

How to Build and Leverage a Network for the Tech Industry

Whether you're new to the tech field and looking to build connections as you start your job hunt or you've been around tech for awhile but are looking to expand your circle, developing and leveraging a professional network can help. But for many people, networking can be tricky business. For some, it feels forced or awkward. Others might be wondering: is it worth it, and does networking really work?

The truth is, networking can provide a ton of benefits for tech professionals at all stages of their careers... as long as there's some strategy and intention behind it. This article will explore how networking can help you get a job and provide you with a list of networking tips to get started.

Importance of Networking in the Workplace

You might be wondering why networking is important. While most people think that its sole purpose is to help you find a job, (and it does help with that!) there are many other benefits, too. Here are the most common.

- **Advance your career:** Building connections can help you now and down the road to find job opportunities—even those that aren't posted. In fact, [around 80% of new jobs](#) aren't ever listed—they're filled internally or via networking.
- **Stay connected with industry knowledge:** If you've been done with your education for a while, it can be easy to lose touch with new trends. Attending networking events, interacting with others in your industry, and signing up for professional newsletters can ensure your knowledge stays up to date.
- **Give back:** Networking isn't one-sided. If you're early in your career, you might need an extra boost to find the right job. Once you're settled, though, networking is a great way to give back to others. For example, you can act as a mentor, participate in informational interviews, or connect younger professionals with job opportunities. At EFA, we encourage our grads to become [tech mentors](#) for our Atlas Program!

What are 4 Ways You can Develop Your Network?

Here are four of the best ways to start developing and leveraging your network in the tech field.

Start with Your Personal Network

You already have a professional network, even if you don't think of it that way. Consider the people around you: friends, co-workers, classmates, family members, instructors at Eleven Fifty Academy, and our stellar [career services team](#). All of these folks are a part of your professional network, and they're a great place to start—especially if the idea of networking seems overwhelming. Consider the following:

- **Get coffee or a drink with people,** like friends, classmates, or family members who may have connections in your field. Catch up with them and ask for their help in connecting you with tech professionals or an HR rep at their company about potential job openings.
- **Meet with our EFA team.** We have connections with [some big names in tech in Indiana](#) and beyond. Our instructors, career services, and alumni network are always happy to assist in your career development and job search efforts.
- **Join EFA's [Atlas Program](#)** after you graduate and while you job hunt. You'll get project-based experience (a great resume booster), and have the chance to connect with other EFA grads and a tech mentor who works in the field—another way to add to your network!

Get Social with Social Media

Namely, use LinkedIn to connect with top industry experts or other tech professionals in your area. You can also use it to search for jobs and show off your skills. There are a couple of things to keep in mind when using LinkedIn:

- **Keep your profile updated:** Even while you're employed, it's important to keep your profile updated so anyone visiting your profile knows about your background and skills.
- **Take their skill quizzes:** LinkedIn has a great way for you to show off your tech skills to potential employers: skill quizzes. These short, 15-question quizzes come in all different topics, like .NET to Python to Cybersecurity. If you correctly answer enough questions, you'll earn a skills badge to display on your profile—signaling you're knowledgeable in the area.
- **Make meaningful connections:** Don't send connection requests or messages to everyone. With LinkedIn, it's quality over quantity. Curate your connections, and stick to people you know or people who you'd like to network with. Pro tip: If you're sending a connection request to someone you don't know, include a quick note in your request. You can say something like "Hello! I'm looking for a coding job and I'm interested in connecting with other coders in Indianapolis."

Join Professional Groups

Joining professional groups can help connect you with industry news, movers and shakers in tech, mentors, and job opportunities. Not sure where to get started? Here are some tips.

- **A quick Google search of "professional tech groups"** will return dozens of lists of tech groups. For example, you can find groups that focus on [diversity in the tech world](#), or general [tech professional organizations](#).
- **If a group costs, inquire about discounts.** Some professional groups cost money, but many offer discounts for students or those who are early in their careers. If you don't see any information about discounts, it never hurts to reach out and ask.
- **LinkedIn Groups is a great (and free) way to connect.** Simply search on LinkedIn for tech groups that you're interested in and request to join. Many groups share job postings, professional development opportunities, and more. You can also reach out to group members to expand your network even further.

Attend Events—Both Tech and Non-Tech Related

We know that events don't often sound like the most exciting thing, especially if you're introverted or planning to attend solo. But, the right events can help you develop your network.

- **Virtual conferences:** Most conferences started moving online in early 2020, and while some are moving back to in-person events, many are keeping up with virtual professional development and networking opportunities. Virtual conferences or meetups can be a great, low-stakes way to gain some industry knowledge, learn about new trends, and potentially connect with other attendees.
- **In-person conferences or panels:** In-person events are returning, and they're a great way to connect with folks in your field, exchange contact information, and add to your professional network. Pro tip: Exchange contact information, rather than just giving yours out. This way, you have everything you need to follow up.
- **Local groups:** Looking to connect with professionals in your city? There are a ton of ways to get involved. Search online for local tech groups, or even branch out and look for volunteer groups, intramural sports, young professional groups, and more. In fact, connecting with folks by interest can be a great low-stakes way to build some connections. And, chances are, there will be people in attendance who work in tech or know others who do!

Build your Network with Eleven Fifty Academy

While networking can seem overwhelming, it doesn't have to be. Our career services team at Eleven Fifty Academy meets with students one-on-one to define their goals, determine their strengths and skills, and match them up to job opportunities that may be a good fit. In fact, within 50 days of graduation, our career services team places 80% of students with an average starting salary of \$55,000! Learn more about how our [career services](#) team can help you build your network and achieve your career goals.