Computer Analyst

At A Glance…

- **Figure out their company's computer needs**
- **Hire, train, and oversee workers**
- **Have at least a bachelor's degree and years of work experience**
- **Many have a master's degree**
- **Earn approximately $50,000 – 60,000 per year (starting)**

Overview

Computer and information systems managers figure out their company's computer and information needs. Then they determine the workers and equipment that will meet those needs. Managers talk to computer dealers about finding the right equipment for their needs. Once they have determined what the system will be, managers plan activities, such as installing and upgrading hardware and software. They develop computer networks. They set up Internet and intranet sites. They also work with other departments on projects that require technical support.

Computer and information systems managers oversee workers within their department. They evaluate projects, assign workers to them, and direct the progress. They also estimate the costs and budget for projects. Computer and information systems managers evaluate the performance of workers.

Featuring...

Mike Silva

Information Technology Specialist 4
(Computer Analyst)
Clark College

Education - Getting Started at Clark

Study Computer Technology; earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree at Clark College. Then transfer to a four year university to complete your Bachelor's of Science Degree.

For most management positions you will need a bachelor's degree. Common majors are computer science, information science, and management information systems (MIS). However, majors in math or other specialties, coupled with computer courses, are also acceptable.

Employers look for computer and information systems managers who have experience with certain types of software or technology used on the job. They also prefer employees with a bachelor's degree or at least an associate degree. Employers look for managers with strong technical skills and experience in the computer field. Finally, they prefer computer and information systems managers with strong business and interpersonal skills.

In many cases, a master's degree is preferred. A master's degree in business administration (MBA) or management information systems (MIS) is good preparation.

Related Occupations

- Computer Programmers
- Computer Support Specialists
- Computer Systems Administrators
- Computer Systems Analysts
- Database Administrators
- Operations Research Analysts

Sound interesting? Visit your Career Center for more information!

Clark College - Career Services
Gaiser Hall 108 (360) 992-2902

Outlook

Nationally, the number of jobs for computer and information systems managers is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2018.

As computer technology improves, so does the outlook for computer and information systems managers. The number of jobs in the computer system design industry will grow extremely fast. Many companies need computer systems but don't know how to set them up. Some of these companies will hire consulting companies to design the system for them.

With the growth of computer systems, there has also been growth in crimes committed using computers. Additional managers will be needed to make sure that computer systems are secure from those who try to break into them.

Employers may take a criminal record into account in the hiring process. For most jobs, employers look at criminal records on a case-by-case basis.

Specific Work Activities

Computer Analysts –

- Evaluate the organization's technology needs; recommend changes when needed
- Communicate with vendors and technicians to provide the company with the right kind of computer systems
- Provide users with technical support for computer problems
- Review project plans to plan and coordinate project activity
- Manage computer backup, security, and user help systems
- Direct daily operations of the department and work on projects with other departments
- Make staffing decisions and train new workers
- Prepare, monitor, and adjust operational budgets and costs
- Prepare and review project progress reports
- Evaluate project proposals and decide whether or not the department can complete those projects
- Read and take training to keeps skills up-to-date

Skills and Abilities

Computer Analyst -

- Analyze ideas; use logic to determine strengths and weaknesses
- Determine how a system should work. Identify ways to measure and improve performance
- Identify problems and review information. Develop, review, and apply solutions.
- Update and use job-related knowledge
- Develop and build teams
- Analyze data or information
- Have a high level of social interaction; they work with technicians, programmers, and other office workers
- Think of new ideas or original and creative ways to solve problems
- Use math skills to solve problems
- Use several methods to learn or teach new things
- Test equipment, software, or procedures to make sure they operate correctly
- Write computer programs
- Imagine how something will look if it is moved around or its parts are rearranged
- Quickly and accurately compare letters, numbers, objects, pictures, or patterns that may be hidden in distracting material

Mike Silva's Bio

Education:

My education in the field really started in high school with classes in science and electronics. I won a scholarship to the University of South Dakota Springfield but later transferred to Western Dakota Technical Institute where I received an associate's degree in Computer Electronics. In 1989 I started taking classes at Clark College when my employer offered to pay all of the tuition. I became fascinated with personal computers and eventually finished a second degree in Computer Networking. After graduating at Clark College, I started working towards a Bachelor's degree in MIS from Washington State here in Vancouver. I decided to take a break from school after the birth of my daughter but I am now looking at finishing my degree at WSUV. In addition to college level classes, I have had countless training classes, seminars and hands on training over the past twenty years. In the information technology field, education is a constant.

