

Durham IT firm launches cyber security academy creating jobs over next five years

Budding cyber security professionals are being offered the opportunity to learn from established experts at a growing North East IT firm.

NETPark-based Tekgem is launching a cyber security apprenticeship academy, pairing trainees with experienced engineers who will guide them through a three-year course featuring a mix of hands-on experience and theory.

The programme, developed in collaboration with digital training specialists Intequal, will initially see five apprentices recruited to Tekgem before the academy's intake is doubled each year over the next five years.

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Tekgem's team already includes former apprentices and this programme will deliver level 3 and 4 qualifications in networking, infrastructure and cyber security.

The firm's founder and managing director Ian Gemski said: "Tekgem are world leaders in bridging the gap between IT and operational technology, a very niche service that we provide to a variety of organisations internationally.

"Because we offer such a unique service, and very specialist, we've found it difficult to recruit experienced engineers with the right set of skills our customers demand.

"The Tekgem Apprenticeship Academy is designed to get the newest and brightest minds with an interest in cyber security through the door as early as possible so that we can build a world-class team of cyber security professionals to meet the

growing demands for our services.”

Trainees will be assessed via a mix of examinations including network +, Comp TIA, Fortinet and industrial cyber security exams.

Tekgem is hoping to attract college leavers aged 18-24, ideally with an interest in STEM, a good understanding of maths, and an enthusiasm for cyber security and excellent communication skills.

A recent Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) report said some 6,000 new UK jobs in cyber security were created in the past year. As one of the country’s fastest growing sectors it generated revenue of £10bn, while gross value added was thought to be £53bn.

Liam Sharpe, a lead cyber security engineer at Tekgem who started his career as an apprentice six years ago, said: “From the very start I was determined to get the highest grade possible and make the most of the opportunities offered with an apprenticeship.

“I took every exam that was available to me, including becoming a Microsoft Certified Professional as well as earning several other industry recognised certifications. Even though it was really hard work at times, the benefits and new career opportunities it has opened up, have been amazing. My career has gone from strength to strength, I’m now a senior engineer and enjoying every minute.”

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