

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