

# So, You Want to Work at Google

by Jennifer Potter

Google receives an average of 2,800 resumes a day. Only 1% of resumes get past recruiter scrutiny. Of those interviewed, only .01-.04% receive offers. That's harder than getting into Harvard!! (their acceptance rate is 5.2% currently). That's daunting, however it is encouraging to know that every resume that comes in really does get viewed by a recruiter!

Google takes hiring very seriously. Their viewpoint is that it's the most important thing they do and has direct impact on the future of the company. They have set in place a very extensive hiring protocol which we will discuss here. There are phone interviews, on-site interviews, Hiring Committees and Executive Reviews.

What is Google looking for in an employee? First and foremost - Brains. Not the textbook kind of brains - though they won't turn those away as long as they are also coupled with creative, achieving, articulate thinkers who are leaders! For technical roles, which we will focus on here, they also need coding and technical knowledge.

Here's a look at the interview process:

- 1) Recruiter Screen - Recruiters look at your resume to see whether you have the expertise. If your resume looks interesting, you move on to the next step. If you're not the right fit, you'll get a response, and they will even keep your resume on file. A big hint: be sure to include your accomplishments on your resume!
- 2) Phone Screen - 1 or more of them. An engineer will call you to see whether you have the knowledge, cognitive ability and cultural fit. They will test your technical skill and will invite you to write code on shared Google Docs. Practice writing code, not on a computer, on a whiteboard or paper. Be sure to study up and be prepared for it. (The book, "Cracking the Coding Interview" is a must read). You will also need to know algorithms and data structures, and your analytical skills will be tested. They will ask a few simple questions - something like "reverse a string in place". Keep in mind, that's a warm up question - if you have trouble with that, you can count yourself out. If you have talent, and seem to have the cultural fit, you'll move on to Step 3.
- 3) On-site Interview - You'll be invited in to interview. If necessary, they will fly you in. There can be up to 5 on-site interviews, about 45 minutes each. It won't be the bosses doing the interview either. Google turns the regular approach upside down. "You'll probably meet your prospective manager (where possible—for some large job groups like "software engineer" or "account strategist" there is no single hiring manager) and a peer, but more important is meeting one or two of the people who will work for you. In a way, their assessments are more important than anyone else's—after all, they're going to

have to live with you.” says Laszlo Bock, Head of People Operations (think HR). Typically, you’ll have 3 interviews and then lunch, then 2 more interviews. (Editor’s note: If they walk you out after lunch, this is NOT a good sign.) Since they want to know how you think, they highly suggest you think ‘out loud’. Months before you apply, practice solving problems out loud. Talk through every problem, if nothing more than to make sure you are answering the correct way. If they ask you to write a program, the suggestion is do not start writing code immediately. Think it through, talk about how you would start, and talk through it while writing. This will also give you practice on precision and articulation. And don’t forget to ask questions! About everything. Most importantly ask about Google, advises Laszlo. There is a lot out there regarding Google asking brain teaser type questions during the interview, “How much does the Empire State building weigh?”, “Why are manhole covers round?” or “How many tennis balls will fill the Levi’s Stadium?” But according to Bock that is on the way out. Google is more interested in the way a person thinks, or more behavioral concepts such as how you handled a conflict or solved a major setback at work. “Tell me about a time when you effectively managed your team to achieve a goal. What did your approach look like?”

- 4) Hiring Committee - There is a committee in place instead of a single person, which reduces the number of ‘bad’ decisions and biases. This seems to ensure the acceptance criteria remains high also. These are made up of senior managers and employees for each major job classification. The interviewers write their summaries on the candidate, and this is reviewed by a recruiter. If the consensus is that there is a good fit, then it goes to the hiring committee. The committee reviews everything: the feedback, the reviews and the comments made. If the candidate passes this scrutiny, then it goes to the next review.
- 5) Executive Review - Senior Management looks over candidate and if they agree, it goes to the
- 6) Compensation Committee - who determines the appropriate offer. After this it goes to the
- 7) Final Executive Review - One of the top execs looks at every potential hire and gives the final approval.

