

# How to Land a \$500k Tech Job



# Introduction

In the highly competitive and dynamic world of tech, landing a [high-paying technology job](#) can be challenging. In fact, the pursuit of new opportunities in this industry is like a full-time job in itself.

Many engineers find the prospect of job-hunting so daunting that they remain in mid-level posts. They cease to consider moving up the career ladder because they assume that it's too demanding or difficult or out of reach.

We, however, strongly advocate moving toward a more lucrative career path, and breaking into senior roles. We believe — and have seen — that it's well within reach.

And we should know!

[At Interview Kickstart](#), we have helped over [9,000 engineers](#) overcome challenges in preparing for a tech interview to land lucrative offers from leading tech and FAANG companies.

An IK alum landing a \$933,000 offer from Facebook is the best testament to our interview preparation strategies. The average salary hike our alums receive is 49%!

[Our career coaches and instructors](#) draw on their deep experience from past and current positions at FAANG and other top tech companies, to help engineers successfully uplevel, transition to their dream companies, and achieve their target compensations.

As proven, repeatedly, by our alums, landing a \$500k tech job is entirely possible with the right prep strategy coupled with a structured and studied approach.

In this comprehensive guide, we show you how you can navigate the journey to a high-paying tech job at leading tech companies.

## Here's what we'll cover:

### ✓ **How do you identify a \$500k tech role?**

Learn how the demand-supply dynamics of tech skills affect compensation; identify the latest, in-demand and high-paying tech jobs, roles, and skills that can enhance your earning potential.

### ✓ **Which companies offer \$500k tech jobs?**

Understand the key considerations in identifying companies that offer the right roles, growth opportunities, and compensation that matches your career and financial goals.

### ✓ **Which band levels offer \$500k compensation in tech?**

Learn how levels affect compensation; craft a career path toward the right level within your preferred company to achieve your target compensation.

### ✓ **What skills do you need to qualify for a \$500k tech job?**

Understand the various attributes you must possess to qualify for a high-paying, specialized, senior-level tech job.

### ✓ **How can you get noticed by FAANG recruiters?**

Craft a suitable resume: Learn how to create a winning resume to grab the attention of recruiters at FAANG and Tier-1 tech companies.

Job search and application process: Learn how to leverage various direct and indirect routes to identify job openings and optimize your profile to apply for these jobs.

### ✓ **What is the FAANG interview process?**

Learn all about the various stages of the FAANG interview process.

### ✓ **How can you prepare for FAANG interviews?**

Get useful insights on how to structure your interview prep and prepare for every stage of the FAANG interview process.

✔ **How do you negotiate a \$500k compensation?**

Be better equipped to negotiate offers with insights into factors that influence negotiations along with salary negotiations tips.

✔ **What is the IK advantage in landing a \$500k offer?**

An introduction to Interview Kickstart's unique, professionally structured interview preparation program, led by instructors and career coaches from FAANG and other leading tech companies; find out how we can help you land top-notch offers from the best tech companies.

✔ **\$500k and beyond!**

Learn about an Interview Kickstart alum who landed an offer worth \$933,000 from Facebook.

✔ **How can you take your career to the next level?**

Find out how we can help you uplevel successfully.

# How do you identify a **\$500k** tech job?



In an ever-changing tech environment, companies are constantly adopting new technologies to innovate and capitalize on new business opportunities, while adapting to changing business environments and dynamics.

How do you keep up with these changes to know what lies ahead for you?

## In-demand tech fields and related skills

In the tech industry, compensation is linked to [tech skills](#) that are in demand. Higher the demand for a skill, higher the compensation.

Premiums on salaries are one way for companies to attract top talent. The average premium on salaries for the top in-demand tech skills ranged as high as \$25,000 ([Burning Glass Technologies study, Forbes](#)).

It's simple wisdom, then, that by adopting the right tech skills you can boost your market value immensely and command higher-than-average compensations.

Many tech fields face the twin problems of requiring specialized tech skills and a real shortage of skilled, qualified, and experienced talent. The easiest way for companies to address the shortage is by offering attractive compensations.

## Latest high-paying tech jobs, roles, and skills

Some of the most in-demand tech fields, roles, and the key skills needed to succeed in these areas are listed here:

## Cloud Computing

The benefits of reduced costs and increased operational efficiencies have led to an increasing number of companies, including government organizations, adopting cloud systems.

A Fortune Business Insights report estimates a 17.9% growth in the market size for cloud computing, globally. The cloud computing market is estimated to hit a value of \$791.48 billion over the next 7 years.



## Key Cloud Computing skills

- Cloud platforms of leading companies including Amazon (AWS), Microsoft (Azure), Google (GCP), IBM, Dell, Oracle, HP
- Python, Ruby, Java, JavaScript, ASP.net, Golang
- SQL, Linux
- Orchestration, Automation

## High-paying Cloud Computing roles (average pay)

- Senior Solutions Architect - \$141,000\*
- Cloud Architects - \$135,977\*\*
- DevOps Engineers - \$121,216\*\*

*\*(Statista)\*\*(Monster)*



## Data Science

[Data Science](#) helps companies improve their business offerings which results in enhanced profitability. The demand for data science is prevalent across industries and job sectors.

Data Science has witnessed a growing demand for talent over the last few years. With demand exceeding the supply of qualified talent, this trend is likely to continue and amplify in the near future. The US Bureau of Labour Statistics estimates a 28% growth in data science jobs over the next five years. This comes on the back of growth in AI, ML, and Big Data technologies.

Jobs in data science are less competitive, offering huge scope for growth.



