Q: Tell me a bit about yourself

Born in Shanghai, completed high school there. Started undergraduate studies in business at Kent State, transferred to Ohio State University for Mechanical Engineering, then pursued an ME master’s at Stanford. Interned at Tesla, returned to China to work as a Product Manager at Alibaba, now Principal PM at ByteDance.

Q: Why you choose returning back to China rather than seeking a job in the US?

Many reasons regarding this topic. Chose to return for personal reasons (family, girlfriend in China) and because of the rising Chinese economy. Accepted a solid offer from Alibaba. Reflects that no one can predict the future precisely; entered the industry as the internet boom was waning and had limited guidance.

Q: Difference of working environment or vibe between US and China

Culture of US and China, vibe in China is more like student union that has strict hierarchy, while the one in US is more like a club where people shared same interest and work together.

The quality of work and business was almost equivalent, but the motivation and energy varies between teams in a company. The variation between teams is larger than that of companies.

Q: What do you think about working in Tech Lead

Maybe you have an innovative idea or an opportunity to create something, you need 1 year to implement it in tech lead. Innovation is challenging due to longer timelines and focus on established, stable core businesses. in tech lead. The core business of them are money maker and is very stable, what most people are doing is not related to core business and will not have a huge impact to the company.

Q: Will you recommend to have a master degree or a phd degree

If you just start your career, a master’s degree is beneficial for career starters; a PhD is will be a great credential but not essential for doing good work. Studying for a PhD is certainly not cost-effective, working experience is more important.

I’m not sure about the stuff in the future 5 years. As GPT is growing, anyone cannot know what will happen in the future. In this situation, I would say, the first job is very important which will get you to learn a lot. Do whatever, get the best first job offer you could have. Even if you dont start your own business, at least do some real stuff(selling coffee, design a product), get a feel about the real world and what others are thinking about ASAP.

Q: Should we do side project to just fulfill our resume?

Prioritize meaningful projects that solve real problems over those done just to fill a resume.

Q: Difference on interview

For job hunting or interview, interviews in US focus on the way to solve challenges, whether you can reflect on your method to make your work better. They care more about why you choose this type of system design rather than technique details. The interviewer will be trained to catch signals in interview. For that in China, interview depends highly on the style of interviewers. Your resume need to put more emphasis as it’s like a trap for the interviewer where you make some guidance to let them ask.

Q: What you emphasize most to choose team members

Basic knowledge about relative technology, product sense, the ability to transform a business problem into a problem that data can answer. You should not be a guy who is stuck in the book. In China, company will focus more on your domain knowledge, it’s like you can do sth at the time you start. So some tricks to solve problems and previous experience will be crucial.

When I ask the interviewee, I will dive deeper. When they start to do sth, whether he has thought over enough trade-off. Second, whether he has pushed the progress to the ground. And how he understands this method that he is working on.

Q: Any other things you want to share for either in school or in work.

Science is the way we understand the world, data and model are just tools. Engineering is putting innovative ideas on the ground and bring them into the real world. Whatever you are working in the US or China, you can always find a way make yourself happy, maybe salary, friend network, etc. We may not set the wealth freedom as our only goal, it will be too boring. Focus on the road you are walking on.