HOW TO GET A CS JOB

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PROCESS

1. Be attractive
2. Find suitable opportunity or make one
3. Apply
4. Interview
5. Negotiate
6. Start work and collecting large checks
BASIC REQUIREMENTS

• Demonstrable ability to write software
  • experience,
  • sample projects, or
  • computer science degree

• Decent grades only matter for first job, if ever
WHAT’S ATTRACTIVE?

- programs you’ve written for fun outside of class/work
- work experience, preferably related to the new job
- good references
- be a decent Human; can you fit in their environment?
- confident attitude
- knowledge of development process not just coding
- research with professor; publications
- something that makes you different and/or well-rounded; e.g., Peru trip or speak multiple languages
WHAT TO DO IN COLLEGE

• Code for fun
• Do part-time jobs, get an internship
• Do research with professors
• Pay attention in data structures & software engineering courses
• Become well-rounded
• Get to know lots of your schoolmates
CORPORATE CULTURE

• Large non-high-tech company
  • Normally not much innovation or cool technology
  • Not overworked, you get vacations

• Small or start-up
  • Often much more interesting, more responsibility
  • More stress and work, less vacation

• Can I telecommute?
  • Depends on the company usually, not the size

• Working on the weekend
  • Expect it in small company and at higher levels in any company
HOW JOBS GET POSTED

• Engineer: “fetch us another Human”

• Manager talks to local HR who sends request to national HR who outsources it to a consulting company

• Often no one competent (to judge you) sees your resume until after a “consultant” filters you

• Nothing helpful ever happens this way

• Caveat: small companies are different
HOW TO AVOID THAT MESS

• You have to know somebody
  • friends, acquaintances, alumni, profs, family
  • Your goal is always to engage human element

• Make your own contact
  • Email engineers directly; ask about corporate culture or their work
  • Don't ask for a job (a favor); ask advice; establish contact

• TJP: academy computers, MasPar, “search company”, USF, ...

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

• Goal is to find common ground with company and employees

• Research the company, the people, their research/work. Learn the industry

• Find out who you know there

• Did you go to the same school? Same hometown? Dig!

• Before one interview, I found out who I knew that knew the interviewer. I was able to say “Bob says hi” and “I liked your paper on blah…”
WHAT HAPPENS IN AN INTERVIEW?

• Interview is about Human connection
  • Interview lets them probe for honesty, holes in your application. “Tell me about your work on blah…”
  • Can they work with you? Do they “connect” with you?
  • Are you reliable?
  • Look professional; don’t be an eccentric until you get the job
  • Getting grilled; don’t expect to answer everything
  • Be yourself and honest
  • Be confident; act like you are interviewing them
  • Summary: It’s literally like a first date
WHAT IF I’M NOT A GENIUS?

• Competency is valued!

• Everyone can be advanced or knowledgeable in some area

• You want to show flexibility, ability to learn and adapt

• No one wants a crazy genius on staff

• Reliability, decent productivity trumps genius any day
OPTIONS

• An option to buy company stock at today’s price in the future when the options vest

• Stock can go up or down

• If you exercise and stock goes down, you owe tax on money you didn’t earn!

• Given in addition to or replacing salary

• Start-up options are usually worthless as most businesses fail; prefer salary as a general rule
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, VISAS

- Fixed H1-B quota with extra chunk for MS-level and above;
- These used to be consumed in first 1/3 of year
  (2010 update: H1-B many remain through the Fall)
- Costs companies money ($3k-$5k)
- All else being equal they have to take citizen
- Smaller companies may have problem hiring non-citizen
- There are OPTs for a year and visiting positions etc…
SUMMARY

• Technical skill is minimum requirement

• It’s all about who you know or can get to know; seriously
  • finding opportunities
  • references
  • achieving “connection” with interviewer/company

• Interviewing well is like being good at dating

• Getting a good job begins Freshman year

• Achievement proportional to effort