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Steven Zhang [Follow](#)

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How I landed 18 FAANG+ software engineer offers after not interviewing for 5 years

👉 Summary of article in table form [here](#)

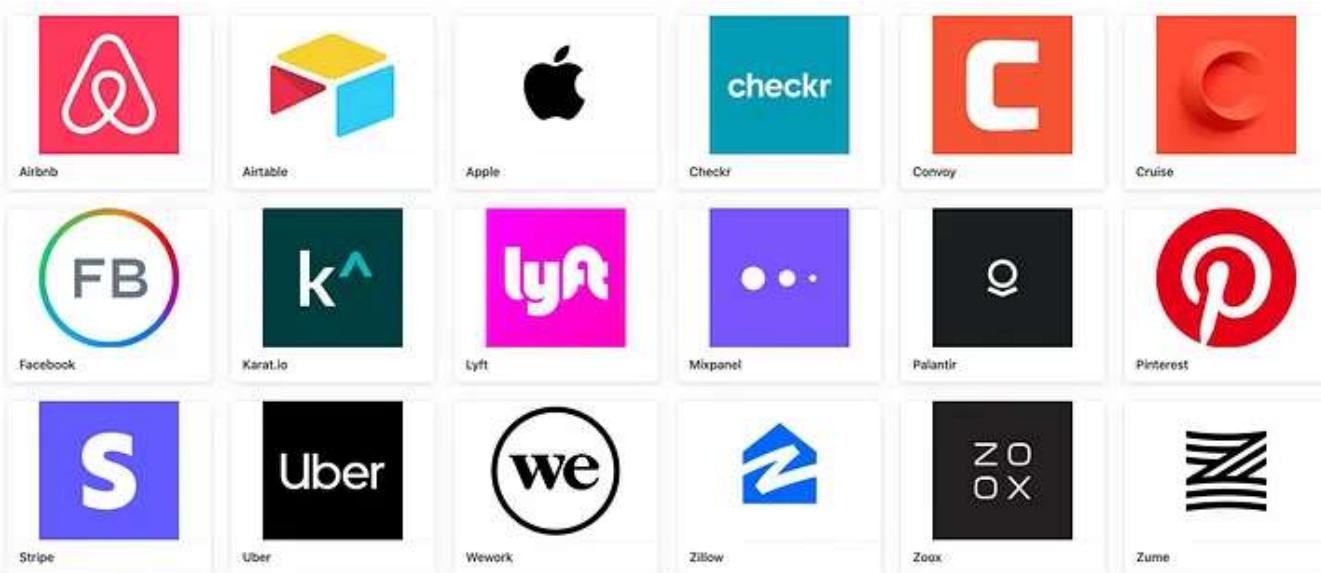
👉 Follow me on LinkedIn for more interview/job search tips [here](#)

👉 If you found this article helpful for your job search, a comment on the LinkedIn announcement [here](#) or in the comments section below would be appreciated!

This article was originally written in Q3 2019 as a private google doc that I shared liberally with friends. I decided to publish it on Medium.com since so many friends were asking for it.

The larger macro and software engineering hiring environment has changed a lot since 2019 but I believe a lot of it still applies!

703 | 3 | ...



Companies from whom I received an offer

Background

In the first half of 2019, I decided to do an extensive job search. I had stayed 5 years at Tableau so wanted to see what the market was like, and what kind of roles were out there at various company types.

My result: I got 18 offers in 22 onsites (please let me know if you meet anyone with more offers, I'd like to talk to them).

Here were my offers:

Public companies:

- Apple
- Facebook/Meta
- Zillow

Late stage-about-to-go-public (now most of these are public/exited)

- Airbnb (2020 IPO)
- Lyft (2019 IPO)
- Palantir (2020 direct listing)
- Pinterest (2019 IPO)

- Stripe
- Uber (2020 IPO)

High-growth mid-stage companies on [breakoutlist.com](#) (or similar)

- [Airtable](#)
- Checkr
- Convoy
- Cruise
- Karat.io (interviewing as a service)
- Mixpanel
- Zoox (acquired by Amazon 2020)

Companies that have had to do major pivots since 2019

- WeWork
- Zume Pizza (now focused on [food packaging](#) instead of robotic food automation, interestingly enough)

See the appendix for the 4 companies where I did not get an offer and what I think I did wrong/failed at the onsite

I ultimately ended up going to Airtable (partially because I loved using the product so much- checkout the product [here!](#)).

I decided to write this semi-essay/notes doc to share my insights and mistakes with others! I put referral links because there's no downside for anyone (but a small potential upside for me :)). Feel free to discard the referral parameters, no offense taken!!

Testimonials for this document

[Aaron, Machine Learning Engineer at Snap](#) — “*This guide reframed how I approached my job hunt and gave me concrete helpful links such as the system design primer and*

negotiation strategies. This is the most succinct and comprehensive summary of all the information you need to excel in your SWE job search."

