



Our commitment to digital skills in the UK



We believe in digital opportunity for everyone. For individuals, communities and organisations across the UK.

As far back as the industrial revolution, the UK has been at the forefront of world-changing advances. The universal Turing machine, the television, the telephone, carbon fibre and the internet, to name but a few.

It's who we are. As true today as it has been for the past 250 years. From fintech to pharmaceuticals, from materials science to Hollywood special effects, we harness science and technology not only to create opportunities and prosperity for the nation, but in inventions that benefit everyone.

Our ability to continue on this path will be determined by our commitment as a nation, and as employers, to ensure that the UK has the skills required to support a thriving digital economy. Which is why we are pledging to make digital skills training accessible to everyone in the UK, for free.

The digital skills gap is costing our economy an estimated [£63 billion a year in potential GDP](#). This isn't an issue of age, discipline or postcode. It's about the skills we have as individuals. The skills that we need to help UK businesses prosper, and what we do as a nation to ensure that they are supported. The education system alone cannot be expected to keep up with the increasing skills gap.

If we, as technology leaders and future employers, partner with government and education to address the opportunity now, we will ensure that the UK cements its place as a digital leader.

That is why we run, support and fund a number of initiatives to help train people in the UK. Our global Cisco Networking Academy, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, has helped nearly seven million people around the world – and 240,000 people in the UK alone – improve their skillsets. Over 85% of people who complete our professional courses have a job or education opportunity as a direct result and we are extremely proud of that.

By 2020, we are committing to help improve the digital skills of a quarter of a million more people in the UK. However, the ambition of our programmes goes further. We are extending our reach to all levels of education, and into the heart of the community. We've launched an initiative, in partnership with The Open University, to provide free training and resource to support teachers in the delivery of computing courses to the over eight and a half million school age students in the UK.

In such a vital profession, only 35% of ICT teachers have relevant qualifications, or even basic computer literacy but are expected to teach subjects such as coding and networking. We, as an industry, have the expertise and the capability to address what may otherwise become an economically catastrophic problem.

Secondly, we are launching a programme to provide access to digital skills training in libraries across the nation. Available first in Manchester, the birthplace of the public library in the UK. In all 22 libraries in Manchester, including the iconic Central Library, residents will have free access to courses that range from the basics of getting online, to providing an introduction to the internet of things (IoT) and cybersecurity. Following the launch in Manchester, other cities are set to introduce the programme in early 2018.

There are three things core to our commitment and how we believe we can have a positive impact on digital skills in the UK:



1. Providing access to the right skills, when they are needed

Teaching computer literacy at an early age is vital to preparing young people for future employment, but it doesn't end there. We believe in providing access to digital skills training when it is needed. Whether by working with education to help you learn the basics of cybersecurity at school, providing the platforms for you to develop your coding capability as a professional, or the ability to retrain to become a network engineer later in life.



2. With opportunity for everyone

With 90% of jobs anticipated to be digital by 2020, it is not enough to only train for the technology industry. With over 300 Networking Academies in the UK, we work with organisations of all types to create digital opportunity in formal education through schools, colleges and universities, but also in non-traditional environments like prisons, homeless shelters, schools for the blind, and through training partnerships with JobCentre+.



3. Using our networks to help as many people as we can

No one organisation can do it alone. We are a channel business, and we believe in the power of partnerships. The task at hand requires industry and academia to work together. It also requires us to think differently about how we help the widest range of people and with the biggest impact. Which is why we actively engage in programmes such as the Digital Skills Partnership and have partnered with organisations like The Open University and STEM Learning to take our programmes further.