

How to Use Meetups to Build Your Network

Meetups are a great way to get to know other software engineering professionals and aspiring developers. But how exactly do you go about finding and joining a meetup? And what do you do when you get there? This Springboard resource is dedicated to answering those questions and helping you make meaningful networking connections. Let's dive in!

How to Find a Meetup Near You

1. **Go to [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) and create a free account.**
2. **Use the search bar** to search for keywords related to your industry, like **"Software Engineering," "Web Development," "Python,"** and **"JavaScript."**

The screenshot shows the Meetup.com interface. At the top, a dark blue banner reads "Find your next event" with "1,423 events near you" below it. A search bar contains "software engineering" with a clear button (x) and a location filter set to "within 5 miles of San Francisco, CA". To the right of the search bar are buttons for "Groups" and "Calendar". Below the search bar, the results are sorted by "Recommended". There are nine event cards displayed in a 3x3 grid. The first row includes "Software Engineer Interview Prep" (990 Job Seekers), "Uber Engineering Events - San Francisco" (9,746 Engineering Enthusiasts), and "SF Engineering Leadership Speaker Series" (532 Engineering Leaders). The second row includes "Engineering & Product Leaders (San Francisco)" (206 Members), "Spanish Speaking Software Engineers in San Francisco" (53 Heroes), and "ENGINEERING PRIVACY MEETUP" (279 Members). The third row includes a "START THIS GROUP" button for "San Francisco Software Engineering Meetup Group" (Over 50 interested >), "San Francisco Engineering Managers Meetup" (185 Engineering Managers), and "San Francisco Software Engineering Meetup" (206 Members).

Find your next event
1,423 events near you

software engineering x within 5 miles of San Francisco, CA Groups Calendar

Sort by Recommended

- Software Engineer Interview Prep**
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- Engineering & Product Leaders (San Francisco)**
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- ENGINEERING PRIVACY MEETUP**
Engineering Privacy - SF Bay Area
279 Members
- START THIS GROUP**
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3. **Set a distance for how far you would like to search.**
 - a. If you live in a smaller town, you'll have better luck finding meetups if you expand your search area.
 - b. You should also search for meetups in cities you'll be traveling to in the near future. This is a great way to broaden your network geographically!
4. **Keep an eye out for meetups that meet at least once a month.** Attending a recurring event will only serve to strengthen the connections you make.
 - a. Other great events to look out for include events that feature guest speakers or a panel, and events that are sponsored by a corporation in your industry.
5. **RSVP to an event (or events) that you are interested in attending.**

What to Do Before the Meetup

Send an email to the organizer of the meetup, telling them a bit about yourself. You can:

1. Let them know that you're new and tell them how excited you are to be attending the event.
2. Volunteer to help with the event you're attending.
 - a. **Volunteering is an especially great way to get to know the organizer of the event.** Keep in mind that the organizer likely knows most of the people coming to the event, as well as other industry professionals in the area.
 - b. **Volunteering is also a great way to meet and connect with people at the event** — especially any other volunteers in attendance!

Look at the RSVP list to see who else is attending. This is a good way to identify some people that you'd like to meet at the event.

What to Do at the Meetup

1. **Find the organizer to thank them** and get to know them a bit better.
2. **Ask the organizer for advice about any people you should meet or get to know.**

3. **Introduce yourself to people!** Let them know that you're new to the meetup or that it's your first meetup. Most people are there to meet new people like you so don't be afraid to strike up a conversation.
4. **Really listen to what people are saying** and add your own thoughts and insights.
 - a. Don't be afraid to speak up in a conversation, also be sure to listen to the person you are talking to, and note the topics you discuss. You can mention these topics in your follow up email that you'll send after the meetup.
5. **If you have a good conversation with someone, let them know that you'd like to follow up with them!**
 - a. Ask to exchange contact details. If you have business cards, bring them and hand them out.

Networking Tips

If you find striking up a conversation with new people challenging, don't worry! Most people do. The tips listed in this section will help you to break the ice and start networking like a pro.

Go to the meetup with a buddy. Having someone with you that you feel comfortable with at the meetup may help to boost your confidence. If you do go with a buddy though, it's important to follow these rules to make the most of your networking experience:

1. Agree to separate for periods of time so that you can network individually, then plan to rendezvous with each other towards the end of the event.
2. Set a goal to talk to a certain number of people before meeting up with your buddy again.
 - a. For example, your goal could be to talk to 5 people or collect 3 business cards before rejoining your buddy.

Know how to break into a conversation with finesse. Sometimes at networking events, you overhear a conversation that you really want to join, but it can be tricky to figure out when to appropriately insert yourself into the conversation. Here are some tips:

1. **Watch for body language.**
 - a. Generally, if people in a group are talking with their shoulders and toes pointed inwards, it means that conversation is closed.
 - b. If you notice people standing with their shoulders and toes rotated outwards, it's likely that they would be happy for you to join their conversation. They might even welcome a fresh take on what they are

discussing.

2. **Engage your curious mind.** Ask questions of the people you'd like to converse with.
 - a. Ask about their role, how they like their company, and use those questions to build common ground between you.

What to Do After the Meetup

Remember that building relationships through networking is a two-step process. Once you've met someone and spoken with them at a meetup, **it's important that you follow up to keep the relationship going.** As you continue to grow your relationship, you'll then be able to ask them for advice, information, and contacts. They'll be able to ask the same of you, too.

Email the contacts you made at the meetup. Say that it was great to meet them and that you are really looking forward to continuing the conversations you had.

- If you talked about a particular topic you'd like to know more about, or have more information to share about a topic you discussed, be sure to include that in the email. This will help to keep your conversation going.
- Share any relevant articles or videos you may have found on a topic you talked about with your new connection.

Conclusion

While networking can be intimidating, it's important to remember that most people who attend meetups are there for the same reason as you — to meet new people who share their interests! With a good attitude and the tips listed in this article, you'll be making connections in no time.