**Technical Recruiter Take Home Assessment for Imbue**

**Part #1: Request for feedback**

⏲ *Estimated time: 30 min*

For this exercise, you’ll read some raw feedback written by the team for a research engineer candidate who came onsite with us (final round) and requested feedback after being turned down for the position. After reading the raw feedback, you’ll compose an email to the candidate summarizing our feedback to them.

Subject: Feedback and Reflections on Your Interview Experience

Hey John,

I hope this message finds you well and that you’ve been able to land on your feet after the interview process. Firstly, I want to thank you for your interest in our team and for taking the time to engage with us during the interviews. We genuinely appreciate your willingness to explore this opportunity with us.

Now, about your interview experience. We wanted to provide you with some insights into our discussions following your onsite interview. Please remember that our goal is always to provide constructive feedback, even though it might not be the news you were hoping for.

**First off, some things we liked:**

* You’re incredibly kind and considerate. Your interactions left a positive impression on our team, and we believe you genuinely care about the impact your work has on people.
* Your intelligence and ability to pick up concepts quickly stood out. You have high potential for problem-solving skills. You are also an excellent programmer!

**On the flip side, here are areas we identified for growth:**

* During the reverse interview, the questions you asked the team seemed a bit random and unrelated to the role. We felt it could have been more focused on understanding our team and work.
* In the resume deep dive, there was a discussion about an internship at Nvidia where there seemed to be a misalignment in expectations between you and your manager. We weren’t really clear on your perspective.
* Your trial project had room for improvement. It did work, but it appeared that you didn’t challenge yourself as much as you could have. We sensed the potential for more depth and complexity.

**Now, in terms of how you align with our values:**

* Think Good: We believe you have the capability to think deeply, but there’s some room for improvement in terms of the depth and scope of your questions.
* Be Kind: You definitely hit the mark here. We thoroughly enjoyed our interactions with you, and you brought some great energy to the team.
* Have Fun: It’s clear that you have a sense of humor, and while there were moments of fun during the interviews, you could have been a little more relaxed. But hey, we get it. Interviews can totally be nerve-wracking!
* Grow Together: Your journey of self-learning, especially during your Ph.D., is commendable. However, we noticed some gaps that could benefit from further development and coaching.

**Overall Assessment:**

To be very transparent, we didn’t think you were a good hire. However, please keep in mind that this is not a reflection of your abilities as a person, but rather an evaluation of your fit for this specific role at this particular time. You have an extremely strong background and your willingness to learn is second to none.

We appreciate your interest in our team, and we genuinely enjoyed getting to know you during the process. While it didn’t work out this time, please don’t be discouraged. We hope you’ll find an opportunity that aligns perfectly with your skills and aspirations.

Feel free to reach our if you have any questions or if there’s anything else we can assist you with. Best of luck with your continued job search, and we wish you all the best in your career endeavors!

Warm Regards,

Antony Vo

Technical Recruiter and Talent Coach

Imbue

-Note: For this email I wanted to be very gentle and kind, yet remain composed enough for the candidate to take this feedback seriously. We all know that interviewing can be stressful for candidates. Hell, even in my current role as a Talent Acquisition Recruiter, I can come off as scary as the hiring managers! This is why I wanted to use a more casual and friendly tone to offset the anxiety that candidates may have. I also learned a lot from a lead recruiter position, where my managers give me feedback and I’m able to give my own perspective. We want to give feedback in a respectful manner, without putting others down. Always give positive input after providing feedback, since it may brighten up their day!

## Part #2: Pitching candidates

⏲ Estimated time: 60 min (15 min pre-reading, and 15 min writing for each candidate)

For this exercise, you’re going to read and synthesize information about our company, culture, and roadmap, then turn it into talking points based on different candidate backgrounds and questions.

### **[TODO] Candidate A - Big Tech**

⏲ Estimated time: 20 min

Candidate context:

* Direct applicant through our career page
* Machine Learning Engineer with 8 YOE
* Lives in Seattle and wants to work remotely
* Has a PhD from Berkeley in CS
* Comes from big tech (Google, Meta, Amazon, Yahoo, etc.)
* Has mostly been a full-stack engineer working on developer tooling
* Likes to support applied research as an engineer

Candidate questions:

* How are teams structured and how does work get done?
* What are your products/what are you trying to build?

Your pitch or talking points:

1. Team Organization: At Imbue, we have a pretty unique approach to team organization. Rather than having traditional teams, we organize around projects with specific end goals. Each of these projects has a Directly Responsible Individual (DRI), and you’ll typically be a part of or responsible for one project at a time, We encourage open collaboration, and project planning is done transparently as a team through Notion. This approach provides flexibility and allows team members to engage with projects that may interest them. Being an ML engineer with 8 years of experience in big tech companies, you’d likely appreciate the emphasis we have on autonomy and applied research.
2. Remote Work: Imbue offers remote work opportunities optimized for autonomy. If you prefer to work from Seattle and in the comfort of your own home, you are welcome to do so! With this setup, you can support research initiatives, have few meetings, and even work from a different time zone. Your background in full-stack engineering and developer tooling aligns well with our goals and the format of a remote work setting, We have exciting projects where your expertise can shine, especially in supporting applied research efforts.
3. Product and Commercialization: Currently, our primary product is only internal, which involves agents and foundation models for internal usage. We’re backed by long-term investors who prioritize the safe agents we build. We know that the early-stage market and technological landscape is constantly evolving, so we’re flexible in our approach. Here at Imbue, we’re open to exploring opportunities that create sustainable value over time. Some examples of projects people have been working on in Q1 and Q2 of 2023 are: improving our foundational model training and architecture, collecting better data and improving data preprocessing for training, improving infrastructure, improve our workflow through different policies, and exploring around coding agents. You’ll get a chance to work on any of these projects listed, depending on which one interests you!

