Careers in the Digital Economy
What have Data Centres Ever Done for Me?

Case study:
Ben Johnson, Data Centre Technician
Sainsbury’s

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Ben Johnson is a data centre technician. He looks after the environment, hardware & network infrastructure within data centres for Sainsbury’s, one of the UK’s premier grocery retailers.

Background
Ben has a BSc geology degree and started his career in the offshore oil and gas industry. Unusually, his background was not in engineering although much of the work was engineering-based. In fact, a key requirement in his previous role was logical thinking in a mission critical environment. When worldwide drilling operations declined he started to look for other openings and applied to Sainsbury’s. Although he did not have the formal IT or technical engineering qualifications that he imagined would be among the criteria needed for a technical role in a data centres, he was offered the job because the company wanted someone who had experience of working in a time sensitive and rapidly evolving environment and who could plan effectively.

Why work in a data centre?
Ben was attracted to the role because Sainsbury’s had scope to provide relevant training and his job would allow him to work with different teams. He enjoyed being thrown in at the deep end because he was confident that the necessary support would be provided by his employers and his team. He was also drawn to the job because it was related to the network and installation work that he was familiar with and has opportunity. He had the option to specialise in networking because there was demand for experienced network engineers, in hardware management or installation. However he had broader opportunities to gain experience in multiple disciplines including planning, finance and management.

What has he gained?
So as the youngest member in his team, Ben has the opportunity to continue the specialist role with the data centre management team, learn more about bleeding edge networking and work with project managers and architects. He says that the job has been an eye opener for two reasons: firstly he was unaware that larger retailers needed such large network and data centre infrastructures and secondly that the data centre environment presented so many career openings.

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