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Reconsidering a Career in IT?

by *Allan Hoffman*

Monster Tech Jobs Expert

IT professionals who, motivated by prospects for rapid advancement and stock-option wealth, joined the field during the boom, may now wonder if they want to devote their careers to information technology.

Several trends have caused technology workers to question whether they want to stay in IT, including:

- Layoffs -- or the threat of layoffs -- together with the travails of job hunting in a tight labor market have greatly reduced opportunities and job security.
- Fewer challenging, cutting-edge projects exist due to tight IT budgets and the end of the startup boom.
- Offshore outsourcing threatens to eliminate help-desk, technical support and even programming positions

Techies entering the field in the '90s experienced the excitement of the dotcom days, but the era's hallmarks, from breakneck growth to outsized job titles, have faded into history. "Now they're getting layoffs, and they're getting more mundane, boring work," says [career coach Joel Garfinkle](#).

Dakotta J.K. Alex, 23, got into the field when he was still a teenager, earning his MCSE in 1998 and working on a help desk and then as a network administrator. He later moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington, with the intention of pursuing a degree in computer science.

"I was interested in how dynamic the IT field was," Alex says. "The options were really what enticed me. I thought getting a certification would bring me money really quickly."

Soon enough, Alex thought, he would be a senior network administrator for a major company, earning \$90,000 a year. Then he saw his prospects in the field deteriorate, which soured Alex on IT. Now he is studying accounting and international relations at the University of Washington, relieved he decided not to pursue a computer science degree.

Even techies with jobs are likely to rethink their decision to enter IT, given the state of the industry. "They are completely considering whether this is the right thing," says Garfinkle.

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Are you [thinking about a change](#)? Consider these pointers.

Change Takes Time

Don't assume you can make a decision by spending a weekend mulling the issue. "You need to commit to the process of really doing the inner exploration around what your interests, skills and strengths are," says Dena Sneider, a career counselor at the [Bay Area Career Center](#) in San Francisco. "If you're working full-time, it can take a year to go through the evaluation to decide what to do next."

Laid-off workers, in particular, should avoid making rash decisions about a career change.

Garfinkle believes this is the best time for individuals to [reevaluate](#) and pursue their dream job rather than one they fell into due to hype about [hot career prospects](#) or other external considerations. "When you're out of work, it forces you to reevaluate, almost by definition," he says.

Research Matters

Do you want to become a [nurse](#)? An [architect](#)? A [teacher](#)? All worthy choices, but do you really know what the job will be like?

"It's so important to go out and talk to people who are doing it," says Sneider, who advises career changers to conduct [informational interviews](#) as part of their research into a new career.

Guidance Helps

Whether you seek guidance from [books](#), a career counselor or a psychologist trained in career issues, advice from professionals can help you set goals in evaluating careers, rather than stew over past failures.

"It's invaluable to go through this [process] with a guide," says Sneider.

Be Committed

No matter what choice you make, you want to develop a strong commitment to it.

For some, even among those who chose IT by default, this will mean a renewed focus on the field, perhaps with a commitment to filling in holes in [education and training](#). "Some of them fell into it, and after evaluating, they decide: 'This really is right for me,'" says Sneider. "Either they recommit to what they're doing with a sense of vigor and interest, or they go off and do something else."

According to Sneider, "People are not getting jobs today unless they know it's what they want. You need to show a commitment. You can't have a lackadaisical, ho-hum attitude. You won't get work."

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