

# 5 Must-Have Tips For Keeping IT Skills Current

By [Ed Tittel](#) FEBRUARY 15, 2016 11:00 AM - Source: [Toms IT Pro](#)

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**Besides formal training, what are some things IT pros can do to keep up with new technologies? There is a plethora of possible answers and today we explore some of the top tips for keeping you IT skills current.**



With technology always changing and advancing, to stand still in the area of skills and knowledge is to lose ground and advantage. That's what makes it so important to keep your IT skills sharp, your knowledge fresh, and your eye on the technology horizon. In this post, we explore some ways to do these things that don't involve out-and-out training, be it in a classroom or online. These are all things that anyone can do with only modest investments of time and effort, and should become part of one's self-maintenance routine as an interested and dedicated IT professional.

## 5. Attend A Conference Or Seminar In Person

Nothing beats stepping out of the daily grind for a day or two, even if only once a year, to spend some time in the company of talented IT professionals with experiences and expertise to share. Sure, you can look for a conference in Las Vegas, or some other destination city (San Francisco, Washington, DC, New York City, and Miami are all popular conference hosting cities, as is my hometown of Austin, TX), but you can also find other, less glamorous learning opportunities and conferences in your hometown, or the nearest major metro area in your vicinity. Take some time to dig into a subject matter, sit in on some technical sessions, soak up some information, and make some professional contacts. This is often a great way to learn about exciting new tools, technologies, platforms, and so forth, with some chances to see them in action (or demonstrated, anyway) and talk to folks who've used them at work.

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## 4. Attend An Online Webinar

Increasingly, online webinars are THE way to gain exposure to and information about new products, platforms, and services. I'm a regular presenter for the [Spiceworks community online](#), so I know they host anywhere from half-a-dozen to a dozen online webinars monthly. In the last year, I've presented on unified communications, hyperconvergence, ruggedized hybrid PCs, Windows 10, and virtualized data warehouses. Topics and coverage are all over the place, at all levels of technical depth and sophistication. All you have to do is look around for topics of interest to you, and you'll find a treasure trove of webinars well worth attending. While most of them are free, you can also find for-a-fee offerings that will let you learn from leading lights in their fields. Tthe Online Training offerings from [WinSuperSite.com](#) are particularly compelling, in my recent personal experience, and include Business Intelligence, PowerShell Programming, Windows Enterprise deployment, and lots of other topics in the Windows Enterprise vein.

## 3. Join A Local Users Group Or Online Community

Whatever your technology platform or fancy might be, chances are pretty good you can find a user organization or an online community devoted to that subject. Thus, for example, in the Windows world, we find great user communities like the Windows Users Network ([WUGnet](#)) with local chapters all over the U.S. The VMware User Group community ([VMUG.com](#)) is the popular option for virtualization pros and PowerShell Community Groups ([powershellgroup.org](#)) can help you get in touch with other PowerShell pros in your area. Similar organizations come out of all kinds of IT specialties or focus areas, including Linux, database, information security, project management, IT governance, and on, and on. (Hint: search for "<subject> user group" or "<subject> user group <metro area>" to find something in your neighborhood.) Online, options are even more amazing, where user forums and other forms of online community abound for nearly every conceivable IT specialty and platform. (You can use a similar search technique for this stuff, too.)

When you find a user group or community, you'll also find them to be storehouses of useful, relevant information including tips on installation, troubleshooting, configuration, security, reading and training materials, certification, and lots, lots more. I blog on Enterprise Windows topics three times a week for TechTarget, and I have found the Windows Forums ([TenForums.com](#), [EightForums.com](#), and [SevenForums.com](#), in particular) to be the best general sources for news, information, fixes, and interesting trivia around. Things should work likewise for you, with whatever subjects and specialties you hold near and dear.

## 2. Read Whitepapers, Articles And Blogs

There's always more fodder for thought and learning online in many forms of reading material. Whitepapers often dig into technical subjects in enough depth to help stimulate learning, if not promote it outright. Lots of online publications, including Tom's IT Pro, but also [ZDnet](#), [InfoWorld](#), [ComputerWorld](#), and so on, provide topic-based whitepaper sign-up services, designed to bring interested readers together with vendors who've got related products, services and platforms to sell. Ironically, the websites [Light Reading](#), [Heavy Reading](#), and [Dark Reading](#), all provide ready access to technical material—some of great depth and breadth—across a wide range of computing and IT subjects (Dark Reading focuses on security news and technologies, but the others cover much of the IT industry in some form or fashion). Blog posts can also provide quick, personal snapshots for subjects of interest, with pointers to more detailed and comprehensive information abounding.

## 1. Share What You Know

It's often said that the best way to really learn something is to teach it to somebody else. Only by watching where others falter or have questions, then helping them along or providing (and properly framing answers), can you really get your mind around a subject. If you take the time and expend the energy to contribute to the body of knowledge, or to document various skills, you'll not only be helping others find their way into subjects of mutual interest, you'll also be improving your own skills and knowledge along the way—not to mention giving back to a community with which you presumably enjoy spending time and interacting. You can share what you know through blog posts, presentations at your local user group meeting or even within your own company's IT department. That's what got me started on what I do for a living today, which essentially focuses on finding topics of value, and then doing my best to absorb and deliver to others what that value might be. You can do it, too, on whatever scale or scope makes sense to you!

I hope you find some of these tips useful. This is a topic I think will be well worth revisiting from time to time, so if you can think of some tips or techniques I failed to mention, please share them in the comments below.