

## Keeping Your Skills Updated

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As an IT professional, continuous upgrading of one's knowledge is vital to your career. But given the dynamic nature of our industry, is it feasible to invest all of our free time and most importantly, our hard-earned paycheck at continuous education?

Fortunately, upgrading your skill set does not necessarily mean enrolling in yet another expensive instructor-led course. Of course, there are many unique advantages when it comes to learning in a classroom environment, but there are also other cost-effective methods that will not deprive you of your social life and the bread for your family.

### User Manuals

If you are already using the application/product at work, there will most likely be a user manual lying around. Spend some time going through this piece of documentation as it will usually contain some form of introduction to the technology involved as well as some invaluable advice on how to utilize the application/product.

### Online Help

Similar to user manuals, you can actually learn a lot from using the application/product's online help. One good example would be Microsoft Office. Practically everything you ever need to know about Microsoft Office is in there. All you need to do is 'ask'.

Online help can even be beneficial for certification candidates. For example, you can almost prepare for your Checkpoint Certified Security Administrator (CCSA) by just absorbing all the information in the online help provided by Checkpoint. Talk about cost effective!

### Public Library

Libraries of today are not the same as those of yesteryears. While it was impossible to find decent or updated IT related materials in public libraries a few years back, it is a different story nowadays. You will be amazed by the variety available.

In addition, borrowing books instead of buying them saves you money and since IT technologies are so dynamic, there is no point in spending so much money on books that will be outdated in a few months anyway. The advantages of reading books is that you can do it almost anywhere, while waiting for a friend at the café or even during a train ride, however, please buy the book if you think it is good reference material that you will use in the future.

### Internet

When I was a tertiary student, the Internet wasn't as readily available (not to mention as affordable) as it is now. Perform a search in your favorite search engine (try google.com if you don't have a preference) and you'll be rewarded with tons of free information.

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However, if you are looking for information on a popular topic, try Web Portals dedicated to it. For example, if you are looking for certification related articles or tutorials, where else better to start than [MCMCSE.com](http://MCMCSE.com)?

Another valuable online resource is [Forums](#). Decent forums are populated with people from all over the world. These people possess valuable knowledge and experiences and the best part is they are willing to share and guide you! (If you ask properly)

I personally love to direct my queries at online forums, but only if I can't find what I need from the Internet or through Web Portals.

### **Vendor's Website**

If the information you are looking for is proprietary, the best place to look is at the vendor's web site. For example, if you are a Systems Administrator on the Microsoft platform, your best friend would most likely be Microsoft's online knowledgebase. And similar to online help files, vendor web sites can be a goldmine for certification related material.

### **User Groups**

User Groups offer you the chance to mingle with like-minded people near you. This is valuable peer support, especially if you prefer to talk to real people or get valuable hands-on practice. The best example would be your local Palm or Linux User Group where enthusiasts gather and learn from each other.

As with instructor taught courses, the possible knowledge gained through the above resources is only as valuable as the article's author or the person offering the advice and nothing beats the real thing – experience. While it is not advisable to fool around with your production servers, it is a great idea to install demo versions of applications/products on your PC.

For example, you can request an evaluation copy of Microsoft's Operating Systems, SQL Server or even Checkpoint's Firewall and try them out without the real risk involved.

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## Contact

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## About BinaryHealthcare.com

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