The Ultimate Software Interview Preparation Guide

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Chapter 1

5 Things You Must Do Before You Apply For the Job

Are you a fresh pass out of an engineering college or a software development program and are now looking for a job? Or are you an experienced software developer who wants to make a shift? Looking for that coveted job is a project in itself which involves a number of stages. The fact is that finding a job is not difficult; however, finding a job that makes you happy and provides you with job satisfaction definitely requires a lot of pre-application work. The most important part of this process is to identify your area of interest. For instance, when it comes to the software domain, are you interested in developing programs or is testing the area that excites you. This is important because you do not want to get stuck in a job which will turn your life into a living hell.

Once you have identified your interest area, you will be required to develop the necessary skill set that most of the employers are looking for. This will also help you in creating a power packed resume which will stand out of the stack and will put you across as a strong and well qualified candidate. In addition to this, you can make a list of the companies you would like to work in like Google, Microsoft, etc. and find out more about them, their work ethics and culture. And, only after you are satisfied that working with a particular company will be in your best of interests, you can go ahead and start networking with people who are in any way connected with it.

Below given are the 5 most important things that you must do before applying for your dream job:

Networking

Before you get an interview call, you most obviously need to apply to a job. And, networking is the key to finding that prospective employment opportunity. It has been found out that the best way to find a job is not through employment agencies or classifieds but by talking to other people. Your family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances can prove to be quite a valuable resource for job search. To begin with, make a list of all the people who fall within your network. Next, you can reach out to this network by means of direct communication or through a professional social network like LinkedIn. LinkedIn can help you invite people you already know to join your network and you can expand this network further by requesting useful introductions. Along with expanding your network, it is also important to maintain a healthy relationship of give-and-take to build a strong network.

Find a Reference in the Company

Once you have an established LinkedIn profile, you can start with your search of finding people you know, who are currently working or used to work with your dream company. You can do this by visiting the company's page on LinkedIn and checking their connections. By reviving these connections, there is a strong possibility of you being referred or recommended to a hiring manager. Higher the number of your LinkedIn connections, stronger is the possibility of you being successful in your job search. Having the right kind of connections is important because even companies like to hire a candidate who has been referred by one of their employees because of the factors like trustworthiness and reliability. Also, an employee of your dream company has a better chance of putting across your candidature than your own resume.

Get Recommended on LinkedIn from Co-workers and Colleagues

If you wish to grab good employment opportunities, it is important to get recommended on LinkedIn. It is somewhat similar to getting a referral client. When someone else recommends you, it will make you look more reliable and trustworthy. This means that if someone in your network is looking for a good software developer, they are more likely to pick you over someone who hasn't been recommended. Getting recommendations is simple; go ahead and ask for them. Search for your past or existing co-workers who are on LinkedIn or else, make them join the network. Once you are in touch with them, ask them to write a testimonial for you and you will definitely find a few takers.

Prepare Resume with Target Job in Mind

A defensible resume that stands out of the stack can become a sure shot entry ticket to that dream interview of yours. Clients usually spend less than a minute on a resume and unless and until your resume depicts a strong candidature for the job in question, you will not stand a chance. This is because putting down your credentials in a generic manner will not impress the potential employers. A customized resume that perfectly fits in the needs of the employer looks crisp, relevant and generally attracts more attention from the management. Also, the Human Resources department would be more than pleased to come across a resume that clearly puts across the competencies and the skill set they have been looking for. Hence, a resume that is targeted towards the potential position will help you make the employer realize that you know what he wants and you have it in you.

Check Company Background

Before you embark your journey for that most sought after interview, it is advisable that you gather as much Company information as you can with the help of internet. This will prepare you for answering the interview questions as well as for asking intelligent questions. This will also help you understand whether you will be able to fit within the prevailing Company culture. The Company website will usually help you with almost all the information like history and mission, line of business, management and culture; however, in order to have an in-depth overview you can make use of LinkedIn. In addition to this, you can also make use of social media sites like Face book and Twitter to obtain some inside information, something that you won't be able to obtain from the official website.

Chapter 2

10 Secrets To Write A Killer Resume

At some or the other point of time in our lives, we may have applied to a job opening with a carefully put together resume. But despite spending a considerable amount of time in making the most perfect resume, you did not get a response. This does not mean that there is something wrong with your qualifications and credentials but the manner in which you might have put them down on your resume. So, here in this article, you will be made aware of the 10 secrets that will help you in writing a killer resume.

