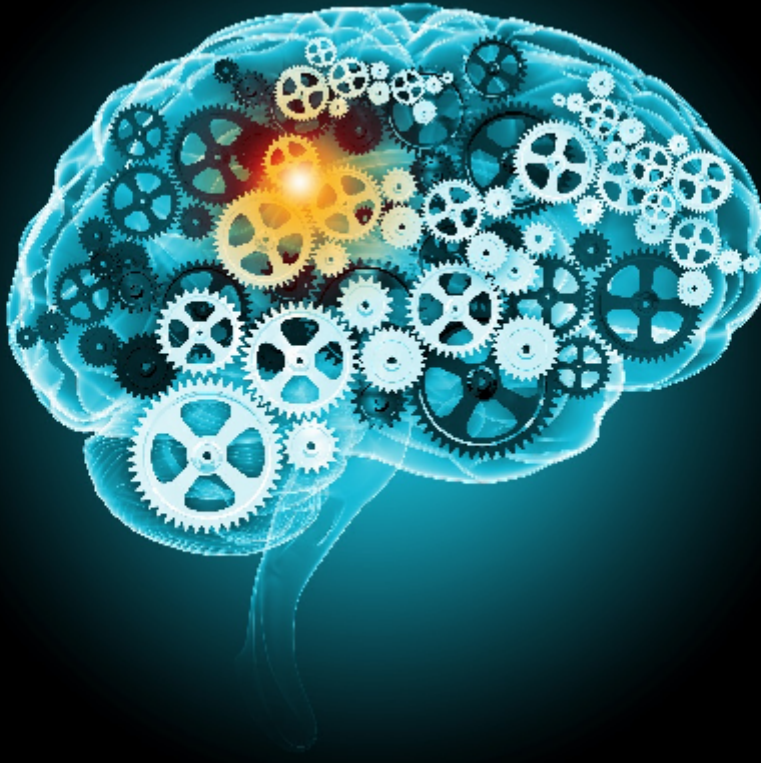# CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION: BMC'S MAINFRAMER IN TRAINING PROGRAM

Oscar Wilde famously said, "You can never be overdressed or overeducated." I'm not sure about the former but I tend to agree with the latter, especially in our industry. Given the systems, platforms, and clients that we support, the learning journey is complex and continuous. And it has to start somewhere.

In 2020, I wrote that a post-coronavirus world would present new opportunities to develop the next generation of IT professionals, and new ways for organizations to access and benefit from their skills. With a move from predominantly onsite working to remote and home working, plus the opening up of a potentially bigger global talent pool, the demand for skills has never been greater—and at a time when many organizations continue to face serious skills shortages.

If current trends continue, it is likely that within the next five years, the mainframe space will have tens of thousands of unfilled jobs globally. Yet, as the BMC 2021 Mainframe Survey reported, more than 90 percent of organizations see the platform as one for long-term growth and new workloads, while 86 percent of extra-large mainframe shops expect MIPS (millions of instructions per second) to grow.

How can we meet that demand, that appetite to innovate and integrate, not only this year but in the decade ahead?

We saw this situation coming, to a degree, which is why BMC Mainframe Services established the Mainframer In Training (MIT) program a few years ago. The program has three main beneficiaries:

- First, BMC, in developing our in-house skills and knowledge base and weaving BMC products and solutions into the training.
- Second, and more importantly, our clients. The program provides them with the talent they need through a pipeline of next-generation IT professionals with on-the-job experience.
- And third, the trainees themselves. The MIT program is the start of a long and rewarding journey, taking them forward while they continue developing their skills and specialisations.

During the pandemic disruptions, we recruited nine new trainees and the training moved mostly online. We're now pressing ahead with our plans to grow the program and take it even further to cover all the areas and solutions offered by BMC.

We have also refined and streamlined the program, which typically lasts up to three years. By targeting the issues and technologies that matter most, we compressed the first year into a high-intensity, three-month bootcamp, including hands-on work. Age demographics are working against us, and we recognized that we needed to speed up the process. Seeing-and-doing in real life is the most effective teacher—logging on and starting to understand how this world fits together, the applications, databases, subsystems, storage, and networks, and performing basic tasks to help keep things running.

Of course, two to three years is still merely an introduction as this field is so vast and complex. Every day is a [school day for a mainframer](#), even if they've been in the job for 30 years. MIT is about laying the best foundations to not only underpin an individual's career but also provide the industry with that strong base and greater confidence that the skills they need do exist.

Another important aspect is mentoring for developmental and career guidance by pairing trainees with a technical buddy from about six months in. The buddy works with their trainee on a day-to-day basis, and the relationship starts with them shadowing each other. They keep in regular contact, with the buddy dropping in to check the trainee's work. This is where the *real* learning journey begins, in the real world with an experienced professional by your side.

As you'd expect, we're also keen to promote diversity and inclusion in the program, and we do have a diverse group. Of the new cohort—four in India and four in the UK—there's a 50/50 gender split. We want to attract all talents and recognize the value that different voices and backgrounds bring.

Representation across the board is important to me as a manager, and important to BMC. Even the words used in an advert calling for applications can impact who responds and why. When recruiting trainees, I've found that their attitude and aptitude are far more important than their previous experience in technology. Are they go-getters? Are they prepared to learn, to expand their minds? Will they stick with it, through thick and thin?

As I wrote back in 2020, "Our clients trust us to provide the trained people and expert services they need, when they need them. Our trainees trust us to give them the best experience we can, imparting the knowledge and skills they need to progress, to support their current and future employers. And our own people and skills base have to be more flexible than ever, ready to pivot to deliver whatever is needed."

As this year's [BMC Mainframe Survey](#) made clear, unprecedented business disruption and significant growth are driving digital transformations across many organizations. BMC's MIT program is an increasingly vital element in enabling those transformations, shaping the enterprise IT and mainframe teams of tomorrow.