(ISC)²®

Inspiring a Safe and Secure Cyber World

TOP TEN SERIES

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BUiLT

BLACKS UNITED IN LEADING TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL

How to Stay and Advance in Cybersecurity

Diversity in cybersecurity is instrumental in advancing the industry and creating a more secure world.

(ISC)^2 is proud to be a top resource to help professionals acquire the best skills they need to become information security leaders with the mission to support professionals by providing industry information, vast networking, collaboration opportunities, and development tools. We have the necessary **tips and resources** to help diverse professionals thrive in the industry and take their careers to the next level.

We know that it's essential for cybersecurity professionals to look like the people they serve and protect. Diversifying the industry improves online defenses and allows a space for different perspectives to contribute to the advancement of technology.

Our efforts have provided a diverse, equitable, and inclusive cybersecurity space for nearly 330,000 members, associates and candidates who serve in critical cyber, information, software, and infrastructure security roles.

As a part of this commitment, we have joined forces with Blacks United in Leading Technology® International, Inc. (**BUiLT**) to provide multiple Guides with proven methods that Black and diverse professionals use to get in, stay, and advance in cybersecurity.

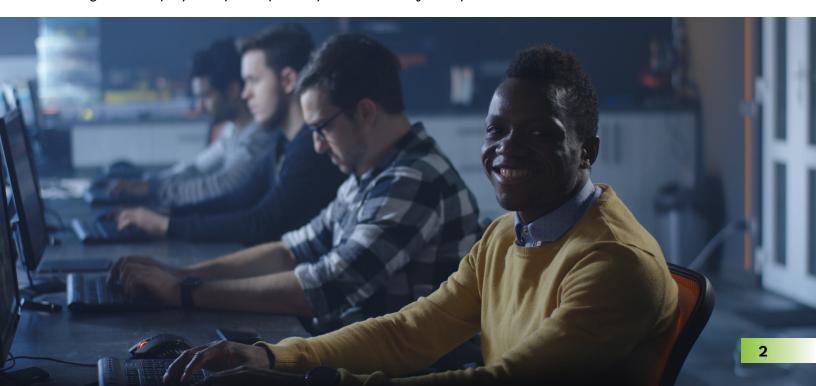# Congratulations! The hard part is done – or is it?

Through hard work, training, certification, and from professional networking, diverse technology professionals are landing lucrative careers in cybersecurity nearly every day. Plus, the need for cybersecurity professionals will be in demand worldwide for decades to come. But, the field continues to be predominantly male and Caucasian while underrepresented groups like women, Black, and Latinx professionals **make up a much lower percentage of the workforce**.

Now that you are in the cybersecurity profession, the next task is to stay and advance in your career. Regretfully, the path to stay and advance in tech for diverse technologists is not guaranteed.

Computer occupations make up one of the fastest-growing employment sectors in the United States, and the **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics** projects that the number of jobs in this area will increase three times faster than the average — and faster than many other fields in STEM. But Black, Latinx and Indigenous people remain under-represented in computing jobs. Black and Hispanic people make up almost 13% and 18% of the US workforce, but they hold only 7% and 8%, respectively, of the jobs in computing. (The US government considers 'Hispanic or Latino' an ethnicity and that people of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race.)

Let's face it. It is well documented that computer science fields have structural inclusion problems. It's hard enough to get the socioeconomic support to learn computer science and cybersecurity technologies, but once employed in these highly sought-after fields, new problems that limit growth often appear.

So if you are in cybersecurity and are looking to advance in your career, here are ten practical tips and strategies to employ today to expedite your career trajectory.

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BLACKS UNITED IN LEADING TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL

TIPS

on Staying & Advancing in

CYBERSECURITY

1.   Be Aware of Your Surroundings

All jobs are not equal, and employers vary dramatically in how they include and support diverse teams and employees. You are responsible for your career and this duty transcends past what your employer or immediate supervisors may plan for you. Remember, you have many firsts that come before your employer's needs, and one of which may be your ambition to excel as a cybersecurity professional beyond your current position.

From the employee's vantage point, the manager is many times synonymous with the employer - they are seen as one and the same. As such, that one person has an enormous influence on their team. And while many great employers figure out how to improve engagement levels on many fronts, the relationship between employee and supervisor has a huge influence.

Understand whether you feel and know that your supervisor treats you fairly and with respect.
There are several great online tools and questions to help you assess your own personal job satisfaction.

Appraise the company culture too. Does the company have a Statement on Diversity, an Ethics Policy, and ways for vendors and customers to air and resolve complaints? What do you read about your employer on GlassDoor and other sites which post reviews about company cultures?

Also understand whether the company is expanding, profitable, or is a sinking ship.

