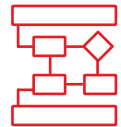
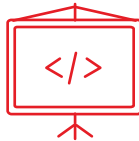
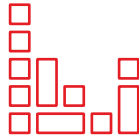
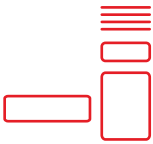


The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Getting a Job in Tech



By 2020, the US will see 1.4 million computer specialist job openings, but more than 70% of those will remain unfilled because our universities aren't currently teaching the required skills.

— GARTNER

INTRODUCTION

“The Social Network” made hacking and startup culture thrilling. Since then, careers in tech have become desirable, maybe even sexy.

Six-figure salaries, craft beer on tap, casual dress codes, stock options and IPOs, all make up the many reasons why a career in tech seems so attractive.

To outsiders, the tech world may seem mystifying, or even intimidating. It's fast-paced, fueled by jargon, and people talk of funding in amounts so colossal it'll make your head spin. Many shy away, believing that without a computer science degree or insider connections, getting a job in tech is out of the question.

Don't be fooled. Getting past the perceived velvet ropes, no matter what job you're currently in, is completely within reach. Consider this: By 2020, the US will see 1.4 million computer specialist job openings, but more than 70% of those will remain unfilled because our universities aren't currently teaching the skills required ([Gartner](#)).

While there are plenty of job openings in technology, there is also a large-scale skills gap, causing quite a stir in the bid for talent. For the person looking to break into tech, it may very well be a question of picking up the appropriate skill set.

So, for the absolute beginner considering changing their career, we're giving you a high-level view of what working in tech actually means. We will cover the six always in-demand roles, and the five steps you can take to start planning for a smooth transition. By the end, you should have enough information to steer yourself in a direction that will lead to fruitful results.

The world is changing at a rapid pace, with technology as both a constant and a catalyst.

CHAPTER 1

The Tech Industry *is* the Whole Economy

Social media, mobile, the web, and big data have influenced everything from the way we socialize with our friends to how we get a ride to the airport. And often times when we think about careers in tech, we tend to narrow focus in on the poster children of startups — AirBnb, Snapchat, Uber.

The truth is, the technology industry — also referred to as high-tech, the tech economy, and just ‘tech’ — is no longer separated from the rest of the economy. Consider this: A website is a prerequisite for most businesses these days. E-commerce is ubiquitous. A mobile app is a necessary utility in the service industry. Marketers have to find their customers online as they search or spend time on Facebook. The traditional stalwarts of our economy — the GE, American Express, and L’Oreal’s of the world are fighting the young startups for talent with the skills to build and manage their digital assets and tactics.

What this means for you: You are in a position of total advantage. Your career options are not limited to startups or tech cities. If the roller coaster ride of a startup isn’t quite your cup of tea, and stability at established corporations is more your gig, you’ll still be wanted. If you’d rather be in Denver, Colorado or Atlanta, Georgia, there will be tech jobs waiting for you. With the right attitude, the appropriate skill sets and a job-ready portfolio, the opportunities are yours for the taking.

In the next chapter, we will cover the roles that are most often in demand and the skills you will need to get them. One quick note: We won’t lie, the skills required and a job-ready portfolio is a prerequisite for landing that first interview. The good news is, you can achieve all that in 12 short weeks — we’ll show you how in the final section of this guide.

Encouraged? Read on.

The 6 Core Disciplines of the Tech Industry

(with data from Burning Glass)

We're not going to attempt to cover every role that exists within the tech industry. Instead, we've made the choice to streamline for the absolute beginner, some of the key, always "in-demand" roles any tech organization will need.

These roles are often indispensable, command a higher than average starting pay, possess highly transferable skill sets, and are upwardly mobile. Most importantly, these roles are easily accessible to the career changer with little to no background in digital, who can break into the field in as little as 12 weeks.