Antonio, Software Engineer at Snap, ex-AWS — “*Steven and I helped each other prep for our last job searches (all while having some generous Mario Kart breaks!). This document is a detailed and actionable synthesis of his learning. Given Steven’s impressive level of success, you really want to pay attention. I especially appreciate his addressing less commonly covered technical topics like system design as well as non-technical topics like time management, negotiation, and mental preparation. His focus on nuts and bolts makes it a concrete template to help other engineers get out of the tar pit and hit the ground running!*”

Nate, Senior ML Engineer at Robinhood — “*Steven and I were interview buddies in our respective job searches in 2019. I especially appreciated the thoroughness of his preparation and ability to document it all in this document. The section on algorithms was super helpful for me- I don’t come from a traditional CS background (worked as a mechanical engineer for several years at the beginning of my career) so having an efficient way to learn and retain algorithms was key*”

Tosin, Software Engineer at Datadog — “*Steven’s doc was a helpful resource during my interview prep. Sure you know you should leetcode or read cracking the coding interview, but perhaps you should consider mock interview resources or a different strategy for system design prep. Steven also includes helpful articles about negotiating your offers. I think this is a helpful reference for anyone going through the stressful process of tech (particularly SDE) interviews.*”

?

Step 0. Figure out where to apply to

First principles

Before applying think a bit more about what you want. Good resources for this are:

How to make a career decision — 80,000 Hours

Career Guide | Probably Good

Software engineering — Career review — 80,000 Hours

Cracking the Tech Career (same author as *Cracking the coding interview*)

Also, see “career advice” section at the bottom of this document

| A Name | category | A= F |
|--|--------------------------|------|
| Very talented people- general for company | engineering growth | 1 |
| Hard technical problems (AKA working on infra/data) | engineering growth | 1 |
| Very driven individuals | engineering growth | 1 |
| The specific team's people gut feeling. team/people > product | people | 1 |
| Company has successful business | engineering growth | 1 |
| do work on distributed systems | | 1 |
| best engineers / very talented engineers (TODO merge with reputat... | engineering growth | 1 |
| Brand name/identity capital | engineering growth | 2 |
| fast growth company | engineering growth | 2 |
| organization openness and transparency | engineering nice to have | 2 |
| pace/iteration cycle | engineering growth | 2 |
| team alignment with core competency of company | engineering growth | 2 |
| Interview process- how difficult was it? | engineering growth | 2 |
| Product I believe in and love | product | 2 |

Example of a table I created to track what I wanted

High growth climatetech companies

Climatetech is a hot space right now that IMO can provide equal career growth while allowing you to have much bigger social impact.

Check out [ClimateTechList](#) (curated by me) for a list of curated companies for software engineers!

Other high growth companies

Checkout the following lists for companies to apply to from a “what company are growing fast” perspective

[breakoutlist.com](#)

<https://blog.wealthfront.com/career-launching-companies-list/>

Other

I also like listening to softwaredaily.com for interviews with founders/top engineers, which could be a good way to hear about what companies have cool engineering problems

Finally, keyvalues.com is a good place to find companies from a culture-first perspective

Step 1. Preparing for the interview

My number one suggestion- take an interview prep course/boot camp

Interview prep courses are expensive (a few hundred to a few thousand dollars) but are cheap compared to the annual salary of a software engineer (even in this macro environment in non-FANG companies)

Courses will:

- Force you practice at regular cadence by giving you structure
- Teach you good algorithm concepts
- Give you recorded mock interviews that you take

Put another way, think of a course as a training camp- you'll be immersed in a high-intensity, high-integrity environment where you do, debrief, get feedback, improve and repeat.

Of course, you *could* learn all these things by googling/LeetCode, but will you do it as fast? Probably not even close

I recommend [Interview Kickstart](#), but there are several other competitors in the space out there.

Without IK, my rate of passing interviews and getting on-site would've probably been 9 out of 22 instead of 18 out of 22. How do I know this- I debriefed after each interview and noted which interviews I struggled with, and how I overcame the block / whether Interview Kickstart concepts helped

If you want to sign up, consider [using my referral code here](#)

Data structures & Algorithms (DSA)

There are a lot of resources on basic algorithms out there such as Interview Cake, and the classic Cracking the Coding Interview.

But here's another hack: listen to grad-level algorithm classes. Sometimes these will pop up in interviews, and they'll give you more formalism to reasoning about algorithms and data structures. I.e. Erik Demaine (one of my fave lecturers) MIT's advanced data structures course: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0yzrZL1py0&list=PLU14u3cNGP61hsJNdULdudlRL493b-XZf>

Another tip is to use the list feature on Leetcode for spaced repetition. Set up lists to review questions for one week and then one month from the day you solve them. Or create your own Anki flashcards!

For me personally, how I got good at DSA questions is roughly (broken down by % contribution):

- 30% Interview Kickstart training questions
- 30% Interview Kickstart mock interviews
- 5% LeetCode on my own
- 5% 1:1 mock interviews with friends
- 10% live interviews on interviewing.io
- 20% live interviews at actual companies

Interview history

View and manage your completed interviews

The image shows a grid of 12 interview session cards from interviewing.io. Each card has a green thumbs-up icon in the top right corner.

