

Sun employment

A big break in the workplace

By CLODAGH HARTLEY
Consumer Affairs Editor

THE SUN is teaming up with computer giant Microsoft to offer TEN top IT apprenticeships.

Together with partner companies in the UK, the world-famous firm will put lucky readers on the path to success.

Applicants must be over 16 and will be able to fast-track their way into the industry with a seven-month training course.

They are then taken on full-time by the firm and receive a standard starting salary.

There are apprenticeships up for grabs all over the country and roles which can be fulfilled after training include help desk engineers, support engineers, systems engineers and IT sales. There are regional variations but the UK average salary for a qualified PC support role is £20,634.

In Manchester, Robert Gibbons, director and founder of Think IT Solutions, is taking on a trainee for the first time.

He said: "This is a brilliant opportunity for someone to gain invaluable experience. I would say it is more valuable than having a computing degree. The candidate will be given full training and will have the grounding necessary to fulfil a satisfying career in IT."

"We look forward to welcoming the correct person for the role."

The successful applicants will gain a Level 3 NVQ for IT Practitioners. They also get Microsoft qualifications such as Microsoft Certified Technical Specialist (MCTS) and Microsoft Certified IT Professional (MCITP).

Exciting

During the first three months of training, apprentices will spend three weeks with training providers Zenos, who have centres all over the country. And a further week will be spent at the IT firm. The fourth month will be spent with the employer.

Months five and six will be broken down into three weeks with the training provider and one week in the workplace. In the seventh and final month, apprentices will be in the workplace — emerging as employees.

Zenos managing director George Anderson said: "Over that last three years, Zenos have trained and gained careers for more than 3,000 young adults and, by next year, the figure will be 5,000."

"By leveraging the expertise of Microsoft, and involving the Microsoft Partner network, hundreds, and eventually thousands, of young adults will gain high-quality IT careers, working with some of the most successful companies in the country."

"This will make a significant contribution to the problem of youth unemployment."

All apprentices will have to pass the Zenos one-day assessment looking at aptitude and attitude, rather than a formal test.

Then they will be introduced to Microsoft partners for the recruiting process.

Luke Smith, manager of ICS Solutions Limited in Basildon, Hauxthorne, said: "We look forward to taking on an apprentice. It is an exciting time to be joining the IT world."

Dave Graesser, managing director of Tek Response Ltd, Birmingham, said: "We've been around for 11 years and we've been growing and growing, even through the recession."

"Because of this, we had an additional need for resources which is why, when Microsoft told us about the opportunity of apprenticeships, we jumped at the chance."

Glad

"I'm keen to help young people into the workplace, especially into the technology sector. I remember how difficult it was for me when I was younger. I had a box full of rejection letters. I wish there had been an apprenticeship scheme like Microsoft's. I'm so glad The Sun is promoting this scheme."

Other apprentices will be taken on by Vital Technology Group in Leeds, Vigotec Limited in Derby, White Box Digital in London, EZE-IT in Lichfield, Staffs, Ramsac in Godalming, Surrey, Responsible IT in London and StepStone in Luton, Beds.

Don May, operations director at Ramsac, said: "We're a relatively small team of 30 people, but we've always been passionate believers in growing and developing talent."

"The pace of change in the technology sector is so fast that no college curriculum can keep up, which is why apprenticeships are such a good idea. Trainees get to work in a real-world situation with technology that end users use today." Simon Waugh, chief executive at the National Apprenticeship Service, said: "An apprenticeship is an



KEY WORKERS . . . Richard Corcoran, above, and Lee Parker, below, have had their lives turned by IT apprenticeships

excellent choice to get a headstart in your chosen career.

"They provide a great way for people to gain qualifications and workplace experience, while providing businesses with real benefits that contribute to the bottom line."

Applicants for The Sun and Microsoft's ten IT apprenticeships will be asked to send a basic CV, plus write, in no more than 100 words, why they think they would make a good IT apprentice.

The closing date for entries is December 11, 2009. The final decision will be made by the end of January 2010, and training begins in February. For details, see thesun.co.uk/jobs.

Father-of-two Richard Corcoran, 36, from Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, is current apprentice whose life was turned around by landing one of the coveted places. He is now nearing completion of his studies with Innowit in Birmingham.

Richard left school in 1996 with three GCSEs. He had a passion for IT and wanted that to be his career. But after having a family very young, he couldn't afford to continue with his studies.

Bright

Richard became a scaffolder and worked in that environment for almost six years. But he was made redundant when the recession hit.

After reluctantly signing on, he found out about the Microsoft scheme. He said: "It's changed my life. A year ago I was working all hours, making just enough to make ends meet, and then the recession hit. I lost my job, but the Microsoft apprenticeship scheme I'm doing with Zenos has been amazing."

"I've now got a great job, good money and I get to spend more time with my family."

Lee Parker, 21, from Leeds, left school at 16 and started work in a warehouse. But he also had bigger dreams and after hearing about the apprenticeship scheme with local firm Arena Group, he jumped at the chance.

Now Lee is a qualified IT systems technician with a company car.

He said: "If I can do it, others can too. I now have a career and the future is bright."

Business Secretary Lord Mandelson said: "The Sun's campaigns are legendary, so it's great that the paper and Microsoft are committed to employing and training young people. Apprenticeships provide employers with well-trained staff and give young people new and valuable skills."

Gordon Fraser, managing director of Microsoft UK, said: "Sunemployment is really making a difference in getting people in work."

"It's a fantastic opportunity for people to get first class qualifications and real experience in the workplace."

This is IT

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HOPE... Kevin Green

MARKET GETTING BETTER

By CLODAGH HARTLEY

THE jobs market is on the road to recovery as firms hire staff at an increasing rate, according to new research.

And there are hopes that unemployment will NOT reach the three million mark after a study of recruitment firms found the biggest increase in permanent placements for two years. At the same time the number of temporary jobs rose at the sharpest rate for 16 months.

The survey by The Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) and accountancy firm KPMG found growth in the jobs market for the third consecutive month in October.

REC chief executive Kevin Green yesterday said vacancies also grew for the first time in 17 months. He also suggested that unemployment would not hit three million - as many economists are predicting - next year after all.

Fastest

He said: "These figures show the UK jobs market is on the road to recovery. Confidence is on the rise with permanent placements increasing at their fastest rate in two years."

The survey also showed that permanent salaries fell at their slowest pace in the 13-month period of decline, with pay for temporary staff falling at its slowest rate in a year. Bernard Brown, of KPMG, added: "The UK jobs market looks healthier now than at any time in the past two years, which is encouraging."

"We may well have reached the tipping point into growth, driven by returning confidence in the private sector."

BE PART OF 2012

THE Olympics are set to bring in a bonanza for job seekers as organisers announced deals worth £700million yesterday.

There are eight categories in which firms can bid for work at the 2012 Games, and companies will be looking to recruit for jobs in eight areas, including security, catering and transport. Businesses must bid for the work through the Olympic website.

Chairman of the London 2012 organising committee Lord Sebastian Coe said: "The scope of this is potentially massive, from sporting equipment to catering services and beyond."