

The top skills young people need to get ahead in the tech industry in 2023

Software developers are in greater demand than ever before because of how rapidly the world is evolving. The rise of remote working, e-commerce, artificial intelligence and cloud computing means that software developers are, and will continue to be, at the coalface of the fourth industrial revolution.



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How then should a young person considering a career in software development, or even someone already navigating their career, position themselves to be at the forefront of the industry in 2023 and beyond?

These are the top skills young people need to get ahead in the tech industry in 2023:

Adaptability

Software developers must be comfortable with change. Someone who started their career in technology 20 or 30 years ago is almost certainly doing things vastly different from how they were taught. That's the nature of technology. Failing to adapt will make you redundant.

This requires open-mindedness and resilience, a keyword we will see echoed across the top skills in 2023.

Continuous learning

Because things are always changing, the modern software developer must be continuously learning. The ability to research, analyse and implement is crucial. A young person should ensure that their places of learning emphasise research and problem-solving. Programs and platforms being developed today are leaps and bounds ahead of legacy systems less than 10 years old. Evolution in technology is lightning fast.

It's not just technology that changes; clients also change. redAcademy sprinters - which is what we call the young people being fast-tracked into software development careers - see first-hand how real-world developers have to pivot and shift between technology stacks and frameworks.

2023 will demand that all software developers are comfortable with ongoing research and continuous learning as this will give them the tools to build the resilience they need to adapt and adjust to inevitable change.

Invest in soft skills

"Soft skills" doesn't mean less important than hard skills, such as coding. Rather, they are absolutely essential for software developers to thrive and advance in their careers. It starts with communication and interpersonal skills such as active listening, assertiveness, patience and accountability. These traits are needed to build strong team relationships which, in turn, foster higher productivity, creativity and collaboration.

The ability to receive and act on constructive feedback is vital. The whole point of learning is to become better at something, and an inability to invite feedback, both good and bad, from peers and managers will hold a software developer back. This fosters maturity that is then added to the resilience toolkit which, in turn, has a direct impact on confidence and grit.

Workplace readiness

Once young people have developed important soft skills, they must understand what workplace readiness means. It is crucial for aspiring developers to spend time in real-world development teams. However, this experience should not be limited to observation. Young developers who cut their teeth inside real teams, working on real projects for real customers, will have a step-up over their peers. This is because they will be more attractive to potential employers as they don't need to be taught workplace basics from the beginning and can hit the ground running.



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What are these basics? Individual accountability and how that plays out in a team dynamic where other people depend on an individual. Deadlines and time-management are crucial. Being a self-starter is non-negotiable. Whether someone is being supervised or not, they need to demonstrate the discipline to get things done. Aspiring developers must know how their actions affect a long chain of events that land on a CFO's desk. Learning from mid-level and senior developers in real environments, reacting and responding to change, is vital in the development of young talent.

Develop a strong understanding of the tech industry and coding languages

The tech industry is rapidly evolving and dynamic. Knowing what it's about is crucial. Perhaps this is where graduates from traditional tertiary institutions have the most difficulty when adjusting to the world of work. Academia is vastly different from the pace and reality of live project teams. Young people develop this knowledge by training in live environments.

A young person wishing to be successful in a software development career in 2023 and beyond must love computers and technology. Following from this, they must be willing to read and write lots of code. Becoming master of one coding language at the expense of others is leaving the young person vulnerable to the inevitability of change. redAcademy sprinters quickly learn which languages are currently being used in which contexts - there's no lag between what's being taught and what's hot at the moment because they're immersed in real redPanda Software client projects.

Some coding languages are more important than others, while some are certainly more favoured by some customers. Developers must learn as many languages as they can. As a starting point, it is important for young developers in 2023 to understand JavaScript, Java, Python and C# as a coding foundation. It is critical for young developers to incorporate these languages with the latest technologies and industry frameworks, examples include Docker, React.js, Node.js, GitHub, Microsoft Azure, among others.

If a young person is not an immediate expert in a particular language, it's their comfort with research and self-teaching that will pull them through and make them valuable members of a development team. In the real world, if you need to move from Python to C#, you won't have much time. On the other hand, someone proficient in C# may find the shift to Java more comfortable. Always be willing to stay abreast of the important and current coding languages and learn how to research and apply those learnings to real-world problems.

Looking ahead to 2023

It is important for young developers to set strategic career goals and then hold themselves accountable. A strategic mindset keeps the bigger picture in focus when changes in direction, coding languages and working environments require tactical shifts. The resilience to make these tactical shifts comes from practicing the skills outlined above.

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