

BREAK INTO TECH






WHAT ARE TECH COMPANIES
REALLY LIKE?

BREAKING INTO TECH
IS HARD

ESPECIALLY BECAUSE EVERY TECH COMPANY PRESENTS ITSELF

THE SAME WAY

Who's Hiring In Tech?

-  **Facebook:** Best place to build & make an impact.
-  **Yahoo:** Having fun and getting stuff done!
-  **Google:** Do cool things that matter.
-  **Amazon:** Work hard. Have fun. Make history.
-  **Microsoft:** Come as you are. Do what you love.

WE'RE FUN!

WE'RE
MAKING
COOL
STUFF!

WE'RE
CHANGING
THE
WORLD!

BUT HERE'S THE TRUTH


TECH COMPANIES CAN BE

RADICALLY DIFFERENT







AND NO COMPANY - NO MATTER HOW COOL

IS RIGHT FOR EVERYONE

 **"It's not what it's cracked up to be. "**
   Former Employee - Software Engineer in Mountain View, CA
 Doesn't Recommend Disapproves of CEO

 **"Extremely cliquey, political, poor culture, lacking in communication and career growth. "**
   Former Employee - Finance in Menlo Park, CA
 Doesn't Recommend Negative Outlook Disapproves of CEO

 **"Horrible place to work. "**
   Former Employee - Sales in Denver, CO
 Doesn't Recommend Disapproves of CEO

SO DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND
REALLY GET TO KNOW COMPANIES
BEFORE APPLYING

STARTING WITH THIS BEHIND-THE-SCENES TOUR OF 18 OF TECH'S BIGGEST EMPLOYERS

- [Amazon](#)
- [Apple](#)
- [Cisco](#)
- [Dell](#)
- [eBay](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Google](#)
- [HP](#)
- [IBM](#)
- [Intel](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
- [Oracle](#)
- [Salesforce](#)
- [Samsung](#)
- [Uber](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Yahoo](#)

AMAZON

What it's like

Amazon has built a giant business by doing whatever it takes to please its customers - from reducing prices to offering lightning-quick delivery. As a result, it has a frugal, hard-driving culture that's all about delivering a better customer experience. Teams are small (no more than can be fed with two pizzas!) with significant responsibilities. Analysis is prized over presentation (key meetings start by reading typed overviews, as opposed to PowerPoint) and it's one of the rare tech companies where non-technical folks can serve as Product Managers.

What's great

Because you move fast and have big responsibilities, you'll learn more than you would in slower-paced roles

What's not

Long hours and a competitive culture can make for a brutal work environment

Best way to get in

- Only 10% of interviews come through referrals so it makes sense to apply online or via recruiters
- Because of the company's customer-obsession, make sure you focus your answers on delivering a better customer experience
- Sample question: What new categories should Amazon enter?



APPLE

What it's like

Apple came back from its deathbed in the late 90s with a simple strategy: Launch just a handful of best-in-class products, backed by incredible hype and excitement. This means that the culture is both perfectionist and secretive. With this few products, it can't fail to launch anything but the best (the VP of its most profitable team was fired after Apple Maps wasn't perfect at launch). And with this much riding on each big launch, it can't afford to let the secret out of the bag early (bosses may not even know what their own teams are working on!).

What's great

You'll be pushed to do the best work of your career because the bar is so high

What's not

The secrecy and long hours spent seeking perfection can take a toll on the culture

Best way to get in

- Teams are super small so, unless you're an expert in your field, it's tough to break in, except through campus recruiting
- Because Apple is so product-driven, know their products inside-and-out and what makes for great design
- Sample question: How would you improve the iPhone?



CISCO

What it's like

At the very peak of the dot-com bubble, Cisco was the world's most valuable company. Since then, the hardware that built the internet has become commodified while software has proceeded to eat the world. Thus, Cisco finds itself in the position of an elder statesman in the tech world - a mature, slower-paced culture amidst crazy, nose-to-the-grindstone startups.

What's great

You can still have a life outside of work - plus you can work from just about anywhere because of their flexible telecommuting policy

What's not

It's become a giant company with less innovation than many of its Valley peers

Best way to get in

- Cisco does a ton of hiring through referrals and campus recruiting
- Because of the company's size, working cross-functionally is critical to its success, so be sure to emphasize your strong teamwork abilities
- Sample question: Tell me about a time when you worked with someone who had a different working style than you.