Google wants the best of the best, and are willing to pay for it, and they treat the employee very well to keep them. Google wants their Googlers (term Google Employees call themselves) happy, motivated and focused. Google is very interested in helping employees manage a healthy lifestyle, and therefore goes a long way in taking care of their employees making life a bit easier in this world of busyness.

Why does Google appeal to so many? Aside from all the imaginative perks, which I list below just for fun, Google has excellent compensation (you want cream of the crop you pay it well!), health benefits to brag about and a 401k with a 50% match plus stock. (and free financial advisors and lawyers to help you make ‘cents’ of it all.) Looks good, huh? But wait...Most touted is Google’s death benefit. Spouse receives ½ the deceased’s salary for 10 years. Plus Google offers 1,000 a month per child. Yes, that’s correct, and no - no one has met an untimely demise

- yet. There is also Family Time: new dads are given 6 weeks Baby Bonding time, new moms can take up to 18 weeks paid, in addition to “Baby Bonding Bucks” for the new addition. And when you are ready to get back to work, there is free on-site daycare.

Another very alluring perk which attracts talent seems to be the consensus that working at Google is “like living in the future”. Googlers get to beta-test all the new technology that isn’t yet available to the public. Googlers get to use the technology before anyone else. If you are into technology, and 50% of Google’s hires are, what could be better?! Employees also have the added pleasure of working with some of the brightest minds and achievers.

So let's list some of those fun perks that help retain the Googler. Laszlo Bock says that he believes people are basically good and don’t take advantage of these extras. He wants to make an employee's life as easy and free from the everyday hassles of life that take up our time and energy so that the Googler is rested, and ready to work.

If making sure you have food (shopping, ugh!), preparing it (cooking - double ugh!) and bringing it into the office is one of those everyday hassles to you like it is to me, then how ‘bout free meals? And I don’t mean soggy hoagies here. We are talking MEALS. Choose one of the 25+ cafes and small kitchens and grab a chef-prepared, gourmet meal. Breakfast, lunch or dinner: Lobster, egg white frittata, vegan truffles, risotto, Korean BBQ, sriracha vanilla ice cream...Or just stop by one of the coffee bars and tell the barista your favorite coffee drink. Googlers comment that having meals freely available at work not only saves time and money, but what they really appreciate is that it helps facilitate building relationships with colleagues.

What else? Free shuttle to and from work, laundry room with free detergent, showers with soap and towels provided so that when you exercise in the free gym or play a pickup game of volleyball on the court outside you can shower off and return to work energized (and clean), tech shop (hey, programmers have technical difficulties too!), motorized scooters to get from one end of the ‘campus’ to the other, [a conference bike](#), stress capsules and if that doesn’t relax you enough then you can get a massage or meditate in the lounge with the giant aquariums. How ‘bout relieve some stress with good, old fashioned fun - yes - playing like a kid - in a [ballpit](#), or taking [the fireman’s pole](#) from the second floor to the first? Google also offers company trips - skiing, movies, happy hours. How ‘bout the bowling alley, or photo studio? Or if you are more adventurous, try your hand at the rock-climbing wall, take a dip in the pool or some easy ping pong. Need a haircut - don’t worry about making time to run to the salon - a hairdresser comes every Monday. Car acting up? A mechanic comes every Wednesday. They even allow Rover to come to work with you! Allowing this reduces stress, creates fun, and spreads joy throughout the office.

Google’s interview process is arduous and long (takes one to two months on average for a candidate to get through the process). But if Google can attract and retain so many top people in the industry, maybe they are onto something here? Could your company profit from a

multi-stage review process? Creating this type of process is outlined in Laszlo Bock's book, Work Rules!.

Definitely worth a read!

Who knows, maybe your company could be the next Google contender!!