



## TACKLING TECH TRAINING

Is investing in training the key to  
successful tech hiring?

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# FOREWORD

Throughout the first months of 2021, the revival of the UK labour market has been under scrutiny, as businesses focus on recovery following Covid-19.

Digital tools and capabilities have played a significant role in driving economic confidence by maintaining business continuity for each and every sector, whilst tech companies are proving particularly resilient and robust throughout the pandemic. In fact, at the end of last year, our Turning to Tech report<sup>i</sup> revealed the demand for top talent continues to grow considerably, with Covid-19 accelerating this even further - proving how robust<sup>ii</sup> the sector is.

It is promising that tech investment is increasing; at a time when many industries are facing substantial challenges, opportunities across the sector continue to be created and there is stronger appetite for technology careers than ever. Now, as a result of this increased demand, it is essential to consider the role tech training plays to ensure that both the tech sector, and the industries that are dependent on digital tools, are set up for continued success. If candidates and workers feel fully trained, supported and competent in utilising the necessary technologies properly, this success will become a reality.

Surveying 1,005 UK tech workers and 504 IT decision makers (IT DMs), our latest research **Tackling Tech Training** reveals UK businesses increased their investment in tech tools by an average of **£1.08 million** in 2020, as digital capabilities enabled them to maintain business continuity throughout the pandemic.

However, with only a quarter of IT decision makers (**27%**) satisfied with their employees' abilities to use these new technologies properly, there is a clear disconnect between the amount of industry investment in technology and the extent of effective training initiatives for both tech and non-tech employees. This is an important topic that CWJobs believes the industry needs to address going forward.

We will unveil the current trends that surround various types of tech training in the UK, as well as examine the biggest ambitions and frustrations of IT DMs and tech workers when it comes to nurturing and further developing those critical skill sets. We will also reveal first-hand experiences from leading tech recruitment consultancy, **Client Server**<sup>iii</sup> and actionable advice from leading tech training provider **QA**<sup>iv</sup>, on how they implement effective tech training programmes for employees across all levels and disciplines.

With this in mind, we hope to provide crucial insights to help inform your clients and demonstrate the importance of technology training, its appeal to potential candidates and why recruitment programmes going forward should be augmented with effective training for hired, upskilled or reskilled talent.



**Dominic Harvey,**  
**Director at CWJobs**



## KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ **Increased tech hiring:** Nearly two-thirds (**64%**) of companies said they increased their budgets for tech hiring in 2020, with the average spend increasing by **£210k**
- ✓ **Training investment soars:** Over two-thirds (**67%**) of IT decision makers also revealed their company's spend on tech training initiatives increased in 2020, with the average spend increasing by **£189k**
- ✓ **There's progress to be made:** In 2020, only an average of **9%** of companies trained all relevant staff in the technologies they invested in
- ✓ **The employee benefit:** Almost two thirds (**65%**) of tech workers view technology training as an important employee incentive
- ✓ **Training saves the tech department time:** Just under 3 in 5 (**59%**) are placing greater investment in training and resources to prevent or decrease the need for troubleshooting
- ✓ **Looking ahead:** Over 3 in 5 (**62%**) said technology training is high on their company's agenda for 2021 and they will be reviewing their technology training strategy this year (**63%**)

<sup>i</sup><https://www.cwjobs.co.uk/recruiters/turning-to-tech>

<sup>ii</sup><https://home.kpmg/uk/en/home/insights/2021/01/kpmg-uk-tech-monitor-q4-2020.html>