Lastly, observe and understand the team dynamics. Do you feel welcomed or do people exclude you?
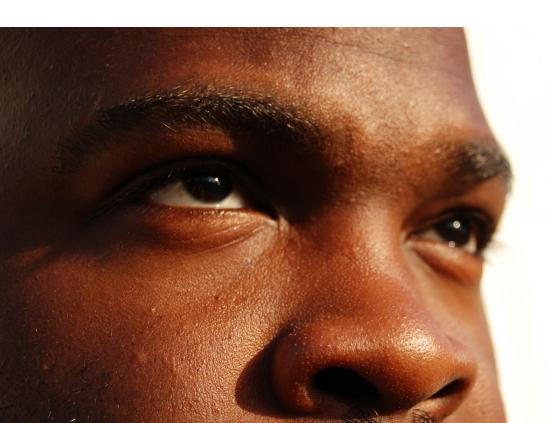
2.   Learn to Manage You

When things are not going well and you recognize a real potential that you may not stay with your current employer, first look at yourself.

Ask yourself, do you want to stay with this particular company or situation? Understand rules like Tip # 1 on **Succeeding in Corporate as an African American**, which applies to everyone, the company's culture is important, and you need to decide how can you and do you want to fit in.

In most cases you do want to stay, at least to maintain your earnings while you also work to improve the situation. One step in managing yourself is learning to not be impulsive and make moves that close off opportunities. You are responsible for supporting your income and almost everyone has experienced having a bad day, not being treated how they wanted, or feeling slighted at the workplace.

The person you can influence the most to stay employed is yourself. Have candid conversations with your supervisor, or if needed, others in management or human resources in a positive way to ask what you can do to improve your situation. Be open-minded. Ask for feedback from peers inside and outside of your company.

Another technique to stay in the cybersecurity industry is to make yourself invaluable to your supervisor, the team, and to the company. Volunteer and ask to work on the top teams, the best projects, and to solve the toughest problems. Willingly accept new assignments and tasks. Take on roles helping with the company social, or the team holiday party, and donate your time with the nonprofit organizations that your company supports.

3.   Develop a Support System

Do not assume that you can continue working at a company or within the profession just by doing good work. Much of people's life occurs working with and for others, and the interaction with the people you work with is as important as your technical performance.

Develop positive interactions with your peers on your team. Find ways, where possible, to have mutually beneficial relationships with your peers. Help each other out in meeting work goals. Consider accepting or inviting your peers to social activities associated with work.

Seek and develop relationships with others outside of your immediate team within the same company. Be open to relationships with people in management outside of your immediate chain of command. Having associates in the human resources department are beneficial to obtain too. A best source of support comes from obtaining an advocate in your company who helps you by working to help you succeed or advance in the company.

Mentors, often people you find outside of the company, can open doors and shape careers for entry-level cybersecurity professionals. Mentors from all levels of the industry can provide opportunities, guidance, and invaluable feedback to help you grow in the field.

Seek mentors through internships, during your employment, and from networking. Whether they're on your team or hold a leadership role, it's essential to ask your mentors many questions as they can provide support and teach you how to navigate the workforce.

• See, *Getting Into Cybersecurity*, Tip #5: Take Advantage of the Power of Mentorships

4. Perform Good Work

Never lose sight that to stay employed at any company you need to perform well. Many people say that Black, women, and other diverse professionals need to work 2x, 3x, and 4x times harder than their counterparts to stay employed in tech. While we at BUiLT and (ISC)[2] don't want to promote this real-world myth as being acceptable, like most urban legends, these beliefs are rooted based on many histories of hard truths.

Be sure to cover the basics of having good attendance, timely responses to business inquiries, being a person of your word, following the employer's policies and procedures, and so many other minimum requirements to stay employed.

Most companies have annual performance reviews and there you should always earn satisfactory or better reviews. And if your company does not have annual performance reviews, be proactive and conduct a self-review and send it to your supervisor. Maintain an open dialogue and ask periodically, "How has my work performance been?" and "What can I do to improve?"

5. Build and Develop Good Relationships

It's an absolute requirement to advance within an existing company to maintain and build good relationships. And good relationships will help you advance beyond your current employment situation and your network, if you have cultivated it, should invite you into other opportunities over your career.

It is not inappropriate to know whether your supervisor is married, if they have children, if they have a religious affiliation, what political party they support, or what college or universities they attended. You need a good relationship with your immediate supervisor, and it would be unusual that after working and supporting your boss for months and years that you would not know some of their personal traits.

Seek and find professional allies and confidants throughout your career. Join technology and business social groups and find people with similar interests in cybersecurity with whom you relate.

Selectively share more about yourself to invite others into your personal circle, and more importantly, into theirs. Follow the tips to get to know your immediate supervisor on some personal level, and make sure they're familiar with who you are as well. Trust is earned, and you will have to earn the trust of others by being trustworthy and by sharing personal aspects about yourself with others.

6. Demonstrate Added Value and Be a Resource for Others

Everyone benefits when the company and teams achieve their goals. One way to advance in cybersecurity is to be a person who is recognized for being a resource for others.

Find ways to help your supervisor with their tasks and duties. Willingly back up your teammates to help ensure they meet their project tasks. Volunteer to keep the team notes, write up the post mortem findings, or come early to set up the projector and conferencing materials.

