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JULY 24-28 2023

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What They Don't Tell You About Tech Interviews

Presented by Fatima Taj



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About Me

- ❑ Software Engineer at Yelp.

Disclaimer: I am *not* representing any opinions/views held at Yelp. These are my personal opinions.





Outline:

Part 1: Pre-Interview

Part 2: Passing the Interview

Part 3: Post Interview

Part 4: Negotiating Your Offer!

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Part 1: Pre-Interview

Getting the Interview

- ❑ Check-off the prerequisites.
- ❑ The Art of Networking post-COVID
 - ❑ The recruiting landscape has changed.
 - ❑ What do I say to my recruiter during a chat? Prepare your elevator pitch.

Your Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a brief introduction that you prepare for yourself.

- ❑ Should be effective enough to catch someone's attention in the same amount of time as an elevator ride.
- ❑ Be genuine. If you're genuine, your enthusiasm and passion will show.
- ❑ Express genuine interest in the company. Why do you want to work for them? Is it the engineering culture? Is it the product? Is it the innovation? Mentorship?

Tailor Your Approach!

- ❑ Message template for recruiters: Introduce yourself, link to posting, why you'd be a good fit, resume.
- ❑ Don't treat people like a means to an end. Establish a genuine connection. Ask for a virtual coffee chat!
- ❑ Keep the connection going, even after you find a job!

How many jobs should I apply to?

- ❑ Harness the power of LinkedIn, Glassdoor etc.
- ❑ Make it a habit vs applying in bulk.

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Part 2: Passing the Interview

Standard Interview Structure

- ❑ Recruiter will reach out to you with either a Phone Screen or an online coding challenge. You can also get a take-home assignment.
- ❑ Depending on the outcome, there can be a behavioral/technical round following this.
- ❑ Onsite. Standard is 4-5 hours. Varies by company. Combination of technical, behavioral and system design. 2-3 technical rounds, 1 system design, 1-2 behavioral.

Right before the Onsite

- ❑ Your recruiter will inform you of the structure of the interview, duration, names of interviewers etc.
- ❑ Ask anything that'll put you at ease during the interview:
 - ❑ How will the technical rounds be conducted?
Production level code or pseudocode?
Hackerrank/coderpad or an IDE of my choice?
 - ❑ When can I expect to hear back?
 - ❑ How will the system design round be conducted?
Can I use a virtual whiteboard?

The Behavioral Interview

Questions roughly drawn from the following categories:

- Tell me about yourself
- Recent projects
- How you deal with conflict
- How you work within a team setting
- Leadership
- Feedback you've received/given to others
- Managing multiple/conflicting deadlines
- Difficult projects/failures
- Projects you're most proud of
- Best and worst attributes.
- How do you stay up-to-date with the latest technologies etc.
- Why you want to work at company X?
- What would you want to improve about company X's product?

Tips for Behavioral Interview

- ❑ Be honest. Interviewers always ask follow-up questions.
- ❑ Be a good storyteller. Use the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) format.
- ❑ For each category, prepare roughly 1-3 experiences since you might find these questions being repeated by your interviewers.
- ❑ Show what you've learnt from your experiences, even if they were failures.
- ❑ If you're asked a question you don't have an answer to right away, you can ask your interviewer if you can have 1-2 minutes to think about it.

The Technical Interview

- ❑ Questions are kept purposefully vague. It's your job to clarify. Being a good software engineer isn't just about churning out code, you need to be able to do requirements gathering, deal with vague scenarios etc.
- ❑ Ask questions. Don't jump into the question not having clarified any assumptions, corner cases etc.
- ❑ Write down test cases, specifically corner/edge cases.
- ❑ Communicate effectively! Talk things out, loud!
- ❑ Discuss trade-offs, different strategies that you're considering etc.

Tips for Technical Interview

- ❑ If you're stuck, you can ask for help.
- ❑ Not every interviewer will allow you to compile your code and see if the test case passes.
- ❑ Write test cases, and always walk through them!
- ❑ Don't underestimate system design rounds.
- ❑ If you're nervous about your technical rounds, watch real-life technical interview videos on YouTube to put yourself at ease.

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Part 3: Post Interview

Post-Interview Etiquette

- ❑ Regardless of the outcome, always thank your recruiter.
- ❑ If company policy allows, ask them for feedback.
- ❑ If you still have interviews scheduled with other companies, inform the companies of your decision. Don't waste anyone's time.
- ❑ Never shut the door completely. Propose staying connected via LinkedIn for future opportunities.

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Part 4: Negotiating Your Offer!

Compensation Structure

- ❑ Typical compensation packages are as follows:
 - ❑ Base Salary. Usually the most difficult to negotiate.
 - ❑ RSU (Restricted Stock Units): Understand the vesting schedule.
 - ❑ Yearly Bonus. These are also pretty standard. A set percentage of your base salary, pro-rated.
 - ❑ Signing Bonus: Plenty of room to negotiate.
- ❑ Do your research about the compensation numbers.
- ❑ Ask friends across different companies so you can have a better idea.
- ❑ Use resources like levels.fyi. Glassdoor can be unreliable.

How to Negotiate

- ❑ NEVER accept an offer as soon as it's presented.
- ❑ Exploding Offers. Make sure you're clear on how much time you have.
- ❑ If asked, NEVER share a number/range. Flip the question on them.
- ❑ Phone call vs email. Depends on what you're more comfortable with.
- ❑ In your follow-up conversation: thank them, and have concrete numbers ready.
- ❑ However, never lie about competing offers or compensation.
- ❑ Recruiters really like it if you convey that you'll be ready to sign the contract immediately if they can get to your proposed numbers.

Sample Email Template

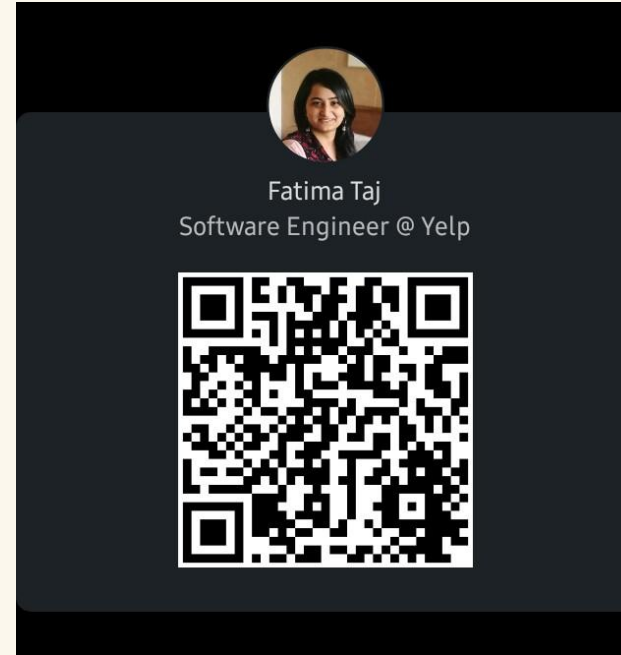
Hi [REDACTED],

I hope you're doing well. I just wanted to follow-up on our conversation from yesterday regarding compensation. First of all, I really appreciate [REDACTED] extending me an offer, I'm really excited for this opportunity! However, I do have a competing offer from my current company and would like to negotiate something comparable to that. I was looking for a base salary around [REDACTED] If we can get to that number, I'll be ready to sign the offer immediately.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,
Fatima

Thankyou for attending my session!

Reach out to me at ftaj@yelp.com or [LinkedIn!](#)





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