<sup>iii</sup><https://www.client-server.com/>

<sup>iv</sup><https://www.qa.com/>





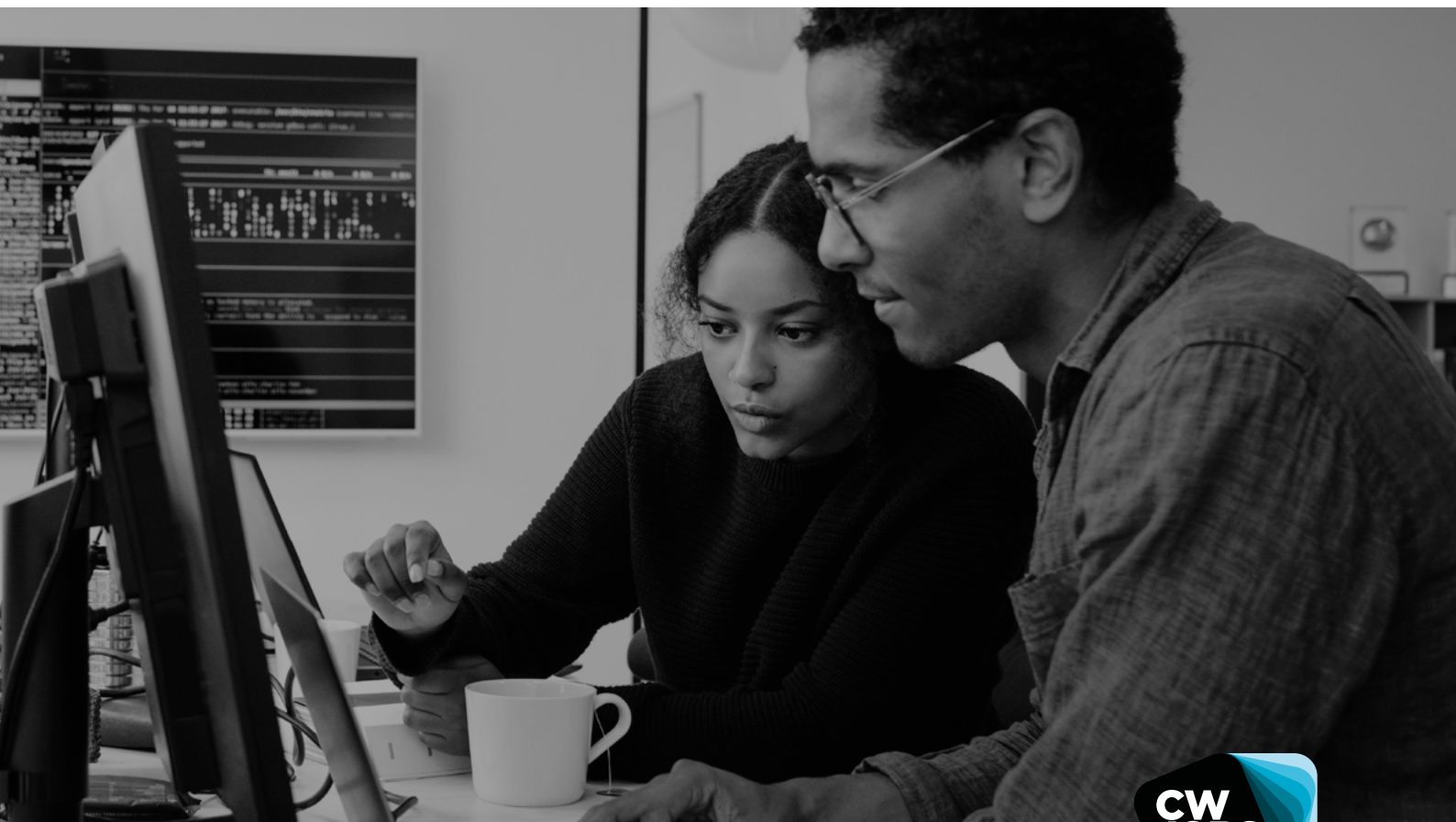
# TRAINING TRENDS

Undoubtedly, businesses in the UK are prioritising digital transformation as the pandemic rapidly altered our means of experiencing the world almost exclusively to digital channels. As a result, companies have been forced to invest in new technologies, such as remote working tools and increased cyber security and cloud solutions in order to continue operating.

