

THE INTERVIEW LAB:

Navigating Interviews From
Either Side Of The Table





TODAY'S PROCEDURE

JOB SEARCH PSA

- Of Lay Offs and Toxic Cultures
- Jumping From vs Jumping To
- It's All Timing
- Track Your Process
- Use Your Network

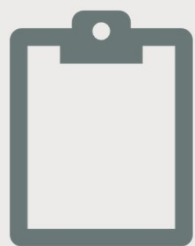
Job Searching

Company	Role	Reference	Apply	Followup	Phone	Team	Asses	Final	O
Bris Therapy	Product Manager	Wade	4/6	4/16	4/20				
				Jones	Brown				
LT		Scott Sauber	5/3	5/13	5/13				
			Smith	Dan					
Hatchworks	Product Mgr	Linked In	4/27						
Kinca	Principal Product	Linked In	5/15						
Realthr.com	Direct Product	Linked In	5/1						
	Product Mgr								
Kinca	Product Mgr	Linked In	5/15	6/1	6/4				
Perfect Serve	VP Product	Linked In	5/1						
Able	Sr Product Mgr	Linked In	5/15						
Defend VR	Sr Product Mgr	Linked In	5/1		5/10				
LifeHikes	Sr. Product Mgr	Linked In	5/15						
Scrubd	Dir. Product	Linked In	5/1						
	Platform & System								
Hatch	Sr PM, Subscription	Linked In	5/15						
Forem	Head of Product	Linked In	5/1		6/11	6/23	5/25	6/29	
Solu	PM, Integrating	Linked In	5/15	Returned	6/24	6/24		Refused	
Dipsen	Head of Product	Linked In	5/22						
Lean Hire	Contractor	Wade							
Even		Angel list	6/6						
Atkins Labs		Angel list	6/6						
Violet		Angel list	6/6						
			6/11						



ROLES IN A JOB SEARCH

- External Recruiter
- Internal Recruiter
- Hiring Manager
- Head of People / HR
- Bar Raiser



JOB DESCRIPTIONS



HOW TO WRITE A JOB DESCRIPTION

- Work with peers in an Agile software development team and maintain Web based software applications built with HTML, and JavaScript
- Write production level code with revisions from peer reviews within a defined section
- Work with peers to write and maintain automated tests
- Maintain security, performance, and code quality standards, working collaboratively within a Continuous Integration environment
- Show a professional curiosity and work with peers to advance technical expertise
- Provide internal support for various internal tools and core product software
- Maintain and support software by fixing bugs and contributing to projects
- Meet with internal teams and clients to brainstorm opportunities for improvements and enhancements

Education and Experience

- Associate's degree required, Bachelor's degree preferred Computer Science or related field
- Two to Five (2-5) years of previous related experience

Professional Skills

- A basic knowledge and understanding of a few programming fundamentals required
- Familiarity with database technologies required
- Experience with object-oriented programming languages required
- Web development experience preferred
- Experience with continuous integration, automated methods, and Scrum/Agile methods preferred
- Experience with .Net preferred
- Experience with C# preferred
- Experience with SQL server preferred

- What hole are you trying to fill?
 - Skill gaps within your team
 - IC, manager, or hybrid
 - Match to common expectations in the market
 - Reasonable leveling
 - Reasonable mix of skills
- Parts of the job description
 - Clear Title
 - Company Description
 - Responsibilities and Duties
 - Qualifications
 - Benefits
 - Call to Action
- KISS, Test, and Repeat

JOB DESCRIPTION HOT TAKES

If the tone of your job post doesn't match your culture, applicants are 2-4x less likely to apply

[LinkedIn Survey](#)

Compensation is regarded as the most important aspect to 61% of candidates, with qualification requirements (49%) and job details (49%) just behind

[LinkedIn Survey](#)

Entry Level should be 0 years of experience

It's a job, not a family or life mission

No ninjas, superheroes, or warriors

Wage transparency helps everyone, and it is starting to be the law

For most jobs, just go search LinkedIn by title and see what everyone else is doing