- Top Row:**
 - Interviewer: "interviewed you" (date: 02/05/19, company: Lyft)
 - Interviewer: "interviewed you" (date: 01/23/19, company: WeWork)
 - Interviewer: "Phantom Fox interviewed you" (date: 01/22/19, company: Checkr)
- Second Row:**
 - Interviewer: "Mammooth Elephant interviewed you" (date: 01/14/19 at SevenRooms)
 - Interviewer: "interviewed you" (date: 01/10/19 at Zume)
 - Interviewer: "Wheedling Donut interviewed you" (date: 01/09/19 at Credit Karma)
- Third Row:**
 - Interviewer: "Stealthy Cronut interviewed you" (date: 01/08/19 at Uber)
 - Interviewer: "Facetious Lion interviewed you" (date: 01/04/19 at Algorithms/Data Structures PRO)
 - Interviewer: "Effulgent Slide Rule interviewed you" (date: 12/26/18 at Algorithms/Data Structures PRO)
- Bottom Row:**
 - Interviewer: "Doctor Warrior interviewed you" (date: 12/24/18 at Algorithms/Data Structures PRO)

My interviewing.io history (interviewer names redacted)

System design

First read this just as a primer: [Web Architecture 101](#)

In my experience, how I got good at system design interview was roughly (broken down by % contribution)

- 50% [Grokking Modern System Design Interview for Engineers & Managers – Learn Interactively](#)
- 20% listening to tech talks (i.e. [Uber Engineering](#)) on youtube
- 30% listening to problem breakdowns of system design problems on youtube (i.e. [Whatsapp System Design: Chat Messaging Systems for Interviews](#))

Since 2019, one of my favorite system design resources has been [ByteByteGo](#), the author Alex has excellent diagrams and excellent LinkedIn content as well

Question banks

There are plenty of question banks floating around out there- I would NOT suggest that you memorize answers to questions- interviewers are trained to detect when a candidate gets the answer too fast! Instead, focus on using this to learn patterns.

Airbnb questions with solutions: <https://github.com/allaboutjst/airbnb>

Jason, former Senior SWE at Facebook found this helpful:

<https://leetcode.com/explore/interview/card/top-interview-questions-hard/> — “For coding problems, I pretty much just used LeetCode and in particular this list. When you buy premium you can also see the actual frequency of questions in interviews.”

Kevin, ML Engineer at Facebook says: LeetCode premium sorted by frequency works well for certain companies (can’t say for all companies since I didn’t look at them all). I also used this [blind post](#)

Behavioral questions

Here are my biggest (unconventional) tips for prepping behavioral interviews.

1. Write a google doc of all the possible common behavioral interview questions (see appendix for my list), and write out answers for them. Have friends review and comment on the google doc. (thanks David, Poorva, and Hermann for helping with mine!)*
2. Record myself during a practice mock interview with a friend, using the list generated in # 1 as an audio file, then listen to myself the night before as a podcast to jog my memory. Ask me if you want a sample.
3. Stop doing any heavy-brain-work (i.e. algorithm problems) at 7pm the night before an interview. Instead, listen to founders on YouTube/podcasts talk about their company’s core values while working out/doing chores. Example: [AirBnb 6 Golden Rules via Brian Chesky](#)

*Dan Croitor, the interview coach/YouTube content creator, said this after reading an initial version of this essay: “*for future behavioral interviews, try categorizing your*

Google Doc on behaviors (vs. commonly asked questions); doing so helps build better answers if you do the prep in multiple rounds / revisions”

Breakdown of how useful each approach was:

- 1 writing google doc — 60%
- 2 mock interviews and listening to self-practicing mock — 30%
- 3 listening to founders talk — 10%

