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That's How I Mastered All My Job Interviews As A Software Engineer?

Do you want to secure your dream jobs as I did? Read my story!

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I started working as a software developer when I was in high school. I worked in different companies across various industries as a developer, DevOps, project manager, and CEO/CTO. Then in mid-20s, I decided to continue my higher education overseas, so I quit my job to pursue a new goal in my life.

Last year, I saw that most of my friends, who had more or less the same skills as mine, were struggling to find a decent job after graduation (Master and Ph.D.). I got afraid if the same thing is going to happen to me. Therefore, I decided to check and evaluate the job market before my graduation by having some job interviews. After few weeks, I was receiving new job offers every week, and I was getting invited for the job interviews online, on the phone and in person. After all, more than 90% of my interviews were successful so that I had to reject them as I was busy with my research at the university.

Then I talked to my friends to figure out what the key differences are between us that I had much more successful interviews, and much higher chance of landing a job. Here, I want to share my findings with you.

CV/Resume

CV is the first thing that recruiters see, and it is the only mean that you can impress them at the early stage. If your CV catches their attention, then you are good to go for the next steps.

I always keep my CV updated even if I do not have any plan to apply for a position. Whenever something worth stating in CV comes up, I update my CV and LinkedIn profile. The look and design of a CV is as important as the content. I do remember when I wanted to redesign my CV, I sent copies to many of my friends, and ask them to review it and give me feedback. I spent a lot of time on the typography of the CV to choose the right font (*Times New Roman* is a big NO!), font size, color, indention, alignments, and logos. Yes, you heard that right, logos. I have used logos to show my educational institutes and companies much clearer and eye-catching in my CV. But you have to be careful about the size, color and location of the logos, and not to make your CV looks messy.

Keep your CV and even your online profiles (such as LinkedIn) professional. If you have a degree in Computer Science, do not include MS Windows and MS Office as your skills—Unless you are applying for a job, which requires great skills in those applications. Also, do not include *reading booking* or *listening to music* as your hobbies, because everybody likes listening to a music, and it is not an outstanding hobby. These are not what a recruiter is expecting to see.

Use a professional email address, containing your name, and avoid your old *"wonderman2000@yahoo.com"* email address.

Never forget to proofread your CV whenever you update it. Nothing is worse than having mistakes in a CV. Your CV reflects your personality. So make sure you have an impressive one. You can search for many free templates online and use creative designs (not messy) to stand out.

Online Presence

Online presence is very important. You do not need to be in Wikipedia —it is not even recommended—but at least having a complete and error-proof LinkedIn profile is a must.

Google your name occasionally to see which pages are associated with your name. A friend of mine, Ph.D. in Archaeology, once realized that there is a person wanted by Interpol with the exact same name as his. Of course, he could not do anything about it, but it is better to know it.

There are other preferred ways of online presence, such as having a personal website, or blog, which is recommended if you have enough knowledge on preparing the material and maintaining it. Having a poor website not only does not help you but also it can ruin your reputation.

Dress Code

It is not a surprise that your clothing is important, but not as much as you may think. Almost all my friends were wearing formal suits for their job interviews. Once I thought that they are going to a wedding. Of course, it is perfect to be elegant, but when your job does not have a strict dress code, there is no point to dress the way that you are not used to, and you do not feel comfortable. In fact, wearing casual conveys your confidence in the interview session. In most of the computer and IT companies, casual clothing is very common in the workplace.

During my interviews, I wore my clean ironed comfortable casual clothes, and a good scent (perfume). A good perfume can do the magic.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are the personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively with the other people. There are some important skills for interviews, that we need to practice them such as communication skills (including public speaking), social intelligence and emotional intelligence. These skills can be learned and improved by practice.

These skills are responsible to convey positive messages implicitly about your personality, and they can significantly affect your

interviewers. You can start with an ice breaker topic such as the weekend, weather, etc.

Be positive and think positively before and during the interview. When you are questioned, do not rush, take your time to think and then answer the questions precisely, short but with a nice story. Try to be short, but not with Yes or No only answers. Bring it in a nice short story. Learn how to tell a story. Also, you can give feedback on the questions that you are being asked. If you do not feel comfortable with a question, tell them politely.

You can learn lots of educational materials about the soft skills online (especially YouTube). If you have more time, improve your *emotional intelligence (EQ)* by learning and practicing the relevant skills.

Self-Confidence

Be confident. Self-confidence is your secret weapon during the interview. At the interview, you want to present yourself. If you are not confident, you can not send the right message to your audience.

Weaknesses

Most of my friends tried to impress the recruiters by answering almost all the technical questions and expressing their opinions right away even on the topics which they had no expertise. If you do not know the answer to a question, instead of making up some nonsense, be confident and say that you do not know the answer. You are not supposed to know all the answers and recruiters know this. Do not play *Mr. Know Everything* unless you really know everything.

Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

Sense of Humor

Never forget the sense of humor. You might think that a job interview is about a serious professional work, but it has nothing against smiling and sense of humor. If you smile and make them smile, you will get closer to a successful interview.

But be careful not to overuse the humor and disrespect your audience. The sense of humor is great, but too much is dangerous.

You Yourself and Honesty

Be yourself, and never try to imitate someone else. Never try to show whom you are not by exaggerating your skills, role-playing, and so on.

Passion

Only go for your favorite jobs. If you do not know a job, or you do not have any passion or feeling about a job, never choose that at the first step. Money is important but passion is more important. Once you have a passion for the job, a strong positive message would be sent automatically. If you are there only to get a job and to get paid, the recruiters can also sense that.

Saying that you are a hard worker is not enough. For instance, I am not a hard worker at all, and I never say that I am a hard worker. Because I do not believe in hard work but in smart work. Once you have the passion for your work, then the hard work would not be hard anymore.

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Ask Questions

You may have heard that you should be prepared before the interview. Like looking at the company's website, and get much information as possible, and going to interview like you know everything about the company. Well, that is not all necessary. I usually did check the company's website, and try to understand the company. Even if I knew the interviewer's name, I checked their names to see whom I am going to talk with. But there were a lot of things that still I did not know.

There is a misconception about the job interview among my friends (or maybe among many). They all went to the job interviews like they were products to be marketed to the company, and the company is going to choose. However, it should not be this way. The interview session is a chance for both applicant and company to know more about each other, and see if they match with each other's expectations or not. Even companies should try to attract fit applicants. So, the applicants should also ask their fundamental questions to see if it is the right position and company that they are looking for.

You may wonder that we may not have many options to think selectively, but that is wrong. Companies need good and fit applicants, and applicants need fit positions and colleagues as they are going to work with each other for some time. Always ask about the follow-up procedure to see how and when you may hear back from the company.

Thank You Email

Always send a thank you email after the interview. Try to have it short, and precise. Proofread your email before sending and make sure that there is no typo or grammatical mistakes inside the email.

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There is one advise that it is not directly relevant to the job interviews, but it has helped me throughout my life:

> *"Keep learning all the time, and never stop reading."*

I hope that you can also get succeeded in your future job interviews, and have a wonderful and joyful job.

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