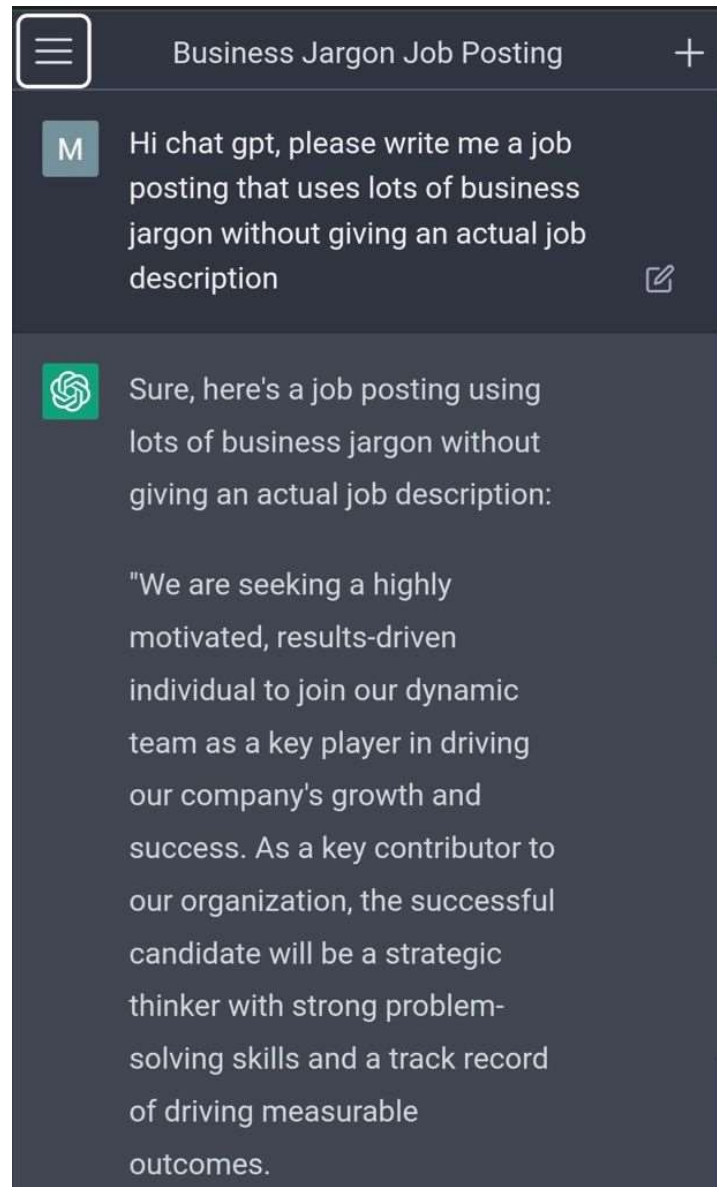
HOW TO READ A JOB DESCRIPTION

Men apply for a job when they meet only 60% of the qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100% of them.

HP internal report

- Scan for matching qualifications
- Looks for indications of culture, company size, and team structure
- Identify the “hole” they are trying to fill
- Identify key words to reflect in communications

DON'T
DO
THIS



This role requires a strong ability to pivot and adapt to changing business needs in a fast-paced, high-growth environment. The ideal candidate will possess excellent communication skills, a customer-centric approach, and a passion for driving continuous improvement.

The successful candidate will be a self-starter with a growth mindset and a strong ability to build and maintain relationships across the organization. If you are a collaborative team player with a proven track record of driving results and are looking for a challenging and rewarding opportunity, we encourage you to apply for this exciting role!"



SOURCING



FINDING QUALITY APPLICANTS

On two different occasions, Speak With a Geek presented the same 5,000 candidates to the same group of employers. The first time around, details like names, experience and background were provided. Five percent selected for interviews were women.

You can guess what happened next, right? When identifying details were suppressed, that figure jumped to 54 percent.

When tech firms judge on skills alone,
women land more job interviews

White men had a 42% advantage over white women [when it came to being promoted to the executive level], which was expected. But that paled in comparison to the 260% advantage they have to Asian women.

