

Okay, so for people who might find this helpful, here is my placement experience with the only company I sat for, Morgan Stanley (we'll use MS henceforth because the name is too long to be read every time). xD

Aptitude Test:

In my year, like in most, MS had two parts to its aptitude test. The test was online and was conducted 2-3 days prior to the interviews.

The first part was a normal MCQ based test that had two sections, Quantitative Analysis and Technical Skills. There was negative marking for these questions (+4 & -1) and the number of questions in the second section were more (10 and 20 respectively, I think). Word of caution: Be wise in designing your strategy to solve questions, there always IS a sectional cut off and the competition is cut-throat.

The second part of the test was a Coding Round, again online. We were given 3 problem statements to be solved in 45 minutes and the programming languages allowed were C, C++ and Java. However you are required to use the same language for Part 1 (Technical Skills) and Part 2 (Coding Round). So make sure you know any one language in its entirety. I hadn't touched anything apart from C. The questions were essentially based on data structures.

Fast forward to interview day.

Interview Rounds:

The interviews were held in the MS office which was a teeny bit intimidating for me because there were people from all over Mumbai with totally self-confident auras around them. The HR team responsible for handling the candidates are REALLY cool though. They made sure all of us were comfortable (read: perfectly stable up there) at all times. It really helps. Talk to those people if you're feeling anything in between nervous and just plain bored.

The day started out with a PPT where we were told about the company and the work that is done there. Pay attention here, you will have to use this information to come up with fake questions later during your interview rounds, if you have nothing in mind.

The PPT was followed by breakfast that none of us really had a lot of. The candidates were divided into groups and called out one group at a time for their first round of interviews, the TECH-1. Okay, before getting into that, you might have to wait a REALLY long time if you're in the last group, as I was, and that gets on your nerves. Again, talk to the HRs. Or eat. Whichever one works to take your mind off the nervousness. :P

TECH-1 was pretty much basic, probably just for them to find out whether you know everything that you claim to know. I was asked questions on the basics of C, Data structure implementation, DBMS AND OS. Sounds daunting, but it really wasn't. My panellists were really cool about giving me all the time in the world to think about my answers, they'd even roll their chairs to the corner of the room

and chit chat when I'd ask them to stop looking at me. Not a recommended course of action for you guys, because you might get really badass panellists who might want to take a stress interview and using this would probably get you a ticket to take you directly out of the building. But the point is that you don't need to panic when you're asked a question that you don't understand AT ALL. It is probably just a coating of shiny silver on a very basic problem. ALWAYS remember to restate the question as you understood it to make sure that you're on the right track. If you're right you get a bonus for being able to analyse well. If you're not, they will make you understand and you won't spend 15 minutes of your interview time solving a misinterpreted question. :)

Sample questions:

- Started off with: How would you find whether a number is even or odd without using any conditions?
- Implement a dynamic 2D excel sheet using DS (underwent various levels of improvisations)
- A build up that resulted in the concept of using joins in DBMS
- Discussed the concept of virtual memory and paging in OS .. Didn't really crack this one! ^.^"

All of this was done by around 1.30pm and we were hurried off to the canteen, which is AWESOME, for a break till 2pm. The results of the first round were announced at around 2.30pm and we were left with around 23 students at the end of it. Oh. Everyone got a T-shirt before the results got out.

The remaining students were again divided into groups and taken to different rooms for the second round, the Group Activity. This is subject to change every year, but for ours we had the one with the Lego toys. Details at a later time perhaps, because most of you must already know about it.

After the group activity, we had three rounds occurring simultaneously, the TECH-2, the ProFit and the HR. Mine went in that order.

My TECH-2 was taken by two of my panellists from the Group Activity, so they already had an impression of my personality and didn't try to grill me on its basis. This round was perhaps the most difficult of all, with gruelling technical questions that I couldn't make head or tail out of. But they were satisfied with a broad outlook to the number of solutions and the different ways to approach the problem. They asked me a little about how my day had been till then and for improvisations on the answers to the questions I was asked in the previous rounds. I was also asked a question about synchronization that I answered with my knowledge of embedded systems. They were really interested in how I applied unrelated knowledge to solve a problem that I would otherwise not be able to answer. This was the end of TECH-2 which made me believe that I had screwed up entirely and that I was out for sure.

Now for that reason, I went in to my ProFit round with an “I-should-really-have-the-best-time-with-this-thing-since-it-is-all-down-the-drain-anyway” attitude, but really, I think that is just what you’re expected to do anyway. :) This ended up being the coolest round of all and I had the time of my life for those 30 minutes. My interviewer asked me ALL the general questions you expect in an HR, and I answered them all very, very truthfully and with really long explanations :P .. The guy was a veeeeery keen listener and caught on to each and every one of my indications. He let me talk about practically everything, from my very hippie-like outlook of life to the most silly bets I have placed, ever. And the best part was that he was always interested, poker-face like, but always waiting patiently for more exemplifications. Don’t bother trying to make up achievements you haven’t really made, because they don’t care about how accomplished you are, more like how zestful you are, and it probably shows when you’re talking about things that you love. Long story short, talk your heart out, they hardly speak in all of those 30 minutes. Let them know that you really ARE passionate about the things that you do.

The next round that I was immediately ushered into was my HR. Now, I probably felt what I did because I had talked a LOT in my previous round, but I really thought this round was predominantly precursory. My interviewer was one of the big shots of the day, but he hardly asked me any questions that could qualify as HR. This person was the only one from all of my interviews who was even remotely rigid, but that too only marginally. He was ultra-friendly again by the end of the interview. This might vary case by case, but he only asked me things like my comfort with relocation and what I aimed to achieve in the next 5 years. At the end of the interview, he kid around a little and escorted me to the waiting room.

By this time all the people who were ice cold to each other in the morning were united by fear and stuff, so we spent the rest of the evening cracking up. The results were announced after a half hour wait and 9 of us got selected in total. The entire experience was pretty much a let-down considering the amount of anxiety I had expected I would go through. Those people were just way too nice. Even when they were annoyed. Well, that’s just how it went for me anyway. :)