DELL

What it's like

Dell was once the #1 PC maker in the world, rising to glory through a combination of innovative direct sales and a lean, just-in-time supply chain. However, as computer hardware has commodified and PCs have been challenged by phones and tablets, it's faced hard times in the last decade, leading Michael Dell to take the firm private in 2013. The company is now known for having a higher quality of life than at many tech giants - especially since it pays Silicon Valley-style salaries in Austin, where the cost of living is much lower than in the Valley.

What's great

Better work/life balance than most tech companies with significant scheduling flexibility

What's not

A diminished market and job cuts means that there are fewer opportunities to rise the ranks

Best way to get in

- Employee referrals are the top source of interviews for many non-technical roles
- Because Dell is outside Silicon Valley and is one of the older tech giants, interviewers want to make sure you're truly committed to the firm
- Sample question: Why do you want to work at Dell and why are you interested in Austin?



EBAY

What it's like

eBay was one of the biggest success stories of the first dot-com era - in just a few years, it went from Pierre Omidyar's personal auction site to a billion-dollar, public company. Since then, it's acquired and spun-off both PayPal and Skype, and has now returned its focus to e-commerce and, increasingly, m-commerce. The resulting company is a rarity in the Valley - a firm that prioritizes business over technology (as opposed to the other way around).

What's great

Better work/life balance than other Valley companies and more female-friendly (36% of its workers are women vs. 25% at Google and Cisco)

What's not

As a company with two decades under its belt, eBay management is often accused of being too political and bureaucratic

Best way to get in

- More than 1/3 of interviews came through online applications
- Because eBay is such a large, established company, make it clear how you can operate in such a structured environment.
- Sample question: How would you manage the weaknesses of a person in your group?



FACEBOOK

What it's like

Founded by a young, aggressive Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook is all about "moving fast and breaking things." This translates into a work culture that's both really transparent (since it's hard to work quickly if you don't have the information you need) and hard-driving (less talk, more action). And since the core business has a virtual monopoly on the world's attention (what other site has a billion pairs of eyeballs glued to it every month?), they can afford to spoil their employees with all sorts of perks and growth opportunities. Just note that, as a company founded and driven by engineers, non-technical folks can rank lower on the totem pole.

What's great

Tons of opportunities to own projects and drive huge results

What's not

Intense, high-pressure work environment

Best way to get in

- Facebook is notoriously picky: Employee referrals and recruiter outreach are definitely the way in
- Because Facebook is always seeking to improve, don't hesitate to come with your own ideas for bettering the site
- Sample question: What's your favorite Facebook feature and how would you improve it?



GOOGLE

What it's like

Just like you've heard, Google really does have ridiculous perks: Coffee bars, giant ball-pits, and their own bowling alley. This is all made possible by the world's default search engine, which spits out millions of dollars in ad revenue every single day. And so it's easy for Google to both treat its employees well and also take crazy moonshots at self-driving cars and internet-broadcasting hot air balloons. The only catch is that most of the employees don't work on those fun projects - instead, they're focused on the less sexy ad business that makes them possible. And, as a company founded by PhD engineers, tech talent is prized above all else.

What's great

Working with super smart peers on projects that touch millions of lives

What's not

As Google gets bigger and bigger, it gets more and more bureaucratic

Best way to get in

- Employee referrals are like gold here - definitely find someone on the inside to get your foot in the door
- Google's moved away from its famous brain-teasers and now focuses much more on behavioral questions
- Sample question: Tell me about a time you met objectives within a project with extremely tight deadlines.



HP

What it's like

HP has come a long way from the Palo Alto garage where it was founded in 1935. Once the leading computer manufacturer in the world, it's now decided to spin off its PC and printers business so it can focus on enterprise and services (much like IBM did years ago). The resulting company still retains some of its old tech pioneer aura but is now more known for its quality of life than its innovation as bureaucracy ossifies the culture.

What's great

Tons of flexibility and work/life balance compared to its Valley neighbors

What's not

Management's focus has shifted away from innovation to cost-cutting

Best way to get in

- Online applications account for nearly half of interviews so fire away!
- As an established company, HP tends to prioritize experience over potential in their interviews
- Sample question: What experience do you have writing database queries?



