IT/TECH HIRING: HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW



Demand for IT talent is on the rise. According to the recent CompTIA research report, tech employment in the U.S. accounts for 12.1 million individuals—and that number has grown by 307,000 in the past year. 2019 saw 4.6 million job openings and the competition for talent has never been so fierce. At the same time, a majority of college students are pursuing STEM careers.

So, IT/tech work might be just right for you. Once you acquire the right mix of qualifications for the job you're seeking, you must prove your knowledge and expertise through interviews potential new employers. Some interviews might feel more casual; others might text your expert technical knowledge—succeeding at both types is crucial in order to get hired.

In this article, we will go over tips to ace your IT interview:

1. Start with your resume

The interview sessions are a direct result of your initial job application and resume/CV, so any interview will build on the information you've shared in your initial job applications. Any information partly left out on the resume will likely be a part of the interview discussion. This might include examples of work you've done previously, as well as any timeline gaps. Do expect a relevant discussion during the interview. Be honest and transparent during the job application phase. You don't have to detail every task you've performed. A good rule of thumb is to be prepared to discuss 1-3 highlights per job you've held.

In this context, the preparation for an interview already starts from your job application. This is where

you introduce your relevance to the potential employer and during the interview session, you present how your experience makes you the best fit for the job.

2. Present your soft skills

Treat the IT job interview as a meeting with your (potential) colleagues. Communication and collaboration are critical elements of any IT-related role. Interviewers want to know you can:

- Make yourself understood
- Present your thoughts effectively
- Conduct an appropriate interactive discussion on complex tech subjects

When you're preparing for an IT interview, focus on learning how to keep your sentences clear, concise, and complete.

These tips also extend to coding interviews and technical discussions that are intended to test your technical prowess on the subject more than your behavioral profile. However, the technical background is only useful once job candidates indicate they fit well into the company culture, collaborate with colleagues, and understand each other.

3. Be your best self

A frequent cliché, this advice is still relevant for all IT interview opportunities. Employers are not only looking for the most knowledgeable or expert candidates, but the best fit for their workplace. A candidate that best fits with the company culture and job requirements and takes the effort to become the best version of himself has the potential to be better than many competing applicants, who may have better credentials and past experiences.

4. Be enthusiastic

Demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job opportunity during the interview. (If you're not enthused, perhaps the role isn't for you.) When it comes to enthusiasm, actions speak louder than words—hiring managers are looking for concrete past experience that demonstrates such an experience. For example, if you're enthusiastic about a specific tech trend, you can indicate that by engaging with the technology, following recent research, and proposing how the new technology could fit in the company's future projects.

5. Know the company and advertised job

Ask the employers and hiring managers and you will be surprised by the number of candidates who enter an interview session without enough knowledge of the job in question and the company itself. Tech companies readily post information about their projects, teams, culture, and vision online. Simple internet research is an excellent way to understand the company, so you can inspire confidence during the interview meetings and prove that you are truly up for the job.

6. Prepare for coding interviews

Vast resources and advice are available to help tech job applicants with coding interviews. Coding interviews show your ability to solve complex problems, but that's not all. They can indicate your

soft skills as well as your approach to problems.

Hiring and team managers pay special attention to how you solve coding problems, including:

- How you formulate the problem statement
- How you identify possible solutions
- How you leverage available resources, including the various methods and knowledge you have acquired in the past.
- Your thought process while solving a problem. Some candidates and hiring managers think it's helpful to speak openly while solving the coding problems, to show your approach.
- How you describe your choices. Coding interviews and most real-world tech problems are open-ended by nature. Tech folks are expected to perform decision choices and trade-offs, adapt to limitations, and make assumptions before pursuing a solution, and your interviewer would like to be aware of your choices.
- Your persistence. Many tech problems are complicated and require persistence to reach a solution. During the short coding interview session, demonstrate your persistence in reaching the solution even if it seems difficult. Don't give up!
- Your ability to review problems. Once a problem is solved, it's also important to discuss alternatives about the different approaches, decision choices, methodologies and limitations you could have considered to solve the problem in a different way.

And one more bonus tip for your coding interview: bring a few white board markers! Hiring managers are often very busy, accommodating a variety of candidates at once. Sometimes little administrative issues (such as a board marker running out of ink) take time to resolve. This time may be taken at the expense of the duration of your coding interview. Bringing resources, you need to solve the coding problems will save that unwarranted hassle and further prove your proactive approach and enthusiasm.

7. Steer the conversation

Tech interviews are not one-way question-answer sessions. Instead, they are a great way to hold constructive arguments to evaluate your skills. Prepare yourself to be in a position where you can contribute to the discussion positively while demonstrating your skills. IT interviewers and hiring managers are typically friendly, as they would be with their future colleague. While they evaluate you for your strengths and weaknesses, take the opportunity to engage them with discussion on technologies and topics of your interest demonstrating your strengths relevant to the existing conversation.

Tech folks interviewing new candidates are always willing to learn more, even if it's from their new hires. By contributing valuable thoughts and knowledge to the interview session, you can prove yourself as a multi-talented candidate who is well-informed and can fill the knowledge gaps within the organization.

Additional resources

For more details on seeking and hiring jobs in IT, read the following BMC posts:

- DevOps Engineer Roles & Responsibilities
- Top Java Interview Questions—Answered

- Hadoop Interview Questions
- IT Salary Trends: The Complete Roundup
- Top Paying IT Certifications for 2020
- How (and Why) to Write a Great IT Job Listing