Careers in the Digital Economy
What have Data Centres Ever Done for Me?
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As global head of data centre engineering I am responsible for the design and engineering standards for UBS' Data Centre portfolio, which includes over 100 sites spread over 38 countries, with an annual budget of ~130CHFm. UBS is a global financial services firm, with speciality in wealth management and has offices in all key metropolis locations.

My career started as an Apprentice with British Telecom; I loathed education! However I enjoyed engineering and practical lessons - hence it was an Apprenticeship for me, during which I attended college and gained a HNC in Telecommunications. At BT I worked in a group focusing on Exchange Construction - building telephony/data platforms and working on telephone exchange programmes.

It was this grounding that led me to work in financial organisations and exposed me to the design and build of bank HQ buildings; and of course the critical path was always the network, and the creation and management of equipment rooms to host these systems - aka the Data Centre. My career led me to working overseas, across Europe, in the US and a stint in Asia! I have had exposure to all aspects of building construction, design, mission critical platforms and trading floors. I was in my late 30's when I thought I should progress my education and attended an MSc in Intelligent Building at Reading University - now I enjoyed education as I was applying my practical experience towards an MSc. With both practical experience and my MSc, I was able to achieve professional registration as a Chartered Engineer through the IET.

I am not an academic but an engineer at heart. I enjoy working with tools, working in an environment that is always at the forefront of technology & engineering: data centres are the modern equivalent of dockyards: we are not building battleships but highly technical, specialist buildings that run the world's economy. This industry connects 5 billion people worldwide and is the shop window to technology creations that are changing the future of how people work and interact.

When I entered this career data centres didn't exist..but now pretty much every service depends upon a computer server, which in turn depends on a network, which depends on a data centre: without this industry our daily lives, including email, twitter, facebook and uTube, would not exist! The skills required are foundation engineering skills, with an appreciation of technology and customer service. You'll be surprised, as I am constantly, at the scale and exposure a career has in this sector - after all, without these facilities we'd still be sending letters or memos to each other!