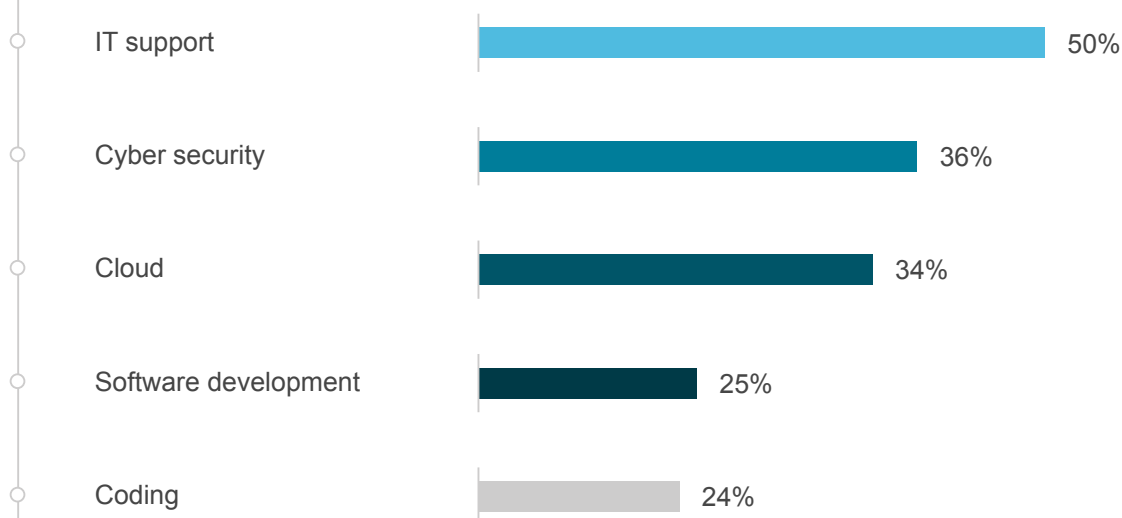
On average, over eight in 10 (**83%**) companies increased tech spend to facilitate the roll-out of hardware devices such as laptops, mobiles and monitor screens to set employees up to perform their jobs effectively from home. This was followed by investment in communication tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Slack (**81%**) and increased company spend on collaboration tools including Dropbox or Adobe Document Cloud (**72%**), to meet the soaring demand and requirements for remote working during the pandemic. This was also the case for cloud storage and servers (**71%**) and cyber security tools (**73%**), as well as VPN capabilities to enable accessing confidential documents remotely (**75%**).

Partly in response to operating these new platforms and services, tech hires increased for **64%** of businesses, with the average budget increasing by **£210k**. And that's not all; spend on technology training also increased in 2020, with over two-thirds (**67%**) of IT decision makers revealing a surge in training budgets, with the average spend increasing by **£189k**.

However, our research revealed that these boosted budgets are failing to deliver. Tech training isn't happening for everyone, as only **13%** of companies have trained all necessary staff in remote communication tools, **9%** in cyber security and **8%** in cloud, highlighting the possibility of a considerable knowledge gap amongst employees.



The top five tech skills that have become most important for companies to have since the start of the pandemic are:



This knowledge gap has been acknowledged by both IT DMs and tech workers already. Only a quarter of IT decision makers (27%) are satisfied with their workers' abilities to use the various technologies they've invested in last year, and just over a quarter (26%) of tech workers are not satisfied with their own ability. These low levels of satisfaction highlight the value that enhanced tech training programmes can bring going forward, both for tech workers and the wider workforce.

What is positive is that businesses recognise the need for this already. Well over half (67%) of UK companies state their technology training budget increased in 2020 – with this only set to continue in 2021 – while over three in five (62%) stated it is high on their company's agenda and they will be reviewing their technology training strategy (63%). The next step, then, lies in ensuring these programmes deliver on the skills they are designed to cultivate.

## TRAINING RESPONSIBILITY

Understanding the current trends when it comes to tech training is particularly important when addressing whose responsibility it falls to, to ensure effective and engaging initiatives are put into practice properly. Just over three in five (62%) tech workers believe it is their employer's responsibility to organise training, showing a strong drive from the UK tech workforce to hold their employer accountable for actioning change.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

When it comes to delivering technology training, the top challenges that businesses face are showing trainees how to use this technology whilst working remotely (33%), keeping employees engaged (31%) and ensuring trainees read all follow-up materials and carry out follow-up actions (31%). These factors highlight the importance of motivating employees, thinking creatively about how to structure sessions and enabling employees to take time out to ensure training is completed properly.