They are:

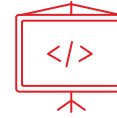
- ♦ Web Development
- ♦ Mobile Development
- ♦ Product Management
- ♦ Data Analytics
- ♦ User Experience Design
- ♦ Digital Marketing

STUDENT SNAPSHOT



I started at Salesforce as an intern, became a junior engineer, and am now a senior engineer leading a major open-sourced project. On the job, I learned how to make the web accessible for all users including people who are blind. Now that I code and build things every day, I'm extremely fortunate to say that I love what I do. I mentor a front-end coding class at San Quentin State Prison with The Last Mile and get to see students experience the same joys and frustrations I went through at GA. I'm excited to see how coding influences their outcomes.

DONIELLE BERG is a Senior UX Engineer at Salesforce and a General Assembly Web Development Immersive Alum '13



67,250

Job Counts for the Last 12 Months

3%

Change from 2011

\$87,217

Average Advertised Salary



PRO TIP

Get started learning HTML, CSS, and JavaScript with our free coding tool, [Dash](#) or explore coding classes at [General Assembly](#).

1. Web Development

What it is. While designers create the professional 'look and feel' of a website or web app, web developers generate the code that makes it work. The technology that supports e-commerce sites, blogs, social networks, and video streaming service are built by developers. Arguably, web development is the most in-demand in the programming space, as the term can cover a vast range of responsibilities and functions.

What you'll do. There are two kinds of web developers. Front-end web developers code what the end user sees and interacts with, like the design and appearance of the web page. Back-end developers build and maintain the technology that enables the user-facing side to function. As such, you'll give life to the ideas of the web designer and figure out how — using code — to get the site to behave as intended.

Skills you need. Web developers work with programming languages — instructions written in code that computers understand. There are many programming languages in use, and they all serve unique purposes, but few developers need to know them all.

Front-end web developers should start with HTML and CSS as they are the two most basic. These languages are used to create static web pages — the ones that look the same to everyone who visits. You'll eventually want to learn JavaScript and JQuery, languages that bring animation, games, apps, interactivity and other dynamic effects to life.

Back-end developers should start with Ruby, PHP, and Python. Some are best for high traffic websites while others are popular because they require fewer lines of code for each action. As a web developer, you'll interact with business stakeholders, user experience designers, and database engineers, so having good communication skills is important. Understanding business goals and the marketing needs of a project will help, too.

Career prospects. Computer technology changes in the blink of an eye, so web developers (and all tech professionals) must work hard to stay sharp. Still, advances in technology will make web dev skills an ongoing need in the corporate world, government, higher education, and in the nonprofit sector.

A typical career path might be to move from front-end to back-end development before transitioning to Full Stack (meaning you can build a website from start to finish, using front-end and back-end skills).

You might also move to mobile app development, product management, user experience, engineering, or a leadership position — like engineer lead and eventually CTO. Keep in mind that a title at one firm can mean something entirely different at another.

[See current job openings.](#)



41,032

Job Counts for the Last 12 Months

135%

Change from 2011

\$111,380

Average Advertised Salary

2. Mobile Development

What it is. Consumers interact very differently with laptops and desktops than with tablets, smartphones, smartwatches, wearables and other digital devices. And as people go more mobile, market demand surges for apps to meet their needs. In fact, today's consumers are spending over **85% of their smartphone usage interacting with native apps.** It's interesting that while many established mobile — only businesses have added web interfaces (hello, Instagram), many startups have no web presence whatsoever. Today, entire businesses are based on apps.

Long story short? There's an immediate and ongoing need for app developers. That's why talented web developers have identified the lack of mobile dev talent as an excellent opportunity to take on a career makeover. The trouble is that supply cannot keep up with demand.

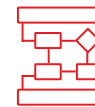
What you'll do. Employers and clients typically start with an idea of what their customers have an appetite for or are asking to do. The job of the mobile developer is to write code that brings the idea to life. You'll test it, tweak it and prepare the app for release to the public. When bugs are found — and don't worry, bugs are always found — it'll be your job to adjust the code and release a new version, making the experience that much better.

