

Hey you!

If you're the typical ND CSE student kicking off your senior year, you're probably trying not to think about interviews, jobs, and life after college. Maybe you're one of the lucky ones that loved your internship and got an offer to return full time. Maybe you have an offer from your internship, but you didn't love it and you're trying to figure out the best way to decline, or maybe you don't have an offer at all. If you aren't part of that first group, chances are good that you'll be interviewing for the next couple of months. As a couple of seniors that have been through it and made it out alive, we have some pieces of advice for you.

Plan a few days before

- Interviewing as a senior can get especially hectic because on top of networking and interviews, you have to manage your classwork, any extra-curriculars, and generally trying to enjoy your last year at ND. Keep an organized schedule of all the applications and deadlines you need to hit so that you can effectively budget your preparation time.

Prepping for the interview

- If you're going down the software engineering route and expect to have a technical interview, *Cracking the Coding Interview* by Gayle McDowell is excellent prep tool.
- Ask an HR recruiter what to expect in the interview. Usually they are more than happy to relay details about their interview process so that you can plan accordingly.

Research companies at the career fair and online

- Glassdoor.com is an excellent resource to get some insight on how employees feel about working at a particular company and how that company stacks up against competitors.
- Google "News about <Company You're Interested In>" - see what's being said about that company in the public. If the company you're looking at is a sinking ship, you might want to think twice before getting on board!
- Most interviews include an opportunity to ask the interviewer questions, and asking really good questions shows that you've done your research and are serious about the position.
- Look up different programs that the company has that you might be interested in. If you're all about something specific like the Women in Engineering program or the league sports that the company participates in, ask about it!
- Figure out what the culture of the company is before you dive right in, and if your research shows that the company has poor morale, remember that through your interview and try not to get fooled by the cheery interviewer.

Don't stress

- This is not a test. Remember that they are interviewing you, but you are also interviewing them as a potential employer.
- Inevitably there will be some rejections, but roll with the punches and use them as learning experiences.
- 'First job' does not always translate to 'dream job' and definitely does not mean 'life job'. Don't settle for something you aren't happy with, but don't write off a company just because they don't have every little thing you were hoping for.

Reach out to alums or older friends

- Have them review your resume or just chat with them about their professional experiences. Similar to shopping for a college choice, there is no better insight into life at a company than the people who work there.
- Talk to older family friends or alumni that have been in the industry for a while and ask them how it has changed over time. Has it started to go stagnant recently, or is the scene just beginning to boom? Getting opinions from those much older, not just the recently graduated ones, can be incredibly helpful.

Bring thank you notes with you. Write them after the interview, before you leave the building!

- A thank you note is often one of the most important parts of an interview, but also one of the easiest to forget or push off. Do yourself a favor, purchase a pack of thank you notes and leave it in your backpack. Before you leave the interview building, find a place to sit and write thank you notes to those that just interviewed you. This will help you get it out of the way, and it leaves a lasting impression on the interviewer. Additionally, a thank you note regardless of whether or not you get an offer will bode well for you.

Small talk is good.

- Use it to find connections between you and your interviewer, and then build on those. Remember, you want to be memorable. As an example, during one of my interviews I spent the better part of 20 minutes talking with my interviewer about music festivals and my favorite bands. Although I can't know for sure, I'm convinced the connection helped me land the offer.
- Awkward silences are awkward for everybody, not just you. Smile, be happy, and truly try to enjoy the interview. Use the time to get a feel for the attitude of the employees!

Take advantage of networking opportunities (happy hours, lunches)

- These are excellent opportunities to build relationships with the people who will be interviewing you. Companies interview scores of candidates, so it's important to stand out, and attending networking events can increase your chances of being rememberable.

Think about what you really want to do (or at least try out)

- As a CSE student, you're going to have a lot of choices regarding what career path to start down. Some typical fields include software engineering, IT consulting, and a blend of the two (of course, there are plenty others too!). Take some serious time to consider what you might enjoy doing post-graduation. Would you rather spend the bulk of your time coding and working on software problems or are you more inclined to delve more into the business side of technology?
 - Again, also remember if you try something and don't like it, you can always make a change!

Don't get too cocky

- Yes, you are a well qualified candidate, but don't go off thinking you're the company's saving grace in 22-year-old form. Companies will value some degree of confidence, but too much can be dangerous.
- When it comes to negotiations, tread lightly. As an entry level employee it's typically tricky to negotiate unless you have a competing offer.

Don't avoid declining offers

- Trust us, pushing it off won't help... it may even cause the company to call the career center to make sure you're still okay. It's better for both you and the company if you let them know as soon as you decide.

All in all, statistics show that you're going to land a great job - all of us did, at least. You've been set up so well and have an incredible network of people rooting for you. Interviewing is an experience, and now is the time that you'll probably experience it the most. Dive in head first - before you know it, you'll be accepting a position and trying not to think about the fact that you'll be leaving ND soon.

Best of luck from all of us here in the class of 2016!

PS, reach out to us if you ever have questions:

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