



STAFFING & TRAINING More opportunities and higher starting salaries in London firms

London first on list for IT graduates looking to kick-start their careers

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Graduates looking to carve out a career in IT by joining a graduate training scheme are more likely to do so in London than any other region.

Figures from online recruitment site the IT Job Board, reveal that around half of all graduate openings are based in London. This represents a greater proportion of roles than the IT market as a whole, where London accounts for a third of all IT jobs, according to research firm Salary Services.

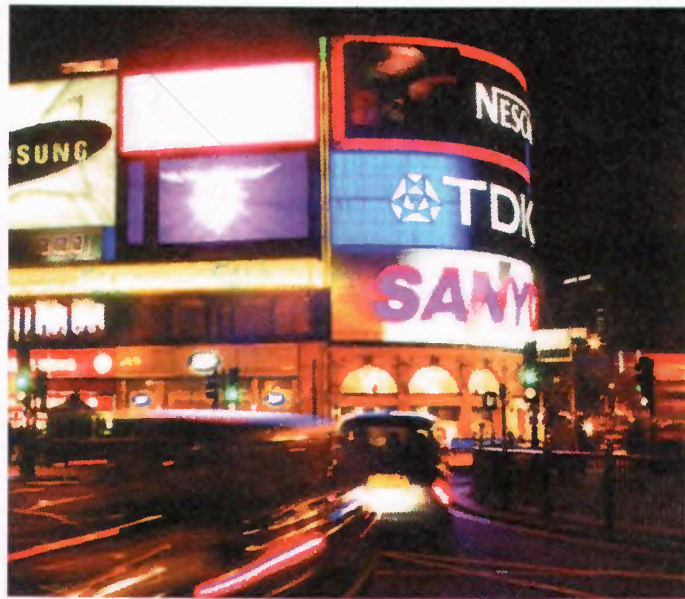
David Bevan, director at IT staffing company InterQuest Group, says, "Graduates tend to establish themselves in a career in London and then take their skills out to the regions. It is far less common for a graduate, once established in a career in IT in the regions, to move into London."

Corporate HQs in London

The London-centric nature of graduate opportunities particularly applies to industries such as banking and finance, which have always grouped together in the heart of the City, says Bevan. In general, graduate opportunities are found in large corporates which are often headquartered in London, and a significant proportion of IT roles are normally based at the head office.

"However, industries such as retail have a more regional focus, and more and more companies are leaving London and relocating to other cities where property prices are lower. Increasingly, we are seeing a wider distribution of opportunities, though this will not undermine London's dominance of the graduate market just yet," says Bevan.

Maggie Berry, director of womenintechology.co.uk, an online career networking and job portal, says, "Although people automatically associate large company headquarters with London, many organisations have realised over the past decade



London life: hours tend to be longer, the pace of work faster, and wages are higher

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Half of all graduate openings and one-third of all IT jobs are based in London
- ▶ Graduates establish themselves in London before moving to the regions
- ▶ Considerably higher starting salaries than elsewhere in the country
- ▶ A lot to offer graduates in terms of entertainment and nightlife

that there is no need to pay London salaries, or London rents, for roles that could be done just as effectively in other parts of the country."

She says womenintechology's graduate jobs page includes positions in Peterborough, Manchester, Newcastle, Reading, Leicester and Edinburgh with a large management consultancy; openings at a financial services organisation in Sussex; roles in a major investment banking group in Derby and Glasgow; and multiple opportunities with one of the biggest global names in technology in Ireland.

Even so, London still exerts a strong pull on graduates. Sam Baxendale, manager of the City branch of recruitment consultancy Computer People, says a key attraction of graduate schemes in London is that

they often pay considerably higher headline starting salaries than graduate roles elsewhere, even in other parts of the South East.

"I have recently placed a new graduate with a masters degree in a role with a salary of £30,000 plus a potential bonus of 100% of salary," he says. "In general, graduate schemes in London pay half as much again as similar schemes in outer London and the South East."

However, Baxendale warns, "When the cost of living and transport are taken into account, graduates outside London are effectively getting the same money, with a better quality of life.

"People want to work in London because of the buzz, because they think they will have better access to a broader range of opportuni-

ties through networking with more people."

Bevan agrees that there is a perception that there are more chances to build a career in London. "People tend to move between jobs more frequently in London, so openings arise on a more regular basis. The flip side is a higher level of competition for jobs, and greater pressure to perform once in them," he says.

The best place for nightlife

Graduates choosing the capital will also have to deal with the pressures and stresses of London living. "Hours tend to be longer, the pace of work faster, and wages are always competing against the rising costs of living," Bevan says.

"With more distractions and higher living costs, graduates may take longer to pay off their student loans - and finding a foothold in the property market is going to be tough. On the other hand, culturally you have much to choose from, and London is celebrated for having character and atmosphere. London also has an excellent transport infrastructure both within the capital and to other places nationally and internationally."

Berry agrees that London has a lot to offer, particularly in terms of entertainment and nightlife. However, she warns, "Once you enter the world of work, your days of clubbing until four in the morning and staying in bed until lunchtime will be relegated to the weekend."

Bevan says that, irrespective of where the job is based, graduates must be sure a prospective employer ticks two boxes. "It needs to provide good training and support, while also offering real experience in the market they are passionate about."

Berry agrees. "Graduates should start with the company and the role, rather than the location; it pays to keep your options open."

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