruitment of professional talent who have a commitment to excellence, the specialist support and distinctive voice they need to be successful. It gives candidates and employers a trusted badge of quality whilst providing member firms with an innovative range of services designed for them by recruitment experts. These services, combined with its growing international profile, commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility and opportunities for professional networking give APSCo members a unique opportunity to develop their businesses and gain competitive advantage (<http://www.apsco.org> (<http://www.apsco.org>)).