

How to Get a Job in Cyber Security: 6 Secrets from Our Experts

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Cyber security jobs are seeing triple-digit growth annually, according to [Baseline magazine](#), making them the fastest-growing segment in IT jobs. On top of the industry growth, [CNN Money](#) reports the median pay in the industry is \$110,000, increasing cyber security's appeal to college students, especially in a job market that is still difficult for many new graduates.

Despite the increased interest, the cyber security industry is expected to have a shortage of about 1.5 million cyber security professionals by 2020. Colleges around the U.S. are launching cyber security tracks, which is especially challenging when preparing students for the industry is a lot like building a plane in the sky, as cyber security continues to evolve at lightning speed. By the time a new college student graduates with a four-year degree, the cyber security landscape has completely changed all over again.

Today, we turn to two of our cyber security experts at Alliance Data to ask them for their advice for students with an interest in cyber security.

Mike Britton is the Chief Information Security Officer for Alliance Data's corporate headquarters and joined the company 10 years ago. Mike has 19 years' experience in Information Security, Audit and Compliance roles for companies that include IBM, MCI and VF Corporation. He has a B.A. in political science from Mary Washington College and an MBA from University of Dallas

Tom VanWinkle is the Chief Information Security Officer for [Alliance Data's card services business](#), and joined the company 9 years ago. Tom has 17 years' experience in IT, Information Security, Audit and Compliance roles for companies that include Nationwide Insurance, KPMG, and Mettler-Toledo. He has a B.S. in Management Information Systems from Miami University and an MBA from Capital University.

Here are our experts' top 6 tips for students interested in entering the cyber security industry:

1. **Read the news.** Stay in the loop about what's going on in the cyber security industry, and evolving technology and emerging threats, as well as global business news.
2. Figure out how to **gain hands-on experience learning scripting languages and programming.** There are so many great free online training resources available today that can be taken advantage of at no cost and can really bolster your skillset and resume.
3. Look into **information security groups and associations**, both free and those with low-fee dues that provide additional topical information and training. These include ISSA, InfraGuard, ISACA, and local "B-Sides" chapters, among others.
4. Look at job postings and figure out what **skills employers are looking for** and focus on differentiating yourself by securing those skills in internships, course work or online training.
5. Aside from the technical skill development, students should also **focus on the why** – what risk might an organization/business face and what impact might it have, if realized. Having the business context is as equally important as the technical skills.
6. **Get certified** once you have the required work experience. Most jobs require security-related certifications, many of which include practical components. The [ISC2 Certified Information Systems Security Professional](#) (CISSP) is the one most employers look for in candidates, but others from [CompTIA](#), [GIAC](#), [EC-Council](#) and [ISACA](#) as well as vendor-specific certifications are also good ones to earn.

In an industry that is growing and evolving so quickly, students who have the skills and business know-how will have the advantage over those who aren't as prepared. There has never been a more exciting —and challenging— time to enter the cyber security industry, but as more colleges launch cyber security programs and begin increasing the number of graduates, the field will become more competitive for job seekers. Just like in any other industry, those who take control of their career and development will be the ones with the greatest amount of success. What tips would you give to the next generation of cyber security professionals?