Pick a good layout for resume

A resume where all the information has been stashed in a garbled manner always looks like a mess that no one would like to read. Hence, it is important to have a clean layout for your resume, something that suits the kind of profile you are trying to portray. In case you are unable to design a layout of your own, you can download one of the resume templates that are available on the internet.

Start with an objective

Although, a resume typically starts with an objective, try and convert this object into a positioning statement. This is because while an objective focuses more on the needs of a potential job seeker, a positioning statement will highlight what the candidate has to offer. This helps in drawing the attention of the potential employer who is simply trying to assess how valuable you are to the company.

Job specific

A resume should not be considered as a personal document but a marketing tool. Hence, your resume should be able to highlight you as a perfect employee that suits the job in question rather than selling the story of your life. So, it is important to understand the specifics of the job opening in complete detail and then carve out your resume that clearly brings out your skills and credentials that will be useful in accomplishing the job.

Highlight achievements

Although, providing a list of responsibilities handled by you in the past is important, it will

not be of any value to the employer if you have not been able to accomplish anything substantial. This is because most of the employers will be looking out for that very element that makes you different from other applicants. Hence, list down all your quantifiable achievements that you are proud of, regardless of whether these are personal or professional.

Choose the right keywords and buzzwords

Using the right kind of keywords and phrases in your resume is one of the most effective ways to draw the attention of your potential employers. It is basically an art of putting down things in quite a decorative manner. So, instead of saying that "I managed a Java Project" you can say that "I was a Java Project manager". It is important to ensure that the buzzwords you use should originate from the job description itself.

Clear roles and responsibilities

You must make sure that all the roles and responsibilities handled by you have been put down quite clearly and does not give a vague idea of your job description. So, instead of making a vague statement like "was a part of the website designing team", put down all the tasks performed by you in a specific manner. This looks crisp and gives a clear idea about your area of expertise.

Provide Enough contact information

Giving out enough contact information is critical to building an effective resume. This is because if the employer considers you to be a good match for his opening, he should not be made to struggle in order to contact or locate you. Put down your name along with all the relevant contact information like e-mail address, phone numbers and physical address at the very top of the resume where it is easily accessible.

Right length of the resume

As against the most popular belief that a resume looks good if it fits within a single page, the potential employers do not really care about the number of pages on which your resume is sprawled out. However, it makes perfect sense not to create a document out of your resume. So, focus on putting down the key information in a crisp manner which is easy to read.

Proof read

In case your resume contains any typographical or grammatical errors, it will be a big turn off for your potential employers. Hence, it is important to proof read your resume wither on your own or by seeking professional help. Review and edit the entire document before final submission.

Keep multiple formats

It is always useful to have a copy of your resume saved in some of the widely used formats like text, PDF and doc. This is because you do not know what kind of format a particular employer will prefer and you do not want to sit and convert the format of your resume at a time when you should actually be handing out a prepared copy.

Writing a good resume is imperative, as a resume creates the first impression on your prospective employer. And as we all know, the first impression is the best impression.

Chapter 3
Top 10 Things You Must Do Before the Interview

Most of you who are about to sit for the technical interview of your dream company must be going through a dreaded feeling despite being well equipped with all the necessary certifications and know how that is bound to exhibit your exceptional IT skills. But, the reality is that there is absolutely nothing to fret about. A good amount of focused and committed preparation is all that you require walking into the interview room with an air of confidence.

However, what one needs to be fully aware of is the fact that there is no possible manner in which you can bluff your way through a technical interview. This is because the interview round is designed in a manner so as to figure out your real mettle and whether or not you posses the right kind of skills that are suitable for the job in question. Hence, given the seriousness of a technical interview, the worst mistake you can make is to show up without any proper preparation.

The below given tips will help you steer your preparation in the right direction:

Check Your Communication Skills

One of the biggest fears people have is that of public speaking which gets exhibited evidently in the event of a technical interview, especially if you are facing a group interview or are nervous about something. It is true that you are not required to blabber like a salesman but you will certainly be required to sell yourself to the interviewers. Good communication skills are important because unless and until you are able to communicate your ideas in an effective manner, you will not come across as a confident person and will not be able to make an impact on your potential employers. So, in case you feel that you lack within this area, it is best to go in for some good public speaking training program or to practice mock interview sessions with another person.

