

4 Ways  
To Accelerate Your  
IT Career

A White Paper  
for IT Professionals

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## Introduction

The information technology industry is back—and more competitive than ever. Employers are eagerly dusting-off IT projects that have been shelved for years. Demand for IT professionals is growing across the board, in industries as varied as pharmaceuticals, banking, retail, and manufacturing.

But employers learned their lesson from the dot com crash. They're hiring only the most seasoned, most creative IT talent they can find. In today's IT resurgence, staying ahead of the competition takes education, experience, and most important, a career plan.

That means taking steps to advance your career, increase your expertise, and expand the type of jobs within your skill set. IT professionals who aren't constantly moving forward risk becoming a cheap commodity.

Information technology careers are analogous to careers in construction. System architects command the highest salaries, and get the most sophisticated jobs. Programmers are just swinging the hammers. A well-devised career plan empowers any IT professional to drop the hammer and pick up the blue pencil by increasing their expertise, earnings, and job opportunities with every new project.

## Don't Stay Current. Stay Ahead.

A good career plan starts with awareness of the technologies available today and those arriving tomorrow. Obviously, an IT pro who can't keep up with technology changes quickly becomes obsolete.

The savviest programmers, architects, and project managers keep one eye on the horizon, and the other looking for new projects or jobs that will take them there.

Mainframe applications and other legacy support systems, for example, simply aren't in demand. Widespread fear of a Y2K meltdown was the last hurrah for COBOL, RPG, and other green-screen technologies.

While there remain a fair number of ERP systems that connect with legacy dinosaurs, anyone who dreams of becoming a COBOL programmer is drastically limiting their career opportunities. The industry—indeed, the world—has moved on.

Similarly, a programmer that started their career programming in Visual Basic should plan to start taking on more .NET, Java, PHP, Perl, Python, and XML projects, or jobs that migrate VB apps to those technologies.

Keeping your ears open for the sounds of new technology is key to finding opportunities that further your career. There are several ways to ensure you're always in the groove:

## Don't Stay Current. Stay Ahead. (cont.)

- Read IT trade publications such as CRM, KM World, Computerworld and Information Week, among others. These magazines are a great source of upcoming trends, products, and technologies.
- Browse IT-related online forums on the Web such as psoftpros.com, ITtoolbox.com, ioug.org and sapfans.com. Get involved with IT and developer listservs and blogs.
- Join offline (i.e., real world) IT user groups to network and obtain up-to-the-minute information from some of the industry's best and brightest.
- Talk to your employer, managers, clients, and colleagues about new technologies they're budgeting for, and considering implementing down the road. This will give you a great feel for what you should brush up on for future jobs, or avoid.

The bottom line: staying informed will keep you ahead of the curve and in position for the most sought-after upcoming jobs.

## Train for the Future.

Training courses are a great way to gain the skills and information necessary to expand your appeal in the job market, and advance your career. Along with on-the-job experience, certification in systems such as Microsoft applications development and SAP add value to your resume. Online training, for example, offers certification in several of the latest tools and technologies, including Microsoft Visual Studio .NET, Oracle 9i DBA, and mySAP CRM 3.0. And online courses let you complete certification at your own pace, in your free time.

Then there are vendor-sponsored training courses, which are among the most respected by IT employers. While these are usually more expensive, courses offered by software makers like SAP, Oracle, Microsoft, BEA, and IBM are comprehensive, hands-on ways to master upcoming technologies and techniques.

## Get Well-Rounded Experience.

Another essential part of a career plan is a well-rounded job history.

The savviest IT professionals master as many skills and different types of jobs as possible, across varied industries.

An IT professional that works similar jobs in similar industries risks getting pigeon-holed. In ERP circles, for example, some people focus solely on government or university-type modules. The result: tunnel vision that limits their skills, expertise, and career opportunities.

Again, the best way to avoid becoming a one-trick pony is to seek out as many different IT positions as possible, in as many industries as possible. The goal is to be capable of jumping from vertical to vertical, without significant limitations.

## Get Well-Rounded Experience. (cont.)

Becoming overly-specialized in one area, while lacking in others, makes employers think twice about hiring you for a job outside your specialties. A job history with varied projects in several different industries, on the other hand, shows employers you can succeed in most any environment.

## Defy Assumptions.

No IT professional can list every accomplishment, skill, or success on their resume. When employers review resumes, much of their determinations rely on assumptions about whether you can accomplish the job.

The key to getting your resume through the process, and getting the job, is providing information that defies assumptions. For example, if two candidates apply for an IT project at an accounting firm, and both have never worked in the financial industry, it's easy for the employer to assume neither candidate is qualified.

But the candidate whose resume illustrates an ability to consistently adapt to new projects, and in new industries, has an instant advantage—even if their resume doesn't reflect financial industry experience.

By emphasizing an ability to thrive in new industries and new technologies, a candidate defies the assumption that financial experience is a necessary qualification for the job. Ultimately, employers want to see if you can hit benchmarks, stick to timelines, meet deadlines, and provide expected deliverables.

A high-impact resume describes how you have transferred your technology know-how across different projects and industries, details the size and scope of these jobs, outlines your responsibilities, and most importantly, notes how your contributions brought tasks to a successful conclusion.

As information technology continues its upswing across every industry, companies will continue to scramble to find skilled IT professionals. Some of those people will be underpaid commodities. Others will be heading for obsolescence. And a few will rise above the pack to establish exciting, well paid careers.

Make sure your career plan positions you for that last category.

## About Yoh

**Yoh** is one of the largest providers of talent and outsourcing services to customers in the United States. With over 374 million USD in total sales, Yoh operates from more than 75 locations and provides long- and short-term temporary and direct placement of technology and professional personnel, as well as managed staffing services, for the information technology, scientific, engineering, health care and telecommunications communities. For more information, visit [yoh.com](http://yoh.com). Yoh is part of Yoh Services LLC, a Day & Zimmermann Company.

## About Day & Zimmermann

**Day & Zimmermann** accelerates customer success by delivering reliable managed services. Operating from more than 150 worldwide locations with 2.2 billion USD in revenues, the Day & Zimmermann family of companies employs 24,000 professionals and is currently ranked in the top one percent of private companies in America by *Forbes*. Founded in 1901 and headquartered in Philadelphia, PA, Day & Zimmermann is a former winner of the U.S. National Family Business of the Year award. For more information, visit [dayzim.com](http://dayzim.com).



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