An additional challenge companies face lies in communicating the value that training brings. Tech training is only mandatory for all staff in 15% of businesses, which seems surprisingly minimal in today's modern world given nearly every employee, no matter what sector they work in, uses tech in some form. In addition, a quarter (25%) said they struggled to persuade senior management to allow employees to take time out for training and to motivate staff to join the sessions (25%) – both vital factors that must be overcome to ensure tech training programmes can deliver.

Luckily, over the last year, a fifth (22%) of companies said they have tried to be more creative and engaging with training for tech workers, by introducing virtual training sessions (21%) and making training more in-depth for tech workers (20%) – but there is more work to be done.









# UPGRADING TECH TRAINING

For recruitment consultants who are looking to help clients solve and fill the wider tech talent gap, it is essential to communicate to them the importance of training staff in digital competencies.

Given just under two thirds (**65%**) of tech workers view technology training as an important employee incentive, recruitment consultants should advise clients to promote training opportunities in various jobs ads. In turn, this will ensure candidates further consider tech training packages when applying for roles and help them value training as a perk going forward. Advising clients to communicate these opportunities during the recruitment process will ultimately help attract and retain top-level talent into these roles.



## TOP TIPS

For those looking to help their clients build expert technology teams, Dominic Harvey's top five tips for tech recruitment consultants are:

### REGULARLY RETHINK THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- 1 Ensure it omits bias, encourages diversity, and successfully identifies the core characteristics their business needs.

### INCORPORATE TRAINING OFFERING INTO JOB ADS

- 2 It should be a key element as it often helps attract a more diverse range of talent, including entry-level candidates and career changers.

### SELL THE IMPORTANCE OF TECH TRAINING TO CLIENTS

- 3 Not only does it equip their business with a competitive edge, it's a perk that employees and candidates value, resulting in future-proofed teams all round.

### DON'T OVERLOOK THE IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS

- 4 Team work, communication and problem solving are important for companies to have and are all key attributes for a successful career in tech.

### CONTINUOUSLY REFLECT ON TECH TRAINING

- 5 Their training programmes should be adapted to meet the pace of their evolving tech stack.





UK businesses cite the following factors for hiring more tech talent this year:

- ✓ **The Brexit effect:** 57% said Brexit will widen the tech skills gap in the UK, so they are looking to train and upskill existing tech talent
- ✓ **Pandemic impact:** Covid-19 has placed greater pressure on businesses to hire tech talent (58%)

Where will businesses find that tech talent?

- ✓ 22% sourced through upskilling existing tech talent
- ✓ 21% developed by reskilling talent from other faculties
- ✓ 70% hired in from experienced talent pools
- ✓ 20% created from early careers programmes

The need for tailored, impactful training is especially important when noting where businesses are looking to source their talent from this year. Rather than only relying on experienced hires to meet these demands, there is a strong focus on upskilling existing employees and reskilling staff from other industries in 2021 – partly in response to the impact of Brexit on the flow of talent from the EU and due to the pressures posed by Covid-19. Businesses are looking to ensure an even split of tech talent from early careers as well as upskilling, reskilling and experienced hires across almost all digital competencies.

Hiring from outside the experienced pool and developing all-new digital skill sets will be key to solving the skills shortage, but these skill sets will only be successfully developed through nuanced and considered programmes that cater to where this talent is coming from.







# INDUSTRY CASE STUDIES

## IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Whilst training plays a key part in most onboarding strategies, businesses must take a long-term view and factor it into their ongoing recruitment processes and job ads. Almost all tech workers (**94%**) stated they value training throughout their careers and over two thirds (**67%**) agreed training needs to be regularly refreshed for all levels of workers. This is especially the case as respondents were in agreement that various technologies and training can become out of date quickly in today's modern world (**66%**).

Mentoring came out as the top training initiative companies should offer when upskilling current tech employees (**30%**). When broken down, interestingly only **23%** of those aged 16-24 stated mentoring should be offered as training to upskill tech employees, in comparison to **44%** of over 55s who said the same. As it was listed as one of the most popular methods companies should offer, clients who currently provide mentoring programmes as part of their training initiative should promote it, no matter the level of seniority or age-group they are hiring for.