Tech's glass ceiling nearly four times harder
for Asian Americans to crack

- Make friends with your organization's recruiter
 - Recruiter Tools (like LinkedIn)
 - Use your network
 - Expand your network
-
- Getting help: external recruiters and search firms

HOW TO SEARCH

- Job listing sites (LinkedIn)
 - Industry or type specific job listing sites
 - Aggregators
 - Recruiters
 - Contractors
- Talk to friends or former coworkers
 - Create some profiles
 - Find something interesting
 - Check your network for connections
 - Understand how they make money off you (you are the product)
 - Reduce your pool

WHERE TO SEARCH: AGGREGATORS

The screenshot shows a Google Jobs search results page for the query "head of product". The search bar at the top displays "head of product" with a subtext "Work from home". Below the search bar, there are tabs for "Jobs", "Saved 60", and "Alerts". A filter bar below the tabs shows various categories: "All", "Information", "Manufacturing", "Finance", "Retail", "Computer Services", "Health Care", "Consulting", "Wholesale", "Research", "Education", "Engineering Services", "Advertising", and "Entertainment". The "All" filter is selected. On the left side, there is a list of job results. The first result is for "Product Manager" at "Accruent", located "Anywhere", posted "4 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The second result is for "Director, Product Management" at "Unite Us", located "Anywhere", posted "2 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The third result is for "Global Head of Product (Greater NYC Area, NY or Remote)" at "Paxos", located "Anywhere", posted "30 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The fourth result is for "Chief Product Officer" at "Clio", located "Anywhere", posted "30 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The main content area displays the details for the "Product Manager" job at "Accruent". It includes a "SAVE" button, an "Apply on LinkedIn" button, and a "Job highlights" section. The "Job highlights" section is divided into "Qualifications" and "Responsibilities".

Google Jobs search results for "head of product". The search bar shows "head of product" with a subtext "Work from home". The results are filtered by "All" (Information, Manufacturing, Finance, Retail, Computer Services, Health Care, Consulting, Wholesale, Research, Education, Engineering Services, Advertising, Entertainment). The first result is "Product Manager" at "Accruent", located "Anywhere", posted "4 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The second result is "Director, Product Management" at "Unite Us", located "Anywhere", posted "2 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The third result is "Global Head of Product (Greater NYC Area, NY or Remote)" at "Paxos", located "Anywhere", posted "30 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The fourth result is "Chief Product Officer" at "Clio", located "Anywhere", posted "30 days ago", and is a "Work from home" "Full-time" position. The main content area displays the details for the "Product Manager" job at "Accruent". It includes a "SAVE" button, an "Apply on LinkedIn" button, and a "Job highlights" section. The "Job highlights" section is divided into "Qualifications" and "Responsibilities".

Product Manager
Accruent
Anywhere
via LinkedIn
4 days ago Work from home Full-time

Director, Product Management
Unite Us
Anywhere
via LinkedIn
2 days ago Work from home Full-time
No degree mentioned

Global Head of Product (Greater NYC Area, NY or Remote)
Paxos
Anywhere
via Built In NYC
30 days ago Work from home Full-time
No degree mentioned Health insurance

Chief Product Officer
Clio
Anywhere
via FreshRemote.work
30 days ago Work from home Full-time

Product Manager
Accruent
Anywhere
4 days ago Work from home Full-time

[Apply on LinkedIn](#)

Job highlights
Identified by Google from the original job post

Qualifications

- At least 3-4 years of work experience in a product management role within a software company
- Bachelor's degree in a technical, accounting, finance, or business field
- Previous experience delivering SaaS solutions to the Commercial Real Estate or similar industries
- Proven application of agile software development practices (e.g., scrum)
- Proven application of user testing and prototyping paradigms
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills

