



VMware Newbie Career Guide

20 Questions VMware Newbies Want Answered

By Joe Sanchez

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START HERE

You are here because you want answers, right?
Let's get started.

Who is this guide intended for?

This starter guide is for VMware newbies and beginners who want answers to common career questions.

What will you get out of this guide?

A lot.

I will answer **20** of the most common questions I get sent to me via emails.

Or I've heard as a manager during the **many** interviews I've conducted.

ONE

Where do I start my VMware career?

The other day I read on VMware's blog a 16 year boy got a VCP (aka VMware Certified Professional).

This is a good place for you to **start**.

A VMware Certified Professional is industry recognized.

TWO

How much will it cost to get a VCP?

The **Official** VMware vSphere configuration and setup course is required before you can officially take the VCP test.

This training course will cost around **\$3700 - 4500** and the test **voucher** is anywhere from \$275 – 300.

There are other certifications but the VCP is the most **popular** in the virtualization industry.

The test is tough so study.

THREE

What salary can I expect to earn as a VMware admin?

What you will earn really depends on a couple of factors.

First, how much experience do you have in other technologies such as storage and network engineering or administration?

Second, are you right out of tech school or college?

Third, do you have more than 3 years of hands on VMware experience, or less than one year?

Fourth, what's your local market like?

Continue for the answer.

Your **answers** to these questions will determine the demand and where your skill set will fit.

There are many jobs for: junior or entry level VMware admins or VMware administrator.

And Sr. VMware Engineer.

Salaries can begin around \$45K and go up to **\$120K** **depending** on where you live and your expertise.

FOUR

Do you need to know everything about VMware products to land a job?

No.

But you should have a good understand of VMware's core product which is **vSphere**.

Like I said, vSphere is at the **core** of the Horizon View, vCloud and many other VMware solutions.

You are at the START, continue to PART 2?

ALTERNATIVES

FIVE

Is there an alternative to VMware I can learn?

Yes.

Lots of them.

A popular alternative to vSphere is **Openstack**.

Openstack is big in the opensource community. And many **BIG** companies are adopting it for their **cloud** solution.

The options with Openstack are many because it will run with various hypervisors, KVM, Centos, Mirantis, etc.

And it integrates well with vCloud, Puppet and Chief.

There's more...

SIX

Is there a **certification** and training for Openstack?

Yes.

Visit www.Openstack.com for more details.

Has this been helpful so far?

SEVEN

Can you expect to **earn** the same salaries as with a VMware job if you chose to learn Openstack?

Yes.

Openstack is widely used and there are many job openings for Openstack admins and engineers.

Many businesses run Openstack and VMware vSphere together.

Or only one of them.

EIGHT

Are there any other requirements for becoming an Openstack admin?

Maybe.

Sometimes the the other **expectation** with vSphere alternatives is that you are a Linux admin or engineer, RHCA or RHCE.

Most - if not all Openstack clouds are running all Linux.

And for Windows they have small Hyper-V or VMware clouds, or in some cases XenServer.

It's time to talk about jobs.

Job Search Advice

NINE

How hard is it to find a VMware job?

Not hard.

Many companies need good people with experience to handle building vClouds. They need people supporting day to day operations.

And people working on their data center projects to consolidate and retire old equipment.

Right now these jobs are in high demand.

TEN

What should I put on my resume?

The truth in **detail**.

Aside from the normal list of pervious jobs.

Add the details of all the cool stuff you have been doing.

P2Vs, setup and configs, VDI (XenDesktop or View), proof of concepts, R&D, lab testing.

Also include how many times you have done a P2V or how many ESXi hosts you have setup and supported.

Continue for more resume advice.

Back for more?

Talk about the projects you have been on.

Details are important and help hiring managers find people with skill sets they are looking for.

Sometime something **unique (a previous project)** is what gets you noticed in the pile of resumes or emails.

Let your resume tell your story.

ELEVEN

Are VMware job interviews **hard**?

Sometimes.

Be ready for a technical panel interview with system admins and engineers.

Expect how-to questions on what a VMKernel is used for or how to enable SSH on ESXi.

Most of the time, the questions will be right out of the VCP study guide.

The goal for you is to know your stuff!

We're getting to the good part, keep reading.

Important!

You must back up your interview answers with examples.

Tell a story about when you did something that required the skill they are asking you about.

Be passionate!

For example: It you are asked what is a P2V?

OMG. If this question comes up you should be able to knock it out of the park.

Tell them how to install VM Converter and blah blah!

Also don't forget to add the Pre & Post P2V tasks.

Make sure they know you have done P2Vs a 1000 times.

TWELVE

What if I don't have a lot of vSphere or Openstack experience and I still get the job because they want a virtualization newbie to do simple tasks?

Congrat!

This would be a great opportunity to learn.

Heck jump on it and learn all you can.

Also find the sharpest guy or girl on the team and stick to them like (well you know).

Don't be afraid to ask questions, lots of questions.

Be willing to learn anything they want to teach you.

A nugget is coming...

The Goal!

The goal is to get them to become your technology mentor.

Ask them for work and don't complain if it's boring.

Try to figure it out yourself. And don't be a know it all.

You want them to like you, right?

Be likeable.

FIRST DAY

THIRTEEN (13)

What if you are a newbie and you crash the system?

Well, that depends on which system you crashed, and how you crashed it.

Not good (see I chose 13 for this one).

If they put you on a business critical system without training you...

...and you crashed it, expect the worst, but hope.

Why?

Because they are morons for letting you handle such an important job knowing you are a newbie.

But!

Here it comes, straight up.

If you weren't supposed to be messing with the systems and you tweaked or updated something and caused an outage, you can expect the worst.

You will be fired.

But if you were doing what you were asked and it was an accident, then tell the boss ASAP.

