



## IT Consulting

*“The IT industry is so diverse that you can develop your career in a number of ways, in a variety of industries and sectors. As an IT consultant, your immediate prospects depend on the size and type of the organisation you work for. Movement between employers is common.”* Quote from [Prospects IT consultant job profile](#) Feb 2022.

Using that broad statement as a starting point our Careers Consultant **David Ainscough** suggests on what to reflect ahead of the Tech Festival and [Tech Fair](#). Becoming familiar with the labour market’s opportunities will support more effective discussions with recruiters and impactful applications.

## Level of technical knowledge

Whilst recruiters will target students from computer science, engineering and maths its very important to recognise that students from all disciplines can often apply for entry level roles. Relevant knowledge and experience can also be acquired from:

- Supplementary IT focussed courses. These could be offered full or part time from Higher Education institutions to students looking to convert from other subjects and are sourced on the [Prospects website](#). As well as building up your knowledge and confidence it also provides more time to acquire project experience from within the course so pay particular attention to this benefit when sourcing possible courses. Conversion courses can offer additional specialisations in web and internet technologies, cyber security or big data and AI.
- It’s also possible for any student currently at Cambridge to sign up to [free courses offered by the University](#). Such courses include computing core principles, programming, databases, as well as analytical tools such as MS Project, Excel and Powerpoint. It looks attractive on a CV to show you have spent time outside your degree syllabus acquiring relevant technical knowledge. Several of the University’s courses now appear on its [Linked in Learning Hub](#). You’ll find access [to other IT courses](#) there too as well as on [Coursera](#) and [Udemy](#).

- Relevant work or student society based experience is also an impactful way to add content to your CV. Most organisations use Facebook or web based technologies to connect to their “users” and working on the technical framework in some way can provide project management and technical experience. Use your networks to find out who might value some additional help to enhance and develop the functionality of their interface.
- Finally, employers themselves will recruit students from a wide range of disciplines knowing that the first stage of the graduate programme will be to train them in relevant methodologies they will need as part of their technical knowledge. This is especially true of those very large organisations which recruit significant numbers of graduates and want to ensure a standardisation in their consulting approach. Such firms include the consulting operations of the Big Four Professional Services companies (EY, Deloitte, KPMG, PwC) as well as global leaders such as Accenture, Atos, Capgemini, CSC, IBM and Tata Consulting.

## Nature of consulting skills and behaviours

By its very nature “consulting” requires the delivery of subject knowledge and expertise often within a project framework (with its all important deadlines that need to be met) and by working collaboratively with the client and your own team. As a consequence recruiters will look for evidence of a number of key strengths within your experience and application material and will test for these during the assessment process. Always check the graduate role specification from any recruiter before applying for a job but the common ones to bear in mind include:

- People skills and in particular communication skills. This attribute is often best expressed in the choice of vocabulary to be used in an application. Words such as “liaised, collaborated, supported, organised, clarified, presented” all suggest working together towards a common goal.
- Focus on around change/improving. This attribute is crucial to a good application. Try to demonstrate in your content that you “initiated, improved, enhanced, re-focussed or planned” an activity.
- Attention to detail. Clients pay a lot to consultancy firms and teams rely on all members to get everything right if they are to meet their deadlines collaboratively. So, its key to be able to demonstrate you complete all aspects of your activities (no loose ends) and that you spot and identify problems before they become serious...and then act accordingly.

To help you define, identify and express relevant skills in your applications and interviews watch the video recording of our recent Career Essentials workshop on “[You, your degree and the skills employers want to see.](#)”

## Targeting graduate opportunities

There is never a shortage of graduate opportunities on offer all year round (and as usual especially during the Michaelmas term recruiting season focussed on students entering their final year).

- [Handshake](#) is naturally a first point of call for Cambridge students looking to connect with organisations soliciting their applications. You can search for “jobs” using job function terms such as “data & analytics, consulting, web & software, and information technology” combined with employer industries such as “consulting or internet & software”.
- [TargetJobs](#) is a national graduate jobs platform which will let you search for roles within sectors such as “business & systems analysis (along with software engineering the largest number of vacancies listed), management consulting, software engineering, and web development”.
- [Prospects](#) is a national graduate job platform on which you can search sectors such as “information technology, and media & internet” complemented by additional keywords to reflect your interests and preferences.
- And for women interested in IT careers there is much additional information available describing opportunities on offer. [Women in Tech](#) is a great place to start with hundreds of career case studies to consult and from which to learn and become inspired.

## Career Progression

It is a widespread feature of the world of IT that individuals continue to learn and in doing so progress with their career. Underlying technologies never cease to evolve at a rapid pace and keeping up to date for organisations and the individuals they employ is crucial to maintaining competitiveness and value. There tends to be three ways in which graduates progress either with their current employer or by changing to another:

- **Technical experience.** For those keen to stay “hands on” with technologies and truly become experts in their field its possible to work in a specialist role in a large organisation or a specific role in a smaller organisation that provides a tightly focussed area of consultancy. It requires keeping up to date, exploring emerging technologies widely, networking with fellow “experts” and attending regular technical training courses. You will typically see job postings for SAP, Cyber Security, software implementation, risk control, and telecoms consultant where technical expertise remains paramount requirement for the role.
- **Client focussed experience.** For those who enjoy supporting clients, understanding their current needs and anticipating future ones the path to follow will be one focussed on client liaison, business development and even marketing. Retaining clients and acquiring new ones is fundamental to the business model of successful consultancies and they need individuals who can keep their “finger on the pulse” of the marketplace and inspire trust and confidence in clients.

- **Project management.** Consultancy delivers a service, often based around change, against a deadline whilst managing a range of resources to achieve an outcome or successful result. Being able to deliver that is a rare skill. Following that path its possible and even desirable to acquire specific project management training and to be someone prepared to weather the pressures of uncertainty and client pressure.

The information technology consulting marketplace remains traditionally one where anyone becoming an expert or authority in any of the above routes to career development. It can also offer the option to go “freelance” or become a “contractor”. In doing so you become self employed (with all the challenges that entails) but also get to enjoy the benefits of flexibility and enhanced remuneration.

## Further resources

And finally, some additional resources you might find useful in the light of the above:

- Use the [career self reflection toolkit](#) to refine the match to IT roles from your experiences and preferences.
- Refer to the Careers Service short sector guide to careers [in Information Technology](#)
- Use [Alumni Careers Connect](#) to contact Cambridge graduates employed in the sort of roles you aspire to and find out more about what they are really like so as to customise your applications. You can also see tangible evidence of how careers in this sector typically progress.
- Use [CareerSet](#) to customise your CV as part of an application and go further by loading the job specification for further suggestions and insights.
- For students with a disability or long term health issue consult our [guide to working with a disability](#) for advice and information.