



## How to Gain a Competitive Edge in IT

**“Techies” who want to get better IT jobs have to stop letting themselves be seen as geeks who are introverted, isolated, out of touch, and out of the loop. Most IT professionals will be working for a business. The business does not want them to do their job because it’s “cool”. The business will hire them because the employers perceive that the techies can add value to the business and make it more successful. Those who want IT jobs need to understand effective communications with these people who will be their bosses.**

It’s not as easy for IT professionals to stand out in their field as many presume. [IT jobs](#) are highly competitive. And many people who want to get hired in IT jobs have to get hired by people who aren’t as “geeky” as they supposedly are — and they need to be able to relate to those people. [IT professionals](#) are still human beings, and the majority of them, if you were to probe their all-around intelligence, are not smarter than the average person except in their certain technological specialties. Therefore, as an IT professional, you should stop thinking of yourself as set apart — whether you think of yourself that way or other people have foisted that stereotyped image upon you.

In fact, the way to get the best IT jobs is to break the stereotypes that surround the technology profession. No, not all IT professionals are involved in World of Warcraft. No, not all IT professionals subsist on caffeine and sugar. No, not all IT professionals love hacking computer codes at the Pentagon. They don’t all have problems getting boyfriends or girlfriends. They don’t all like obnoxiously bombastic, unmelodic, alternative heavy rock music. In fact, some of them even enjoy sports.

Employers foremostly award IT jobs to people who can get along with other people and relate to them. You may be that way — but perhaps you are low-skilled when it comes to showing it forth. If you take measures as a “techie” to make yourself more accustomed to the daily human world, you will give yourself a competitive edge when going for a job.

Here are five basic tips for giving yourself that competitive edge in landing IT jobs.

1) Get trained in what you are not trained in — communications. Most techies — and most adult people for that matter — take communications for granted. After all, all but diseased or harmed children and adults, can talk and they talk every day. Most people are literate, too. Communications is easy, isn’t it? Not really. What if people were to scoff at you

and tell you that since they know how to use their cell phones or how to operate Microsoft Office, [technology jobs](#) must be easy? You would be inflamed with anger at an insult or you would laugh at them for being so stupid. The same thing applies to communications. If everyone were automatically skilled in communications, every salesman would be a millionaire, and everyone would be able to write a novel that sold like Stephen King’s. Many people tend to be insular, and their communications skills get clipped as a result. This holds especially for techies, who do engage in some significantly different thought patterns from the usual person. Techies can also get caught up talking in codes and jargon that few people know. IT professionals need to consider attending communication seminars, perhaps even taking full semester courses in communication classes at local universities.

2) Get yourself a mentor. Yes, that’s right. You don’t know it all. Find yourself a mentor from out of your fellow senior IT people, one who has already been there, done that with regards to working across disciplines and with people of different personalities and training. In IT or any serious profession, a mentor can be a person’s greatest asset. They have already been where you want to go, and are likely to have already done everything that you are doing. If they have made it that far in IT, they must have dealt with many people including managers and employers. They can help you learn how to navigate the often-turbulent water of the business world in which you work.

3) Learn to understand the business you work for, not just your job. How do your computer programs fit in to the big picture of the company’s direction? Why are you so important in the first place? How is the next piece of software you program, going to help your company? The people who are running the business where you work have done analyses, too— just of different things than you have. Get more involved with their ideas so they can appreciate more of yours.

4) Stop being an introvert. Yes, this is the one that might be



## IT Job Feature

the hardest of all for the techie. Other people outside of you and outside of your narrow clique of colleagues have ideas too. They have some different ideas from yours because they are habitually thinking about things that escape your notice as you toil away with computer codes. Interact with other people on a voluntary basis. Make yourself more interesting and personable to other people by both knowing “everything” about something (IT) and something about everything.

5) Become more educated. Just because you’re a techie doesn’t mean you can’t learn how to be useful in other ways. If you’re a techie who also has a degree in economics or an MBA, you make yourself a more versatile asset. You can more easily come up with IT solutions that have a broader business impact. Who’s more successful; you, or Bill Gates? Nuff said already.

So, if you want to have more of a chance at better IT jobs, expand yourself beyond the confines of your techie specialty.

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