And don't hide the truth.

Be 100% honest so he will understand the impact and how to restore the system.

Uptime is critical for most businesses and a system down is not good, but accidents happen.

If you survive or end up looking for another job;

Learn from it.

FOURTEEN

What if my boss wants me to install ESXi a different way than is best practice?

Always be willing to learn a new way of doing something, even if you have your own way.

It could be because they have learned they need a special configuration because of their specific hardware or application.

Or it can be because nobody has ever rewritten the build document since ESX 2.0 was being used.

If this is the case then ask the boss to let you update the build document.

The opportunity here is huge because documentation is a 4 letter word in most IT departments.

BTW. Four letter words are bad words.

Continued from the previous page.

As I was saying, you will find many or most IT process documents are out of date.

This is a gold mine for a newbie because you can review all the standards and configuration while you update the documentation.

Best of all.

You will most likely get to use Visio and update technical drawings and designs.

And you will get to ask a lot of questions in the process.

This is worth it.

Ask lots of questions and take good notes.

FIFTEEN

What about VMware Horizon View or Citrix XenDesktop – should I learn VDI too?

VDI is very popular.

What is VDI?

My bad. Virtual Desktop Infrastructure is virtual machines running desktop OS.

It is a value-add on anyone's resume to list experience with related technology.

However, if your only experience is a small VDI lab at home then that may not cut the mustard.

Why you may ask?

Well because a lot of times the VDI environment you may end up supporting has 100s or 1000s of users with various configurations.

Use common sense.

THINK SERVICE FIRST

SIXTEEN

This is the FINALE!

What are some important vSphere best practices I should learn?

Think Services First.

Learning and knowing best practices for backing up VMs, how to monitor vSphere, and how to solve common problems like when ESXi hosts disconnect. These are important skills.

Why?

Because all these skills help protect the service, which takes care of the user.

And they are all common issues you will face every day.

Got it?

Where was I?

I remember, I was about to give you another nugget.

Another important skill you must have.

You must know how to analyze a poor performing virtual machine.

And know how to make recommendations for tuning the bad boy.

You will find a lot of performance problems in older environments that have upgraded from v3.x to 4.x to 5.x.

This is your bread and butter, master it.

SEVENTEEN

I am new and need a lot of help with ESXi. Is it OK to call VMware support?

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Please call VMware support!

In my book, I always advise my team to call VMware support after 2 hours of them trying to figure something out by Googling.

Sometimes 4 year old blog posts on ESX 1.x just don't help much on ESXi 5.x problems.

Calling support is also a good way to learn how the experts troubleshoot.

Normally they will have you open a WebEx and then they will take control of your system.

This is getting exciting just writing about it!

At this point sit back and take lots of notes on what commands they are running.

Pay especially close attention when they drill down into logs.

Ask questions until they tell you to shut up or they figure out what is going on.

Never be afraid or too prideful to call support for help.

VMware support is not free so use it!

Storage & Networking is next.

EIGHTEEN

Who handles the network and storage in a vSphere cloud?

Excellent question.

It depends on the dynamics of the team.

Sometimes storage and networking admins are dedicated people.

For example:

There may be storage engineers doing just storage related tasks, and when you need storage for the vSphere you put in a request for 2 x 5.0 TB for 2 new 5.0 TB data stores.

The same thing happens for networking.

Just some friendly advice.

OH boy, you will have lots of fun with network teams.

That's all I am going to say.

There may be a dedicated network team that handles the network.

And if you are using Cisco UCS then they may be very involved in the vSphere management.

Also, you may find yourself wearing multiple hats.

Don't be surprised if the storage and network jobs are done by the same team. Namely you.

This is called convergence and many IT shops are combining all the technical roles in to a hybrid team that does everything.

Tons of opportunity to learn a lot and get hands on training.

NINETEEN

Should I start learning about storage and networking for my VMware career?

Yes.

Especially now that VMware is offering virtual storage and networking as new features in their newest release.

Understanding storage and networking best practices are very important for understanding how to deliver great services.

Remember, “Think Service First!”

TWENTY

What is the most important thing a newbie should know about VMware?

Easy.

Think Service First!

What I’m trying to drill into your brain is it is not about servers! It is about the **service** running on the server.

It's about the **customer** or user using those services.

Many times system engineers forget they are building infrastructure for non-technical people to do work on.

The ESXi and VM servers you love host real day services.

Is this making sense?

Headed Home...

By now it should be coming together.

What's most important are the services, such as: payroll and healthcare apps that are accessed by ordinary people like maybe your mom or sister.

These apps are all over the world and are accessed via Internet or LAN connections.

People connect to them through a website or locally installed clients.

Learning to consider the **service first** will help you become a better service provider – instead of “just” a systems engineer.

This is your true value!

Bonus

Here's the bonus tips.

I cannot stress this enough.

Learn as much as you can on scripting.

And learn to automate everything.

This will give you an edge over non-scripting candidates applying for the same job.

And make sure this skill is on your resume in bold letters.

Another important tip I will give you before we conclude is **don't limit** your options to only VMware.

There are huge opportunities now to learn so many cool and new virtual technologies.

Conclusion

This VMware Newbie Career Guide is Free and is intended to help anyone starting out.

These questions and answers should get you into the ball park. And the rest will come as you learn the craft which is the technical side of things not covered in this guide.

Remember, every business and hosting company needs people who are smart enough to handle the nuts and bolts of setting up and supporting The Cloud.

This means opportunity for people coming in on the ground level. You can grow with the business and learn a lot.

Sure they need experts for the heavy lifting but a lot of jobs in The Cloud are perfect for newbies.

Good Luck!

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Find [VCP for Hire: A Manager's Guide for Hiring VMware Engineers](#), on Amazon eBooks.

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