Learn The Right Terminology

If you have applied for a position within the technical department of an organization, you will be expected to be well versed with the right terminology and a section of the interview will definitely revolve around this aspect. This is simply because of the reason that a technical job is not the kind where you can become successful by simply using the power of your tongue. Here, unless and until you do not have complete knowledge of your subject area, you will not be able to perform effectively. Regardless of whether you are applying for an

entry level job or a high position, you will be asked subject knowledge based questions. So, in case you have forgotten your basics, it is time to brush them up and become thorough with the subject matter.

Practice Interviewing

By practicing an interview session, you can prepare for the real encounter in the best possible manner. This is very helpful even if you have been a part of many interviews earlier. This is because the more you practice; the sharper will be your reflexes to tackle any kind of question that comes your way. Interview practicing can be done alone or along with your family, friends or a professional. If you wish to practice interviews with a professional or interview preparation software that can be used online, you will be required to pay some fees. However, you can achieve the same results by recruiting your family members or friends as your mock interviewers. You can even take it a step forward by setting up the interview area and dressing appropriately for the occasion so as to get a feel of a real interview session.

Work On The Feedback

Despite working real hard for an interview, there might be situation when you were not able to perform to your full potential as a result of which you could not get your dream job. But instead of getting dejected by this kind of a situation, the best way out is to reflect on the course of the interview and work harder on your downsides. In case, you are a highly aware person, you will be able to find out the areas where you lack by self evaluating your performance during the interview and also on the basis of the response from the employers. If this is not the case, you can seek the help of a professional mock interviewer. Additionally, once the interview is over, you can even ask for a feedback very politely. If you get to hear something negative about yourself, instead of feeling angry or broken, try and work on it in a constructive manner.

Take up Real Interviews With Other Companies You Would Not Want To Join

While applying for a particular job position within your domain you must have created a list of companies you would like to work with. However, there will also be some other, not so attractive companies which might have vacancies for the same job position. So, one good way to prepare you for the interview of your dream company is by sitting for the interviews of these unimportant companies. This will make you aware of the kind of questions that you can expect in the actual session along with providing you with a confidence boost that you

will not be able to get with a mock interview session. Also, it will help you brush up your professional knowledge many times, so that you have everything on your tips when you sit for the actual interview session.

Have Appropriate Dress and Keep It Ready For The Day Of Interview

It is true that a strong knowledge base is important but an equally relevant truth is that the right kind of appearance is very helpful in creating that perfect, first impression on the interviewers. By appearance, we do not mean that you have to dress like you are walking straight out of a Hollywood movie but to dress conservatively, professionally and comfortably that suits the setting you are in. Although, you might feel extremely comfortable in that favorite pair of worn out jeans but wearing any such thing to an interview room will make you appear highly unprofessional and casual. Hence, choose the right kind of attire for the D-day and keep it ready well in advance so as to avoid any kind of last minute rush.

Stay Updated In Technology Trends

The beauty of the IT and software industry is that it keeps evolving on a regular basis as completely new trends and technological advancements come into the picture. Hence, it is very important to stay up to date as far as the trends of your particular domain are concerned. This is because you will make quite a sorry figure if your interviewer is asking you questions on Windows 7 but all you can remember is the features of Windows 3. When you are well informed of all the current trends of your industry, you will come across as a pro-active person who is highly committed towards his job. And, in reality, this is exactly the kind of profile that every seasoned employer would be looking for.

Have References Ready

Giving references are an important part of the interview. Keeping the references ready to be distributed will give an impression to your potential employers that you are well prepared for this interview and all you mean is work. Also, if you distribute the references at an appropriate time, without being asked for them, it will make you appear as a person who likes to take ownership of things. Your reference list can have approximately 3 to 5 names along with their professional information and contact details. As far as you can, try and give references of people who have worked with you earlier and who will have all good things to say about you.

Take Some Practice Tests for Quantitative and Analytic Reasoning

If you are applying for a technical position, you will be required to sit for some or the other kind of an aptitude test as a part of the interview process. This test will mostly consist of quantitative ability, reasoning and analytical skills. The main idea behind giving this kind of a test is to assess the candidate's thinking and judgment. Hence, if you do not want to falter within this area, it is highly advisable to take these tests seriously and do a lot of practice before facing the actual set.

Take Some Practice Tests of Puzzle Solving

Many of the major software giants start their interview process by making the candidates sit for a puzzle solving test. The main idea behind giving this kind of a test is to test the IQ of a person which is quite an important aspect of any job specification. Hence, it will be very helpful to have a good amount of practice in solving different kinds of puzzles. For this, you can consult certain good puzzle solving books that can be purchased or downloaded for free. Additionally, you can also solve puzzles on certain sites.

