

# FoxRockX

## Career Investment 101

*How can I become a better developer?*

**Rick Schummer**

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Rick gets asked the question: how can I become a better developer? He explains how he attempts to stay at the top of his game in software development.

I regularly get email, take part in discussions at user group meetings, and see messages posted on a forum: how can I become a better developer? My answer is quite simple: invest heavily in your career. Here is a sample of what I do today:

- Subscribe and read magazines, purchase and read books.
- Read as many forum posts as possible and contribute when I have something to add.
- Subscribe to numerous blogs.
- Listen to industry targeted podcasts.
- Run a user group and attend meetings.
- Attend conferences.

Sounds like a lot to do, right? Olympians do not get the gold medal by just showing up. You have to work at it. I cheat because I have fun working. How many people on this planet talk about their job and a hobby being the same?

I naturally want to become a better developer. I also want to be a stronger analyst, a wiser project manager, an insightful database admin, and a smarter business owner. It is not easy and it is not without cost (financial and time), but it is something I feel pays big dividends. So will you be less successful if you don't follow the same regiment I do? Not a chance. There are different paths to the same endpoint. Pick your passion, and do the things you think will benefit your career. Even doing just one of the things on my list will get you noticed by the boss or your team, and impress your customers.

You already have a copy of FoxRockX (electronic and/or print), which unfortunately is the only remaining Visual FoxPro centric magazine published. If you already subscribe, thanks. If this is a sample issue for you and you like what you read, consider a subscription. It is one way to stay on top of insightful and fresh Visual FoxPro material.

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Visual FoxPro books are not found in a book store. There are only three publishers I know still publishing Visual FoxPro books. Hentzenwerke Publishing has the largest collection on the planet, the FoxPro User Group of German Language (publishers of **FoxRockX**) has a couple of new books in the works including a one on Sedna and VFP 9 SP2, and the Russian BHV has a VFP 9.0 book.

Online forums are an excellent place to hang out. All the popular Visual FoxPro forums are free from monetary cost to read content. So pick a forum that meets your needs and fits your personality, and read as much you can. Post a contribution when you have something to add. If you are looking for a forum check out the Online Support Category on the Visual FoxPro Wiki (<http://fox.wikis.com/wc.dll?Wiki~CategoryOnlineSupport>).

Some blogs have great content, and some have high noise ratios. You quickly learn what is valuable and what you can ignore. A great place to start for Fox content is the VFP Wiki: <http://fox.wikis.com/wc.dll?Wiki~BlogWatch>. The Fox Show by Andrew MacNeill is the only active podcast on all things Fox: <http://thefoxshow.com>.

I think running a user group and going to meetings is one of my favorite things to do. There is so much knowledge shared and so much learned, and friendships forged. Find the closest group, or start one in your area. Googling "fox user group" will get you started.

At the risk of sounding self-serving (I am an organizer of Southwest Fox), attending conferences has unique advantages over the other things I invest

in for my career. There are so many opportunities to gain inspiration. Naturally there is the session content, hearing the session from the presenter, and white papers. You can directly ask presenters to help you with a problem or provide a different perspective on the issue. In addition you directly network with peers. The connections I have made and often renew at conferences have paid huge dividends over the years. When I need help I know I can call on people directly. Sure you can read about a conference via the bloggers and on the UT coverage, but wouldn't you prefer to get all the benefits directly? It is a huge investment of time by the presenters and attendees taking off time from work. Depending on the conference, there is a huge financial commitment to attend. Outside of a successful deployment I am not sure there is a better feeling as a developer arriving back at the office with renewed energy, lots of ideas to implement, and a pile of business cards from all my new friends.

The remaining regular FoxPro conferences include the German DevCon (Frankfurt), Prague DevCon (Czech Republic), Atout Fox (France), SDN VFP Conference (The Netherlands), Brazilian Conference (Sao Paulo), VFP Conference Teheran (Iran), and Southwest Fox (USA). I hope you find an opportunity to go to the conference that best fits your needs.

I believe everyone should ask themselves: how can I better my career? In our field there are so many resources to help answer this. I hope I have provided a little food for thought on the subject and look forward hearing additional ways this can be accomplished. I am sure I can learn from your ideas.