On the flipside, younger tech workers (aged 16-24) were in favour of more creative training programmes such as digital bootcamps (**26%**) and gamified learning (**25%**), which were of less interest to over 55s, at **13%** and **8%** respectively. These distinct preferences in training styles further support the need for recruitment consultants to advise businesses to listen to future candidates and ensure programmes are able to be tailored to their individual needs. This is further highlighted by the second most popular training initiative amongst those surveyed – flexible learning that's led by employees.

This provides a key opportunity for recruitment companies to offer further consultancy to businesses they are working with to augment recruitment strategies with tech training, to ensure they are attracting and retaining top talent.



Whether it's sourcing software engineers / developers, Cybersecurity or DevOps experts, **Client Server<sup>®</sup>** is the UK's leading technology recruitment consultancy. They play a key role in helping UK businesses to adapt to the ever-changing tech landscape.

As the skills gap looms, businesses are looking to create loyal, reliable and future-proofed teams. But these can't be developed through just hiring alone; Client Server believes that hiring and training work hand in hand when building first-class technology teams, with the benefits this brings to their clients difficult to overstate.

<sup>Y</sup><https://www.client-server.com/>





2020 really highlighted the opportunities for training within the tech sector. As a result, we're seeing demand surging for almost all technology skills, with data, cloud and security some of businesses' biggest priorities. But, demand for tech talent outstrips supply, meaning businesses need to rethink their approach to training for two key reasons.

Firstly, tech workers have the upper hand when job hunting, therefore businesses need to offer them a compelling employment package, and training is almost always a perk that candidates ask for. Whether it's training days, bootcamps or education budgets, candidates want to know their employer is invested in their futures and that their skill sets will continually develop, which often results in higher employee retention.

Secondly, the skills gap is looming, meaning tech talent is increasingly being sourced outside of the experienced pool, whether that be from graduates or candidates reskilling from other areas. Training is therefore an essential factor in ensuring they're set up to hold a tech role with success – these candidates want to know they'll be supported before they take their first steps into the sector.

When hiring, we advise including training programmes within wider employment packages. However, we remind clients to tailor these programmes to different roles; experienced tech workers often wish for greater ownership and prefer to be given a training budget to spend as they please, whereas entry-level talent require more intensive and structured programmes. Businesses need to think about what training works best for the particular skills they want – DevOps professionals may benefit from group-based interactive training, whereas security experts may require individual assignments.

To help clients build long-term teams, it's important for recruitment consultancies to remember that each business responds to training differently. We've found that smaller businesses can revamp their programmes in a more agile manner, but don't always have the budgets to offer extensive training that Blue Chips can. On the other hand, larger businesses tend to already have established training programmes in place, which can take a long time to change. Just remember, as recruitment consultants, you're there to help them do more than hire – you're there to help their business grow.



**Nick Boulton**  
Director at Client Server



## CLIENT SERVER'S TOP TIPS

For recruitment consultants looking to advise their clients on tech training programmes, Nick Boulton's three top tips would be:

- 1 Highlight to clients that training is an employee benefit. Employees want to work at a company that is invested in their future**
- 2 Training programmes should be flexible and tailored to different cohorts and specialisms. By tailoring training, it will continually be seen as a perk rather than a chore**
- 3 Always adapt your advice to your clients' businesses – if you know they'll never get the budget for intensive bootcamps, they can still deliver effective and engaging training in-house**





## CASE STUDY: QA



As the UK's leading tech skills and training organisation, QA works with over 5,000 corporate and public sector clients to help build technology expertise. It specialises in the people side of tech transformation, helping businesses to upskill or reskill existing employees as well as identifying, recruiting and training new tech talent. Its programmes include training courses, intensive digital bootcamps and apprenticeships, spanning disciplines such as cyber security, cloud and software development.

With the Digital Skills Gap looming – which is set to cost the UK more than £140 billion<sup>vi</sup> between 2018 and 2028 – QA's role in helping organisations to build tech talent brings immeasurable benefits to both British businesses and the economy as a whole.



Tech talent has become a vital component for business growth – if organisations don't have the skills required to take advantage of advancing technologies, they will lose competitive advantage.

