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Is Your Networking Career Becoming Obsolete? Not If You Do This.

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The Future of Networking Career: Is It Still Relevant?

– **By Rosli Salleh**

Reinventing Networking Careers in the Cloud and AI Era

The networking profession is undergoing a major shift as cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), and software-defined infrastructures redefine how organizations function. These changes are reshaping the responsibilities of network professionals and prompting a key question: Is networking still a relevant career? The answer is yes - but with adaptation and upskilling.

The Foundation Remains Strong

Despite the rapid pace of technological change, core networking fundamentals like IP addressing, routing, DNS, subnetting, VPNs, and firewalls remain essential. These principles support both on-premises and cloud environments and are crucial for roles like cloud architects and security engineers. While manual tasks such as physical device configuration are becoming obsolete due to automation and virtualization, the demand for strong foundational knowledge remains unchanged.

The Skills That Matter Now

To succeed in today's landscape, networking professionals must expand their skill sets. This includes network automation tools (like Terraform and CloudFormation), Python scripting, and understanding hybrid networking that spans on-prem and cloud systems. Skills in cloud security - including IAM, Zero Trust, and firewall configurations - are critical. Familiarity with containerization and virtualization tools such as Docker and Kubernetes is expected, while emerging technologies like NFV and edge computing offer new opportunities. Proficiency in DevOps practices, especially CI/CD, also gives professionals a distinct edge in agile environments.

Job Market Outlook for 2025

The networking job market remains robust heading into 2025, with a low 3.7% unemployment rate despite broader IT layoffs. Demand is fueled by trends like cloud adoption, NaaS, increased cybersecurity needs, and the integration of AI. Roles such as Network Engineer, Network Architect, and Network Manager are expected to grow, especially for those with expertise in cloud and automation. As businesses outsource IT operations and shift workloads to the cloud, the need for professionals skilled in virtual networks, firewall management, and system reliability continues to rise.

The AI Factor In Networking

AI is now playing a significant role in network engineering. Updated certifications like CCNA include AI awareness, helping professionals understand and responsibly apply AI tools in networking tasks. Rather than replacing engineers, AI acts as a productivity enhancer. Learning platforms like Cisco RevUp and Cisco U offer free, guided paths on topics like prompt engineering, RAG, and self-healing networks. The industry is shifting toward AI-enhanced command-line interfaces and agentic systems that automate routine tasks, allowing engineers to focus on higher-level design and strategy.

Staying Sharp in the Age of AI

While AI provides great assistance, there's a risk of skills atrophy. Engineers must use AI as a learning partner, validate outputs, and maintain critical thinking. Certification paths are evolving to test real-world problem-solving and AI tool interaction, emphasizing adaptability over rote memorization.

Final Thoughts: Reinvent Yourself, Don't Replace Yourself

Networking isn't fading - it's transforming. Professionals must retain core knowledge, discard outdated practices, and embrace automation, cloud, and AI. The future belongs to those who can evolve. As the saying goes: AI won't take your job - but someone who understands how to use it might. Here are two related articles you can refer to :What is the future of NETWORKING career - How to stay relevant? and The Future of Networking Certifications

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