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Top College: No, Top Talent: Yes ; Anudeep cracks Google

- Difficulty Level :\nHard
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Anudeep Nekkanti embodies the old adage \xe2\x80\x93 there is no substitute for talent. The 21-year-old coder from Samalkot (a small town near Vishkhapatnam) has landed an offer from Google, Zurich.

What makes Anudeep\xe2\x80\x99s feat commendable is that he was not placed out of the cream colleges of the country. No he is not an IITian, NITian or BITSian! A B.Tech student in computer science from Anil Neerukonda Institute of Technological Science, Vishakapatnam, he considers his preparation and performance in programing competitions the reason for his success at cracking the google interview process.

We at toptalent.in had the opportunity to interact and pick Anudeep\xe2\x80\x99s brain to gain valuable insights into developing the right skills to be successful at getting recruited at Google.

Toptalent: How do you feel on achieving this rare feat?

Anudeep: It always feels great to achieve something rare. I was happy after knowing about it, but the real joy was after knowing how much my parents and well-wishers enjoyed the news. There is a lot of hype about being Googler, excited to see what it is really. Also excited about Zurich and Swiss chocolates

Toptalent: What made you chose your particular college and course?

Anudeep: I did not know about IIT-JEE or AIEEE. I did not dream about joining particular college. I almost never took decisions back then. My dad is cool, he does not believes that education is everything and he did not want me to only concentrate on studies. So, when joining 11th standard, he asked me if I want to opt for JEE training.\xc2\xa0Not knowing what it is, my initial answer was yes but then he realised that I had no knowledge of what I was getting into and made me change my mind, and I am grateful to him for that.

My EAMCET (State board common entrance test) rank was in the seven thousands. I had never lived outside of my town. So I wanted to stay away in a city and study, at the same time I did not want it to be too far from my home. Visakhapatnam was the best choice.

Initially I was supposed to take Electronics. My sister, who had finished B.Tech in computer science by then told me \xe2\x80\x9cCS is easy, you can start preparation one day before exams and clear them\xe2\x80\x9d. Well, I was looking to enjoy a lot in engineering and this line was perfect! It had so much impact. I just decided to take Computer science. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I have taken. CS is not easy, it is fun!

TopTalent: How many interviews were held in all?

Anudeep: Telephonic Interview initially. Then six onsite interviews at Google Hyderabad, then manager interviews.

Toptalent: Can you give us a brief account of what you felt was the toughest interview?

Anudeep: Hard to pick a single interview. Of the eight rounds I had with Google, couple of them were tough, one of those rounds lasted two hours on a single question.

Toptalent: What was your preparation strategy?

Anudeep: I did not prepare on anything specific for Google interview, I knew that my strength is algorithms and data structures. I did not want to read about other topics only for the purpose of job. I was hoping that only algo related stuff was asked. I was lucky with Google, all my interviews, all the questions were related to algorithms, data structures and programming.

Toptalent: What kind of skills do you think helped you getting this job?

Anudeep: It is competitive programming. I should say I was lucky about it. It is true that majority of hiring is biased towards competitive programming. One can clear these interviews by having good knowledge only about algorithms and data structures. Open source contributions, projects and machine learning are 3 other skills I would list.

Toptalent: Tell us a bit about competitive programming and how you became good at it.

Anudeep: It is similar to any other sport. One need to have a lot of interest to perform. One need to put a lot of effort to top. We say someone is \xe2\x80\x98out of form\xe2\x80\x99 or \xe2\x80\x98in form\xe2\x80\x99 in sports, true for competitive programming too, you need to keep doing them to be in good touch. And most importantly, at some point of time you realize that \xe2\x80\x98This sport is not correct for me\xe2\x80\x99, it can be true with programming too, and when this happens do not hang on to it, move on there are lot more things to do. How did I become good at it? I played it a lot. Concentrated practice is all that matters.

Toptalent: What resources did you consult? Where did you practice problems from?

Anudeep: Firstly, I solved about 300 problems on SPOJ (Sphere Online Judge). I came to know about online judge for the first time in 2012 Jan. That was because of IOPC (programming contest by IIT Kanpur).

Practice was my mantra. I used to try a problem for 2-3 hours. If I didn\xe2\x80\x99t get it, I looked for solutions on forums. I read few tutorials on TopCoder, but I did not know that TopCoder also has algorithm problems. I participated in following August\xe2\x80\x99s long contest, I was lot better this time, I could solve 7 problems.\xc2\xa0Ended\xc2\xa035th in Global ranking.

With this limited exposure to programming I went to participate in ACM ICPC Regionals. I could solve 4 problems there at onsite. I then understood that knowing how to solve is not enough, it is the ability to think and code fast is more important.

By August end I solved about a hundred and eighty\xc2\xa0*500 pointers*. I slowly started to think dynamically. By then I was able to solve four out of five problems. Now I am quite comfortable with 500 pointers. So, to conclude\xc2\xa0all that matters is sheer practice.

Programming is fun, programming is easy. My failure at IOPC 2012 made me start it. I thought, I will do well in IOPC 2013 and stop programming. That is how I started it. Very soon I started to like it, then I got addicted to it. I enjoy the feel that I get when I see \xe2\x80\x9cAccepted\xe2\x80\x9d. That awesome green color. My heart beat raises whenever I submit a solution. I get goosebumps. It was that fun that kept me going. Don\xe2\x80\x99t do it, Play it. Enjoy it, it is a fun game. After 21 months, I am still deeply in love with it. Right now I am preparing for world finals. I am doing problems from various on-line judges like Topcoder, Codechef, Codeforces.

Toptalent: Were grades a factor in you getting selected?

Anudeep: No. I did not mention much about my grades in my CV. My CV only says B.Tech 4th year, 8 CGPA till date.

Toptalent: Tell us more about your final location choice, Zurich?

Anudeep: I had to risk my job for Zurich. I was initially offered London, Bangalore and then Hyderabad. I told I do not want to take those position, and was in a situation of being completely rejected by Google. But I was okay with that too so I told no to those 3 positions. 70 days after my onsite interview I was finally given Zurich.

Toptalent: Whats your advice to students who are aiming for similar placement offers as yours?

Anudeep: I see that a lot of Indians are putting a lot of effort into competitive programming (mainly for placement offers) with not so good results. Trust me, do it with complete concentration for a month, by then you will exactly know if you have to continue in this field or not. If you feel you should not continue, stop it, do not hang on to it hoping for offers. Use your time on other stuff.

All Practice Problems for Google !

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