

In Dallas, we met people who began their careers in tech after completing Google's IT Support Professional Certificate.



Melinda Williams, a cosmetology teacher and salon owner, recently completed the Google certificate program. Now, she's exploring a career transition.

Johnathan Thai, 21, got his IT credential last year. Now, he's working as a customer care agent at a cybersecurity company.



Preparing the Next Generation of Tech Talent

Companies are looking for digitally-savvy Americans to fill hundreds of thousands of tech jobs. New educational models are emerging to teach them the necessary skills.

In a rapidly changing economy, the demand for digital talent is higher than the supply. Today hundreds of thousands of unfilled digitally intensive jobs call for more education than a high-school diploma but don't require a four-year college degree. In IT alone, there are more than 215,000 open roles. Fortunately, a new educational landscape is taking shape to close the talent gap—and it's extending beyond traditional degrees. According to Sean Gallagher, the founder and executive director of Northeastern University's Center for the Future of Higher Education and Talent Strategy, the past decade has seen the rise of microcredentials, digital badges, and certificate programs at colleges as well as noninstitutional educational providers. "The pressure and the momentum in the marketplace is for shorter, more modular, more job-market-aligned credentials that are more affordable," he says.

Employers are part of this transformation too. Take Google, which offers the Google IT Support Professional Certificate. Available online and through community colleges, the certificate is designed to prepare learners for entry-level IT jobs in less than six months. Johnathan Thai, 21, is one of the more than 85,000 Americans who have enrolled. A few years ago, he was struggling to keep his grades up at his community college in Dallas. After completing the Google certificate, he got a job as a customer-care agent at a cybersecurity company. Now he's feeling confident about his prospects in the tech industry. "I realized that I had a lot more potential than I initially thought," he says.

What We Learned

The tech talent pool is growing to meet demand. Here's how.

Tech companies are skilling people up.

It usually takes less than six months to complete Google's IT Support Professional Certificate, which is designed to prepare participants for entry-level IT jobs. The median salary for this growing field is \$53,470.

Nondegree credentials are on the rise.

In the 2016–2017 academic year, postsecondary institutions conferred 945,000 certificates below the associate's level, up from 553,000 in the 2000–2001 academic year. That's a 71 percent increase.

Hiring practices are evolving.

A majority of HR professionals either have "a formal effort to de-emphasize degrees and prioritize skills underway" or are "actively exploring and considering this direction."