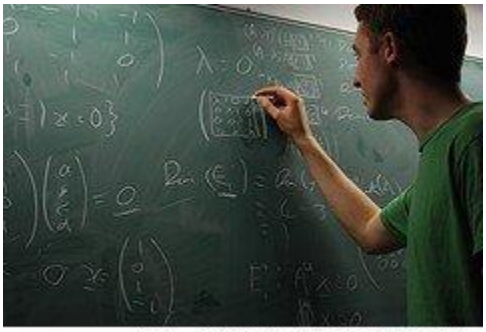
Want to Make More Money? Take More Math

JOB HUNTING TIPSCAREER ADVICE

by Alex Rudloff on Aug 21st, 2009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It may be unwelcome news for some, but math isn't just for technical professions anymore.

As the world becomes more and more data driven, the ability to process information quickly and quantitatively has started to command higher starting salaries. According to the bookOvercoming Math Anxiety, a professor at National University estimates that starting salaries across all industries increase by $2,000 for every math class someone has taken after the ninth grade.

In a recent Wall Street Journal article, Jennifer Courter, a researcher at mental images Inc., said "[Math] is a lot more than just some boring subject that everybody has to take in school ... It's the science of problem-solving."

It's no wonder that a recent study conducted by Adico Inc. listed "Mathematician" as the best job in the country. The average Mathematician earns an estimated $94,160 a year and is treated to great working conditions in a variety of fields. Additionally, every single one of the top ten highest starting salaries in 2009 involves a generous amount of mathematics.

Most of us spent our youth undoubtedly asking ourselves "When am I ever going to use this stuff?" Those who went on to study engineering and computer science quickly found their answer. The trend, however, points towards math becoming increasingly important in other fields as well. We all need a little math in our lives. Even a firm understanding of basic math can improve earnings. Richard Murnane and Frank Levy conducted a study on the subject and found that a "mastery of skills taught in American schools no later than the eighth grade is an increasingly important determinant of subsequent wages."

While employers are not likely to count the number of math classes you've listed on your resume, they will be looking for the abilities that tend to be correlated to those classes. Measurable skills such as data analysis, data manipulation, forecasting and budgeting are undoubtedly important, but the ability to handle complex problems and engage in higher level thinking are two traits thinking mathematically helps nurture.

The good news for the less mathematically inclined is that when it comes to improving your professional skill set and abilities, it's never too late to start. A number of resources exist online to help you get started.

Online Math Resources

- Math.com Online Games
- The Math Forum Student Center
- American Public University System Instructional Math Videos
- MIT Open Courseware: Mathematics
- Math Jobs on Emurse.com

"Students often ask me what to take in school... my answer?... follow your natural interests, but take lots of math!"
- Thomas E. Dunham, Vice President and General Manager for GE Medical Systems, General Electric Company