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6 people explain how they broke into tech from industries like nursing and teaching - and landed salaries over \$100,000

Xing, Jessica; Malone, Katie. **Business Insider, US edition; New York** [New York]. 19 May 2022.

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Abstract

None available.

Full Text

- The tech industry is a popular choice for workers seeking stable, high-paying jobs.
- But making the switch to a new career may not be as easy as some workers make it seem.
- Six tech workers in jobs like engineering and product management told Insider how they did it.

Stories about the life-changing experience of switching into tech seem to be everywhere, but it can be hard to decipher what's real and what's exaggerated.

Tech salaries averaged above six figures in 2021, but it may not be as easy to break into the field as some workers make it seem. The hype around tech work on platforms like TikTok, for example, has been criticized as overly romanticizing the transition, Insider reported earlier this year.

Plus, there's no one way to make the jump. Workers switching into tech come from all backgrounds and take various paths. For example, a former intensive-care-unit nurse became a software engineer after teaching himself through online resources and applying his nursing credits to a new degree. And a former teacher landed a job at Zoom by illustrating how their teaching skills would benefit the firm.

"In just five years I managed to turn my whole life around," Cinneah El-Amin, a product manager who said breaking into tech helped her stop living paycheck to paycheck, told Insider. "If I learned anything, while tech can be a difficult industry, it's important to not let your own insecurities or upbringing hold you back."

Read stories from tech workers in engineering, product management, software development, and more about how they made the switch into the field:

A burned-out teacher pivoted to a job at Zoom by showing how their teaching skills could help the firm

Teachers bore the brunt of the shift to remote learning during the pandemic, making already long workweeks even more strenuous. Some teachers have left the field for good and found other industries where they can apply their skills.

Gianni LaTange, who left teaching to work at Zoom as a developer advocate, said they landed the job by showcasing how their teaching skills would be valuable to the firm. The move also allowed LaTange to increase their pay to \$175,000.

Switching to tech helped this product manager stop living paycheck to paycheck

Higher salaries can be life-changing for some people entering tech.

Cinneah El-Amin earned \$44,000 a year in her first job out of college, and it left her living paycheck to paycheck as she managed her debt. She said the jump to a technical role — she's now a project manager — helped her quadruple her salary, pay off debts, and reevaluate her life goals.

An ICU nurse became an engineer in just two years

John McBride spent four years as a nurse in the intensive-care unit, until witnessing nearly daily tragedies became too much. He started using free online resources and later went back to college, attending a program that let him put the credits from his nursing degree toward a bachelor's in computer science.

McBride landed his first software-engineering gig at VMware after two years, and he's been there ever since.

High-paying tech roles are possible without a college degree

A foray into tech isn't an immediate six-figure gain for everyone. Maria Gabriela Ochoa Perez Waechter, now a ServiceNow developer, said she got into the field without a college degree by starting at a golf-course software firm. It paid \$33,000 a year.

But by finding her niche in software development — and job hopping along the way — she's increased her salary to \$150,000.

A tech newcomer started her own business to help others enter the field

There's even a market for tech newcomers who want to help other newbies break into the industry. Mary Awodele, a self-taught tech worker, said she found so much success in tech that she aimed to help others do the same.

She says her online education firm has helped more than 120 people land jobs in areas like software development and data management.

A job in tech helped this founder build a career after rehab

A combination of a laptop gifted by a friend and certifications helped Lauri Burns, a nonprofit founder, start her career in tech after finishing rehab.

Today her work is focused on helping people experiencing homelessness. But years of tech experience not only helped her build a stable career path but gave her the skills to branch out as a founder, she said.

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