Skills you need. Though it's not a prerequisite, many mobile app developers have transitioned from web development since some of the necessary coding languages and soft skills are the same. You will need a different set of skills depending on which platform you're working on — iOS, Android, or Windows. For



PRO TIP

Get started learning mobile development with [iOS courses](#) at General Assembly or our [Android 101](#) series.



40,752

Job Counts for the Last 12 Months

7%

Change from 2011

\$106,471

Average Advertised Salary

iOS, you will program in Swift and (possibly) Objective-C. You must understand Xcode, the integrated development environment (IDE) for iOS, and the iOS software development kit (SDK). For Android, you'll program in Java and XML and must master Android Studio and Google Play. For Windows, you'll program in C++, C#, and JavaScript. You must be familiar with the Visual Studio (the IDE), and the Windows SDK.

Career prospects. In July of 2015, [Apple announced that the App Store was responsible for creating and supporting 1.9 million US jobs](#), nearly 75% of which are attributable to the mobile development community building apps for iOS. They've also created 1.2 million jobs in Europe and 1.4 million jobs in China. And that's not counting the jobs created due to Android or Windows apps. Needless to say, mobile developers do not need to worry about job placement for the foreseeable future.

Bonus points: Salaries are slightly higher than with web development since mobile skills are in short supply and you can pretty much work from anywhere as long as it has a good internet connection. With experience, you can explore other areas of the tech industry like software engineering, or you may want to focus on leading development teams in a particular programming language or industry.

[See current job openings.](#)

3. Product Management

What it is. Product management is often confused with project management, product marketing, and a variety of other similar sounding titles. So to be clear, that place where business, technology and user experience meet? That's product management.

As a product manager, you are the mini-CEO of your product. It's your responsibility to identify market opportunities and define the product being built so that outcomes provide an acceptable ROI. You'll have your fingers on the pulse of marketplace demands through a multitude of channels including customer interviews, user testing, and data analysis.

You'll distill market insights into an implementable strategy and delivers on it by leading a product team to bring it to life.



PRO TIP

Learn more about how to get started in product management on [General Assembly's blog](#) or [take a class](#).

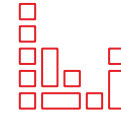
What you'll do. In addition keeping a strong pulse on the market and customers, product managers are typically the go-to person for anything and everything concerning a product. You'll work cross-functionally to conduct market research, glean insights from data, evaluate the competition, and lead a fluid team of project managers, designers, developers, and UX experts who will roll on and off as needed to deliver on a product that a marketplace will love. You'll iteratively define and refine the product functionality, so you can ship the right product at the right time to the right customers. You're also the primary product evangelist, and your enthusiasm should be contagious.

Skills you need. You'll be in charge of building and maintaining a product roadmap, defining clear product requirements, communicating broadly and tracking the performance of your product in the market. Research and validation may involve competitive analysis, customer interviews, MVPs and A/B tests. You'll define KPIs and then track the results by interacting with tools like Google Analytics, Mixpanel, and even some SQL. You are likely to apply lean and agile principles to building big products one iteration at a time. base engineers, so having good communication skills is important. Understanding business goals and the marketing needs of a project will help, too.

Career prospects. Because product management is critical to the success or failure of a product, salaries are typically above \$100,000. Over time, a solid product manager will develop skills to lead larger teams, and have the ability to contextualize his product against a larger business strategy.

A successful product manager will typically transition into an executive leadership role. If a product manager doesn't find himself in a CPO (Chief Product Officer) role, he will inevitably find himself as CEO, CTO or even CMO. Some product managers also find that their skill sets allow them to springboard into developing their own business ideas becoming startup founders and entrepreneurs.

[See current job openings.](#)



41,000

Job Counts for the Last 12 Months

372%

Change from 2011

\$105,540

Average Advertised Salary



PRO TIP

Explore data courses at [General Assembly](#).

