

Cultivating an Austin Technology Community

By Matt Genovese, CEO and Founder, Door64

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Summary: Matt Genovese of Door64 shares his insight on how building a strong local technology community has impacted Austin's technology industry.

A microprocessor is often given accolades based on its computing power. Statements like, "My computer is faster than yours" speak to our preoccupation with performance. However, when you dig into the details, you'll discover that the individual circuits on a chip are only as good as their ability to *communicate* with each other. In other words, the *network* is equally important as each individual circuit. In fact, the robustness of the on-chip network is often the biggest limiter to the entire chip's overall performance.

Now, let's zoom out a bit. The Central Texas technology sector—semiconductor and hardware companies, software companies, gaming companies and more—employ 50,000 technology professionals in Central Texas. That sector is a key growth driver for our entire community. In 2010, the semiconductor industry alone realized \$295 million in sales and analysts projected 8-10% growth for 2011.

Each member of our technology sector—from the multi-national corporation to the one-man start-up—plays a role in Austin's technology industry and our region's economic story. The individual educational backgrounds, experiences, and creativity of our workers enable each of them to achieve great results. However, like the circuits of a chip, if they are isolated and not networked into the fabric of the broader technology community, they are limited both in their individual ability to achieve peak performance, and our collective ability to positively impact our city's economy.

Over the past five years here in Austin, Door64 has been building a *community* – a communication fabric that serves the members of our local technology industry and supports the ongoing growth of the technology community as an economic driver in Austin. The fabric is made up of individual technologists from engineers to CEO's, and organizations from user groups to tech companies. Door64 is not simply a "networking group", but rather we are actively developing unique and valuable means of communication that extend throughout Austin's technology industry. And beyond the fabric itself, our Door64 community has *culture* – one that is rooted in finding ways to help each other individually and collectively. With our "give before you get" mentality, I have seen time and time again how individuals and companies who pay-it-forward through their networks are rewarded many times over. Our successes realized in the local technology community impact both attraction and retention and, in turn, extend beyond our walls to elevate the entire Central Texas area.

The good news is that Door64 is working! Since 2007, our community has grown to almost 25,000 technology professionals, collectively representing a large number of Austin-area technology companies. But our success is about so much more than numbers. In terms of employment, the quality connections made through our initiatives have helped countless technologists successfully navigate the job market. I am always running into people who have told me their stories of meeting someone at a Door64 event who helped them land a great job or establish a new and valuable business relationship. And it's not just technologists who benefit: human resource professionals and hiring managers alike are equally excited to reach the tech professionals they need to grow their businesses.

In fact, a growing number of technology companies have discovered that a well-networked employee base is a tremendous asset to the company. When I spoke once with a human resources manager at a prominent local tech company about Door64, he immediately implored his entire technical staff to join and participate in our community. Why? Companies know that their best new hires come from referrals, and who best to make those referrals than their own employees who already understand the technology and work environment. Technologists intrinsically vet each other while networking, determining if the other person is sharp, or...full of it, not to mention a good personality fit. Encouraging employees to network greatly amplifies a company's own recruiting efforts, and simultaneously helps technologists navigate the job market to find the right fit for their talents, skills, and personality.

Beyond affecting technology employment, our community has the ability to foster the creation of new organizations, from users groups to start-ups. For example, two years ago, a number of people who found each other via Door64 decided to meet in person and discuss their individual expertise, and see what they could do together in terms of a start-up. In another instance, a technology executive living in San Antonio has used Door64 to keep up to date with Austin's technology scene, and recently informed me of his new venture with an Austin-area contact he met through Door64. In terms of user groups, many local organizations utilize the technology calendar on Door64.com to publicize their meetings, grow their membership base, and in turn serve more local technologists.

Looking forward, I am enthusiastic about what we will accomplish together as a community and for our community that is not easily achieved by ourselves. I am thrilled to see connections turn into relationships that create new opportunities inside our networks and beyond. I envision Austin being known not only for technology innovation, but also as a place where a well-connected technology community as a whole is proactively fostered, grown, and served. Add in Austin's dynamic quality of life and you have a formula to attract and retain the best and brightest minds who will continue to drive innovation and economic growth.

- If you are a technology professional in Austin, [join our community at Door64.com](http://Door64.com)
- Get involved by attending one of our Door64 networking events (held twice monthly), [sponsored by local tech companies](#).
- Consider how Door64 can impact Austin, your company, organization, or career. [Let us know how we can help!](#)

Why the name *Door64*?

"In elementary school, I received a Commodore 64 for a birthday gift," says Matt Genovese. "My dad was not a big fan of the 'game machines' like the Atari, so he simply said I should learn how to program it. And I did. By fifth grade I was coding in assembly language, attended and taught at a local computer club, and subscribed to Commodore magazines. I totally geeked out."

"So fast forward thirty years. I was trying to come up with a name for this site, and I considered that there are so many people who grew up just like me...starting out on 8-bit computers, and now working in high-tech. So I named the site 'Door64' to pay homage to the Commodore 64 and all the geeks who are now grown up, working alongside me in high-tech."