## Key Data Science skills

- Math, Statistics
- Python, R
- SQL, Hadoop, Pig, Spark, Hive
- Machine Learning, GPUs, AI, NLP
- Data visualization, mining, analysis, modeling, manipulation, wrangling

## High-paying data science roles (average pay)\*

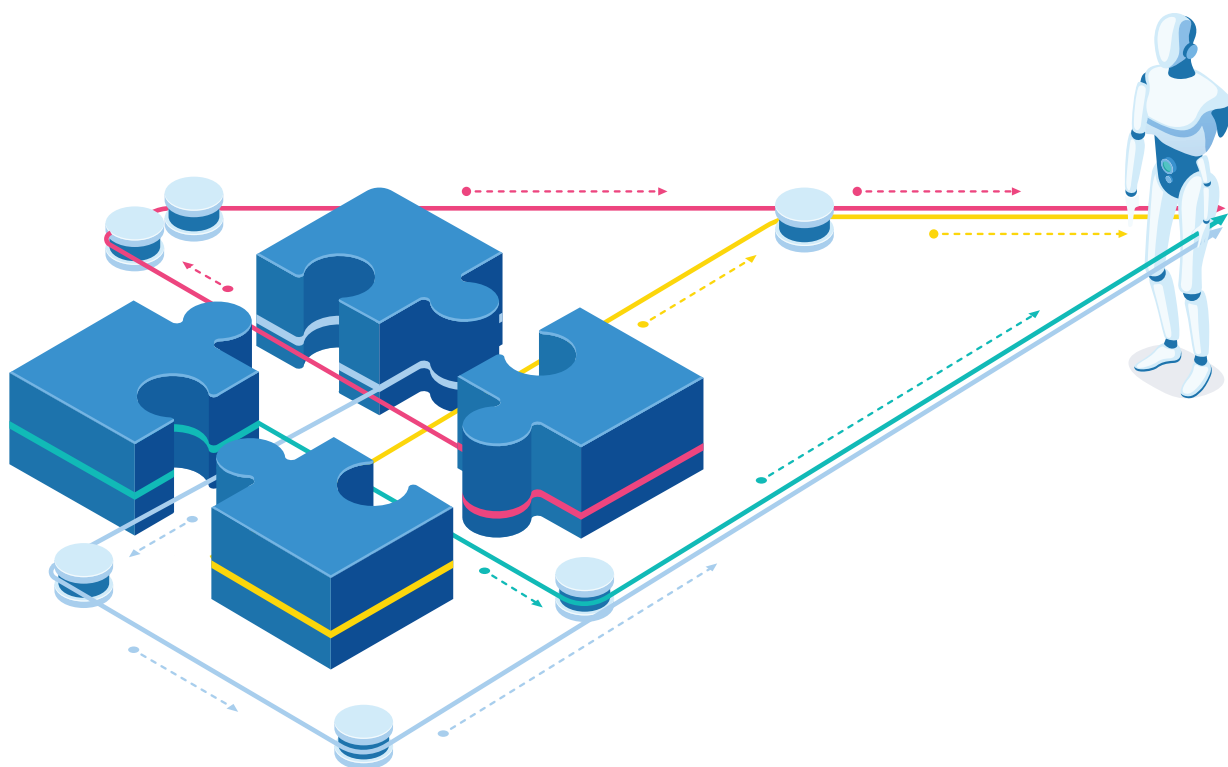
- Machine Learning Engineer - \$149,847
- Enterprise Architect - \$144,013
- Data Architect - \$133,840
- Big Data Engineer - \$132,571
- Data Scientist - \$122, 519

(\*Indeed)

## Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)

AI and [ML](#) are emerging as top skills following the COVID-19 pandemic, as companies evolve and adapt to changing circumstances. With multiple applications across various industries, the demand for AI and ML professionals is projected to grow manifold over the next few years.

AI statistics (as reported by [semrush.com](#)) indicate an annual AI market growth rate of 33.2% until 2027. The global AI market is expected to hit a market value of \$190.61 billion by 2025.



## Key AI, ML skills

- Python, R, C, C++, Java
- Linux, Unix, SQL, Hadoop
- NLP, ML techniques, Computer vision
- Applied mathematics, Statistics
- ML Algorithms, TensorFlow, Spark, Scikit learn
- Artificial neural networks
- Data engineering
- Signal processing techniques
- Language, audio, video processing

## High-paying AI and ML roles (average pay)\*

- Principal Software Engineer - \$155,000
- Software Architect - \$135,107
- Senior Data Scientist - \$127,500
- Data Engineer - \$122,060
- Machine Learning Engineer - \$125,000
- Senior Software Engineer - \$120,000
- Data Scientist - \$110,000

(\*Indeed quoted on [cnbc.com](http://cnbc.com))

## Cybersecurity

All companies, irrespective of size or type, face cyber threats. Even government organizations and leading global businesses have experienced security breaches and hacks. The targeted companies suffer financial losses, job losses, and erosion of customer trust.

Cybercrimes are on the rise as cybercriminals devise new ways to breach security systems. This has underlined the need for companies to develop robust security systems and proactively detect and prevent potential threats.

The US Bureau of Labour Statistics estimates a 31% growth in cybersecurity jobs by 2029.



## Key Cybersecurity skills

- Application Development Security
- Risk Management
- Incident Response
- Cloud Security
- Blockchain Security
- Threat Intelligence
- Data Privacy
- Compliance and Controls
- Computer Forensics
- Security Governance
- Access Management