4. Data Analytics

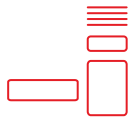
What it is. Too many businesses are excited by Big Data (or just lots of data) but have no idea what to do with it. That's where data analysts and data scientists come in. Data analysts organize and collect data from a variety of sources, evaluate it, derive insights from it, and make actionable recommendations to drive the business. If, when you look at a spreadsheet, you can see a story unfold (rather than rows and columns of numbers), then a data analyst may be the right career choice for you.

What you'll do. Data analysts typically work in teams wrangling data sets, build dashboards to help the business keep informed on business health, set up A/B experiments to make effective decisions and create data models to predict an outcome. You'll communicate data-driven insights to key stakeholders, product owners, marketers, designers, and others who will use that information to optimize their deliverables or plans. Your work can help employers accurately allocate resources, set prices and modify how a supply chain operates.

Skills you need. As a baseline, you'll rely on core critical thinking and analytical skills because you'll do a lot of number crunching. Data is precise, so you'll need to pay attention to detail and have decent communication skills so you can verbally and visually convey complex findings. From a technical aspect, you'll learn how to work with reporting packages (like Microsoft Excel and Business Objects), database analytics tools (Hadoop, SQL, and Pandas) and have some basic coding skills (such as XML, Python, or Javascript).

Career prospects. How's this for opportunity? **McKinsey reports that by 2018, the US will struggle with a 50-60% gap between how many analysts there are and how many are needed.** Globally, this gap is even wider. Jobs are out there, and you'll find plenty of options down the road as you hone your skills. Data analysts go on to become business analysts and data scientists, and, eventually, find leadership roles in data and business intelligence.

[See current job openings.](#)



29,825

Job Counts for the Last 12 Months

15%

Change from 2011

\$99,177

Average Advertised Salary



PRO TIP

Learn more about UX design at [General Assembly](#).

5. UX Design

What it is. UX design is a discipline that determines the interaction experience of a user with a website, app, device, or piece of software. It's all about anticipating a user's needs when using your product, ensuring an intuitive, impactful, and even delightful experience.

What you'll do. As a UX designer, you'll use a mix of user research, information architecture, and graphic design skills to create products that are beautiful and simple to navigate. You'll think critically about a user's goals and intentions when they are using your product and how they can be better served through design. Your job is to learn how to best help businesses build higher quality experiences for their customers. You'll be doing quantitative and qualitative user research and compiling your findings to inform your design choices and stakeholders, identify areas of opportunities and points of friction and, of course, design user interfaces and experiences for your product using wireframes and prototypes.

Skills you need. To understand user behavior, you'll get familiar with web analytics tools like Google Analytics and KISSmetrics. In quantitative research, many UX designers rely on Survey Monkey, Usabilla, Mechanical Turk, and the aptly named UserTesting. When it comes to live testing—where potential users are using (and possibly struggling) with your product—you'll need to know how to conduct an objective set of research protocols, have excellent observation and communication skills and a whole lot of empathy.

For wireframe creation and prototyping you'll probably learn Adobe Photoshop, Balsamiq Mockups, Axure or Sketch. Other tools you may come across are Omnigraffle, UXPin, Invision, Axure, and Moqups. While UX designers don't need coding experience to succeed, it certainly doesn't hurt. Finally, a UX designer needs to be a good communicator given that you'll not only need to understand what a user is going through, but also communicate your design ideas to your product and engineering teams.

Career prospects. Fact: Companies that invest in great design outperform the S&P 500 by 228%. That's great news for UX Designers who will have a wide-open market ahead of them. Add hospitals, re-

tailers, manufacturing, fashion, and ad agencies to the list of large and small companies needing UX Design and you'll see that jobs are everywhere, not just in digital districts of New York and San Francisco. There is much runway in upward mobility in the field of UX design given that large projects are typically handled by UX teams rather than a single UX designer. The types of managerial roles will depend on the company you are with, going high up to the C-suite as a Chief Experience Officer.

