for the services of intermediaries. Of course, this system has a number of disadvantages. One of them is price instability. Cryptocurrencies can be subject to significant price fluctuations, which can lead to large losses for investors. The risk of hacker attacks is also a major disadvantage. Storing cryptocurrency online can be vulnerable to hacker attacks, which can lead to loss of funds. The main problem with the blockchain system, however, stemming from its advantages is the lack of regulation. Cryptocurrencies are not strictly regulated, which can lead to the possibility of using them for illegal purposes such as money laundering and terrorist financing.

From my point of view, blockchain system has a high development potential and subsequently cryptocurrencies will become the main medium of exchange in the future, replacing traditional fiat currencies. Blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies will help create new economic models where people can exchange value without intermediaries and without restrictions. Cryptocurrencies can help solve many of the problems associated with the financial system, such as high fees, lengthy transfers and restrictions on international transactions. They will help create a fairer economic system where everyone has access to financial services and can control their own money.

The blockchain system has a number of reasons that point to its long-term development and scalability. It allows transactions to be carried out without intermediaries, which may lead to a reduction in the role of banks and the state in the financial sphere. This may enable small and medium-sized businesses to access financial resources without unnecessary costs for commissions and interest. However, there are also risks associated with the instability of cryptocurrency rates and the possibility of using them for illegal purposes. In addition, the blockchain system requires large computing power and energy consumption, which can lead to environmental problems. Overall, cryptocurrencies and the blockchain system have a high potential to change the structure of the economy in the long term, but require more in-depth study

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IT MARKET TRENDS IN BELARUS

IT industry influences not only the lives of individuals but also the world's economy. The first IT product dates back to 1948. That machine was programmed to perform mathematical calculations using machine code instructions [1]. Currently, IT products assist businesses, corporations, government, and ordinary users in solving their tasks and optimizing their activity. In their turn, IT market and industry in Belarus have their own trends and perspectives.

The objective of the research is to analyse the Belarusian IT market, identify its trends and perspectives, touch upon up-and-coming technologies and highlight the particularities of IT market in Belarus that developers deal with.

Firstly, the Belarusian IT market can be listed as a labor market with high competition among specialists. According to the statistics, based on the third quarter of 2023, on average, 5 to 7 specialists applied for one position. What is more, 97 % of vacancies required at least one year of professional experience from applicants.

The second fact to point out is that IT companies prioritize skills rather than a university degree. Back in the day, professional education used to be an indicator of the applicant's competence, but nowadays there is a plethora of information on the Web, and everyone has an opportunity to obtain the same knowledge without having a degree. IT companies are interested in team-oriented developers with strong hard and soft skills, and a diploma appears to be a secondary factor in terms of employment.

Referring to the skills required for IT specialists, hard and soft skills have to be mentioned. Hard skills differ from vacancy to vacancy, but there is such a technology as Git that is applicable to the majority of positions. For backend developers in particular working with databases, good knowledge of APIs and logical thinking appear to be mandatory hard skills. In today's society, soft skills for IT jobs may be underestimated, but in fact, they can easily overweigh hard skills, especially in small IT companies. Teamwork, adaptability and communication skills make it easier for all the members of an IT company to interact with each other.

The third thing to mention is artificial intelligence. Currently, AI is gaining its popularity and is widely used in various spheres of professional activity, not just in programming. Such neural networks as BgRem, Midjourney, Uizard, for instance, are widely used among designers. Furthermore, Adobe and Canva products have their own AIs that simplify work with software.

As far as programming is concerned, ChatGPT, GitHub copilot and Tabnine are frequently used for writing a code and debugging, but at present, these neural networks work well only with popular libraries and are able to write simple codes that are based on well-known patterns. Therefore, it is important to face the fact that AI nowadays remains a great tool, but it does not replace IT specialists.

One more aspect to pay attention to is no-code or zero-code concept. This technology provides small businesses and startups with inexpensive digitalization of their products. These days no-code is not only connected with site-builders, such as WordPress, Tilda and WIX, but also is able to create web applications. Adalo, Glide and Bubble services facilitate the creation of progressive web applications (PWA) which work as web sites but imitate mobile applications. It goes without saying that PWA will not replace native and cross-platform development, but it remains a topical and cost-effective way to implement digitalization in a small business or a startup.

In relation to programming languages, according to TIOBE index, top 5 programming languages at the beginning of 2024 are Python, C, C++, Java, C# [2].

The biggest increase in popularity is observed in C# (+1.15 %). It can be justified by active community, cross-platform support, new updates with simplified syntax, frameworks that allow implementation of AI [3]. Consequently, it may be predicted that there will be more workplaces for backend developers, C# developers in particular.

The research findings show that IT market in Belarus differs from the world's IT market, but nevertheless inherits its trends. High competition among specialists makes it difficult for developers to enter the industry and keep afloat. The Belarusian IT market is not deprived of big companies, but is more oriented to small businesses that gives developers more freedom and flexibility within IT companies.

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ONLINE PLATFORMS: THE KEY TO ENTREPRENEURIAL INITIATIVES (CAPITAL, SPECIALISTS AND BUSINESS CONSULTING)

This study investigates how online platforms aid entrepreneurial efforts by facilitating access to capital, expert advice, and business guidance, helping overcome geographic and resource accessibility challenges.

Entrepreneurship, crucial for economic progress, relies on traditional and professional resources, often hindered by issues like resource scarcity and geographic barriers. This paper focuses on how digital platforms bridge these gaps, especially during a startup's early development stages.

Capital is essential for launching a business, with diverse external sources available for funding. Entrepreneurs can use the "3F system", loans, and strategic investors. Challenges such as limited local contacts and unsupportive environments can be mitigated through online access to international financial resources.

Online investment avenues:

1. Startup launch platforms: Platforms like Startups.co and Gust.com offer resources, connections, and advisory support for early-stage entrepreneurs.

2. Social networks of business angels:** Networks like Funded.com, Angel Capital Association, and Angel Investment Network provide access to business angels for