

IT career structures in the age of Digital

Snapshot Research Report

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Snapshot Report*

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A. Introduction

This document presents the results of a brief online survey of how IT career structures have changed, if at all, in the Digital age.

Here 'Digital' means the whole set of newer technologies and methods that have spread in the last few years. These include all kinds of cloud usage by business, advanced analytics including big data, machine learning, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Internet of Things (IoT).

The online survey used to collect data also allowed participants to see how the responses (so far) had built up. Those visible results unavoidably included some that were unverified or incomplete. This report excludes all unverified responses and is restricted to large IT functions. It therefore presents a reliable and useful picture of the current state of affairs in corporate IT functions in 2017.

The participating companies were from eight countries. Note that some submissions covered separate parts of the same IT function, the companies involved being:

- Deutsche Telecom
- ESB (Dublin)
- Experian
- Fidelity Investments
- HSBC
- IAG (Aer Lingus, British Airways, Iberia, Vueling, etc.)
- Mars
- Novartis
- Orange
- Prudential
- RBS
- Roche
- Royal Dutch Shell
- Sainsbury's
- Santander
- TUI
- Vodafone

'There is unfinished business in this area for some, if not most, participating companies.'

The picture that emerges is that there is unfinished business in this area for some, if not most, participating companies. Many know that changes are needed although the implications, on roles and careers, of new technologies and methods may not be clear for some time. But this report should help participating companies to understand general trends and to identify options that otherwise might not have occurred to them.

B. Today's IT career structures

'For practical reasons this survey restricted itself to the number of families or specialisms, because that is the aspect that is most significant, and easiest to compare.'

We asked participants about current practice, in terms of their present-day IT career structures. Such structures can be characterized by setting out the **number** of families or specialisms, the **levels and granularity** within each, and the **scope and depth of coverage** of the definitions of each generic role or stage in the structure.

However, for practical reasons this survey restricted itself to the number of families or specialisms, because that is the aspect that is most significant, and is easiest to compare.

The responses were as shown:

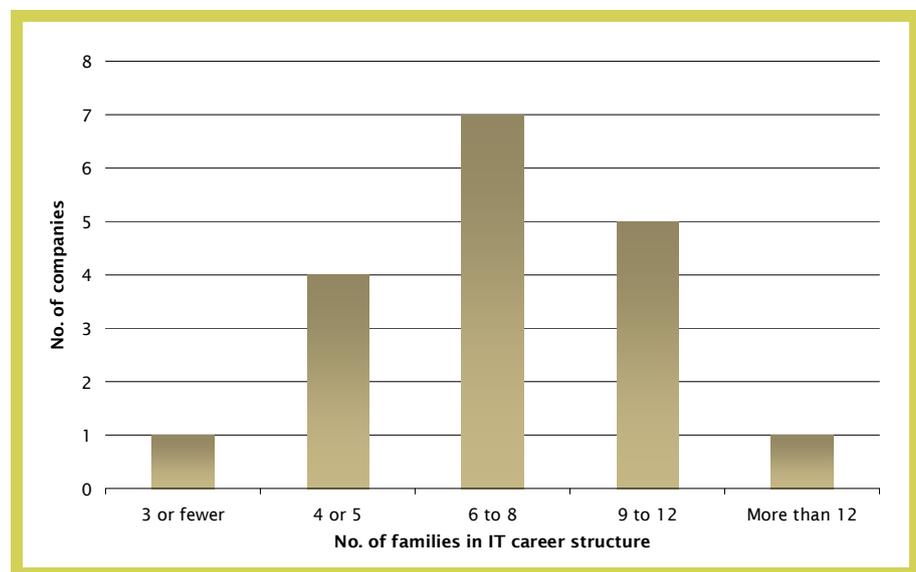


Figure 1:
Number of families in IT career structures

The above mix of practices is broadly typical of user companies generally, so it gives a useful base upon which to examine trends.

In the following paragraphs participants' comments, for each of the above categories of career structures, are cited.

3 or fewer families

The single comment here reflects experience elsewhere:

'Job families here are incredibly broad and generic, in quite an unhelpful way.'

4 or 5 families

'One IT job line includes dev & ops, another one includes architects, another one includes dev in innovation; another one including dev working in B2B activities. It's too much: we're trying to do better.'

'Five job families aligned to core IT capabilities.'

'In addition to IT, we have a digital stream in Sales and Marketing.'

'Top layer is Business Leader with 4 layers beneath split as either technical or business to ensure that technical roles are as recognised and rewarded as business/managerial roles.'

6 to 8 families

'Our Digital strategy is still evolving alongside other critical business reorganisation. This may have an impact on the number of families we have going forward but it's reflective of where we are now.'

'These job families were created 5 years ago.'

'Our seven IT families are Development, Consultancy, Project Management, Architecture & Innovation, Service Management & Support, and Governance. Many include seven levels – two of which are management levels.'

9 to 12 families

'We have 12 job families across 7 levels.'

'This has been done 2 years ago and needs revision to include trends like digital, big data, [industry-specific data], cyber security.'

'We are currently reviewing our Common Role Framework; as we look to implement agile practices & review our Centres of Excellence models.'

'We are currently reviewing the job families as part of the implementation of Workday.'

More than 12 families

'Our job families are in the process of being updated. I would estimate the average age of most of them is three years (some have been updated very recently but the majority have not). Each family has approximately five layers.'

General note on the number of job families

What's typical? Most structures consist of families that are based on broadly recognizable specialisms, e.g. developer, project manager, business analyst, service management, infrastructure support, systems administration, or whatever. It is easy to see how one might, in this way, arrive at a total of between 5 and 10 families.

Fewer families? Sometimes a different approach is taken where the families are rather broader, more conceptual - and less recognizable to those doing the jobs. For example, some companies have created families called Business, Technical and Management. Typically, to be useful, these will have to be sub-divided up into more recognizable sub-groups.

More families? At the extreme, there may be up to about 20 families defined, especially in large global organizations, because:

- Very large IT functions are more likely to have a greater number of specialisms because economies of scale make such specialization a realistic option, and
- Widely distributed teams can vary in size and specific job requirements and the global structure may incorporate 'either/or' options for local use. For example, one small local support team might only need all-round technical expertise, while a larger team in another part of the world might operate with more specialization. To recognize this, the company's global structure might include both an all-round technical support role, plus a number of different technical support specialist roles. No local team will need all the options that are on offer.