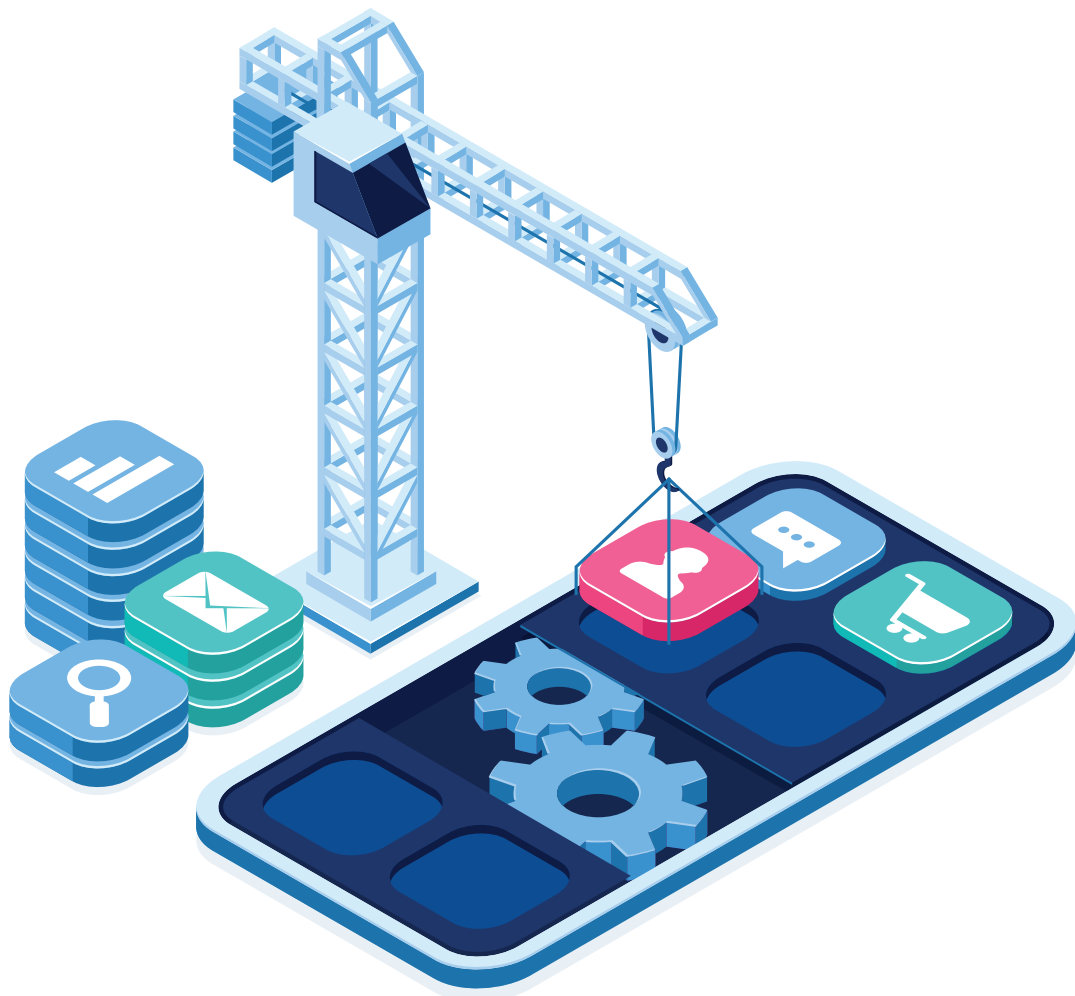
## High-paying AI and ML roles (average pay)\*

- Software Architect - \$137,014
- Application Security Engineer - \$130,809
- Senior Security Consultant - \$129,251
- Penetration Tester - \$119,142
- Risk Manager - \$118,222
- Network Security Engineer - \$109,281

## DevOps

[DevOps](#) helps companies develop high-quality software and increase productivity for a competitive edge. Globally, companies across industries are increasingly adopting DevOps technologies making it one of the most in-demand tech fields. Increasing automation of businesses and large-scale adoption of cloud computing are key drivers for the growth of this sector. DevOps is well-suited to remote work environments, enhancing its demand through the COVID-19 pandemic.

A MarketsandMarkets report estimates the DevOps market to reach a value of \$10.31 billion by 2023.



## Key DevOps skills

- Programming, Python, Ruby, Go
- Linux
- Networking
- Storage
- Cloud, Docker, Kubernetes
- Ansible, Chef, Salt
- Git
- Jenkins
- Monitoring tools
- Databases
- System Administration
- Automation

## High-paying DevOps roles (average pay)\*

- Senior DevOps Engineer - \$118,801  
(\*salary.com)



## Software Engineering

Advances in the field of automation have given rise to new opportunities in the field of [software engineering](#). Today, software is ubiquitous and necessary for the smooth functioning of business operations. Software is constantly evolving to meet new business requirements. This drives demand for skilled software engineers with expertise in the latest programming languages, advancements, and updates.

The U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics estimates a 17% growth in software engineering for the period 2019-29.



## Key Software Engineering skills

- Rust, Dart, Go, Scala, Ruby, Python, Java, JavaScript
- SQL
- Docker, Kubernetes, Redux
- AWS, Azure
- Apache Kafka, Apache Spark
- Ansible
- Jenkins
- React.js
- HTML, CSS
- Node.js
- Git
- Web, Mobile applications
- Database applications