1 more item

Responsibilities

- Conduct opportunity assessments and market analysis for your portfolio and markets to support retention, organic growth and cross-sell opportunities
- Actively contribute to defining the personas of your solutions both quantitatively and qualitatively across the customer journey
- Be the lead advisor for your portfolio and drive recommendations for the product lifecycle planning process
- Own the ideation and planning of user discovery activities to define business problems and test/validate solutions
- Drive analysis projects leveraging necessary data to transform findings into actionable information – ultimately feeding into strategic business planning
- Understand customer trends to lead, and be personally accountable

WHERE TO SEARCH: JOB LISTING SITES

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn job search interface. At the top, the search bar contains 'Head of Product' and the location is set to 'United States'. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Jobs', 'Date Posted', 'Experience Level', 'Company', 'Job Type', 'On-site/Remote', 'Easy Apply', and 'All filters'. The search results are displayed in a list on the left and a detailed view on the right.

Head of Product in United States
16,306 results

Director II Product Enterprise Strategy
Retail Business Services
Scarborough, ME (Hybrid)
Your profile matches this job
Promoted • 7 applicants

Head of Product
Confidential SAAS
United States (Remote)
Promoted • Easy Apply

Product Owner
Discover Financial Services
New Castle, DE (On-site)
1 connection works here
1 week ago • 17 applicants

Director, Product Management
Supermicro
San Jose, CA (On-site)
Actively recruiting
1 week ago • 13 applicants

Director, Product, Card Servicing Strategy
Capital One
McLean, VA
1 connection works here
Promoted • 9 applicants

Senior Product Owner, Product Line Solutions
Cradlepoint
Boise, ID (Remote)
Medical benefit


Head of Product
Confidential SAAS • United States (Remote) 3 weeks ago • Over 200 applicants
Full-time • Director
See how you compare to 281 applicants. Try Premium for free
Easy Apply Save

We are a well-funded and growing B2B SAAS company looking to expand our product team with a Head of Product (VP). You are:

- Able to work with and build a world-wide distributed and fully-remote team
- Passionate about all things Product - research, user requirements, competitive analysis, product planning and more
- Experienced in successfully building and managing a rapidly growing team
- Have managed both Product Management and Engineering teams
- Passionate about B2B customers and their end users
- Passionate about SAAS
- Experience in DevOps industry a plus

Please submit a resume.

Meet the hiring team

 **Mauricio Steffen** • 3rd
Director, Product Management at Cradlepoint
Message

Messaging

LINKEDIN PSA

- Why to be present
- Of connections and salespeople
- Match your profile to your resume
- Staying free



Search



Home



My Network



Jobs



Messaging



Notifications



Me



Work

LinkedIn News

- **McDonald's big idea: Small stor**
4h ago • 2,308 readers
- **Purple is taking over streetlight**
4h ago • 1,960 readers
- **Unconventional way to get a ra**
4h ago • 978 readers
- **The metaverse for offices?**
4h ago • 256 readers
- **Pantone names 2023 color of th**
4h ago • 3,124 readers

Show more

Vistage is looking for your real-world sk
CEOs.