[See current job openings.](#)

STUDENT SNAPSHOT



I was always very creative and artistic—even as a little kid. I knew I was going to do something related to the arts. I was also strong in math and science, so I didn't want to do graphic design. I wanted to do something that was somewhat technical. I've been drawing, making stuff with my dad's tools since I was little. It's this passion that led me to industrial design and now, UX design.

KARA BRESSIE is a UX and Interaction Designer at RepairPal and a General Assembly UX Design Immersive Alum 2013



45,991

Job Counts for the Last 12 Months

145%

Change from 2011

\$76,783

Average Advertised Salary

6. Digital Marketing

What it is. Digital marketing is a discipline that leverages digital channels to acquire, engage, convert and retain customers. This includes search engine marketing and optimization, online advertising, social media, mobile, video etc. It differs from traditional marketing in that it requires you to have some technical know-how regarding the platforms you can use.

Most critically, it allows you to analyze its effectiveness and allows you to optimize accordingly, in near real time. After all, the marketer's job is to fundamentally sell, at a strong ROI.

What you'll do. Because digital marketing covers a spectrum of channels (mainly Search, Advertising, Email Marketing, Social Media, Mobile), what you'll do depends on your area of expertise or focus, and on the needs of your employers. Most digital marketers will find themselves wearing one or all of the following hats: executing marketing campaigns, managing its performance, optimizing on a campaign or reporting back on the campaign's effectiveness.



PRO TIP

Get started learning about digital marketing at [HubSpot Academy](#) or take a marketing class at [General Assembly](#).

Skills you need. While going deep and becoming a channel expert is likely where you'll head as a digital marketer, you will be successful in your role with a broad understanding of how the channels all work together. After you choose the channel you want to hone in on, you will likely start getting familiar with the various products and tools you will need to enable you to do your job. For example, a paid advertising expert will want to get to know Facebook's advertising solutions really well, and know how to use Google Adwords. You'll also need a familiarity with product management, engineering, customer support, and sales so that you can connect the dots in the customer journey or the sales funnel. The key to success in this role is embracing data—knowing how to read dashboards and derive insights from it is critical. To that end, you'll want to have strong proficiencies in the analytics tools your company uses. Having a working knowledge of front-end development skills like HTML and CSS will upgrade you to a “full stack marketer.” The field is always evolving, so you'll need the passion and flexibility to change with it.

Career prospects. Developing and refining your skills is essential to staying relevant in such a fast-paced business. Those who stay up-to-date will find that their career prospects are vast, and promotions are swift. Experienced professionals have dynamic and diverse trajectories: while some choose to become deep experts in core digital marketing competencies including Paid Media, Social Media or Content Marketing, others go broad and take on the management and leadership path, either at a business or with a service-based business such as agencies. Whichever path you take, make sure you acquire the business know-how needed to do work that gets results.

[See current job openings.](#)

So ask yourself: Which role type speaks to your personality type, dreams, and aspirations? What business challenges are you up for solving? What type of work do you find yourself passionate about on a daily basis? Hopefully, this guide gives you enough to start honing on some possibilities so you can zero in more on the opportunities.

The key to choosing a career that's right for you is to select one that you'll love for many years to come.

Changing careers may seem daunting but with the proper planning, as the next section explains, getting there can be easier than it seems.

STUDENT SNAPSHOT



After pursuing a master's degree and teaching career in painting, I found myself in a catch 22. I wasn't able to get an adjunct professor position until I started showing my work, but I needed to earn a living to show my work. I was nannying on the side until a pivotal moment when I realized that I needed a change. A friend referred me to General Assembly, where I researched all the Immersive programs designed for career-changers. I learned that UX design is about working with people in intuitive ways (like teaching undergrads) and realized that this career path would fit my personality best. It was a logical and functional way to apply my passion for aesthetics.

AMANDA INNIS is a Visual/Web Designer at Plum Alley and a General Assembly UX Design Immersive Alum 2015

4 Steps to a Seamless Career Change

Think you've picked a profession that you want to switch careers to, with good reasons to boot? Congratulations, that's your first big step. Next, we're going to outline how to develop a plan for this life transition.

