



DATA



CYBERSECURITY



AI



INFRASTRUCTURE

INSIDE IT: JOB SEARCH & HIRING INSIGHTS

A recap of our August 28, 2026
Let's Talk Job Search workshop.



A product of the DuPage County
Workforce Development Division
2525 Cabot Dr. Ste. 302
Lisle, IL 60532

ABOUT WORKNET DUPAGE



We are the Workforce Development Division of the DuPage County government and your local American Job Center. We connect job seekers to training and career resources and help businesses find and develop skilled talent. Our no-cost services support a stronger local workforce and help residents build stable, meaningful careers.



SOME OF OUR SERVICES



Training
Grants



Paid Work
Experience



Workshops
& Webinars



Employer
Services



And More

Meet the Panel

workNet DuPage is grateful to the panelists who brought leadership, recruiting, human resources, and technology-transformation perspectives to the discussion.

Amy Pelton

Recruiting Solutions Manager | Sentinel Technologies

A talent acquisition and workforce solutions leader with more than 25 years of experience recruiting technical professionals. Amy leads recruiting strategy, manages talent acquisition, and works closely with hiring managers and clients on staffing and workforce needs.

Anthony McPhearson

Chief Information Officer | DuPage County, Illinois

A technology and executive leader with more than 30 years of experience hiring, developing, and leading IT professionals. Anthony leads enterprise technology strategy for DuPage County and advocates for continuous learning, mentorship, and preparation for a rapidly changing technology landscape.

Paul Cameron

President | Speed Up My Search, Inc.

A technology recruiter and job-search expert with more than 25 years of experience. Paul has helped IT professionals navigate resumes, interviews, career transitions, and hiring decisions and is the author of IT Resume Mastery and AI Mastery for Job Search.

Robert Miller

Technology & Transformation Leader

A technology and transformation leader with more than two decades of experience across rail, financial services, and manufacturing. Robert focuses on using technology to improve business processes, operational efficiency, and cross-functional collaboration.

Rosanne Potter

Senior HR Manager | Sentinel Technologies

An HR leader with more than 18 years at Sentinel Technologies. Rosanne oversees a broad range of HR functions and brings insight into hiring, employee development, collaboration, performance, and what helps employees succeed after they join an organization.

What the Panel Highlighted

AI is changing jobs more than simply eliminating them

AI is changing how work is performed and creating supporting roles. Learn how AI affects your current or target role rather than treating AI as a standalone specialty.

Data is becoming foundational

AI depends on clean, organized, understandable data. Data architecture, engineering, governance, analytics, and related capabilities are increasingly important.

Cybersecurity remains a major growth area

As organizations deploy AI and expose more systems and data to new risks, security architecture, SOC operations, governance, and monitoring remain strong areas of opportunity.

Infrastructure and hands-on support still matter

Network engineering, infrastructure, data-center work, and on-site technical support remain important because many tasks cannot be solved remotely or by AI.

Entry-level and repetitive work is under more pressure

Repetitive junior coding, lower-level QA, routine help desk, and basic customer-service work may face more automation pressure. The response is to move toward judgment, quality, security, data, problem-solving, and direct interaction.

Adaptability can matter more than mastery of one tool

Employers value candidates who understand underlying concepts, learn quickly, and can transfer skills across changing technologies.

Communication and collaboration are core IT skills

Technical knowledge alone is not enough. Employers want professionals who can explain technical work, understand business context, collaborate, and communicate recommendations clearly.

Networking remains high leverage

Referrals and relationship-building can move candidates closer to people who understand the company, team, role, and hiring process.

Where the Opportunity Is

The panel described stronger demand in work that supports AI adoption, protects systems and data, strengthens infrastructure, improves quality, and requires judgment and problem-solving.