Practicing technical interviews

Again, I had a really good experience with interviewkickstart.com

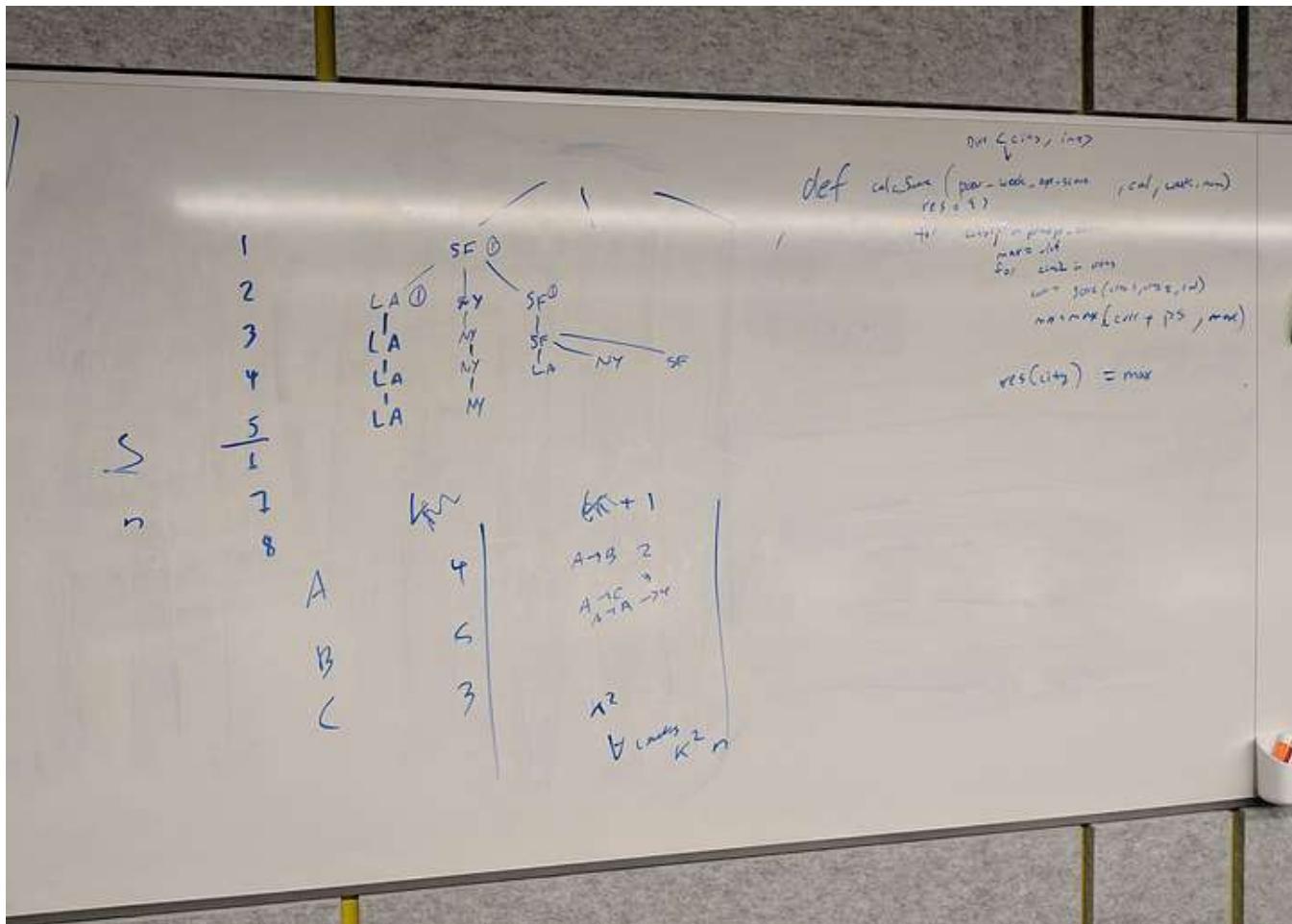
In addition, you can try:

interviewing.io -The actual company interviews are top notch and nothing beats emulating nervousness by... Being nervous in front of a real company :-).

meetapro.com — newer mock interview-as-a-service interviewing service, price ranges more varied (lowest one is fairly cheap at <\$50/hour for mock interview with non-US based).

[Exponent's courses and resources](https://exponentcourses.com) — various courses and content on different interviewtopics, including software engineering.

And of course, ask your friends and former colleagues!



I did a lot of whiteboard problems with friends in their offices after work hours

Step 2. Applying to companies

Use referrals

Don't apply to companies- referrals are the way to go. If you have a former classmate or coworker at the company you want to apply, ask them to refer you.

Senior Engineer Ben Fisher has this tip- "I had success going to the company's page on LinkedIn. Under employees, it will show if you have any contacts who have a contact at the company ("2"). I could then ask my contact to introduce me to the employee."

Try <https://rephr.me/> to get referrals from companies where you don't have connections

Use robo recruiters

If current hiring is like Craigslist's romance section (inefficient) then these sites are like OkCupid (match with score)

Most of these are not developer-only (so data scientists, PMs, etc.)

In my experience, there was no noticeable difference between these, and they mostly had a lot of startups

Underdog.io

- I got my Airtable offer that way, but I was already planning to reach out to them

Woo.io

Hired.com

Triplebyte.com (developers only).

- One phone screen. Then you can skip to onsite interviews
- For me, this was the fastest process-
- I got my Apple, Mixpanel, and Zoox offers this way

Interviewing.io — if you pass each phone screen anonymously (so basically no downside to trying) skip to onsite. It's a good place to practice interviews too (I did 7 phone screens here)

- My Zume, WeWork, Uber, and Checkr offers came this way

Amazon hack for picking/interviewing for the right team

If you're applying to Amazon and live in Seattle, here's a strategy that worked for me:

- Buy LinkedIn premium
- Have recruiters and HM from Amazon/AWS reach out to you
- Talk to a couple of them, but only talk to the ones where HM reaches out to you directly
- Then pick the HM/team that sounds most interesting

Why is this hack necessary? Because Amazon's an exception because they're the only company where:

- Multiple recruiting emails are sent out by them by separate teams*

- It's a mix of HM/recruiter
- The actual on-the-job experience is so dependent on what team you join at Amazon anyways,

In fact, there is no way to remove yourself from the Amazon recruiting database because there is no central one! I've received 50+ recruiting emails from various Amazon teams since 2019 :(

Sequencing/Timing the job applications

Another thing to think about is sequencing which companies to apply to

For example, I've found that most people are out of practice at the beginning of interviews, and may get tired at the end so one strategy for this would be:

1. Have the companies you're not as keen on ideally at the start.
2. Have the companies you're more excited by in the middle when you have more practice.
3. Make sure you ping the companies you're excited about if you get an offer before you run out of steam.
4. For companies that tend to have long processes, you might want to start these early.