## High-paying Software Engineering roles (average pay)\*

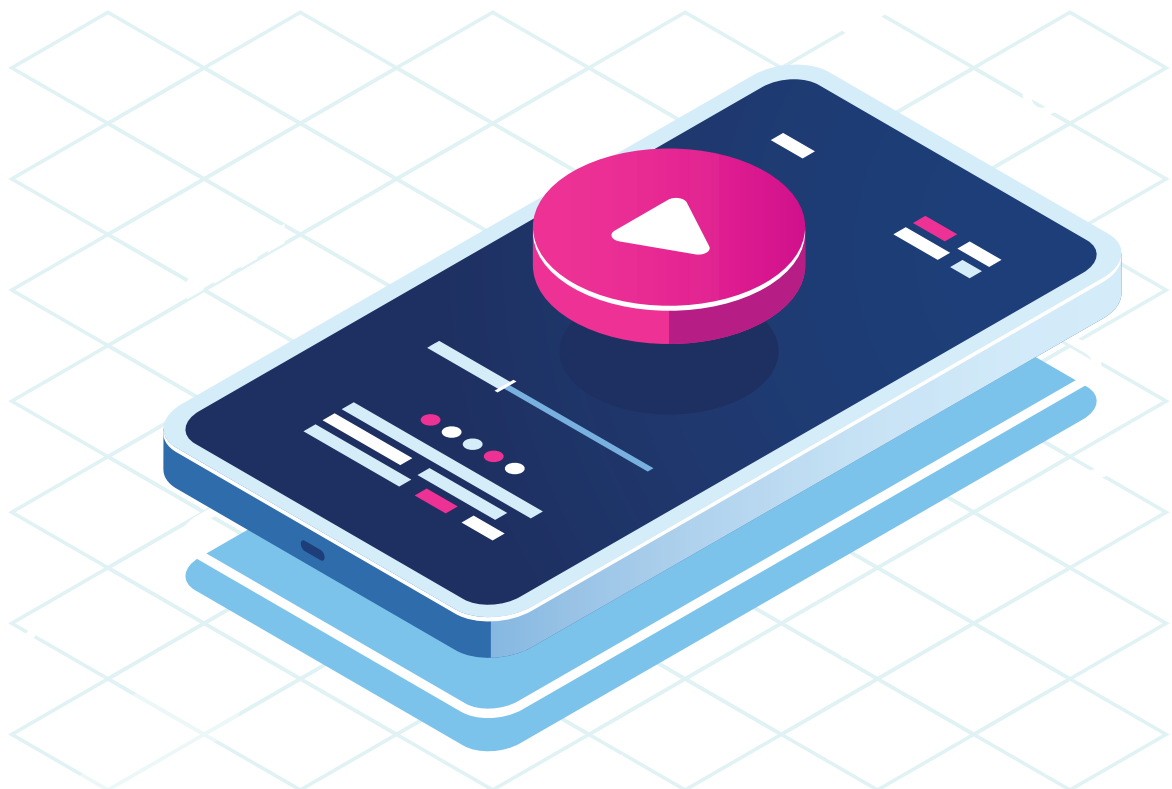
- Technical Program Manager - \$145,977
- Software Engineering Manager - \$144,954
- Enterprise Architect - \$140,877
- Data Warehouse Architect - \$134,922
- Site Reliability Engineer - \$128,537
- Full Stack Developer - \$113,011
- Software Engineer - \$109,907

(\*Indeed)

## Mobile Application Development

Mobile application development is one of the fastest-growing tech fields as mobiles continue to influence consumption, business interactions, and communication. This, in turn, drives demand for mobile applications. [The COVID-19 pandemic](#) boosted demand for mobile apps, for example, video conferencing apps. Security and privacy are leading requirements in the mobile app development field while ML, AI, AR, and VR trends continue to influence it.

The U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics estimated a 22% market growth rate for the period 2019-29.



## Key Mobile App Development skills

- UI/UX designing
- Cyber Security
- Native, Cross-platform development
- C#, Java, Kotlin,
- HTML 5, CSS
- APIs; iOS, Android, Windows Mobile
- JavaScript, Angular, ReactNative
- Backend computing
- Git

## High-paying Mobile Applications Development roles (average pay)\*

- Software Architect - \$135,900
- Senior Software Engineer - \$127,647
- Android Developer - \$120,277
- Mobile Developer - \$118,934
- iOS Developer - \$116,807
- Full Stack Developer - \$107,303

## Project Management

Project managers (PMs) are in demand across various industries globally. An increasing number of companies are now charting clear career paths for advancement as a project manager.

The demand for PMs is driven by the growing awareness of how they enable cost control, cost reduction, increased productivity, and increased profitability.

With talent in short supply, certified PMs can command high salary premiums. PMs are in demand at companies with complex, large-scale projects.

Mordor Intelligence estimated a 10.67% CAGR for project management software for the period 2020-2025. The Project Management Institute estimates the creation of 22 million new jobs in the field of project management by 2027.



## Key Project Management skills

- Project management methodologies; Agile, Scrum, Waterfall, Kanban
- Project Lifecycle Management
- Financial Modelling
- Data Analysis
- Cost Management
- Risk Management
- Budgeting
- Quality Management
- Conflict Management
- Planning, Forecasting
- Communication
- Negotiation
- [Problem-solving](#)
- Leadership

## High-paying Mobile Applications Development roles (average pay)\*

- IT Project Manager - \$100,456
- Engineering Project Manager - \$99,701
- PMO Manager - \$94,366  
(\*Indeed)

## Internet of Things (IoT)

Increasing development and usage of internet-enabled devices, increased investments in smart cities, and greater adoption of cloud services are driving the phenomenal growth of the IoT market. Besides increasing existing business efficiencies, IoT is also predicted to create new revenue streams for businesses. This, in turn, presents emerging opportunities for companies to gain competitive advantages. IoT has diverse applications across multiple industries.

Fortune Business Insights estimates the IoT market to hit a value of \$1,854.76 billion by 2028, considering a 25.4% CAGR for the period 2021-28.





## Key IoT skills

- Data Management, Analysis, Visualization
- Hardware Interfacing
- Field Gateways
- Embedded Software Development
- Information Security
- Business Intelligence
- UI/UX Design
- AI, ML
- Networking
- Application design and development

## High-paying IoT roles (average pay)\*

- IoT Engineer - \$123,189  
(\*Indeed)

## Web Development

Today, businesses everywhere are optimizing their online presence to stay competitive. Websites and online platforms continue to gain traction as a means to connect and engage with customers in order to drive sales and revenue.

As existing businesses grow and new companies enter markets, the demand for web development services will continue to rise. The proliferation of new technologies is also boosting demand for web developers who have the ability to implement complex, scalable website applications.



## Key Web Development skills

- HTML
- CSS
- Javascript
- Git
- APIs
- BrowserDev Tools
- Versions Control
- HTTP, MySQL
- PHP, Ruby, Python, Java
- Scala, Go, Rust, Kotlin, Perl
- C, C++, C#
- Angular, React, Vue
- Node, Django

## High-paying Web Development roles (average pay)\*

- [Front-end Developers - \\$107,000](#)
- [Back-end Developers - \\$101,619](#)
- [Full-stack Developers - \\$113,500](#)

(\*Indeed on kinsta.com)

# How can you uplevel your tech skills to land a high-paying tech job?

At Interview Kickstart, we understand how companies conduct skill-based technical interviews, including the type of skills and level of expertise they look for.

We offer the first-of-its-kind, domain-specific tech interview prep program designed specifically to help engineers upskill and improve their interview performance to land lucrative offers at FAANG and Tier-1 tech companies.

