

AT&T's Data Network Consultant, Abdul Khan, Shares His Career Experience



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MEMP Alumnus 2012



One year ago, Abdul applied for the AT&T Business Sales Leadership Development Program (BSLDP) in technical sales through Duke's E-Recruiting. A short while after, he received a call for an interview. The interview, consisting of behavioral questions, lasted 30 minutes and was conducted by the human resources (HR) department. On the same day, he had a second interview with HR, more detailed this time, regarding personality traits. No technical questions were asked. Abdul then had to deliver a presentation and recommendation on the third interview based on a case which he had four days to analyze. The fourth interview was a casual conversation between him and a line manager. At last, the fifth and final interview brought him back to HR, after which he soon got his job offer.

Abdul, a MEMP December 2012 graduate, joined AT&T in March of 2013, and now works as a Data Network Consultant. During his time at Duke, he served as the Director of SRC on the MEMP Product Development Committee. Before coming to Duke, he worked for a year as the Director of Business Development in GSM Nation LLC, New Haven. He holds a bachelor's degree in electric engineering from a premier technology institution of Pakistan and had comprehensive internship experience in international tech companies, including Siemens and Nokia.

Abdul's main role now involves consulting customers on solutions, providing technical support in product demonstration, and supporting the sales team in responding to network and service related client queries. Today, he has an interview with CDAR's representative, Ahsaan.

"Good morning, Abdul. How are you?"

"Doing great. How can I help?" said Abdul.

"I was wondering if you could share some of the biggest challenges that you faced as a student entering the field of technical sales."

"Sure. Actually, I had no experience in sales when I came in, but I did have a strong motivation to learn. One of the biggest challenges I faced was that the market is very competitive and there are loads of substitutes out there. You have to be compelling in your argument when you are selling your product to your client, which requires strong understanding, expertise in the product portfolio of the company, as well as technical knowledge needed to customize the solution to the customer's need."

"Great, thank you. What exactly do you do on a regular basis?"

"Some of my typical responsibilities include presenting AT&T products to the executives and IT directors of client organizations. So it's crucial to have answers to their possible queries and be able to translate the product's offering to their solutions. You need to have adequate technical knowledge of the product to be able to diversify its applicability."

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“I see you have a couple of certifications. Would you mind explaining how they apply to your career?”

“I did my VMWare certification while at the BSLDP, which is a sales training program designed around virtualization basics and VMWare solutions. Certifications such as these not only help expose you to practical knowledge but also add value to your resume and make you stand out in a pool of candidates. CCNA, CCNP, and CCIE are some certification programs which encompass entry level to advanced level network engineering skills that hold a high standard in the industry for a career in data networks.”

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“Thanks for that! I know you took courses like Competitive Strategies and Forecasting at Duke. What skills did you find to be most valuable in your field of work that you picked up in those classes?”

“They all added value in the developmental analytical skills essential in every line of work. CompStrat helped me in building an insight of policy and strategy evaluation and gave me a high level of perspective of the company’s long-term objective. Data Mining was another course that greatly enhanced my analytical ability, but it was really the communications skills, robust negotiation, and persuasive skills that I learned while being part of multiple MEM student bodies and clubs. These skills are essential for a career in sales or jobs that involves client interaction.”

“I’m curious, what are your long-term career plans?”

“I’m currently focused on expanding my skill set, learning assorted sales practices, developing client relations, and getting promoted to the role of Senior Data Network Consultant. There are multiple roles in AT&T as it offers products and services in VoIP and VPN. That opens up a whole new dimension of clients. While these things are important, I’m also enjoying my current role.”

“Thank you, Abdul! It was a pleasure talking to you. I’m sure your insights into technology consulting will be very useful for MEM students.”

“Thank you for interviewing me. Let me know if you have any further questions!” ■