Step 3. Scheduling interviews

Get recruiters to book times with you on Calendly instead of emailing back and forth times

Get a Calendly and use that to book times with recruiters instead of emailing back and forth times :)

Extreme example: I was able to schedule 10 onsite interviews in roughly 10 days. The way I did this was by creating a separate Calendly for each company such that whichever company was scheduled first would get the most options.

| | Name | Date | Companies (manual) | Type |
|-----|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 122 | 190123 mixpanel. hirin... | 2019-01-23 Wed | mixpanel | hiring manager recruiting |
| 123 | 190123 zooth. recruitin... | 2019-01-23 Wed | zooth | recruiting call |
| 124 | 190122 nordstrom. thir... | 2019-01-22 Tue | nordstrom | third party recruiter |
| 125 | 190122 Wework. techni... | 2019-01-22 Tue | Wework | technical phone interview |
| 126 | 190122 zume inc. hirin... | 2019-01-22 Tue | zume inc | hiring manager recruiting |
| 127 | 190122 Checkr. techni... | 2019-01-22 Tue | Checkr | technical phone interview |
| 128 | 190122 . - interviewing... | 2019-01-22 Tue | | |
| 129 | 190122 Redfin. recruiti... | 2019-01-22 Tue | Redfin | recruiting call |
| 130 | 190121 iunu. hiring ma... | 2019-01-21 Mon | iunu | hiring manager recruiting |
| 131 | 190120 amazon.com / ... | 2019-01-20 Sun | amazon.com / amazon web services; - | technical coding challenge interview |
| 132 | 190119 karat. technical... | 2019-01-19 Sat | karat | technical phone interview |
| 133 | 190118 amazon.com / ... | 2019-01-18 Fri | amazon.com / amazon web services; - | recruiting call |
| 134 | 190117 amazon.com / ... | 2019-01-17 Thu | amazon.com / amazon web services; - | hiring manager recruiting |
| 135 | 190117 ■ Ubereats. re... | 2019-01-17 Thu | ■ Ubereats | recruiting call |
| 136 | 190117 . third party rec... | 2019-01-17 Thu | | third party recruiter |
| 137 | 190117 Remitly. techni... | 2019-01-17 Thu | Remitly | technical phone interview |
| 138 | 190116 origin.io. hiring ... | 2019-01-16 Wed | origin.io | hiring manager recruiting |
| 139 | 190116 drive.ai. hiring ... | 2019-01-16 Wed | drive.ai | hiring manager recruiting |
| 140 | 190116 ✓ Google assi... | 2019-01-16 Wed | ✓ Google assistant | recruiting call |
| 141 | 190114 hbo. third party... | 2019-01-14 Mon | hbo | third party recruiter |
| 142 | 190114 Grab. recruitin... | 2019-01-14 Mon | Grab | recruiting call |
| 143 | 190114 seven rooms. t... | 2019-01-14 Mon | seven rooms | technical phone interview |
| 144 | 190112 karat. - kevin b... | 2019-01-12 Sat | karat | |
| 145 | 190111 . hiring manage... | 2019-01-11 Fri | | hiring manager recruiting |
| 146 | 190111 datadog. techni... | 2019-01-11 Fri | datadog | technical phone interview |
| 147 | 190110 zume inc. tech... | 2019-01-10 Thu | zume inc | technical phone interview |
| 148 | 190109 creditkarma. te... | 2019-01-09 Wed | creditkarma | technical phone interview |
| 149 | 190108 ■ Ubereats. te... | 2019-01-08 Tue | ■ Ubereats | technical phone interview |
| 150 | 190107 scalyr. technic... | 2019-01-07 Mon | scalyr | technical phone interview |
| 151 | 190107 Zillow. technic... | 2019-01-07 Mon | Zillow | technical phone interview |
| 152 | 190107 ● Facebook - i... | 2019-01-07 Mon | ● Facebook - instagram | recruiting call |
| 153 | 190104 [ongoing] tripl... | 2019-01-04 Fri | [ongoing] triplebyte | third party recruiter |
| 154 | 190104 workramp. hiri... | 2019-01-04 Fri | workramp | hiring manager recruiting |
| 155 | 190104 karat. hiring m... | 2019-01-04 Fri | karat | hiring manager recruiting |
| 156 | 190104 Oracle. recruit... | 2019-01-04 Fri | Oracle | recruiting call |
| 157 | 190104 datadog. recru... | 2019-01-04 Fri | datadog | recruiting call |
| 158 | 190103 Remitly, Assur... | 2019-01-03 Thu | Assurance Remitly | recruiting call |
| 159 | 190103 . third party re... | 2019-01-03 Thu | | third party recruiter |
| 160 | 190103 Zocdoc zoc do... | 2019-01-03 Thu | Zocdoc zoc doc | technical phone interview |

| | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 161 | 190103 drive.ai. recruit... | 2019-01-03 Thu | drive.ai | recruiting call |
| 162 | 190103 Facebook - ... | 2019-01-03 Thu | Facebook - instagram | recruiting call |
| 163 | 190103 convoy. emplo... | 2019-01-03 Thu | convoy | employee informational call |
| 164 | 190102 postmates rec... | 2019-01-02 Wed | postmates | recruiting call |
| 2019 | | | | |
| 01 | Jan | Feb | Mar | Q2 |
| | | | | Apr |
| | | | | May |
| | | | | Jun |
| 171 | 101210 Virgin. recruit... | 2010-12-10 Tue | virgin | recruiting call |
| 172 | 181218 Zocdoc zoc do... | 2018-12-18 Tue | Zocdoc zoc doc | recruiting call |
| 173 | 181214 Grab. recruitin... | 2018-12-14 Fri | Grab | recruiting call |

If you need to push back an interview...

If you need to push back an interview for whatever reason

- Go with “personal reasons” or “family reasons”
- Otherwise, just say that you’re not ready and want more time to prepare. Remember that recruiters are incentivized to get you hired at their company!

🎙 Step 4. Do the interviews!

Logistics/gadgets

Headset (important)

You’re going to be doing a ton of talking on the phone. Get yourself a quality headset. It was expensive but worth it. I use the Jabra Evolve 75 (connects to Bluetooth and computer). The killer feature for Jabra Evolve 75 is a microphone boom that can be physically moved up and down to toggle the mute state- you’ll never wonder if you’re muted or not again 🚫 😊

For cheaper headsets, check out The 5 Best Wireless Headsets of 2022 | Reviews by Wirecutter

Logistics/gadgets for IRL interviews

Whiteboard markers (important)

I’ve done a bunch of testing on various whiteboard markers. The expo clickable ones (often sold out- try this one instead if so) save you a lot of time from having to

cap/uncap markers. Plus no company ever has clickable markers so it's a subtle way to show the interviewer "I'm prepared and brought my own markers, no question"

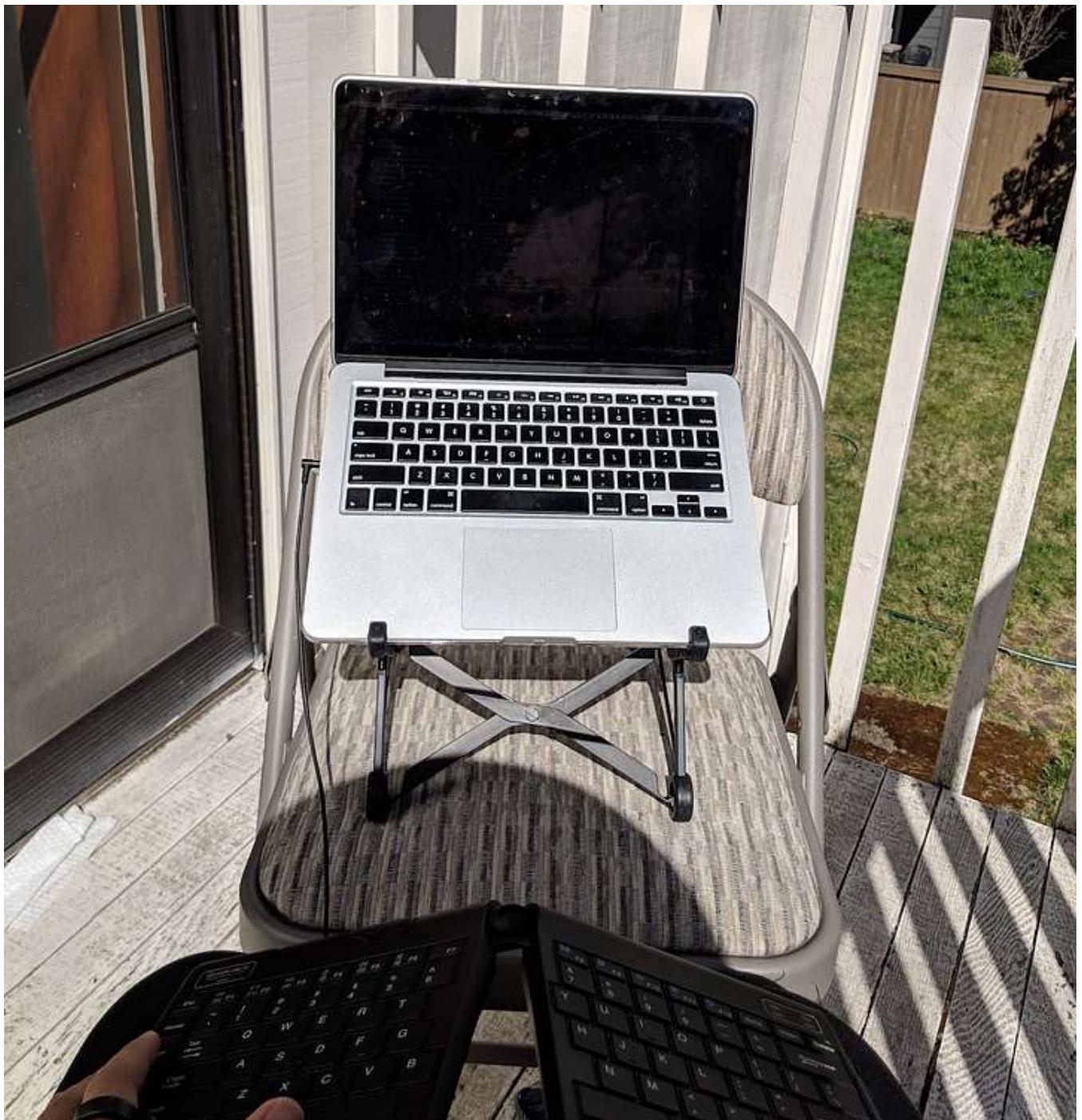
Keyboard and laptop stand (nice to have)