VISTAGE



Mai Irie



Katherine Davis



Messaging

WHERE TO SEARCH: INDUSTRY OR TYPE SPECIFIC JOB LISTING SITES

- Diversity

www.blackjobs.com/

www.diversifytech.co/job-board/

www.recruitdisability.org/

- Startups

<https://angel.co/> ~or~ <https://wellfound.com/>

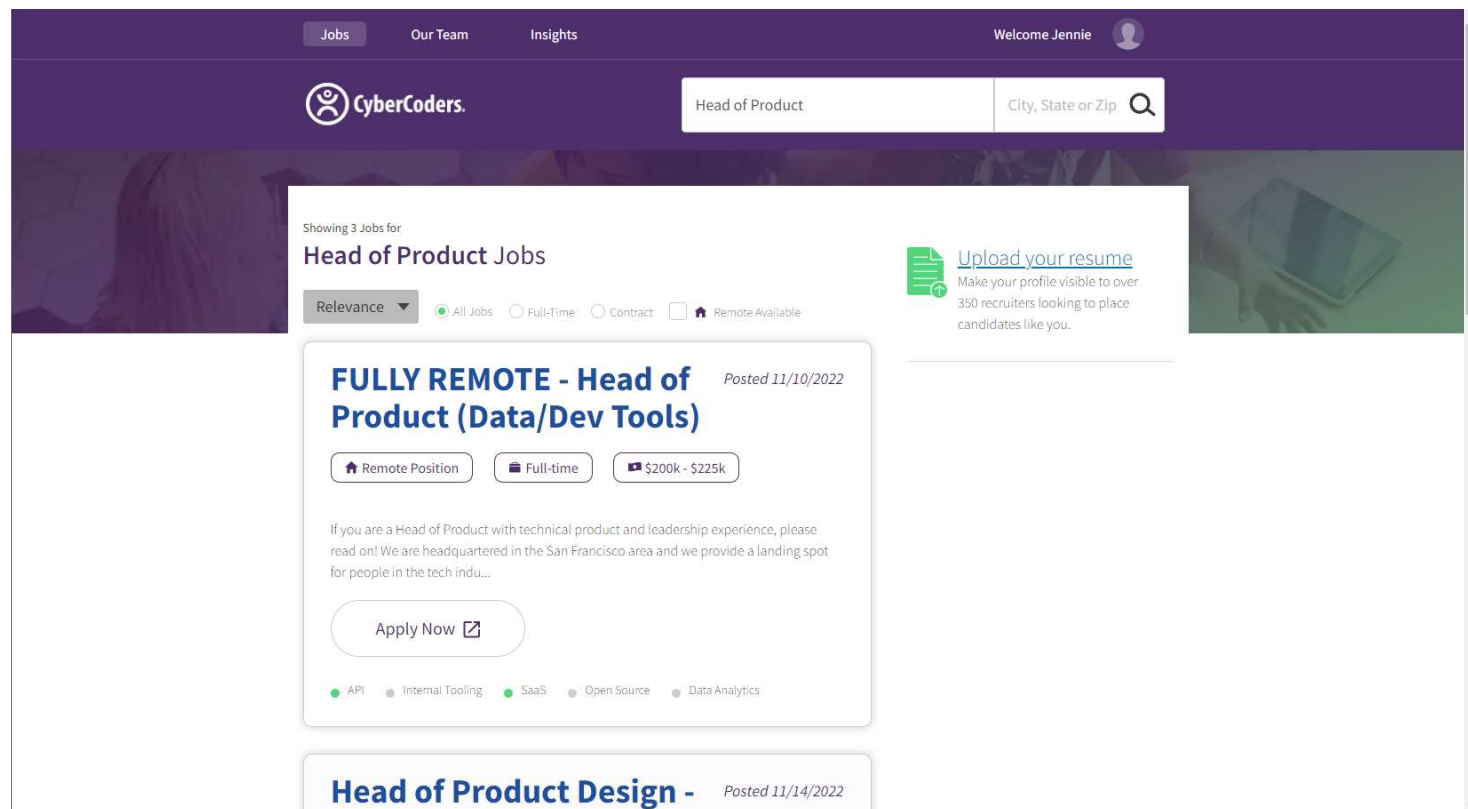
www.workatastartup.com/

- Remote Friendly / First

<https://weworkremotely.com/>

<https://remote.co/>

WHERE TO SEARCH: AGGREGATORS



WHERE TO SEARCH: RECRUITERS

Hi Jennie. I help tech companies source and recruit Product and UX Designers. I have several people in my network searching for new roles. If you're having issues with hiring, I'd love the opportunity to help. Can we chat?

It'd be great to connect with you on LinkedIn either way.

Lead Full Stack Engineer role still open?

Hi Jennie,

I am reaching out about the Lead Full Stack Engineer opening at [REDACTED].

I'm representing a Lead Full Stack Developer who looks like a good fit for the role posted below and I'm with a contingency-based firm so there is no cost associated with taking a look unless you hire them.

Can I send their resume over?

If you're not interested, please DECLINE so I know not to follow up.

