

[TopTalent.in] What it takes to be a Googler? An Interview with Google's recent hire Romal Thoppilan

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There is a myth that only grads with high CGPA land in high paying dream companies. Despite his average grades, Romal with his extraordinary coding talent and determination succeeded in getting a job offer from Google. He would like to create something disruptive in the fields of Data Science and Mining, and I believe Google is the right place to start my career, he says the myth buster. We at [TopTalent.in](#) got a chance to interact with him about what made this possible and what others can learn from this.

In case you are wondering how the resume of a Google recruit looks like, you can [download](#) the resume by logging in.

TopTalent : Could you briefly describe your student days at BITS Pilani ?

Romal : I always considered myself fortunate to be pursuing my degree at BITS Pilani. The curriculum here is quite flexible giving enough scope to nurture your interests apart from academics. I tried to make the most of it by being able to complete few higher degree courses in undergrad itself. The faculty here is pretty knowledgeable, I spent some great time working along with them in projects. Also the students here share great enthusiasm towards their career and play a big role in your development.

TopTalent : What makes Google special?

Romal : Google certainly ranks among the top companies to work at and the quality of the products and services they offer is well known. Also working in Google allows one to pursue his own interest along, since Google has such wide ranges of projects to offer. The work environment and the culture there adds every bit of fun to it.

TopTalent : How much preparation did you put in to bag this opportunity?

Romal : Unlike most others, I took my time off. My primary objective was to complete and furnish off some of my incomplete projects, so that I could be confident about them during placements. For programming, I used to practice codeforces problems. The contests it organizes contains a real good mix of mathematical, logical and algorithmic problems, and poses an environment much similar to coding rounds during placements. Besides, I had completed most of the algorithms from Cormen and then shifted to GeekForGeeks to refer to past years interview experiences.

TopTalent : Can you describe the complete hiring process of Google?

Romal : The whole hiring process was pretty smooth actually. It had one written round based on your overall knowledge of the field which basically had a few aptitude and coding

questions. The shortlist was announced after two weeks and we were called for an on-site interview at its Bangalore office. Then followed four back-to-back interviews, mostly algorithmic. We were allowed to write the code through whichever medium we were comfortable with. I toggled through all pen, board and online editor. There was very little delay and the accommodation and food were pretty good. Finally within a week, I got the CALL!

TopTalent : What topics do you think students should prepare for similar jobs like that of yours?

Romal : Firstly, they should have regular coding practice as most companies now prefer using coding rounds for shortlisting. The problems asked normally don't require any deep knowledge of algorithms. They are to test your speed and logical thinking. Then comes personal interviews. Most of the companies prefer asking algorithmic problems. However, these questions could indirectly test your basics around other topics like operating systems and database management system as well. Mostly if your basics are clear, they look at the way you think and reach the solution.

TopTalent : From your experience, what are some of the important factors that the interviewers will be looking out for?

Romal : Many believe that interview questions keep on repeating every year so they could just mug up everything to clear such interviews. This brute force way doesn't even work out for regular jobs let alone Dream Companies. In one of my interviews, the interviewer asked me a question which I had never seen before. When I finished reading the problem, he asked me to speak out everything that came to my mind and to not stop speaking till I reach some solution. Luckily for me, I did arrive at some solution. It was a mind boggling experience. These kind of interviews end up testing your thinking abilities more than anything. For Jobs like the one I am going to join, strong basics in algorithms and critical reasoning skills are essential. These are the two most important qualities that interviewers will be looking in you. *The answer impresses nobody, the way you reach there is what matters.*

TopTalent : What role does resume and CGPA play for applying to such jobs?

Romal : Resume serves two purposes. Firstly, getting you shortlisted for the interviews and secondly, to give a brief idea of the things you have been working around and are comfortable with. This generally guides the interviewer to choose what to ask and what not to ask from. I personally referred to *Cracking the coding Interview* for building my own resume. It contains a number of Do's and Dont's.

CGPA was never a thing to boast about in my resume. For most of the companies it just plays a role in the initial shortlisting. However for research based companies your CG does play a significant role. Though a high CG is a good thing to have, its just an indicative of how disciplined you are rather than a measure of your talent.

TopTalent : Would you like to share something exclusively for job seekers from elite colleges ?

Romal : Do not restrict yourself to some specific domain or subject, at least not at the undergrad level, but always have an overall sight of things and how they interrelate. Follow your interests and be good at it. Make most of the opportunities you get to learn as a part of your curriculum or through other online sources. And do possess a go-code mindset.

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