



Industry Labour Market and Skills Intelligence Report – Executive Summary

Digital and technology version 1

December 2020



Purpose of the report

- > This report provides an employer led and current understanding of skills and talent needs across our digital & technology industry in Greater Manchester (GM). The intelligence has been gathered from a large variety of sources including: discussions with employers of all sizes, existing employer networks and organisations who work with employers including but not exclusive of; Manchester Digital, MIDAS, Growth Company, and Local Authorities. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this work, we hope you will continue to be involved in future talent development activity related to digital skills.
- > This intelligence is an accurate reflection of the labour market and wider skills landscape at the time it was published. It is a continuous piece of work which will iterate as the digital economy evolves and intelligence gathering, and dissemination is ongoing. The pandemic continues to shift the economy as well as digital transformation developing at a fast pace and GMCA understand the need to regularly update this intelligence accordingly.
- > For the initial version of the report it was important to clarify the digital skills landscape in GM from an employer's perspective and begin to better understand occupational pathways and progression in areas where employers report the greatest demand. There will be areas which need further exploration such as creative and good practice related specifically to in work progression.
- > **The full report can be found here: [www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what we do/work-and-skills/skills-for-growth/](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/work-and-skills/skills-for-growth/)**

1. For some areas of the digital industry it may not always be helpful or possible to try and present clear progression pathways to a specific job role

A key theme that emerged was that for some areas of the digital industry there are clear occupational routes into and to progress through the industry.

However, in other areas of the industry progression pathways and specific roles are not clear and employers struggle to articulate specific preferred routes, instead preferring candidates to be able to demonstrate a core set of technical skills, competencies and wider soft skills and mindsets regardless of formal qualifications

This has come about for several reasons. In some areas of digital such as cyber security and information security there is a lack of professionalisation of roles partly because they have and continue to emerge and change so quickly. This has led to no formal progression route and vast differences in role titles and job descriptions

Other areas of digital are responding to fast-developing technologies such as areas of big data and cloud. These challenges added to the high level of industry specific and technical understanding required by skills providers to translate what employers need make aligning curriculums and narrating the opportunities for learners in these sectors difficult. Skills providers need to be supported to work with industry.

**1. Not
always clear
progression
pathways**

For individuals of all ages and from all backgrounds whether they are looking to enter the industry for the first time in their career there is the need to translate this complex industry and support to navigate the best entry and progression routes for them. This report recommends using individual stories of those working in the sector to bring to life the different entry routes into the sector, something that has worked well in the recent Switch to Digital event aimed at individuals wanting a career into digital.

There is also a need for longer term support for those actively looking for routes in to help navigate the opportunities and present their skills and competencies in the way employers are asking for. There is a big opportunity for agencies such as Job Centre Plus and National Careers Service to upskill their advisors to help individuals navigate their way into the industry. There is also a role for mentoring, helping individuals access industry professionals and this should be better embedded into and used to enhance training and upskilling programmes.

Whilst the ambiguity around progression routes creates challenges, it should also be an opportunity to support individuals who's educational and employment background is less traditional. There is a real opportunity for employers and individuals to maximise on the flexibility created by different entry routes and create diversity and social mobility.

1. Not always clear progression pathways

2. Rather than what jobs it is sometimes better to understand the technical skills, competencies, soft skills attributes, and mindsets employers require at different levels of digital roles

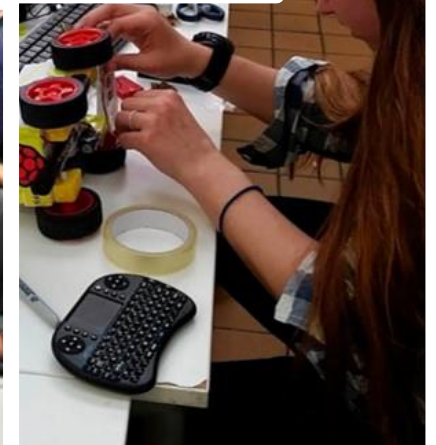
If employers in certain parts of the digital industry are advising us not to simplify job titles and progression pathways where they don't exist, there needs to be another way to help individuals to navigate and narrate the sector in GM? This report starts to unpick the different routes into digital but also the specific skills, competencies and mindsets employers need and how these may be different as individuals progress from entry level to mid and senior level roles within the sector.

This report has worked with employers in GM's digital industry to group digital roles so that we can start to define how the occupational areas are different but also the opportunities to develop a successful career across different areas focusing on continually developing the technical and soft skills required to progress.

Anecdotally employers have often attributed failure of some bootcamp and short course type training down to the inability to successfully assess for competencies of individuals leading to inability to attract the right type of talent in the first place or individuals leaving with an inflated view of their earning power and the level of roles they are trained to apply for.

The Industry Labour Market and Skills Intelligence Report will highlight good practice where assessment of competencies and mindsets has been high quality and recommend that wider upskilling and training programmes adopt similar practice.

2. Importance of softer skills and mindsets



3. Desire to increase diversity

3. There is a strong desire by employers to increase diversity within their workforces

Almost all employers we spoke to have a priority to increase diversity within their workforce and that related to diversity in every sense in terms of background, gender, race, mindsets, age, ability and route into the industry. They strongly recognise the benefits that diverse teams bring to all aspects of their business.