Step 1: Discover What It's Really Like

A career change is a life change. Your first step is to make sure you explore what your future career aspiration is really like. But with plenty of free and low-cost ways to start getting a pulse for what it's like, there's no excuse not to. Here are a few ideas:

- ♦ Go to job aggregator sites such as www.indeed.com and do a search for the roles you are interested in. Scan the job descriptions and take note of the roles and responsibilities, the skills required and even what the day-to-day is like. Also, make a note of the companies that are hiring for the role -- this should also start giving you an idea the types of companies that hire for the role.

STUDENT SNAPSHOT



It took me two years in total. I started learning on my own through online resources. I built up enough of a skill set when I started asking my friends if they needed websites. I realized that I wanted to do this—that it was a big passion. I would stay up super late at night and hours would fly by because I would spend hours coding.

It was hard to make the decision to join General Assembly's Web Development Immersive. I am in my late 20s, and it was scary to quit my career as an event planner in the nonprofit industry and start from scratch. It took a little bit of work to open myself up to being a beginner again. I had to relearn how to fail and let myself trust my instructors and peers. It was a mental and emotional investment. But it was worth it to reinvent myself and pursue a career that I now love.

DONIELLE BERG is a Senior UX Engineer at Salesforce and a General Assembly Web Development Immersive Alum '13

STUDENT SNAPSHOT



It took me two years between the last day of my career in real estate and my first day as a product manager. While that may seem like a long time, it's pretty quick in the grand scheme of things.

At first, I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I reached out to a career coach who helped me explore options in tech. Through a series of conversations, I realized that I was interested in product management and that I would need to focus on developing some technical skills. I started by taking free online courses. That was good exposure, but I didn't come away with a strong understanding of how everything worked. That's when I decided to do some in-person learning and signed up for General Assembly's part-time front-end web development course so that I could take engineering courses after work.

My career change process, from that point, was gradual. As I learned after-hours, I transitioned from a sales to a marketing role and then a role in website optimization and testing. Eventually, I landed in a product management role—all the while, I built a mobile app called Bar Roulette that has been featured in numerous media outlets. And yes, there were naysayers who advised me against transitioning. But I kept developing the skills I needed to achieve my goal, and now, here I am doing exactly what I want to do—product management.

TYLER SWARTZ is a Product Manager at Tripping and a General Assembly Frontend Web Development Alum 2014 and iOS Development Alum 2015

- ♦ Use Eventbrite and MeetUp.com to look up events related to the field you're interested in changing into. Attend a handful and start chatting up someone who is already doing it.
- ♦ Career coaches are great sounding boards to validate if the roles you are interested in might be a good fit for your personality. They can be costly, but initial consultations are often free.
- ♦ Talk to people who have walked the walk. Don't know any? Just [ping the team](#) at General Assembly (we'll be happy to introduce you to some awesome career changing alumni). While you're at it, check out the [General Assembly campus calendar](#) for free and low-cost introductory sessions.

With some thoughtful first steps, it may be one of the most rewarding changes of your life. To help you kickstart your research, we've asked a few General Assembly alums to share stories and tips from their experiences.

Step 2: Decide How You Will Pick Up the Skills

Like all big moves, you should develop a concrete plan for how you might get there. After all, picking up a brand new set of skills requires time and money. Ask yourself: How quickly do you want to get there? That should help you determine which path you will likely want to take.

Three Ways to Pick Up Those Tech Skills

Self-Study

This is the no-supervision, DIY route with online videos, books, and tutorials. It's the most cost-effective option, but also, the most time-consuming. The good news is you can do this all on your own time and pace. The bad news is you're on your own when you run into problems and have to hustle to piece together a portfolio. This option is great for someone who is highly motivated, disciplined, and wants absolute flexibility in learning. What's also great about this option is you don't have to quit your day job while learning. You may, however, be forced to give up a bustling social life on nights or weekends.