Career Path:

In 1988 I moved to Portland with no job but plenty of opportunity. Within a few weeks I took a job with a Kyocera Northwest; a Japanese electronics company located right here in Clark County. Kyocera Northwest became AVX Vancouver and I spent thirteen years with the company. My first position at KNW was in the Engineering Department qualifying components to be sold to all the major electronics manufacturers. I eventually got pulled back into computers and became the department "go-to" guy with computer questions. I was offered a job in the IT department, as the Network Administrator and I spent five years in that position until the plant closed in 2001. The day after I left AVX Vancouver, I started with Clark College as an IT Specialist and have been here ever since. I have been at Clark now for ten years. I currently hold the title of "Computer Labs Manager" with the state classification of an Information Technology Specialist IV.

What do you do in your current position?

My primary job is split into two separate functions, each with many, many individual responsibilities. First and foremost, I help support the Computer Operations Supervisor who is responsible for keeping track of all the open labs on all campuses. That includes staffing, computer access, documentation, supply ordering, print issues, software installation, troubleshooting, and all other technical issues. I sit on the tech fee committee and help advise the group on technical issues pertaining to the open labs which are funded via the tech fee. I am the go to person for all issues related to print management and printing in the open labs.

In addition to managing the open labs, I have a large area of the campus that relies on my for technical desktop computer support. My support function also includes many IT projects I am involved in. Every new building and every new software system requires time to develop and implement.

What do you love about your job?

I really enjoy the diverse personalities of the people who work for me; particularly the younger folks. I am a story teller and sharing my life experiences with each new group is very rewarding. I also enjoy the technical challenges of working in information technology. It's nearly impossible to get bored working in an IT department; especially in higher education. Change is constant and you no sooner get a software package implemented or a new building on line, and something else is coming at you. Always different and always new ... what more could you ask for in a job?

Challenges:

Like with all work at Clark, balancing time is tricky. I can't allow myself to get too far into a tech problem or the labs will suffer and if I spend too much time in the labs, my clients will suffer. Time management is the key and it's a skill I am still trying to master after almost twenty five years in technology.

Work/Life Balance:

I moved to the Pacific Northwest for the lifestyle. I am an outdoor person and I stay very active. Maintaining a balance in life includes personal time as well as family time. Information technology people are often stereotypically cast as nerds or introverted, workaholic, social misfits. I think this couldn't be further from the truth. Modern day technology support has an emphasis on customer service and modern technology allows for more and more worker freedom. That being said, it's easy to get pulled into an IT job and work sixty or more hours a week. Winter time is perfect for exploring downtown Portland, snowboarding or a round of golf. Summertime has even more to offer: hiking, camping, mountain biking or training for the Hood to Coast relay, Clark College is a perfect fit for me. I work hard Monday through Friday and then it's time to play and that gives me the balance I need to perform at my best.

If someone is considering this career – what should they know?

Information technology is fast paced and constantly changing. A person entering this field needs to be prepared to be constantly relearning practically every aspect of his or her job. Be prepared to work in groups as collaboration is the key to project success. Modern IT positions are more and more about people and giving them access to information and less and less about maintaining complex systems and guarding information. Education and training will be a key factor to staying ahead of the technology curve and that means keeping up with all forms of new technology. Read the blogs, study the tech sites, pay attention to your clients, books, classes, user groups, volunteer; the more exposure you have to technology, the more valuable you will become.