The more you volunteer and take on extra tasks the more you increase your **Leadership Power**. Even if you do not have the legitimate, coercive, or reward power that leaders possess, you can gain referent, charismatic, informational, and moral power simply by working willingly to be a resource for others.

7. Increase Your Technical and Professional Knowledge

Growth is essential to securing higher positions in cybersecurity. Because of this, professionals should learn new tools and software they can apply to their roles and the real world. Due to the fast rate of technological advancement, gaining experience through research and certification courses can help you get where you want to be.

Asking questions in the workplace is a great way to learn, too. Colleagues may be more knowledgeable in other areas, and vice versa. Asking questions can help you become more equipped to address issues in your role and develop more skills.
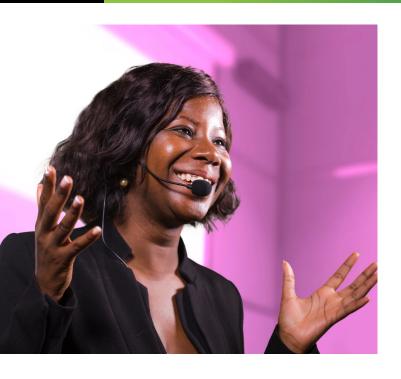
We all know that experience is essential to gaining success in the field. Using your cybersecurity knowledge in a company setting or for personal projects can be an excellent way to accelerate your skill development. You can also strengthen your skills by acquiring cyber-focused certifications and certificates like the ones offered by (ISC)[2].

Learning new technology, which is constantly changing, is key to advancing in the industry. Continuing to acquire new skills throughout your career will help you become a go-to person and subject matter expert for your organization.

(ISC)[2]s mission is to support professionals by providing industry information, vast networking, collaboration opportunities, and development tools.

• See, *Student Pathways*, Tip #6: Learn the Industry Jargon and Motifs

8. Seek and Obtain Technical and Professional Recognition

Certainly, you must continue obtaining technical certifications, but industry-wide recognition is important to make your personal career "employment-proof." Once you obtain industry-wide recognition, you can worry less about keeping your job, as new opportunities then start coming your way.

Technical and professional recognition comes from public speaking, entering technical paper competitions, winning hackathons, and by doing good deeds for society. Here again, nonprofit organizations provide great avenues to speak, teach, volunteer, and lead in ways that give you professional recognition.

Many cybersecurity professionals and influencers blog regularly on technical topics and have their own personal technical websites. These personal technical websites, unlike personal Facebook profiles, highlight a person's technical and business successes. Managing your LinkedIn profile is also important to obtain increased technical and professional recognition.

9. Expect the Unexpected and Keep Your Options Open

Advancement in any profession is not always linear, and new opportunities are naturally laden with both excitement and fear. As an example, people often move to smaller, less profitable companies to take on larger responsibilities or to gain an important job position/title.

You may start in a technical role but gain interest in a non-technical role soon after. Some technical and non-technical career opportunities include programming, graphic design, cyber forensics, cyber mitigation, application security, coding, and more.

If advancement to you means more money then you should consider pivoting in cybersecurity sales roles, working as a principal at a growing, new startup, or by starting a technology with some of your colleagues.

If you master Tips # 1 – 8, and you get caught unexpectedly with an expected job termination, your past experience, relationships, and industry certifications and recognitions should easily carry you into a new, better career opportunity.

10.   Lift as You Climb

Sadly, even with such a staggering need for cybersecurity professionals, there remains a clear imbalance between the needs of the industry and barriers to entry. So, as you succeed in the industry, be sure to mentor and help others.

Helping others can be as simple as providing regular check-ins, and not being part of a formal mentorship program. If you're a hiring manager, make sure you share best practices around recruiting and biases in hiring and promotion. And, always promote and amplify the voices of diverse individuals in your company and the cybersecurity community.

It's a proven adage that it's better to give than to receive, and the personal and professional benefits from helping others are unlimited. The experience of helping others almost always provides a mirror of best practices and techniques that you can use to help yourself. Be sure you lift as you climb, for doing so gives you added gifts to launch your career even further.

Blacks United in Leading Technology® International **(BUiLT)**, founded in September 2020, increases the representation and participation of Black people in tech. And as we hold the **Three Doors Open**, others can follow in too.

BUiLT's 2022 annual survey reconfirmed what Black professionals seek most:

Professional networking

Jobs

Technical training/certification opportunities to advance their careers in tech

BUiLT's growing worldwide footprint meets those needs with programming on career and professional development, technology training, and volunteer opportunities to hone leadership skills.

Our partnerships with organizations like (ISC)² are vital to the industry's success at filling the hundreds of thousands of technology jobs with people who bring creativity and diversity of thought in today's business problems are solved.

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How to Get into Cyber © 2023 – (Getting In)

Student Pathways Guide from Class to Your First Gig © 2023 – (Student Pathways)

You Already Have the Skills and the Talent: A Guide to Switching to Cybersecurity Mid-Career © 2023 – (Career Switchers)

How to Stay and Advance in Cybersecurity © 2023 – (Staying & Advancing)