You're going to take your laptop onsite for quite a few interviews (a lot of companies now require coding/debugging onsite).

Note- this was true in 2019 but not as true post-covid, but leaving it in in case in-office interviews become the norm again in the future!

Set yourself up for success with a portable ergonomic keyboard, laptop stand, and external mouse (links are my choices)

I did it because of ergonomic problems, but during interviews I realized that it sent a really high signal to interviewers. For example, at Zoox, the engineering director even turned around at the end and commented "I'm very impressed by your laptop setup"



(btw if you're curious about my current 90 degrees tented keyboard setup and eye-tracker mouse check out <http://stevenzhang.com/rsi>

Routine the night before an interview

Behavioral/mindset advice. I did 22 onsite interviews (including 10 in 2 weeks). I found this routine to be super helpful the night before

1. after 9 pm, stop doing problems
2. listen to [Dan Croitor's](#) YouTube channel which talks about the cultural values of different companies (ex: the one for Airbnb): [AirBnb 6 Golden Rules via Brian Chesky](#)

3. listen to some Bryan Cranston (actor mindset for auditions, really good parallel to interviews)
4. Listen to this guided meditation morning of Programming interview visualization exercise

Step 5. Negotiate and decide on your offer (and understand the incentives)

Compensation benchmarks

It's important to understand your compensation expectations when applying (even at step 0!). Here are some resources:

- Candor's salary database
- Levels.fyi and Perks.fyi
- Teamblind.com
- <https://leetcode.com/discuss/compensation/>
- <https://h1bdata.info> – uses public data that companies have to file with the US Department of Labor. Only includes salary though so not as accurate if your position is compensation heavy.
- Startup equity and salary percentiles from Wellfound (fka AngelList)

Incentives

Companies typically get a conversion rate of 20–30% from offer to accept the offer, at least for SWEs. So basically you shouldn't feel bad for negotiating and rejecting because, from the company's point of view, they're **used to this**.

A typical funnel might look like this:

- 100 Applications
- 25 Best-Qualified Applicants Screened by Recruiter
- 5–10 Candidates Forwarded to Hiring Manager
- 3–5 Selected to Interview by Hiring Manager

- 1 Offer Extended

In other words, they have no idea if you rejected them for 1 company or if you had 100 offers! (I don't recommend you get 100 offers)

Also, I don't have data to confirm this, but anecdotally it seems like recruiters seem to be incentivized to hire without taking into account the cost of interviewing (i.e. time spent for engineers). The incentive for recruiters is that they usually have a quota to hit each month/quarter of accepts (comment if you have more info on this)

Consider using a negotiation coach

A bunch of my friends and I have used the negotiation coaching services of teamrora.com — they have helped hundreds of professionals negotiations and the incentives are aligned- if they make you more money, their fee is higher!

Good negotiation resources- general strategies

If you only have one hour, listen to this talk on [Udacity presents: negotiating your engineering offer](#)

Also: [Salary negotiation strategies everyone in tech already knows — but you don't | Candor](#)

Another one: [How Not to Bomb Your Offer Negotiation — haseeb qureshi](#)

Also, Offerletter.io — a guide to negotiation. The site is down, but it's on the web archive here:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170215155654/https://www.offerletter.io/blog/>

Negotiation resources- personal stories/anecdotes

Listen to the podcast of one ex-poker player (Haseeb Q) who climbed up his way up the salary negotiation ladder: <https://youtu.be/7DQpZBP26ow> . This is more for motivation, content in the Udacity video is about the same

[Ten Rules for Negotiating a Job Offer — haseeb qureshi](#)

[Salary Negotiation: Make More Money, Be More Valued | Kalzumeus Software](#)

Be transparent with your recruiters

As you do all this, it's best to be transparent with your recruiters (i.e. what other offers you're considering, if you're still interviewing, etc.). You don't have to share every nitty gritty detail, but please don't lie.