Our programs follow a comprehensive curriculum delivered via unmatched teaching methods by FAANG+ instructors.

**Learn all about our domain-specific courses designed to help you learn or improve your tech skills to pursue a career path of your choice.**

- [Android Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [iOS Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Back-End Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Front-End Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Full-Stack Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Machine Learning Interview Course](#)
- [Data Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Data Science Interview Course](#)
- [Technical Product Manager Interview Course](#)
- [Technical Program Manager Interview Course](#)
- [Security Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Site Reliability Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Embedded Software Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Test Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Cloud Engineering Interview Course](#)
- [Engineering Manager Interview Course](#)
- [Early Engineering Interview Course](#)

Join our FREE [webinar](#) to learn more about the following courses and how to uplevel for success in a competitive and changing tech environment.

# Which companies offer **\$500k** tech jobs?



The type of [company](#) you work for strongly influences your earning prospects. Below are some key considerations to help you **identify the right company to achieve your compensation goals.**

- Affordability
- Brand Value
- Projects

## Affordability

Regardless of the prevalent demand-supply dynamics of the talent market, not all companies compensate talent competitively.

- Key reasons for this are a company's
- Inability to afford top talent
- Inability to effectively identify and recruit top talent

If you're competitively placed in the talent pool, and you're targeting a high compensation, choose companies that can make you an offer in line with your market value and salary goals.

## The FAANG advantage

FAANG and other Tier-1 tech companies are considered [dream companies](#) by most tech professionals. This is because these companies:

- Offer very competitive and attractive compensations (the #1 reason); they're more likely to offer you a \$500k compensation early in your career.
- Focus on innovation and capitalize on new business opportunities, presenting engineers with career-changing opportunities.
- Maintain a strong competitive edge, which is why they invest heavily in talent.

FAANG and Tier-1 tech companies offer compensation packages largely unaffordable by most other companies. This enables them to attract and retain top tech talent for all roles at all levels.

## FAANG vs. Startups

A dilemma that tech professionals often face is whether they should pursue a career at [a large, established tech company](#) or [a small, growing startup](#).

Earlier, compensation set the two apart, with most startups unable to offer attractive compensations.

However, a growing number of startups are now able to compete with tech giants for top talent. In our experience helping candidates negotiate offers at various top tech companies and startups, we have observed that at least 150 non-FAANG companies have the capacity to outbid FAANG offers.

If compensation is the deciding factor between joining a FAANG company or a startup, a careful consideration of the compensation structures will help you decide which one can help you reach your compensation goals.

- **Cash:** FAANG companies offer top-of-the-industry salaries, as well as perks and benefits that few other companies can match. FAANG companies are also perfectly poised, financially, to offer attractive salary premiums to outbid other companies for top talent that is in short supply.
- **Equity:** FAANG companies offer equity of considerable value, including refresher grants, to create highly lucrative compensation packages.

Not many companies possess the liquidity to compete with the cash compensation offered by FAANG companies.

Offering FAANG-level salaries increases the funding requirements for startups, which poses a huge challenge.



However, startup equity is usually non-tradable for a long period. Added to this is the risk of uncertainty in startup equity values. How a startup performs is usually unpredictable.

FAANG companies, on the other hand, are among the most profitable, publicly traded organizations in the world.

Equity offered by FAANG companies is highly tradable. Also, considering their market leadership statuses and excellent performance statistics, the value of FAANG equity compounds quickly, which can boost your overall earnings considerably within a short period.

In the long run, FAANG compensations tend to be more lucrative in terms of cash and equity, even when compared to a fairly successful startup.

## Brand value

FAANG companies have a global reputation as market leaders and tech innovators. Landing a job at a FAANG company increases your marketability considerably. As a FAANG employee, you're more likely to be considered for roles at other FAANG companies and receive lucrative offers. You can also command a premium for having worked at a FAANG company if you pursue a career at a non-FAANG company in the future.