Sr. Product Manager Opportunity - 100% Remote, Direct Hire!

Hi Jennie,

I'm reaching out to see if you're on the job market or open to new opportunities?

Based on your overall background, you could be a great potential match for a Senior Product Manager role that I'm working on. This position is direct-hire and will sit 100% remotely.

This is a great opportunity to break into the Cyber Security sector. You will have the opportunity to work with a strong team to help drive a state of the art product that's constantly evolving.

I'm looking for someone who has experience working



RESUMES & COVER LETTERS



HOW TO WRITE A RESUME

Include the following sections:

- Summary of who you are and your experience
- Work Experience: it's okay to drop irrelevant jobs for the job you are trying to get
- Skills: make this scannable for your non-technical recruiter
- Education
- Relevant works, patents, conference appearances



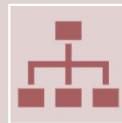
Make a list of every relevant job you have had: Title, Dates, Company name



For each position, write down something you did that you were proud of



Add as much numerical impact detail as you can produce



Rank order your stories and put three-five under each title

Types of Experience

- 15+ years Agile Product management: strategic release schedules, pricing strategy, product and development, sales enablement, QA, customer
- 15+ years Business analysis: business and customer product documentation, user testing, customer im
- 10+ years Budgeting and departmental finances: P
- 6 years HIPAA and PCI Compliance
- 7 years Management Experience: hiring, team build engagement, and retention of engineers, business a designers, marketing & sales
- 6 years product coaching and training
- 10+ years Product training and development, pre
- B2B, B2B2C, B2C, internal services in both prop leader owned, and large enterprise companies.
- Microsoft Excel, Word, Power Point, Publisher Photoshop, In Design, Axure wireframing, Fig

Products Launched:

- Community engagement platform
- Location Creation Tool for retail operations
- Content Management System (CMS)
- Data visualization and analytics dashboards
- Customer Acquisition and Customer Relatic
- Form Builder Tool
- Marketing Automation Platform (MAP)
- Single Sign On Portal (SSO)
- Literature fulfillment and bulk warehouse /

Education

M.B.A., U of I, Tippie School of Business, 2012, (

B.A., Creative Writing and Theatre, Knox Colleg

HOW TO READ A RESUME

- Scan for keywords or skills
 - Application Tracking Systems looking for key words and job titles
 - Extremely common in companies big and small
 - Often built into Candidate management systems
 - Built into Indeed and LinkedIn
 - A recruiter or hiring manager doing a quick scan through a resume
- Look for red flags and disqualifiers
 - Gaps
 - Job hopping
 - Wild title swings
 - Lack of growth
- Decide what you need to know from a screening call

NAVIGATING RESUME DIFFICULTIES



Layoffs and
gaps



Title confusion



Job hopping



Industry
changer



Promotions at
the same
company



ATS blocking:
Jobscan.co

- Always be honest
- Make it scannable
- Include name and contact information
- ~1 page per 10 years of *relevant* experiences
- Link to portfolios, blogs, or reps.
No pictures or graphics
- Use your cover letter to explain
but don't be defensive

COVER LETTER HOT TAKE

Jennie's Cover Letter Template:

- I'm applying for XYZ position
- I am excited to work at your company because XYZ
- I am uniquely qualified because of these three bullet points that reflect the job description
- I look forward to connecting with you and learning more

- If they ask for a cover letter, write a cover letter
- If you are in a job that is about communicating, expect to need to write a cover letter
- It's okay to use a template
- If you have some unique quality that makes you the perfect fit, say that
- Tell them that you are excited specifically about their opportunity