However, there are some parts of the industry where work culture promotes long hours and pressured conditions causing high levels of stress. In conversations with employers this point was made about areas of cyber and specifically at senior level roles where there are talent shortages causing pinch points. Manchester Digital's skills audit in 2020 reported 18% of individual respondents identifying as having anxiety or mood/emotional disorder. A recent report into Diversity and inclusion in cyber showed 9% of their respondents are considering leaving their employer or the industry due to diversity and inclusion issues.

There is the risk in GM that if these issues are not tackled the industry will miss out on talent entering and progressing within the industry.

[Manchester Digital Skills Audit, 2020](#)

[NCSC Diversity and Inclusion in Cyber Security Report,2020](#)

3. Desire to increase diversity

There are many examples in GM of good inclusive work practices in the digital industry related to recruitment, holistic training support and workplace practices, There is a real opportunity for the industry to use these examples of good practice so that they become more mainstream, as well as join them together to ensure where there is inclusive recruitment there are also work practices in place to support different groups to thrive within employment and talent is not lost because workplace culture does not support their wider needs or they feel like they don't belong on the company.

Businesses need support to recognise and embed inclusive practices in all areas of their business and understand that there are no quick wins to achieving a thriving diverse workforce overnight. Rather there needs to be recognition that culture and behaviour change happens slowly and involves everyone and may change the way their business functions.

4. COVID has been a catalyst for digital transformation across all sectors in GM; driving increased demand for digital skills

All sectors and sizes of businesses have been affected by the accelerated digital transformation caused by the pandemic. The types of skills needed are wide ranging and include:

- > High level technical skills needed within existing IT teams in businesses especially around areas such as cyber, data analysis and software development
- > Digital specific leadership and management especially around the more pastoral and wellbeing support and management of team remotely
- > Digital skills for non-technical staff in businesses including albeit at a lower technical level than within digital specific roles; data analysis, cyber, user experience and digital marketing skills

These needs were existing before the pandemic but have accelerated. There is a need within sales and marketing roles across various sectors from manufacturing to retail who are struggling with new skills required for ecommerce. SMEs specifically have reported consistently not being able to find the right provision which suits their needs.

Within sales and marketing as well as elsewhere the inability for staff to adapt to digitisation is no doubt having an effect on redundancies and there is an urgent need to support the upskilling of existing staff to stem some of this impact.

4. Digital Transformation



Recommendations and future reports

Recommendations in this report will be further worked on to create a detailed action plan which will be published in early 2021 and will set out how GMCA and other stakeholders can respond.

This will include areas of commissioned skills delivery. Recommendations are here as a guide to show stakeholders where there is the biggest need based on the intelligence, GMCA will look across work and skills activity to see where this intelligence can be embedded but it is expected wider stakeholders will also be able to take action based on the evidence provided. There are eight headline recommendations from this report.

Recommendations

- 1 There are areas of the digital industry where the region has skills shortages at scale and more provision is required to meet this talent need. These areas include highly skilled roles in: Software Development, Networking Engineering, Cloud Engineering, Data Analysis, and Cyber. Local/national funds should be aligned to meet this need
- 2 Digital skills are needed in all sectors due to digital transformation. There is a need for “digital champions” in existing IT and wider non-technical roles to support with digital skills related to data, information governance, digital marketing, and digital finance applications
- 3 With increased numbers of people in GM looking to switch to a role in digital, the industry needs to be encouraged and supported to develop more flexible routes into the industry building on the success and good practice which already exists
- 4 The wealth of inspiration activity promoting digital skills and careers needs to be joined up for maximum impact, including shared messaging, targeting, and better signposting and transition between them

Recommendations (cont.)

5

The digital industry offers lots of opportunity, but it is complex, and some areas of the industry do not have clear progression pathways. Careers advisors and work coaches need support to understand the industry. Careers advice should be focussed on giving key messages around real life stories of those who have successfully navigated their route into the sector

6

Individuals who are looking for employment in the digital industry need greater support to be ready for a role in the industry. This should be embedded within skills and training programmes with links to employers and skills delivered through work-based scenarios set by the industry. There needs to be more transition activity supporting individuals from training into employment, preferably by industry experts through mentoring activity which supports individuals with digital portfolio development, interview and CV techniques and navigating the sector

7

Skills providers should be supported in understanding how training and skills programmes can be designed to best reflect needs of digital employers. A digital specific Quality Curriculum Criteria should be developed which supports skills providers to design skills models offering candidates the best opportunity to experience industry and develop the wider skills and mindsets they require

8

Inclusivity should be embedded in all skills initiatives with programming designed to remove barriers to engagement and target specific groups who may otherwise miss out. However, to support the journey to a more diverse workforce in our digital industry GM employers should collaborate around good practice to develop a shared approach to inclusive recruitment and workplace practices

Recommendations and future reports (cont.)

This initial report does not seek to be a comprehensive assessment of cover all skills aspects and needs of the digital industry in GM. There is still much to do, and this will be a continuous process to assess gaps in progression pathways. Future areas of intelligence gathering will include:

- > Skills need in GM's creative sector.
- > Skills needed for progression within the digital industry in GM.
- > Further work with employers around the 10 occupational clusters to explore technical, soft skills and mindsets required at entry level roles and progressive levels within each area.
- > Skills needed for digital transformation in the public sector.
- > Skills for FinTech as part of GM's wider professional and financial services industry

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