IBM

What it's like

IBM tabulated the 1890 census, helped build the personal computer business, and now derives the majority of its revenue from services. Along the way, it's become a huge company (the second-largest employer in the US) with myriad divisions and products. The result is that there's lots of opportunity left (e.g., Watson and their Smarter Planet initiative) but it's often trapped in a bureaucratic, stodgy culture that lingers after more than a century in business.

What's great

Flexibility to work from wherever you want - dozens of offices around the world

What's not

Too old-school in its culture + the amount of bureaucracy required to get things done

Best way to get in

- Online applications and campus recruiting account for more than half of all interviews
- Because so much of their services business is done in consulting teams, make sure you can demonstrate your ability to work within groups
- Sample question: Describe a role where you were a leader and one where you were a follower.



INTEL

What it's like

The world's leading processor maker really is inside just about every computer - with the notable exception of mobile devices, where it was late to the game. As one of the companies that put the silicon in Silicon Valley, it's now something of a hardware dinosaur in a tech world dominated by upstart software companies. But it's still doing some of the most advanced work in its field - albeit with the politics and bureaucracy that come from being in business for several decades.

What's great

Inventing the future of computing without the insane hours of startups

What's not

As a hardware giant (where new products take years to reach market), decisions are made slowly

Best way to get in

- Campus recruiting and online applications are the primary ways to get your foot in the door
- Given the size and complexity of the company, Intel tends to ask lots of behavioral questions about your teamwork experience
- Sample question: Describe a conflict you had on a past project and how you resolved it.



LINKEDIN

What it's like

Once ridiculed as "the boring Facebook," LinkedIn has come into its own with a diverse, sustainable revenue mix: Subscriptions, ads, and tools for recruiters and salespeople. All of these products rest upon an unparalleled database of the world's workers and, hence, a virtual monopoly in certain spaces (recruiting, job-seeking). This means the company has the freedom to be incredibly transparent with its employees (biweekly all-firm meetings with the CEO). Also, as a firm founded by a product manager, PMs are very much at the top of the food chain (as opposed to engineers) and everything revolves around cross-functional product teams.

What's great

Super collaborative, open environment

What's not

Technology and innovation are relatively weak compared to Valley peers

Best way to get in

- Referrals don't hold that much weight so networking with recruiters tends to be more effective
- Given the company's emphasis on collaboration, make sure you demonstrate that you're a cultural fit and not just a talented jerk
- Sample question: What about LinkedIn's culture makes you want to work here?



MICROSOFT

What it's like

The once-mighty Goliath of the tech world has been turned into a David, courtesy of missing the boat on mobile. While its enterprise software and services are still cash cows, Microsoft is now struggling mightily to break through with its 3rd place mobile OS and Surface tablets. This has led to an interesting cultural mix - equal parts stodgy giant and determined underdog.

What's great

Better work/life balance and awesome benefits

What's not

Internal politics and policies (including a reduced form of stack ranking) leads to slow, suboptimal decision-making

Best way to get in

- Microsoft is all about campus recruiting - getting in from school is a perfect path
- The company tends to look for well-rounded generalists rather than super-technical specialists, so be prepared to answer questions well above and beyond its own domain
- Sample question: If you owned the last piece of the Berlin Wall, how would you market/sell it to extract the maximum value?



ORACLE

What it's like

Oracle is the definitive enterprise software company. While it may not have the same sex appeal as a Facebook or Google, it makes gobs of money selling into the Fortune 500. Perhaps because of its focus on enterprise, its culture is also very corporate - steady, relatively few perks, but good benefits. In other words, nothing super exciting but the perfect entree into the world of B2B.

What's great

Loads of flexibility about where you can work

What's not

Weak salaries and opportunities for growth

Best way to get in

- True to form, Oracle is very balanced when it comes to interviews: They come from a roughly even mix of campus recruiting, recruiters, online applications, and employee referrals
- Given Oracle's focus on business, it's best to know their markets and customers cold
- Sample question: Why might a small business potentially avoid Oracle solutions and how would you position Oracle for them?