HR PHONE
SCREEN



GOALS AND STRUCTURE

- Let me give you a quick overview of the job and company
- Tell me a bit about yourself
- Why are you interested in this position or company?
- 3–5 quick disqualifying questions
- What questions do you have for me?
~~~~~
- Any red flags or mismatch between expectation based on resume and how they present?
- Do they ask good questions and seem plugged into the opportunity? Do they seem interested in us specifically?
- Does this overview match my expectations of the job description?
- 5–8-minute walk through of relevant experience. This should be crisp. Start from the most recent or most relevant and work backwards
- What are you learning about the “hole on the team” from the disqualifying questions? What red flags are you hearing?
- Expect a mix of technical and “culture” fit questions
- Have relevant questions prepared to ask
  - Specific to the skills or experience needed
  - Culture or team structure
  - What are the next steps?



TESTS



# TYPES OF TESTS

Whiteboarding

In person, on our computer, as part of a loop

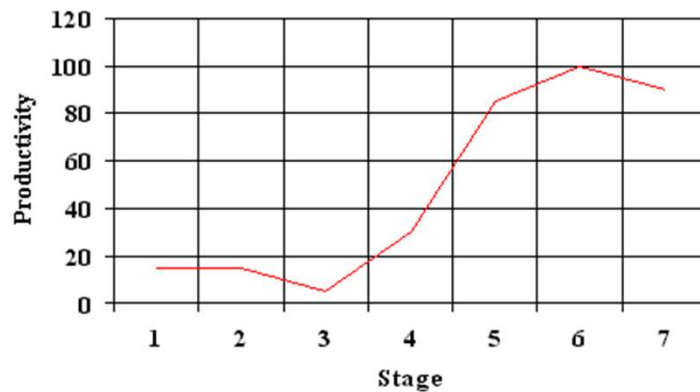
Take home test – random example from the internet – essay

Take home test – Similar to the problems we are solving – case study

Purchased program

- How to prepare
  - Looking for red flags
  - Dealing with anxiety
  - Managing your emotional energy
- 
- How to review
  - Blinding your tests
  - Using a test in an interview

# LEVELING BASED ON TESTS



1 Innocent – may have heard of it

2 Exposed – can use it correctly in a sentence

3 Apprentice – has tried it, or taken a class

4 Practitioner – has used it successfully on a project

5 Journeyman – uses it all the time, or on multiple projects, can mentor

6 Master – teaches it, transcends rules

7 Researcher – writes books, conferences, etc.

Source: Meilir-Page-Jones Expertise Scale

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220523143414/http://www.wayland-informatics.com/The%20Seven%20Stages%20of%20Expertise%20in%20Software.htm>



## LOOPS & TEAM INTERVIEWS





# STRUCTURE

## *LAYOUT OF A LOOP*

- Generally, 3-4 people plus the hiring manager
  - Direct coworkers
  - Subordinates if a management position... sometimes
  - Stakeholders or adjacent departments
- Panel interview versus 1:1 interviews
- The executive / board /investors interview

## *LAYOUT OF AN INTERVIEW*

- Gathering people together
- Introductions and description of the job/team (5 minutes)
- Questions (40 minutes)
- What questions do you have for us? (15 minutes)
- Structured, semi structure, and unstructured

# QUESTION TYPES



## Foundational

Tell us a bit about yourself  
Why are you looking to work here?



## Behavioral

Tell me about a time you...  
STAR structure: situation, task, action, and result



## Case Questions

One thing we are dealing with here is... how  
would you approach that?



## Brainteasers or get to know you

What is your favorite dessert?  
Why are tennis balls fuzzy?  
Sell me this pen

# INTERVIEW PHILOSOPHIES

- Start with the hypothesis that the candidate has the skills and personality to be successful in the job and then test to nullify the hypothesis
- Create a conversational environment and then track what questions the candidate asks and how they learn about the situation at the company over the course of the interviews
- Create a panel that shows what it is like to work at the company, be casual and make jokes, see how the candidate can respond to different people on the panel
- Ask a purposely confusing question to see if the candidate will ask clarifying questions and test for understanding
- Frankly explain the problems we are dealing with and ask the candidate talk about times they have dealt with a similar situation



## QUESTIONS YOU WILL GET

- Favorite project and outcome / Made the wrong decision, had a project fail
- Dealing with interpersonal conflict / Management or leadership style
- Dealing with ambiguity / Time management or prioritization or dealing with conflicting priorities
- Learning new skills / Understanding industry trends
- Sharing and defending your ideas

# ANSWERS YOU SHOULD RECEIVE

- Story telling with clear examples (acknowledge, pivot, message)
- Succinct and to the point of the question