Henry Hippley, currently recruiting manager at Stripe and formerly recruiter at Convoy during my job search, said to me “One thing you didn’t mention that I appreciated during your search is being super transparent/direct with recruiters. It makes a huge difference on the company side.”

Step 5. Accepting an offer

Tips on staying classy when accepting an offer:

<https://www.thejobnetwork.com/accept-job-offer/>

Step 6. Start at your new job, & grow your career!

SWE Career advice in general

People I like to follow for general SWE career advice

- Rahul Pandey — Building joinTaro.com to help Software Engineers find career success. Follow me to grow your career.
- Alex Chiou — Co-Founder @joinTaro.com, Making Software Engineers Better At Their Jobs
- Rahul and Alex are building *the* discussion platform for career advice. Very good content! Use this link for \$50 off a yearly subscription (most people use company Learning & Development budgets for this too so it can be effectively free to you)
- The Pragmatic Engineer Newsletter
- Also, I heard from my new grad brother that Reddit's r/cscareerquestions is a good resource

Appendix

Essay in table format

Aly Thobani synthesized the essay in table form. You can get access to the full-table here

[Download CSV](#)[View larger version](#)

🌟 Some end-to-end interview prep stories to get you motivated and excited

Preparing for tech interviews with Paul Carleton of Stripe

Interview with Cyrus Xi of Uber (see also the Reddit post links in the video)

'How to Get a Job at the Big 4 — Amazon, Facebook, Google & Microsoft' by Sean Lee

Companies in which I did NOT get a job offer after an onsite

There were 4 onsites that I did not pass. Listing them here with some thoughts on why I did not pass them/what I could have done better. *Note I don't recall the exact details here- I'm just basing this based on my notes.*

Google:

Got to final offsite, and according to my recruiter my ratings were:

- 1 Leaning hire
- 3 hires
- 1 leaning no hire

The leaning no hire question was a very complex tree question and I had not practiced enough trees at that point

Grab:

Did extremely well on all the coding questions, but my system design interview went poorly-. Had not studied enough

Microsoft:

Perhaps was unconsciously overly confident since I got Microsoft offer a few years ago?

Had not prepared enough on a few technical concepts. Was thrown off by the BST iterator as an example.

Snap:

I ended up interviewing for a research engineer position (helping build prototypes) because the headcount was low for regular SWE. I don't know what determined the HM choice but I do know that the recruiter said they had found someone with a more direct fit as a prototype/research engineer.

List of behavioral questions I wrote out answers to

Pure behavioral questions (decreasing order of importance)

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Why should we hire you? [show off strengths]
- Why are you leaving your current company? [given a neutral answer, don't say anything bad about the current company obviously]
- Why do you want to join us? [given question tailored to the company]
- How did you resolve conflicts in the past?
- What is your weakness [give a neutral answer or pair strength with weakness]
- Give an example of you and leadership
- Give an example of showing initiative

- Example of customer obsession
- What's your promotion history? Why wasn't it faster?
- Talk about a time you had to work with someone you didn't respect.
- What was a nontechnical mistake you made?

Technical behavioral questions

- What was a technical mistake you made?
- Describe a <current/challenging> project? [give the interviewer a choice]
- Example of difficult tradeoff you've made
- How much time do you spend coding?
- What's your day-to-day like?
- How do you ramp up on a new team/project?
- Talk about a recent project you've worked on
- What was the biggest scale system you've worked on?
- Example of raising the quality bar?
- Example of predicting deadlines?
- Most impactful thing done at previous companies?

Company-specific questions- Stripe

- Explain a project that you worked on recently that was difficult
- How do you stay up to date?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Company-specific questions- Airbnb

- What are some adventures you've gone on
- Time you were inclusive of others

- Time you persevered in face of challenge
- Time you were a team player
- Who is the best host/most hospitable person you know in life?
- What's a time you've sacrificed something of yourself for someone else in the last 6 months/been nice for someone
- Tell me about a time you disagreed with someone. How did you resolve it?
- Tell me about a time when you didn't follow the way things are usually done.
- Tell me about a time you took a risk.
- When have you created something from nothing?
- Tell me of a time when you've been spontaneous.
- What's something about yourself that you want to improve? Why?
- When priorities change, how would you help your team understand and carry out the new goals?
- Tell me about a time when things didn't go your way for something really important for you.
- What makes you feel optimistic about life/humanity?
- What was the last nice thing you did for someone?

Mindset — Why interview prep

- We're living in a time of commoditization of software talent, which also means a talent pyramid is forming
- To avoid commoditization, keep skills sharp and stay at top/migrate to the top
- Part of keeping skills sharp is being at an organization with sharp skills

A common argument is that being good at interviewing doesn't correlate completely with on the job performance. This is true, but here's an alternate perspective to consider: [Tim Ferriss Is Everything That's Wrong With The Modern World \(And Why You Should Follow His Lead\)](#)

Thanks to friends who contributed

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Thanks for reading

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