

## HAS THE RECESSION CREATED AN IT SKILLS GAP?

### Overview

The government and private sector are in broad agreement that growth in the IT industry will help lift the UK out of recession. Seen as a strategic advantage – not a cost – to the vast majority of businesses, IT aids survival during tough times and enables firms to thrive in boom years.

However in a recent survey conducted by CWJobs, key findings indicate that IT professionals are facing a new set of challenges thrown up by the economic downturn.

More competition for jobs and higher calibre candidates, coupled with a lack of transparency in the recruitment process, has created a ‘skills gap’ – one that’s forcing candidates to retrain, just to keep up with higher expectations and evolving trends.

Nearly 70% of employers say they struggle to find the right mix of skills in new recruits; and almost 60% of IT professionals feel that employers could be clearer about the skill sets they’re seeking.

CWJobs has conducted this research study to further explore the skills gap issue, and the effects of the economic climate, from both candidate and recruiter perspectives.

### Key findings

#### Raising the bar

An increase in available candidates applying for IT jobs has created more competition in the industry; and in turn, a shift in the calibre of IT skill sets now expected by employers.

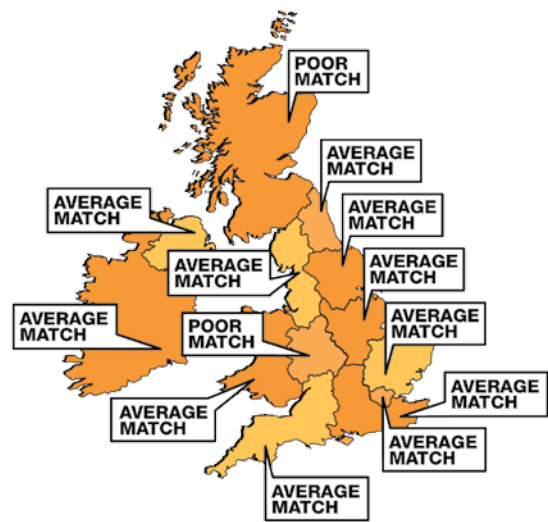
The majority of IT professionals surveyed, whether in work (57.7%), unemployed/in-between jobs (37.8%) or having recently graduated (13.3%), feel their IT skills are an ‘average match’ to meet this current demand (50.3%).

Just 22.6% of respondents said their skills sets were a ‘good match’, and the remaining 27.2% felt their skills sets were a ‘poor match’.

When asked the same question, 81.6% of recruiters surveyed viewed candidates’

IT skills as an ‘average match’ to the current demand. Just 2.6% said skills sets were a ‘good match’, and 15.8% a ‘poor match.’

### How well do you feel your IT skills meet this current demand?

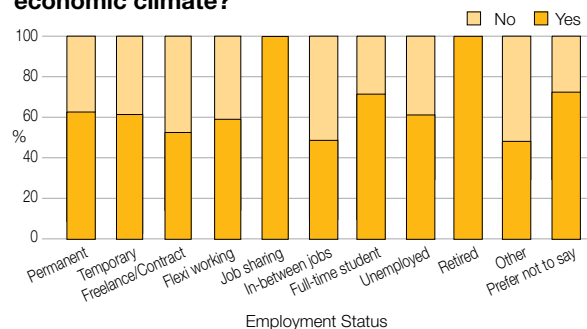


### Retraining to keep pace

The survey analysed whether IT professionals felt they were being forced to retrain to meet the demands of the current economic climate: just over half (59%) agreed.

Asked the same question, 54.1% of recruiters also agreed – with over 73.7% adding that they expect IT

### Do you feel that the IT industry is being forced to retrain to meet the demands of the current economic climate?



**“Nearly 70% of employers say they struggle to find the right mix of skills in new recruits”**

professionals to retrain and up skill to have a competitive enough skill set.

However, when researching both current and future IT skills sets, both IT professionals and recruiters show a difference of opinion as to what technology disciplines are most in demand.

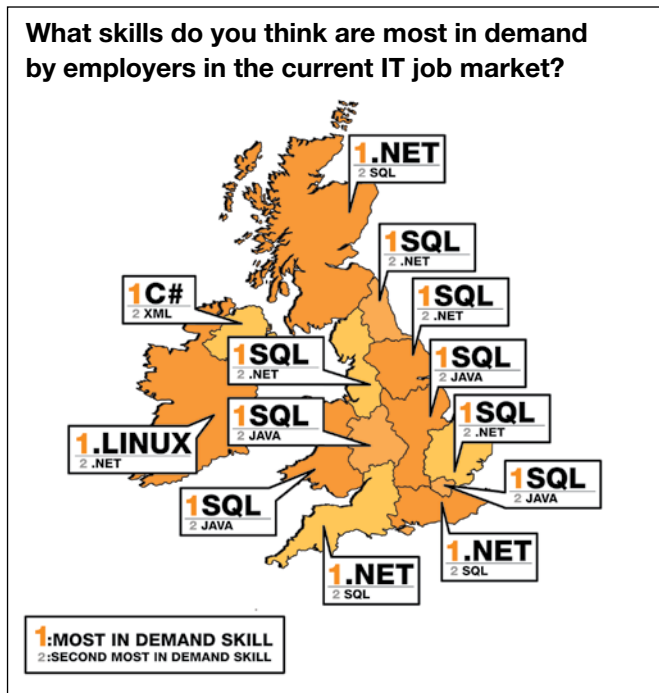
The top three IT skills for employers in the current IT job market, according to IT professionals surveyed, are SQL (47.1%), Java (44.5%) and .NET (43.2%).