The challenge is that there simply isn't enough tech talent to go around. Instead of continuing to rely on traditional recruitment programmes, organisations must find new ways of building the skills needed. Whether it's through reskilling the existing workforce, or introducing apprenticeship programmes into the talent strategy, HR teams must work with the wider business to find more creative ways of delivering the skills required to implement the digital transformations organisations need to emerge stronger from the pandemic.

QA works with a wide variety of UK organisations from central Government departments to global enterprises and SMEs to narrow the skills gap through training and skills programmes. For example, we recently helped Baillie Gifford<sup>vii</sup> level up their tech expertise. The company faced a shortfall in cloud and DevOps capabilities. They were challenged with differing levels of experience and needed to upskill their tech teams inside the office environment. QA's Cloud Academy team implemented a bespoke 'Learn-Do-Validate' model where employees learnt through courses, applied this knowledge via unique hands-on-labs, and validated their knowledge through examinations. The programme resulted in a 540% increase in the team's overall skill profile.



Digital bootcamps provide another option for organisations faced with the need to upskill teams with legacy skills. The length of QA's bootcamps varies from as little as 5 weeks, to up to 12 weeks. Existing employees are reskilled in multiple tech specialisms and organisations retain loyal employees familiar with the company and culture while also building much-needed digital skills.

Most recently, we have launched a 5-week bootcamp that allows companies to reskill individuals or teams in software, cloud and DevOps. In a short space of time, employees are ready to get back to the workplace and hit the ground running, adding immediate value with their new-found tech skills.

In addition to these training programmes, there is also an opportunity for organisations to build tech talent through new approaches to recruitment. At QA, we partner with a diverse range of networks to encourage applicants from a more diverse pool, and we remove restrictive requirements such as a STEM degree from job specs. Rather than identifying candidates via the conventional CV process, we use predictive tools that remove unconscious bias from adverts, AI and aptitude tests. This approach is designed to identify aptitude and attitude. All of these elements add up, allowing us to recruit a more-gender balanced and ethnically diverse population onto our tech programmes.

The digital skills gap has the potential to limit the ambitions of every organisation. But a talent strategy that encompasses upskilling, reskilling and hiring for potential, will put organisations in a far stronger position to close the skills gap.



**James Frost**  
CMO at QA

<sup>vi</sup><https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/company-news-release-g20-report-uk>

<sup>vii</sup><https://www.bailliegifford.com/>





# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As businesses in the UK begin to rebound following the pandemic, it is more important than ever that they reap the benefits of the significant investment they've placed in digital tools. To make that a reality, we firmly believe that all workers should be equipped with digital competencies and future-proofed skills, meaning tech training should be considered, compelling and creative – and it should be required for all.

On a macro level, it is reassuring to see the investment and importance the Government is placing on providing thousands of adults across the country the opportunity to retrain, boost skills and get people back into work by transforming training, through the Lifetime Skills Guarantee<sup>viii</sup>. But HR teams can play a critical role here too.

Going forward, it is important senior management teams and HR departments work closely together to reshape their training initiatives. This requires much more than financial investment – as our report reveals, training budgets are yet to translate to employees' skill sets – and requires investment of time and resource to ensure that training programmes are truly tailored to the needs of employees and the business. This approach should ensure tech training is made mandatory, employees feel supported and tech talent encouraged, in order to make a real difference and contribute towards filling the obvious skills gap.

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pioneering-reforms-to-boost-skills-and-jobs>





# ABOUT US

For the last 21 years, CWJobs has been the home for tech jobs. We match employers from all industries with the most relevant tech talent through our innovative product technology and unique candidate audience.

Our CV database of just under **1.3 million skilled candidates** combined with our expert understanding of tech recruitment means that our clients can find the right talent, quickly and efficiently.

For more information about **CWJobs**, get in touch on 0333 0145 111.

## THE RESEARCH

This report is based on research conducted by Censuswide on behalf of CWJobs of 1,005 tech workers and 504 IT decision makers between 19th January 2021 and 26th January 2021. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

To find out more about our research, please visit: [www.cwjobs.co.uk/recruiters/tackling-tech-training](http://www.cwjobs.co.uk/recruiters/tackling-tech-training)





For more information on CWJobs,  
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