PRO TIP: Make sure you finish your course by ruthlessly prioritizing a dedicated amount of hours every week.

Yes... that includes prioritizing over your social life.

Getting an Advanced Degree at a University

This is that proven path our parents know — revered academia that allows you to stick that masters or doctorate degree suffix after your name. It looks great on the resume and you become part of an alumni network, especially valuable if you are enrolled in a prestigious institution. However, this option will set you back by 1-2 years and burn a hole in your wallet in the sum of five to six digits. Ultimately, a return on investment could take years. You will also be without income while you are getting your degree. This option is great for someone who holds academic prestige in high regard.

PRO TIP: Make sure you enroll in a school that has a proven record of producing a curriculum that teaches the latest skills and techniques for the tech industry, resulting in a polished portfolio that will make you job-ready.

Enrolling at an Educational Institution with Practical Training Programs

This is the talk of the education world — schools that are laser-focused on teaching skills that will kickstart someone's career in the shortest amount of time possible. In the case of General Assembly, the curriculum is designed for adult learning, is hands-on, highly iterative, and taught by top practitioners. Compared to an advanced degree, a program such as General Assembly's cost between US \$12k-\$14 and takes about 12 weeks to prime a student from zero to one, with a polished portfolio. The school also has a formal "Outcomes" program that works closely with getting graduates ready-for-hire and with hiring partners looking for talent. Enrolling in a school like General Assembly allows you to tap into its network of alumni and instructors, which will eventually play an important role in molding your career path. Like the university option, you will be without income while you are at school if you're enrolled in an Immersive program. This option is great for people who want to cut to the chase, in the least amount of time possible.

PRO TIP: Make sure that you are enrolling in a school that is licensed by the state so you are protected by fair consumer practices (i.e. properly trained instructors, recourse for money back should the school shut down etc). General Assembly is consistently licensed by the state or country it operates in.

Step 3: Plan the Funding

Career changes don't come free, but the payoff is great. With careful planning, they won't break the bank, either. How you learn your skills will determine how much money you will need. Now, add your living expenses during the time of study and another 60–180 days¹ thereafter. If you choose the self-study option, funding is likely less of a concern.

Do you have the savings to tide you through this? Is it necessary to apply for a loan? Use credit cards? Borrow from family members?

Funding is very personal, as this General Assembly alumni knows from experience.

This probably isn't something folks want to hear, but if you're not rich, you'll have to make sacrifices. I didn't go out to happy hour and ate rice & beans for three months, but I kept telling myself it was temporary and would eventually be worth it... and it was. —DONIELLE BERG

Other options to consider if you are considering going the path of Educational Institutions

- ♦ Scholarships: Scholarships can be found everywhere including for programs at educational institutions offering practical training. In 2015, 83 career-changers received scholarships through General Assembly's [Opportunity Fund](#).
- ♦ Merit-based fixed-rate loans: Not all loans are made equal. Need a loan? Make sure they are fixed-rate, merit-based loans with easy repayment terms. A good admissions officer can help you with that.

¹ 90% of General Assembly graduates are placed in a job after 60 days. 99% are placed in a job after 180 days.

Step 4: Rebrand Yourself

Work on a narrative for your transformation so you'll be job-ready and marketable for that brand new career. Here's how to manage it.

1. **Develop a narrative for your shifting personal brand.** Take stock of your transferable skill set from previous professions and consider how they will apply to your next role. Attention to detail, communications skills, team management skills are some of the skills that will translate well in most tech roles.

In addition, changing a career is an impressive undertaking, so play up your career change as the strength it is. Employers and hiring managers—like those who frequently recruit General Assembly alums—value the time and effort put into making a career switch. Here's why:

HIRING MANAGER SNAPSHOTS



I have found career-changers to be awesome. I could easily hire a recent grad or experienced tech worker, but career-changers bring a perspective to the table

that nobody else has—years of time developing soft skills and learning how to advance. When I hire career-changers out of General Assembly, I actively look for individuals who could rise up within a few years.