Chapter 4

5 Killer Things You Can Do To Get Noticed and Hired by Google, Microsoft or Apple

Like millions of people across the globe, if you also dream of getting hired by the technology giants like Google, Microsoft or Apple, you will have to position yourself accordingly. When it comes to the excruciating battle of looking out for that perfect job you will notice that you are not the only one in this race. On the contrary, the job market is flooded with an unbelievably large number of qualified candidates so that it is not unnatural to feel like just another job seeker within this crowd.

Owing to the extremely stiff competition of current times, the job searching techniques of yesteryears that included searching suitable opportunities, sending out resumes and then waiting for a reply are not going to work anymore. What you actually need to do is to get out in the open and grab the attention of your potential employers in a manner that not many have tried. This is simply because no employer will remember an average candidate.

If you have still not been able to figure out that jackpot move which is bound to get you noticed, try one of these ideas and see the results.

Contribute in Open Source Community
Open source communities are always on the lookout for motivated and skilled volunteers who can contribute some useful ideas and turn them into applications. Today, most of the technical companies hire people not on the basis of their resumes or references but on the basis of the real time work that they have done. Your contribution to a significant open source project will help your potential employers to assess the quality of your work, the completion percentage, level of passion as well as cultural perspective. This is especially important for people who have been unemployed for a long duration of time because the software development community requires razor sharp skills. An open source community will provide you with plenty of opportunities to hone your skills and give an impression to your employer that all you mean is business. Best still, solve an enterprise level problem and watch your name reaching the right kind of people.

Create a Blog and Write Good Articles in your Area of Expertise
With continuous growth in the popularity of blogging, many software recruiters are now making use of the web to find suitable candidates. By digging their way through different

kinds of technical blogs it becomes easy and quick for the recruiters to develop a pool of potential candidates. Hence, blogging is not only for fun but can seriously help you get hold of that dream job you always wanted to have. So, create a blog and start penning down good articles to demonstrate your skills and expertise. If you wish to attract the targeted viewers, it is important to put in time to develop quality content. A good blog post does not only help the recruiters to assess you on your knowledge but also your style of communication.

Do Some Volunteer Work in your Job Knowledge Area
Volunteering has always been associated with something that is noble and benefits all. Although, the nobility of volunteering work cannot be negated, you can make use of it to network with the right kind of people. If you are unemployed, you can seek volunteering opportunities within the area of your knowledge and avail the chance of working along with some of the professionals who can help you with your career choices. On the other hand, if you are a working professional, volunteering within the area of your expertise will give you an opportunity to network with some of the experts and professionals who might provide you with the right kind of push towards your career goals. Volunteering within the community where you want to get hired is a great way to help yourself get noticed.

Write White Papers in your Knowledge Area
If you have conducted any kind of research with regards to the most effective marketing tactics, you will discover white papers to be one of the excellent tools which can help attract the required attention. A white paper is basically responsible for doing two things: educating and persuading. So, if you wish to persuade your potential employers into believing that you are the most suitable candidate for their company, you must pen down some white papers within the area of your knowledge as well as technical expertise. This will help the software recruiters in assessing your skill set pertaining to the understanding of a problem, analysis and the most appropriate solution. In addition to this, the manner in which you communicate with your audience will also get conveyed. Hence, all you are required to do is to write a good white paper and you will be in a win-win situation.

Do Research, File Patents
Like all the other above mentioned things, not many people will ever think of taking the route of conducting a good research and filing patents to secure that coveted interview with your dream software company. The software community is known to move at a lightning speed owing to the large number of inventions that happen on a continuous basis. Hence, if you are able to show that you have conducted a strong research in any of the important areas you are bound to get noticed as a person who is serious about his profession. Software companies prefer to hire people who have in depth understanding of their domain

and are at pace with the current technological trends. This is what your research work will put across the table.

Hence, all said and done, you will certainly appreciate the importance of standing tall in a group of potential job seekers. The job market has become so overcrowded that unless and until you have something special to showcase, something that makes you stand apart from your fellow interviewees, it will become very difficult for you to navigate. However, by implementing some of these unique strategies you can bring upon yourself a lot of good luck as far as the dream interview is concerned.

Wish You Best Luck for Your Dream Job