Areas showing opportunity

- Data engineering, architecture, governance, and analytics
- Cybersecurity, SOC operations, and security architecture
- AI platform, observability, and AI-adjacent roles
- Enterprise architecture and IT governance
- Cloud and infrastructure engineering
- Network engineering and on-site technical support
- Quality engineering and senior QA
- Data-center operations and infrastructure support
- Specialized consulting and contract work

Areas under more pressure

- Repetitive junior software development
- Lower-level QA and testing that can be automated
- Routine help-desk interactions
- Basic customer-service requests
- Repetitive execution with limited judgment

What this means for you

You do not need to start over. Look for where your current skills intersect with growing areas, and be prepared to explain how your experience transfers to a new tool, platform, or role.

Practical Job-Search Advice for Attendees

Use AI to learn AI.

Ask tools such as ChatGPT or Claude to recommend training for your target role, explain unfamiliar concepts, identify adjacent career paths, and help you build a learning plan. Start with free resources before paying for training.

Learn prompting and provide context.

Better inputs produce better outputs. Explain your background, skills, target roles, constraints, and goals. Avoid entering sensitive personal information. Ask specific questions instead of broad ones.

Use AI for job-search strategy—not as an autopilot.

AI can help identify target industries, companies showing hiring signals, relevant contacts, networking messages, potential interview questions, and skill gaps. The value comes from using it as a thinking and research partner.

Maintain a strong LinkedIn profile.

Keep it detailed and consistent with your resume. Focus descriptions on accomplishments rather than job duties. Follow relevant professional groups, industry leaders, and organizations to find training and networking opportunities.

Use free learning resources.

YouTube, vendor training, public libraries, LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, Udemy, professional associations, and other free or low-cost resources can provide substantial skill development.

Build a relationship map before applying.

Identify people connected to the role, department, company, or initiative. Look for second-degree connections, professional groups, and potential referral sources.

Be flexible about the first step.

A smaller company, on-site role, contract assignment, unfamiliar industry, job shadow, internship, or lower initial salary can provide the experience needed to move into a stronger position later.

Treat public-sector IT as a legitimate career path.

Government may not always match private-sector salaries, but can offer strong training, broad technical experience, benefits, retirement programs, stability, and opportunities to build transferable expertise.

Create your own luck.

The panel repeatedly returned to action: attend networking events, initiate conversations, ask for introductions, learn new skills, explore adjacent roles, and make yourself more likely to be in the right place when an opportunity appears.

Resume & Application Takeaways

A generic resume puts you at a disadvantage. Your resume should make it easy for the employer to understand why your background is relevant to the specific role.

- Compare your resume directly with the job posting.
- Use the employer's terminology when it truthfully describes your experience.
- Move the most relevant skills and accomplishments higher.
- Write accomplishments and outcomes, not only duties.
- Add context such as users supported, systems managed, dollars, volume, time saved, risk reduced, or measurable results.
- Remove or shorten information that distracts from your fit.
- Label contract assignments clearly and highlight extensions when they demonstrate strong performance.
- Use AI to compare your resume with the job description, but never allow it to fabricate experience or metrics.

The resume has one job

Earn the interview. The interview is where you explain how you can solve the employer's problem.

LinkedIn, Networking & Relationships

Online applications still matter, but networking can move you closer to people who understand the role and hiring process.

- Keep your LinkedIn profile aligned with the roles you are pursuing.
- Describe accomplishments and technical scope rather than copying job descriptions.
- Follow target companies, professional groups, industry leaders, and local organizations.
- Use current learning, projects, certifications, and professional interests to show momentum.
- Build targeted relationships with employees, recruiters, alumni, former coworkers, professional-group members, and second-degree contacts.
- Start with genuine questions about someone's experience rather than immediately asking for a job or referral.
- Maintain relationships with organizations that communicate well, even when one opportunity does not work out.

The goal

Create opportunities instead of relying only on online applications.

Interview Takeaways

The interview is where you demonstrate how you think, learn, communicate, and solve problems. Technical knowledge matters, but the panel also emphasized authenticity, judgment, and humble confidence.