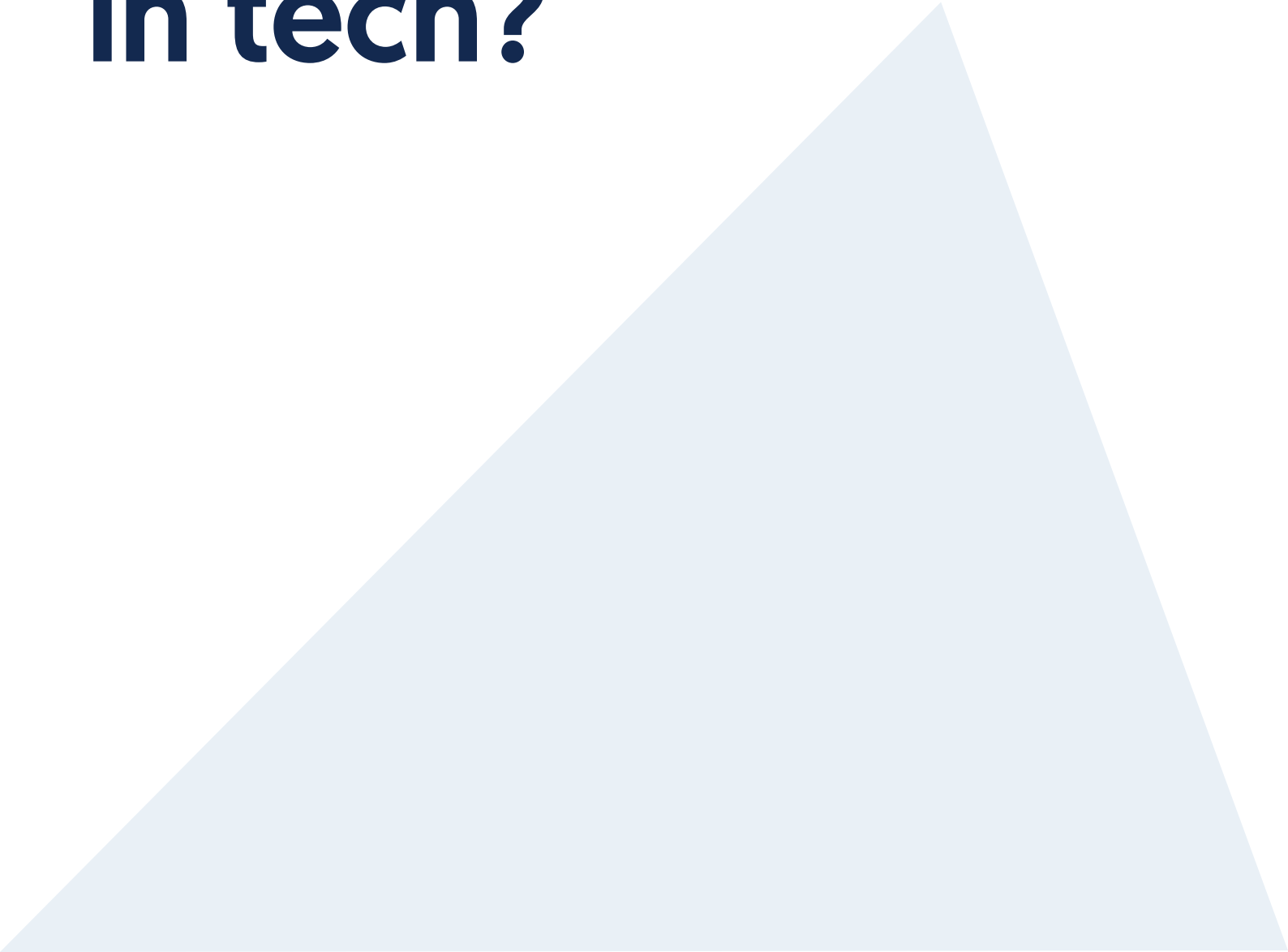
## Projects

FAANG and other top tech companies usually work on multiple projects and products at a time. They are also early adopters of the latest technologies and are leading innovators in the tech industry.

The scale and complexity of projects undertaken at FAANG companies provide engineers unique opportunities to deepen and broaden their skills. This enables greater and faster career growth and progression opportunities.

Startups may offer a great idea or product or people to work with but are limited in the opportunities they can offer to broaden skills. This can constrain career growth and, in turn, earning prospects.

# Which band levels offer **\$500k** compensation in tech?



Most tech companies use a [system of levels](#) to determine job responsibilities for each role. This, in turn, determines skill requirements and pay scales. Higher the level, higher the responsibilities, and consequently, compensation.

Compensation or salary ranges are set for each level. A salary range refers to the upper and lower limits of salaries that can be paid to employees at a particular level.

Understanding levels is necessary to ascertain if your position on a career ladder is the right fit for your skillset. For example, if you are performing tasks beyond the job description of your current level, you are most likely suited for a higher level. You should therefore be earning a higher compensation.

This can help you determine if you should seek a promotion internally or look for opportunities that match your expertise externally.

Alternatively, you can determine the expertise required to move up to your target level and upgrade your skills accordingly.

## Every company levels differently

Job titles aren't uniform across companies, nor do they indicate job levels.

At startups and mid-sized companies, levels aren't well-defined. On the other hand, large tech companies have well-structured levels based on clearly defined rubrics.

The level you're at in your current company won't necessarily correspond with the same level at another company. An [L4 at Google](#) differs from an [L4 at Amazon](#). Netflix has only one level, while Microsoft has sub-levels.

Companies set levels based on company policies, privy only to a few internal employees. Their systems aren't always transparent and can be challenging for tech professionals to understand. Sites like [levels.fyi](#), have created comparative studies of levels at top tech companies.

Below is a comparison of levels for the role of Software Engineer at FAANG companies.

Note: Salary details of senior-most positions are not included as comparable information was not available at the time of compilation.

Google	Netflix	Amazon	Facebook	Apple	Microsoft
L3 SWE II \$191,857	Senior software Engineer [Only one level]	L4 SDE 1 \$164,530	E3 \$180,330	ICT2 \$173,667	SDE 59 - \$158,570 60 - \$164,291
L3 SWE II \$191,857		L5 SDE II \$227,272	L5 SDE II \$227,272	ICT3 \$217,284	SDE II 61 - \$178,406 62 - \$184,286
L3 SWE II \$191,857		L6 SDE III \$328,929	E5 \$387,903	ICT4 \$317,574	Senior SDE 63 - \$215,622 64 - \$247,177
L6 Staff SWE \$488,105		L7 Principal SDE \$635,562	E6 \$594,572	ICT5 \$446,097	Principal SDE 65 - \$290,183 66 - \$343,419 67 - \$500,945
L7 Senior Staff SWE \$671,783		L8 Senior Principal SDE	E7 \$897,651	ICT6 \$719,750	Partner 68 69
L8 Principal Engineer \$1,023,285		L10 Distinguished Engineer	E8	Distinguished Engineer	Distinguished Engineer 70
L9 Distinguished Engineer			E9	Engineering Fellow	Technical Fellow 80
L10 Google Fellow					

As evinced from the above, software engineers generally earn upwards of \$500k only at senior levels.

While some roles pay higher than others, compensation tends to run in tandem with seniority. The higher up the career ladder you are, the higher the earnings.

Tech compensations tend to plateau around the \$150k - \$300k mark. While many progress from junior to mid-level positions fairly quickly, breaking into high-paying, senior-level positions can be challenging.

An extract from the above table reveals the level at which software engineers can break into the \$500k pay range.