-Note: I really wanted to highlight the unique aspects about Imbue, from the team organization to the fun company culture. Not many small startup tech companies allow this much transparency and information early in the process, so I want to be there to provide for candidates who want to know more! We also want to be able to sell the role for someone who is working remote in a different state; it makes the role seem that much more enticing.

### **[TODO] Candidate B - Academia**

⏲ Estimated time: 20 min

Candidate context:

* Passive candidate we reached out to via personal email
* Post doc researcher at BAIR
* Lives in SF and wants to work in-person
* Has had a couple of tech internships in grad school (DeepMind and Nuro)
* Has a background in reinforcement learning but wants to work with LLMs

Candidate questions:

* I saw the Avalon demo on your website. How does that project factor into your current roadmap?
* What is your current roadmap?

Your pitch or talking points:

Given your background in academia and your extensive experience in reinforcement learning, I wanted to provide you with some insights into how your expertise aligns with our current projects and roadmap here at Imbue.

1. Avalon: As you noticed, this is a benchmark designed to challenge agents in a wide range of tasks, all within a sparse reward structure. The benchmark has been instrumental in our exploration of generalization in reinforcement learning. We believe that the ability of an AI agent to generalize its learning across diverse and complex tasks is a key milestone in the field. Beyond being a benchmark, Avalon is also a fast and versatile 3D simulator tailored for constructing RL environments. It has been built with the needs of RL researchers such as yourself in mind, making it a valuable tool for creating and debugging new environments and game logic. Avalon is open-source, user-friendly, and has a vibrant community which means that researchers like you can start experimenting shortly after a dive.
2. Our Roadmap: While we’ve gained significant insights from our work on Avalon, our roadmap is an evolving journey. We’re excited about the possibilities of combining RL with large language models (LLMs). Your background in reinforcement learning and your deep interest in LLMs could be a fantastic fit for our future endeavors. We’re looking to explore how these technologies can work together to solve complex real-world challenges.
3. Candidate Background: Your background, particularly your experience with tech giants like DeepMind and Nuro brings a valuable perspective to our growing team. Imbue values a culture that encourages collaboration and innovation, and we believe that your expertise in these areas will contribute significantly to our ongoing research initiatives. Since you would like to work in-person, you’d have the opportunity to immerse yourself in collaborative and ideation-focused work.

-Note: After researching Imbue’s product and looking more into Avalon, I had a better understanding on how this type of work would be interesting for an RL researcher like Candidate B. By diving a little bit into their background and showing what Imbue has to offer, I’m able to sell the role to this candidate who is looking for onsite work.

### **[TODO] Candidate C – New Grad**

⏲ Estimated time: 20 min

Candidate context:

* Direct applicant through Handshake
* New grad from MIT (Bachelor’s in Neuroscience)
* Lives in Boston but wants to relocate to SF and work in-person
* Has had 3 tech internships at Stripe, Datadog, and Dropbox
* Is very open about what they want to work on, but they care a lot about culture
* They’re also very passionate about AI safety

Candidate questions:

* What can I expect from being in-office?
* What makes Generally Intelligent’s approach to AI safety different from others?

Your pitch or talking points:

1. Imbue’s Unique Culture and On-Site Experience: Our culture at Imbue is like no other. We’re a tight-knit community that thrives on collaboration and innovation. If you’re excited about relocating to SF and working in-person, you’ll definitely find our on-site experience tailored for professionals like you who want to foster a collaborative and dynamic learning environment. Being in office, you can see ideas flowing freely and have the opportunity to work closely with passionate individuals.
2. AI Safety as a Core Focus: At Imbue, we’re deeply committed to AI safety. It’s not just a buzzword for us; it’s at the core of our mission. We believe that building safe and practical AI systems is essential to our growth. We’re actively working on engineering processes, monitoring systems, and best practices to ensure the safety of our AI systems, We even filter out potentially risky information out of the training data to make our models safer. Models that are a little more unstable would not be open source for developers. Additionally, our collaboration with NIST demonstrates our commitment to developing and sharing safety standards with the broader AI community.
3. Differentiating Imbue’s Approach: What sets Imbue apart in the realm of AI safety is our focus on human-centric AI systems. We see AI as a tool to augment human capabilities rather than replace the. Our agents are designed to work in harmony with humans, with natural language being a fundamental part in their decision-making process. This ensures the transparency, accountability, and enables a close monitoring of our AI agents. We’ve also actively been engaged in AI policy discussions to shape regulations that prioritize people’s safety over corporate interests. Our joint policy dinner with DeepMind is just one of our many efforts to create new policy proposals around agents to highlight our commitment to responsible AI development.

These are great questions, and your openness to culture will be highly valued at Imbue. You’ll find a lot of ways you can contribute to our current and future projects which could present excellent opportunities to learn within the company.

-Note: Knowing that this candidate has very high standards for company culture and commitment to AI safety, I wanted to be very clear and transparent of what we do here at Imbue. If we’re able to assure the candidate and sell them the role based on what they’re asking, we can create a very powerful team. Remember that interviewing is not just a one-way street, and the company should be a perfect fit for the candidate as much as they are a perfect fit for the company. Being transparent early on can determine the candidate’s commitment to the role which can in turn, reduce turnover within the company. I know what it’s like to be reluctant on moving forward with a company, too! That’s why we want to be upfront and as honest as possible as the hiring team. It also shows a sign of mutual respect. I sure as hell hope that the hiring managers have a fun time interviewing me as much as I like being a candidate for the role!