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Interview Prep Week 5 (03/19) Notes

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Hey all,

    Last weekend we did resume peer reviews, then talked about salary negotiation. Most of the resume insights
are already in your notes, but here are some highlights:

Resume Clinic
    We did resume peer reviews & edits. No lecture so thus no lecture notes, but here are a few observations I
got from the

Lead with your strongest suit! If you don't have any significant work experience, make the first section your
projects. If you do, lead with the most impactful result from your last job.

The single most common fix is to add numbers to everything. This is harder than it looks, but remember that the
numbers can just be an estimate. People don't care within an order of magnitude--it simply shows that you're
somebody who actually did things rather than simply floating along with the boat.

When I talk to people in person, their experiences are often FAR more interesting than what goes into their
resumes. I have no idea why this happens, but it does. So don't be afraid to be a little weird.

Negotiation with Satvik Beri
If you weren't here, we ended the resume peer review session earlier than expected, which gave Satvik Beri time
to talk about his negotiation experiences. This was a particularly good time, since he had just finished 6-week
long negotiation process with Euclid (the company he really wanted to work for) and estimates that he got
+30% in total compensation out of it.

Get in touch with him: satvik.beri@gmail.com

His negotiation/interview prep includes Ramit Sethi's Competence Triggers. As a direct example: he set up an
interview with the CEO of Euclid to ask about the company's business plan. By evaluating them, he came
across as more senior and got the CEO in his corner :-)

Negotiate on the important things first. Start with salary, then the second toughest (equity / signing bonus), then
the third toughest (vacation days, fringe benefits). Don't ask for things like being able to work remotely right
away; it sends the wrong message. Similarly, ask for the ability to leave work to attend conferences instead of
vacation days.

Here's how a company thinks: the entire process is a giant (but necessary) expensive pain in the ass. There is a
hiring bar, which candidates have to meet. Anyone over the bar gets a job. They're trying to recruit 120
candidates for the job this year but are on track to get 90. A single recruiter will get maybe 1-2 hires per month if
he or she is lucky! You are quite possibly the difference between your recruiter making his or her numbers or
getting put on a performance improvement plan.

Needless to say, once they've made you an offer, they'll go through great lengths to get you to take it. Any sort of exploding offer is a bluff, pure and simple, and you can and should "reset the clock" by simply declining it. "Thank you for the offer, and I really want to work at <your company>, but I was really looking for a range of (high number) to (even higher number)." Then they'll go think for a bit and come back with a better offer.

Contrast this with the model that a company hires for a position, and then takes the candidate who is willing to be paid the least. While this does occur for positions where the company needs a warm body with the right certifications, data science is not that job. The company expects to make at least 3 - 10X what they're paying you off of your work. So hiring the best candidate is far more important than the cheapest. Silicon valley has its perks. **Bottom line is, once you've gotten an offer, the risk of "blowing yourself out" is maybe 1/1000 of what you expect.**

Things to avoid: asking extra vacation, asking to work from home, asking the interviewer how many hours he works. All three of these send the wrong signal--they make you look like a lazy person.

If you say "I'll take this if you give me X" or reasonably imply it and DON'T follow through, this is extremely bad form and people will go out of their way to punish you for it. So if you're going to use this technique, use it at the very end of the negotiation cycle "if you give me XXX I'll sign right away."

Knowledge is power. Have an estimate of how much you can expect to make given your experience. Have multiple offers. Simply knowing how much you're worth is a tremendous position of strength.

You don't need a competing offer to negotiate. At Euclid, Satvik simply mentioned that he was being interviewed by Facebook and expected to make a certain range. He didn't end up getting an offer from Facebook. It didn't matter. He had already set the frame so it was already priced in.

That said, getting competing offers is AWESOME.

Mention ranges. When somebody asks "what are you looking for," I recommend giving a range of your high number to an even higher number.

If somebody asks what you're currently making, decline unless you're making a lot and would expect to take a paycut. Instead say "here's what I've been offered by XXX" or "here's what I expect to make, based on my experience." it's asked salary-related questions before you get an offer, say something like "let's talk about salary negotiation after we both decide if this is a good fit". Get the offer first and negotiate from a position of strength.

Interviewing well matters. Satvik got his payraise partially because everyone who interviewed him liked him. The difference between "just over the bar" and "really awesome" will often determine how willing the company is to give you a raise.

Target a promotion. This happened for both Satvik and I; he targeted it intentionally and convinced Euclid to create a new catagory of Senior Data Scientist just for him; I got Facebook to do it because they had to in order to make a counteroffer. Because companies set pay bands for a given role, as part of the negotiation process you can often talk them into a level higher (thus allowing them to preserve fairness within their role system). This is where listing business value also helped Satvik; it's something a senior data scientist would do.

You want to be with every company. Playing hard-to-get just doesn't work. Period. End of story. If you care at all about the company, they are your top choice--you just need a little bit more money because you know you're worth XXX.

Non-negotiation observations

Job hunting follows a roughly linear path:

First, figure out what job title you want to try for. The obvious one is "data scientist," but there are people here who could also be data engineers or managers. If this is a question for you, the best way to figure it out is to talk with people who have these jobs and see which one suits you the best. **It's difficult to target more than one job at a time because things which are strengths for one are often weaknesses for another.** For example, a dedication to proper testing is good trait for data engineers to have but a poor one for data scientists.

Then, get referrals. The best way to do this is to ask a friend who works at the company if he or she knows any people with the job you want. Use your friend to get you in touch with one of them. You can also simply cold-email or cold-LinkedIn message people with the job telling them that you're considering the company and asking if you could get an informational interview. Remember that most companies have referral bonuses and that even important, busy people love to give advice :-)

Use this informational interview to figure out what job title you should target overall, and which job to apply to at that particular company. **Often job descriptions are completely wrong so this is much better than applying from the internet**.

Then, convert your informational interview buddy to a referral. Satvik's estimate is that going from nothing to referral at one company takes at most 10 hours of work. This is for a completely blind approach; often you will have a friend who can introduce you to a friend who can set up the interview for you.

Best,
Robert