

IT Career Association Releases 2026 IT Career Outlook Report, Identifies AI Growth as Dominant Trend

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The IT Career Association has published its 2026 IT Career Outlook Report, a comprehensive analysis identifying artificial intelligence as the dominant force reshaping the information technology job market. AI-related skills now appear in 78 percent of IT job postings, according to the research.

The report, released this month and available as a free download at itcareerassociation.org, examined employment trends, salary data, skill requirements, and certification pathways across major IT disciplines. The analysis draws from Bureau of Labor Statistics projections, industry surveys, and job market data to provide IT professionals with actionable career guidance.

"The integration of AI across IT roles represents the most significant shift in skills requirements we have seen in a decade," said Antonio Guerrero, Executive Director of the IT Career Association. "Seven of the ten fastest-growing tech roles are now AI-related, which signals a fundamental transformation in how IT work is performed rather than a simple addition of new job categories."

The U.S. tech workforce is projected to expand from approximately 6.1 million jobs in 2025 to over 7 million by 2035, according to the findings. This represents growth 2.6 times faster than the overall job market. However, growth is distributed unevenly across specializations, with some traditional roles facing stagnation or decline while emerging areas experience explosive demand.

The research identifies five high-growth areas entering 2026. Cybersecurity leads with the most persistent talent shortage, with security roles projected to grow 31 percent from 2024 to 2034. Cloud computing and DevOps remain in high demand as organizations continue migrating to cloud platforms. Data analytics and data science roles show substantial expansion, with forecasts suggesting growth exceeding 400 percent by 2035.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning positions represent the fastest expansion, with generative AI creating demand for ML engineers, AI specialists, and AI product managers. The report also highlights cloud

architecture and infrastructure modernization as a critical growth area, with companies seeking professionals skilled in hybrid cloud and edge computing.

The analysis documents significant challenges alongside these opportunities. Entry-level positions have become increasingly competitive, with help desk job postings declining 36 percent since 2020 as automation and AI-driven support tools handle routine technical issues. The report found that many basic IT tasks, including password resets and simple troubleshooting, are increasingly automated or managed by AI systems.

The half-life of technical skills has shortened to approximately 2.5 years, according to the research. The report states that 54 percent of tech skills are expected to undergo substantial transformation due to generative AI adoption. This rapid pace of change places continuous learning at the center of career sustainability.

"With technical skills becoming outdated in less than three years on average, professionals must view skill development as an ongoing commitment rather than a one-time achievement," Guerrero said. The report emphasizes that 45 percent of tech hiring managers indicate employees with outdated skill sets face higher likelihood of termination.

Traditional roles are experiencing transformation rather than elimination. Systems administration and network administration positions show mixed trends, with on-premises roles plateauing while cloud-integrated positions grow. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a four percent decline for traditional network and system administrators from 2024 to 2034, reflecting the shift toward cloud and managed services.

Software development remains one of the largest IT occupations, with over 1.5 million jobs in the United States and projected growth of 25 percent through the decade. However, the research notes that AI coding assistants are reshaping expectations, with developers now expected to focus on complex architecture and creative problem-solving while AI handles routine code generation.

Salary data shows the median annual wage for computer and IT occupations reached \$105,990 in 2024, more than double the national median for all occupations. The research provides detailed compensation ranges across experience levels. Entry-level cloud engineers can earn approximately \$100,000, while senior engineers in high-demand fields commonly earn \$150,000 or more. The report notes that recent salary growth has moderated following the rapid increases of 2020 to 2022.

The certification analysis identifies CompTIA A+ as the foundational credential for career changers, AWS Certified Solutions Architect Associate as a key mid-level career accelerator, and CISSP as the advanced standard for security expertise. The report provides guidance on certification pathways for professionals at

different career stages.

The IT Career Association developed the report to address the skills gap affecting over 90 percent of organizations worldwide. The document includes career roadmaps tailored to career pivoters, new graduates, and mid-career professionals seeking advancement. The organization is based in Orlando, Florida, and focuses on supporting IT professionals through education and career development resources.

The complete 2026 IT Career Outlook Report is available for download at no cost. For more information, visit www.itcareerassociation.org.

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