Data centres: powering our digital universe

Data centres power the modern economy and underpin every aspect of digital living; business processes, government services and social interactions. Data centres are where science fiction meets reality: they enable space travel, artificial intelligence and machine-to-machine communications. Data centres are behind YouTube, Spotify, Netflix, Facebook, Uber, eBay, Airbnb. Data Centres are where Formula 1 is won – and lost! Data centres drive investment in communications infrastructure and enable smart grid. Data centres stimulate technological development and R&D and provide the processing power for bioinformatics and medical research. Data centres help us model and understand our planet and its atmosphere, from weather forecasting to long term climate change. The UK data centre sector is globally important, market leading and underpins our future - and it needs people like you.

All these activities and applications may look familiar but don't think for a moment that they happen by themselves. Without data centres, hundreds of thousands of things like these would simply not exist. And without the right people to operate them, data centres could not function. So if you want to help seek a cure for cancer, win Formula1 or understand the universe, why not consider a career in data centres and help to shape our digital future?

Why work in a data centre?

Working in a data centre means that, unlike a lot of people, you will have the opportunity of continuous employment from the moment you leave further education - or before if you are an apprentice. You will be really well paid, you will learn an incredible range of stuff that will open doors for you in almost any sector. You don't have to stay in data centres but if you do, you get to work with the kind of equipment that other people only dream of. Recruitment professionals describe the data centre sector as "a huge opportunity with a focus on brains over strength, where management, strategic and commercial skills are highly prized and the pay and prospects are huge".

What's not to like?

Here are just a few of the benefits of working in UK data centres:

- **Job security:** Unlike some industries, the UK data centre sector is growing and has demonstrated consistent growth even during recession. There is negative unemployment within the sector – which means we can't find enough people for all our jobs. And, since data centres underpin our digital future, it is a good bet that the industry is here to stay.

- **Career progression:** The data centre environment presents a seamless continuum in terms of career progression, offering the full suite of roles ranging from technician to consulting engineer and beyond. Working in a data centre provides one of the best routes to Chartered status because there are so many options.

- **Remuneration:** Engineers are consistently reported to be the third best paid professionals after doctors and lawyers, so salaries are generally high. More specifically, data centre engineers are in high demand and command very competitive salaries.

- **Variety of experience:** Data centres bring together an incredible array of activities from IT to generator maintenance and everything in between. Technicians and engineers working in the sector will be exposed to every aspect of engineering usually within the context of a mission critical environment. Few industries can provide the breadth of experience that a single data centre can offer.

- **Exceptional choice:** Data centres bring together enough technical and professional disciplines to present a multitude of career opportunities from technical and operational to management and business. Don't forget that many senior non technical roles in business are filled by people who trained as engineers: a trained engineer can become a marketing professional but a degree in marketing will never make anybody an engineer.

- **Career mobility:** Data centres provide engineers and technical staff with an unequalled range of transferable skills that equip them for a broad range of both technical and management roles. So if you want to stay in data centres you can, but if you don't there are multiple routes into all sorts of other industries.

- **Leading edge:** Data centre staff have the privilege of working at the forefront of technological development and handling plant at a scale that most engineers elsewhere can only dream of.

- **Geographical mobility:** The data centre industry is global: engineers and technicians can work anywhere – the sector in the UK employs may foreign nationals in technical roles and UK nationals work in technical and advisory roles all over the world.

- **New opportunities:** the data centre sector is changing constantly – both in terms of business models and technologies so there will always be new challenges and new opportunities.

- **Being the best:** The UK data centre sector is world leading and drives R&D in areas like environmental controls, refrigeration, fluid dynamics and energy efficiency – it provides an opportunity to be part of the cutting edge.

For further information please contact: emma.fryer@techuk.org or csellers@theiet.org