## Future skill sets

Going forward, the top five skills that IT professionals would choose to retrain and specialise in are SQL, .NET, Java, Oracle and Linux.

When asked what specialist skills will become more highly sought after by employers over the next 12 to 24 months, recruiters chose SQL, .NET, C#, Java, PHP and ASP.NET as their future front runners.

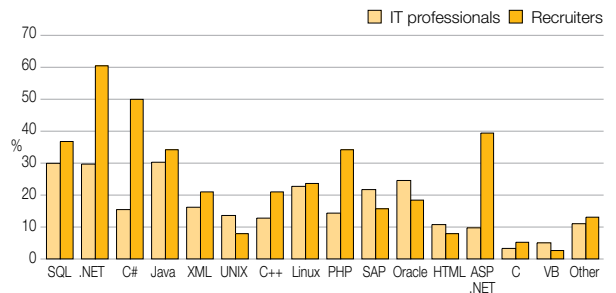
IT professionals chose SQL, Java, .NET, SAP and Oracle.



Conversely, recruiters chose C# (60.5%), .NET (55.3%) and ASP.NET (50%). An overwhelming 74% of IT professionals answered 'no' to naming C# as an integral IT skill in the current market, and 84.5% answered 'no' to ASP.NET.

Other skills cited by recruiters as being most in demand by employers in today's IT job market include IT fundamentals, soft skills that impact the bottom line, embedded systems, Microsoft Infrastructure, Siebel, Business Objects and SQL Server.

## What specialist skills do you think will become more highly sought after by employers in 12-24 months?



Recruiters also cited 'soft skills' such as business acumen and understanding user requirements as most likely to become highly sought after by employers in the future; alongside Ajax, Python and Business Objects.

CWJobs' key findings indicate a mismatch between what IT professionals and employers believe to be the most desirable IT skill sets – both now and in the future. With both groups showing a markedly different viewpoint, and contrasting ideas, it's clear that a large skills gap disparity exists in this context.

## Transparency in IT recruitment

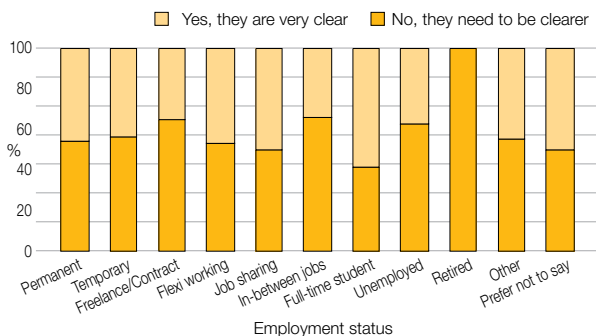
Looking to potential causes of the skills gap issue, IT professionals were asked whether they feel there is enough guidance available specific to their skill set. 58.8% said there wasn't enough information, and there is room for improvement.

**“Almost 60% of IT professionals feel that employers could be clearer about the skill sets they're seeking”**

A further 59.6% of IT professionals surveyed also felt that employers are not clear enough about the skills they expect when recruiting for IT roles. When asked what skills are most in demand by employers right now, responses included: “I don’t know. They never tell” and “Unclear what they want.”

Mirroring these findings, 68.4% of recruiters say they struggle to find the right mix of skills when trying to select the right IT candidate. A further 65.8% also felt candidates aren’t clear enough about the skills they possess when applying for IT roles.

### Do you feel that employers are clear enough about the skills they expect when recruiting for IT roles?



### Clearer communication

CWJobs’ research study highlights a miscommunication between both groups, resulting in a significant gap between the IT skills people possess and those required for new IT roles.

The importance of better defining job specifications and requirements is therefore more crucial than ever: Employers could give clearer information about the skills

sets they want for their business. Equally, candidates could both showcase and develop their IT skills more effectively to meet both current and future demand.

Essentially, the skills gap could be closed with more transparent, clear and open communication between those who hire IT professionals and those applying for new IT roles.

### Survey information

Sample size: 1,560 IT professionals and 38 recruiters who use CWJobs.co.uk

Date conducted: 27.04.09 –17.06.09

The age span of IT professionals who took part in CWJobs’ IT Skills Research comprises an even spread: 17.3% belong to the 25-29 year old age group, with the remainder ranging from 16-20 up to 65-69 years old. There is a majority male presence (86.9%) and a broad spread of UK regions and geographical locations (South East England 16.9% through to Europe (EU Country) 10.8% and Rest of the World 7.5%).

Recruiters who took part also contain a spread of geographical regions – from Central and Greater London (26.3%) to the South East (18.4%), North West and North East (10.5% respectively), as well as Scotland (13.2%). In addition, 2.6% of recruiters surveyed were from Europe (EU Country). Recruiter company sizes range from 1-50 employees (68.4%) up to 500+ (2.6%), with the majority specialising in IT (65.8%) alongside Electronics/Communications, Software House/ Consultancy and Finance (7.9% respectively).

### About CWJobs

**CWJobs.co.uk** is the leading specialist IT recruitment website, enabling permanent and contract IT jobseekers to search and apply for jobs across all skill sets and industry sectors throughout the UK and Ireland. Each month, the site draws over 320,000 unique IT users, attracted by the opportunity to search thousands of jobs from hundreds of leading employers.

**www.myskillscloud.co.uk** is an online tool developed by CWJobs to enable jobseekers to compare technical skills and see how well they fit the IT job market. Once a unique skills cloud is created, jobseekers have a clearly defined skills set to print and email. Double clicking on any word takes users straight through to current vacancies that match their skills cloud.