- Grounded in the resume experience
- Clarification or follow up questions if relevant
- Across a diversity of experiences as appropriate to the level
- Balancing theory and real work examples
- Conversational and appropriately confident





# QUESTIONS YOU SHOULDN'T ASK

(BUT PROBABLY WILL ANYWAY)



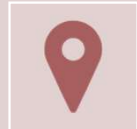
What's your greatest strength? What's your greatest weakness?



Why are you looking for a new position?



Why should we hire you?



Where do you see yourself in five years?

## ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

---

Gender

---

Marital or Family Status

---

Citizenship, Nationality, or Language

---

Age

---

Religion

# “WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR US?”



Culture



Expectations and  
definition of success



Challenging aspects of  
this position /  
challenges the  
organization is facing



Professional  
development and  
growth



Team structure



Next steps

## RED FLAGS

- Do the people interviewing you seem to like each other?
- Is the job/candidate consistent from interview to interview?
- Are they asking inappropriate questions?
- Cockiness, arrogance, ignorance
- Never-ending interviews / unclear process

## TEAM “FIT”

- Would I enjoy working with this person? Can I collaborate with them?
- How would this person fit with the skills of the existing team? Do they fill the “hole” on my team?
- How would this person fit with the style of the existing team?
- Where do I need some outside opinions and different perspective from the existing team?





## THE OFFER & AFTER



# REFERENCES

- 3 people who can speak to your current experience
  - Always chose people who will speak well of you
  - Prepare your references with information about the job
  - Use your references to do a “reverse reference”
  - The “Current Manager” ask
- Think about why you are looking for references
  - Understanding work style or to support the employee’s growth
  - Delaying tactic
  - Test our specific concerns about the candidate
  - The “unofficial” network check

# NEGOTIATION ELEMENTS

## ***MONETARY COMPENSATION***

- Base Pay
- Signing bonus
- Performance bonuses and commissions
- Equity (RSUs vs options)
- 401(k) match

## ***NON-MONETARY COMPENSATION***

- Title
- Flexibility, hours, remote work
- PTO and leave
- Benefits
- Professional development
- Prestige / resume building / network
  
- Timeliness / job search process

# HOW TO NEGOTIATE

- If you are in a salary negotiation, they are already interested in you
  - When you get an offer you can say, “thank you, I will need some time to consider this”
  - Women and BIPOC individuals tend to undervalue themselves – think of a number that makes you laugh and add 20%
- Build a complete package, not just comp
  - Most compensation packages are tied to title
  - Know what you want, what is nonnegotiable for you
  - Know your worth and ranges in the market
  - Ask for a signing bonus (even if I usually don’t)
- Remember this is a relationship, not a once and done
  - But... remember all future raises will be a percentage of your starting wage and title
  - But... remember that you are making a choice now for your future resume
  - But... remember to preserve your own energy and why you are interviewing in the first place
- If you have multiple interviews in process, use that (next slide)
- Great step by step guide: <https://candor.co/guides/salary-negotiation>

## HANDLING MULTIPLE OFFERS

- Be clear and honest with your internal recruiter that you are interviewing at multiple places
- When you get an offer say, “thank you, I will need some time to consider this” and let your other opportunities there is now a timeline
- Manage “exploding” offers clearly (and feel free to accept and then decline)
- Try to get as apples to apples as possible and do a side-by-side comparison



# REJECTION

## *THE BAD AND UGLY*

- Ghosting
- Cancelling offers
- Closing the position
  
- Turing down a job

## *THE GOOD*

- Clear feedback on what was missing
- Friendly and considerate
- Honesty about the organization's process



## QUESTIONS

[Jennie.ocken.org](http://Jennie.ocken.org)

[jennie@ocken.org](mailto:jennie@ocken.org)

[@jennieocken](https://twitter.com/jennieocken)