ANSHEY BHATTIA, Founder at Verbal Plus Visual and Employer of General Assembly Grads



When I hire anyone, I look at more than their resumes, education, and career histories. I also look at hobbies and side projects to understand how candidates

think and what they enjoy doing. Many people discover their passions later in life and instead of sticking to their initial career trajectories, decide to switch gears. It's a sign that the candidate really loves what he or she is doing and is motivated to learn.

JEANNIE YANG, Chief Product and Design Officer at Smule and Employer of General Assembly Grads

2. **Build a portfolio with tangible examples of your work.**

Depending on which route you choose, you should constantly be creating work to add to your professional portfolio. You can do this by picking up freelance jobs from websites like [Upwork](#) or approaching nonprofits to do some pro bono work.

If you choose to take the path of an educational institution that offers practical training, ensure that a polish-perfect portfolio is part of the course's outcome.

3. **Keep your LinkedIn profile updated.** LinkedIn, after all, is the new resume. Be sure that your LinkedIn Profile is chock full of search terms relevant to your new career, including a link to your portfolio if it exists.

Step 5: Develop and Grow Your Network

Networking may not be everyone's favorite thing to do, but it's a means to an end. Should you choose to enroll in a school, make sure

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 2,000 companies have hired alumni from General Assembly programs.

that the school is reputable and commands a strong network of successful and highly engaged alumni, instructors, and students.

Ask to speak with anyone from their community to gauge the strength of their

network. Attend alumni events. See if you can find success stories of their alumni. This speaks volumes as to whether or not your tuition dollars are accompanied by access to a community that will be useful for your career down the road.

If you are doing independent study and will not have a network to readily tap into, here are some ways to network:

- ♦ **Attend a local GA event.** These free events are open to everyone and present an excellent opportunity to meet fellow career-changers and tech leaders. Even if they're not hiring, they likely know who is. [Check out GA's calendar to see what's happening in your area.](#)
- ♦ Use [Network After Work](#), [Hubspot Events](#), and [Meetup.com](#) to search for tech meetups, conferences, and career fairs in your area. Go. Network. Be present.

Keep in mind that a lot of hiring happens behind the scenes. Jobs might go unlisted and companies might prefer to hire employee referrals only. As with every other industry, it's 'who you know.' So networking is uber-important. You never know when or where the right opportunity will pop up or whether a company might even go the extra mile to create a customized role just for you.

If you stick with it and don't give up, you WILL find a job. You will get your foot in the door. If you're not sure, trust your gut. Keep pushing until it happens.

— KARA BRESSIE

Never stop learning and never stop networking. Treat your future as a moving target, and keep figuring out new ways to skill up.



General Assembly (GA) is a global educational company. Focusing on the most relevant and in-demand skills across data, design, business and technology, General Assembly is empowering a global community to pursue work they love through best-in-class instruction and access to opportunities. GA works with students online and in person across 15 campuses around the world and thousands of companies as partners in course development and graduate placement as well as through GA's corporate training and digital transformation business. Additionally, GA's focus on affordable and accessible education combined with our education-to-employment approach is helping to create a diverse talent pipeline. See our most up-to-date list of campuses at ga.co/locations.

What Happens Next?

The coolest creators, the most aspirational entrepreneurs, the awe-inspiring thinkers around you all said “yes” to an opportunity. Whether you’re aiming for a promotion or a complete professional 180°, we’ve partnered with experts to deliver tips, advice, and guidance so you can master new skills in design, marketing, technology, and data — online or at General Assembly campuses around the world.

Do you want to build a career you love?

Join us when you're ready to say “yes.”



WEBSITE

generalassembly.ly

TWITTER

[@GA](https://twitter.com/GA)

INSTAGRAM

[@generalassembly](https://www.instagram.com/generalassembly)

FACEBOOK

[/gnrassembly](https://www.facebook.com/gnrassembly)

LINKEDIN

[/general-assembly](https://www.linkedin.com/company/general-assembly)