

The Business Services Sector

As the economy recovers, new jobs and opportunities will emerge. The basic skills required for many of these jobs are expected to rise – it is estimated that by 2010 around 95% of all new jobs will be at Level 2 or above. These fact sheets have been designed to support people in making informed choices about future employment and / or training to make the best of these new opportunities.

The North East Business Services sector

The Business Services sector is a dynamic and exciting sector, made up of organisations and companies that provide services to businesses. These services include call centres, advertising, management consultancy, business research, building maintenance, legal and financial advice, architectural services and marketing.

Job roles across the Business Services sector are varied and include advertising consultants, marketers, architects, software designer, maintenance engineering services, call centre operatives, recruitment consultants, solicitors, accountants and administration assistants.

The North East Business Services sector is very large, employing roughly one in five of the regional working population. It contributes a lot of wealth to the region (roughly two fifths of North East output) and offers a huge variety of job roles to interested applicants, as well as promising career paths for people with ambition.

As with many industries the recession has meant that North East Business Services companies have had to cut some jobs. This is mainly because companies have found themselves with less spare money to spend on services such as marketing and legal advice. However, it is also very likely to bounce back strongly as the recession lifts and as businesses find themselves doing better.



Call Centres remain a significant employer in the region and offer excellent opportunities to develop skills. For example, the region boasts a number of financial services call centres and employees often have to undertake financial adviser qualifications.

In general, Business Services firms are changing by making more and more use of IT and new communications technology. The so-called 'Knowledge Intensive' Business Services – which include accountancy, web design and marketing firms – benefit from using IT more because it means that they do not have to be located near their customer. They are therefore free to pursue overseas clients and expand internationally.

The North East Business Services sector is likely to expand in coming years, and has been prioritised in the region's economic growth strategy. The balance of services across the sector (advertising, legal, etc) is not likely to change significantly. The Business Services sector is highly dependent on modern means of communication such as broadband, and so is likely to benefit significantly from the Government's large investment in broadband. This will help to raise the productivity and efficiency of the sector.

Skills required in the Business Services sector

The skills required in the Business Services sector are very diverse because there are so many different jobs in the sector. Generally speaking they are office-based skills, but as Business Services deal with customers (in the form of other businesses) people skills and sales skills are also very useful.



Employers in the industry look for skills such as:

- Motivation, self-confidence and good personal presentation
- Managerial and leadership skills
- Problem solving and analytical skills
- Good knowledge of IT
- The ability to communicate clearly and effectively

The Business Services sector is very commercial, so an understanding of business principles is valued by employers. There are many basic qualifications which can be used in almost any part of the sector. These include the European Computer Driving License (ECDL), the NVQ in Business and Administration, the NVQ in Sales, and A-levels and/or GCSEs in English, Maths and IT.

More advanced qualifications are also useful, depending on the specific area of Business Services. These include, for example, Degrees and qualifications in Accounting and Finance and the Higher National Diploma (HND) in Web Design.

Skills in the Business Services sector are not likely to change very much in the near future, and will probably remain the same as those already needed. However, there will probably be more of an emphasis on IT skills and knowledge as companies invest in complex modern technology to ensure they remain competitive and productive. As companies outside of the sector invest in new technology there will be a market for support services relating to these, providing new jobs in IT fields.

It is also very likely that increased international business will lead to greater competition in the Business Services sector (between companies in the North East, and between the North East and other regions). Firms will try to become more innovative and more productive, so people who can show initiative and confidence will be in demand.

Universities in the North East play a key role in providing useful Degree-level training for the sector. Further Education colleges across the region play an important role in training individuals up to the point where they can enter the sector with a base of relevant skills to build upon. There are useful NVQs in a range of subjects including Accounting, Management and Computer Maintenance and System Support.

For more information about the Business Services sector please see the following websites:

- e-skills UK <http://www.e-skills.com/>
- Service Network <http://www.service-network.co.uk/servicenetwork>