SALESFORCE

What it's like

Before there was a cloud, there was Salesforce. By convincing thousands of businesses to move their sales databases off of internal servers and onto the net, the firm launched a revolution in the way that enterprise technology was bought and used. Now in its second decade of growth, Salesforce faces similar challenges to lots of big tech companies - how to maintain a powerful, innovative culture once you're no longer the new kid on the block?

What's great

Admired culture with emphasis on philanthropy and community service

What's not

Layers of middle management have crept into the company, slowing down its innovation

Best way to get in

- Given that it's such a culture-driven company, Salesforce really prizes referrals
- Because Salesforce is a sales-driven company (no surprise!), it helps to really understand that world
- Sample question: Are you more like a hunter or a farmer? (Two typical sales metaphors)



SAMSUNG

What it's like

Samsung has risen from selling noodles in the 1930s to become the world's largest seller of smartphones. While the company still has significant challenges ahead, including differentiating itself from other Android handset makers, it's a unique opportunity to work for an international company - either in the US or overseas. The upside is access to today's most important markets and technology but the downside is that, as a Korean company, the work culture can be tough, even by Silicon Valley standards - especially the brutally long hours.

What's great

Lots of resources to do battle in the hot smartphone market

What's not

A work culture that prioritizes face time and endless reporting

Best way to get in

- Campus recruiting and online applications are the major roads to an interview
- Because it can be tough to adapt to the company's culture, expect probing around how you work with management
- Sample question: Describe a situation in which your work was criticized.



TWITTER

What it's like

Twitter is an Icarus-like story. From an initial pivot (the company was originally focused on podcasting) that took the world by storm to an IPO just a few years later, this is one bird that's flown high. But now, as a public company, it's facing the wrath of Wall Street investors that don't see enough growth and revenue to justify their lofty expectations. The result is a company that's exciting to work at it with lots of great opportunities for growth, but also a very challenging, uncertain future ahead.

What's great

Working with awesome people on big-time projects

What's not

Lots of management turnover and growing pains as the company struggles to please investors

Best way to get in

- Referrals and online applications are the name of the game at Twitter
- Because of the pressure to drive growth and profits, bring your best ideas to help the company continue to expand
- Sample question: If Twitter were to get into payments, how should we do it?



UBER

What it's like

Uber has quickly become the world's most valuable private startup. And it's gotten there through a strategy of no-holds-barred growth within and across markets, now serving over 300 cities in 60 different countries. This means that the culture is an aggressive one - move fast, change the world, and sleep when you're dead.

What's great

Fast growth means big opportunities to learn and rise the ranks

What's not

No work/life balance and lots of stress

Best way to get in

- Online applications are how the vast majority of people got their first interviews
- Because Uber is looking to grow so fast and take risks, don't hold back on your craziest ideas to help the company skyrocket (on both the supply and demand sides)
- Sample question: Think of a marketing stunt Uber could use to drive demand - what are its pros and cons?



YAHOO

What it's like

Yahoo can legitimately claim that it started the internet industry, as the first guide to the World Wide Web. Since then, it's gone through a roller coaster of experiences, going public, getting crushed by Google, and then having a former Google leader, Marissa Meyer, come in to save it! Thus, the experience there today is a chaotic one: On the one hand, there's reason to be optimistic about the company's future for the first time in years. But on the other hand, there's still a very uncertain path to get there.

What's great

A chance to reinvent a storied brand - now with Google-like perks

What's not

Lots of management fighting as the new leadership charts a precarious course for the company

Best way to get in

- Applying online, connecting with recruiters, and getting referred are all promising ways in the door
- Because Yahoo has lost some of its historic luster, make sure you emphasize your interest in the company, specifically - not just tech, in general
- Sample question: What's your favorite Yahoo product?



THE BOTTOM LINE

AS YOU

BREAK INTO TECH



DON'T MISTAKE THE
"BEST" COMPANY

FOR THE BEST COMPANY
FOR YOU

IF YOU WANT HELP FINDING THE PERFECT FIT

JUST LET ME KNOW

I'VE WORKED EVERYWHERE
FROM APPLE + LINKEDIN TO THE
TINIEST STARTUP

DROP ME A LINE AT
JEREMY@BREAKINTO.TECH



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FREE INSIDER SECRETS



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ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU

PAY IT FORWARD



As a former teacher,
I believe in sharing everything I've learned.

So, in that spirit, please share!