- Prepare concrete stories about problem-solving, adaptability, learning, communication, collaboration, and measurable impact.
- Show how you learn. Explain the steps you would take to get up to speed on an unfamiliar system.
- Research the organization, role, technologies, priorities, and likely business problems before the interview.
- Do not use AI to answer questions live.
- Do not insult legacy technology before understanding why it exists.
- Avoid memorized answers that hide how you actually think.
- When you do not know an answer, acknowledge it and explain how you would investigate, validate, or learn it.
- Bring thoughtful ideas about automation, AI, security, quality, or efficiency when relevant—but do not pretend to understand the environment better than the people who work there.

Career Pivots & Building Experience

When direct experience is limited, build credible evidence. The panel emphasized practical ways to demonstrate capability and make a transition more believable.

- Complete hands-on labs or portfolio projects.
- Volunteer for legitimate technology work that produces a real outcome.
- Consider internships, job shadowing, apprenticeships, or short-term projects when appropriate.
- Use contract assignments to build current experience and professional references.
- Join professional groups to learn the vocabulary, issues, and people in the field.
- Complete reputable training or certifications when they are consistently valued in your target market.
- Explain the purpose behind your prior work—not only the tools you used.
- Remain open to smaller employers, different industries, on-site roles, adjacent technical functions, contract work, or public-sector opportunities.

Ghosting, Rejection & Momentum

The panel acknowledged that ghosting is common. Application volume, automated submissions, limited recruiting capacity, and imperfect processes all contribute.

After an interview

- Send a professional thank-you or follow-up.
- If the stated timeline passes, ask whether the role is still open and whether you remain under consideration.
- If an employer communicates well or provides useful feedback, maintain the relationship.

After an application with no interview

Many organizations cannot respond individually to every applicant. Review whether the application was targeted, record it, and keep moving.

Track what you can control

Measure targeted applications, professional conversations, referrals, follow-ups, learning, and interview practice—not only rejections and unanswered applications.

Final Takeaways

- The IT market is changing, not disappearing.
- AI will affect many roles; understand how it affects yours.
- Data, security, infrastructure, quality, and judgment-heavy work remain important.
- Adaptability and transferable capability matter.
- Tailored resumes outperform generic ones.
- Relationships and referrals can create opportunities.
- Interviewers want to understand how you think and learn.
- Build evidence when formal experience is limited.
- Track controllable activity and keep adjusting your strategy.

One final reminder

You do not need to learn every tool or apply to every opening. Understand where the work is moving, identify

Generative AI: Use It Wisely

Generative AI can help with learning, research, brainstorming, resume comparison, interview practice, and career exploration. It should support your judgment—not replace it.

Common tools

ChatGPT

General-purpose conversational AI for questions, explanations, writing, brainstorming, studying, coding, and working with files or images, depending on available features.

Claude

General-purpose AI assistant used for language, reasoning, analysis, coding, and document-oriented work.

Microsoft Copilot

Microsoft's AI assistant. Consumer and workplace experiences differ, and some versions integrate with Microsoft 365.

Google Gemini

Google's general-purpose AI assistant for questions, writing, research, planning, and multimodal tasks.

Perplexity

An AI-powered answer and search experience that can provide source-linked responses.

Examples only - not an endorsement

DuPage County and workNet DuPage do not recommend one generative AI product over another. Use third-party platforms at your own discretion. Features, pricing, privacy practices, and terms can change; review the provider's current information before use.

Use the same safety rules regardless of tool

- Do not enter sensitive personal information, passwords, confidential client or employer information, or proprietary documents unless use is clearly appropriate and permitted.
- Verify important information because AI can be inaccurate, incomplete, or outdated.
- Proofread anything you plan to submit or share.
- Never allow AI to invent experience, accomplishments, skills, or credentials.
- Do not use AI live to answer interview questions.



Open Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
(630) 955-2030
www.worknetdupage.org



CONNECT WITH US



LOCATION

2525 Cabot Drive
Suite 302
Lisle, IL 60532



HOURS

Monday - Friday
8:00a.m. - 4:30p.m.



PHONE

(630) 955-2030



WEBSITE

worknetdupage.org