## FAANG levels and \$500k compensations

Company	Level	Title	Total Compensation
Google	L6	Staff Software Engineer	\$486,333 Salary - \$225,804 Stock - \$209,745 Bonus - \$50,784
Google	Only one level	Senior Software Engineer	\$497,251 Salary - \$484,364 Stock - \$12,773 Bonus - \$114
Amazon	L7	Principal SDE	\$635,400 Salary - \$163,800 Stock - \$399,067 Bonus - \$72,533
Facebook	E6	Software Engineer Level IV	\$588,556 Salary - \$232,153 Stock - \$302,653 Bonus - \$53,750
Apple	ICT5	Staff Software Engineer	\$441,517 Salary - \$213,724 Stock - \$192,793 Bonus - \$35,000
Microsoft	L6	Staff Software Engineer	\$486,333 Salary - \$225,804 Stock - \$209,745 Bonus - \$50,784
Google	67	Principal SDE	\$513,591 Salary - \$230,773 Stock - \$201,773 Bonus - \$81,045



Most senior positions that pay \$500k or more are highly specialized, technical roles or management/leadership roles involving supervision of large teams or business units.

Organizational structures are leaner at the top. With fewer senior positions available, competition intensifies as you move up the ladder.

Levels help engineers determine their career paths. Besides identifying in-demand, high-paying tech roles, identify the level at which you can achieve your target compensation. Then, create a roadmap, including the skills, qualifications, and personal attributes you'll need to reach your desired level.

# What a \$500k tech job requires



The right combination of experience, [qualifications, skills,](#) knowledge, and expertise is what will help you move up the career ladder and land a \$500k tech job at leading tech and FAANG companies. Consider the following aspects in determining your career path to your desired tech role:

- Experience
- Projects
- References
- Qualifications
- Skills
  - Technical skills
  - Behavioral skills
- Other attributes

## Experience

Most senior-level positions require 10-15 years of work experience. However, this is not a blanket requirement; when talent is in short supply or the technology is new and evolving, expertise is valued over years of experience.

In general, the more years you chalk up, the more exposure you're assumed to have to different types of projects and situations. As an experienced engineer, you're more likely to possess the ability to:

- Understand business operations and business impact
- Identify business opportunities and initiate projects
- Identify, predict, and prevent problems and challenges
- Provide technical stewardship
- Function independently
- Manage and lead projects
- Think critically and analytically
- Arrive at solutions quickly
- Recover from failure
- Work at scale
- Innovate

Technical expertise can get you to mid-level positions fairly quickly in your career, but senior levels demand more experience than just executing technical tasks.

Over time, as technology advances, degrees and certifications can lose relevance and value. This makes the right experience vital to proving you possess the required skills for a higher position.

To break into senior levels and command top compensation in the tech industry, over tenure, depth and diversity of experience are required.

Experience should demonstrate tech expertise through learning and growth and show company-wide impact over productivity.

Most FAANG and top tech companies expect engineers to prove their ability to function at a higher level before being promoted. To be hired into a [managerial](#) or leadership role, you'll be expected to demonstrate leadership and other skills required for a senior role.

## Projects

Projects are a great way to showcase practical application of conceptual knowledge. They also prove your interest in professional development.

At a senior level, you'll be expected to have an impressive project portfolio. It should showcase your ability to handle projects of scale and complexity relevant to a senior role.

Projects can be used to showcase both technical and behavioral skills in a practical setting. The more diverse the projects you've worked on, the broader your skillset and knowledge. The more complex the project, the deeper your technical expertise.

You may not be able to show proprietary work done at your current or past companies. You, also, may not have had the right exposure or opportunities to work on complex projects during the regular course of your work. Working on side projects or contributing to open-source projects will allow you to overcome these issues.

## References

At senior levels, engineers are highly compensated because they are in a position to influence projects and teams. Their performance has a direct impact on business operations and revenue.

Considering this, companies seek to mitigate risks associated with engineers in senior positions. Recommendations from credible industry professionals inspire confidence in your ability to fulfill the responsibilities of a senior role.

References validate your experiences, skills, and contributions as an employee at your past companies. References also increase your market value and give you a competitive edge in negotiating a higher compensation.

## Education/Qualifications

Possessing the right degrees and certifications from leading or highly recognized universities and institutes also boosts your earning potential.

### College degrees

A bachelor's, master's, or higher degree is usually required for a senior role.

Most data scientist roles, for example, require a bachelor's degree for entry-level positions and an advanced degree, i.e., Ph.D. or master's for senior positions.

However, many companies will consider equivalent work experience in place of formal education for some roles. Software engineers [may not require a formal degree](#) but will have to upgrade their skills by learning new technologies if they hope to command higher salaries. Most successful software engineers gain expertise through self-learning and tech [bootcamps](#).

### Certifications

Companies may stipulate a specific level of expertise as qualifications for certain roles. Professional certifications are a way of validating newly acquired skills to prove you're job-ready.

Recognized certifications can improve your career prospects and your earnings potential significantly. Multiple certifications further enhance your chances of earning a higher salary.

Most engineers tend to become unemployable or unmarketable because their existing qualifications are outdated, and they don't possess or gain in-demand skills.



Acquiring the right educational or professional qualifications can help you change career paths or become more qualified to move up your current career ladder. This will, in turn, help enhance your earning potential.

## Skills

High-paying senior-level positions are highly specialized positions requiring deep and diverse skills. To be compensated well, you'll have to display a broad range of skills, which includes:

- Technical skills (hard skills)
- Behavioral skills (soft skills)

## Technical skills

The more specialized and in-demand your tech skills are, the higher the compensation you can command.

Possessing expertise in a skill that has low demand won't get you a high-paying job. But, if you possess technical skills in a field that has a short supply of talent, you can command a high salary at an earlier stage of your career.

For example, a mid-level AI engineer will probably command a higher salary than a software engineer at a higher level. This is because there are fewer qualified AI engineers compared to a large talent pool of software engineers.

Tech is always evolving, and some technologies get outdated as new technologies emerge or become more advanced.

Programmers who keep up and build expertise in new, [in-demand programming languages](#) will always be better positioned to command higher pay.

To enhance your value to an organization, you will need to be adept at not only learning but also implementing new technologies. Technical skills that have high earning potential are those that can create real business value for a company.

Developing a broad range of skills throughout your career will demonstrate your ability to adapt to changing technologies.

At junior and mid-levels, engineers tend to focus on only one area of technology. However, at a senior level, you may be required to oversee multiple projects simultaneously. This means you'll have to possess knowledge and skills across different technological areas.

## Behavioral skills

At a higher level, you're compensated not only for your technical expertise but also for your interpersonal skills.

At junior and mid-level positions, engineers function to complete individual tasks or manage individual projects or small to mid-sized teams. They focus on solving defined problems through technological expertise.

However, at senior levels, engineers work to identify business opportunities and create a company-wide impact. They move from single to multiple projects, influence technical strategy, and work with large teams to achieve business goals.

At senior levels, people and behavioral skills are more important than technical skills. These are must-have competencies to secure a high-paying, senior position.

Key behavioral skills you should build are:

## Communication

Engineers tend to focus on technologies and function as individual contributors executing individual tasks. This does not offer scope to develop interpersonal skills, such as communication.

However, communication skills are a key requirement to progress into and function at senior levels.

Senior engineers have to communicate with multiple stakeholders and their teams to achieve results. Understanding requirements, conveying ideas, presenting outcomes, assisting teams, resolving issues, etc., all involve different forms of [communication](#).

Therefore, improving your communication skills — verbal, written, and listening — can give you a competitive advantage in securing a high-paying position.

## Leadership

To advance to a management or specialized individual contributor role, the ability to lead or influence people is a core skill.

To position yourself as a leader, you should be able to leverage technical expertise and strong people management skills to develop trust with people beyond your team.

Scalability is an important aspect of business operations at most leading tech companies. Companies are always keen on engineers who can lead large-scale initiatives, i.e., take ownership, accountability, and responsibility of large teams and projects.

[Leadership](#) is imperative to achieving project and business goals and is a highly valued skill at all tech companies.

## Mentorship

At a senior level, you're expected to not only manage but also nurture talent. You create real value for a company by sharing your skills and knowledge. By mentoring, training, and enabling others, you improve the quality of talent at a company. This improves overall team performances for better results, helping companies stay competitive.

## Critical/Analytical thinking

To provide technical direction and lead major projects, you should be able to analyze complex information and problems to determine optimal solutions.

This includes the ability to think on your feet and function as a critical resource, especially in a crisis.

You should be able to understand the nuances of processes and systems and identify ways to fix issues and improve efficiency.

## Strategic thinking

In the tech world, innovation drives profitability. Strategic thinking in the tech industry requires an innovative mindset — an aspect FAANG and leading tech companies worldwide thrive on.

At a senior level, engineers command high compensations for their expertise in managing ongoing projects and their ability to anticipate problems and identify opportunities.

Coupled with strong critical and analytical thinking skills, strategizing and the ability to see the bigger picture are highly valued skills by tech organizations functioning in a very competitive industry.

## Problem-solving abilities

Top tech companies place a lot of value on engineers with [strong problem-solving abilities](#).

At senior levels, you'll be expected to break down complex problems into resolvable tasks. This requires a fair bit of creative thinking, technical expertise, and hands-on experience.

To develop strong problem-solving skills, gain experience handling different types of projects. This will familiarize you with different situations and issues and how to solve them.

Companies prefer engineers with deep experience since they are bound to have encountered lots of challenges and failures, making them adept at dealing with and solving problems. They can easily replicate past learnings to resolve problems quickly.

## Organizational skills

Strong organizational skills are essential to proper time management, smooth functioning of operations, and productivity. This involves multiple skills such as planning, decision-making, multi-tasking, prioritization, delegation, etc.

While many engineers are adept at functioning expertly within prescribed frameworks, not everyone develops the organizational skills required to run large-scale, complex systems and processes that drive value for organizations, making it a skill worth pursuing.

## Time management

Leading multiple teams or projects simultaneously, collaborating with multiple stakeholders, and directing tasks to achieve set goals, requires strong time management skills.

At senior levels, your deliverables have a real business impact. Time efficiencies can positively impact earnings and profitability.

The ability to manage timelines and deadlines is a highly valued skill for senior tech positions.

## Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness is about being able to achieve outcomes with available resources as well as identifying new technologies or resources to achieve goals.

Your experience should speak of your understanding of the latest trends and developments to help you achieve goals efficiently and effectively.

At a senior level, you will be required to work proactively and chart a course of action in the face of uncertainty.

## Project management

Another core competency requirement at senior levels, project management, involves initiating, planning, detailing, and controlling projects from conceptualization to delivery.

It involves a range of responsibilities such as creating roadmaps, goal-setting, negotiating, budgeting, monitoring, risk management, etc.

Project management skills are especially in demand at leading tech companies. FAANG companies run multiple businesses and products simultaneously, and senior-level engineers are expected to manage competing priorities.

## Other attributes

Besides your demonstrable technical and behavioral skills, you should possess other personal and professional attributes to secure a high-paying, senior tech role.

## Be a 10x engineer

You can create demand for your talent by developing deep expertise in a particular area and creating value for an organization by becoming a force multiplier.

By utilizing your expertise to enable others to perform in a manner that drives a 10x improvement in overall results, you can create immense value for an organization. This ability offers you a strong competitive advantage to command premium compensation.

10x engineers are desirable because they are self-starters, constantly developing their skills and finding newer and faster ways to arrive at solutions. They're always up-to-date on the latest advancements in technology and have an experimental mindset.

## Competitiveness

A competitive spirit is necessary as you strive for a high-paying, senior position at a leading tech company.

Competition intensifies, and opportunities narrow out as you progress up the career ladder. Therefore, developing competitive advantages and standing out from the crowd is required if you expect to land a senior position.

It's important to build networks and connections within the community to stay aware of new trends and technologies that companies are adopting as well as your value vis-a-vis talent available in the market.



## Create more value

Promotions are vital to career progression. As you go up levels, promotions are not easily earned. To earn a promotion, you have to develop the ability to function at a level higher than your current level. You have to go beyond productivity to creating company-wide business impact in order to stand out and create more value for yourself.

Engineers with a breadth of skills and knowledge of business operations and culture are remunerated far higher than those with depth in a limited technological area.

Given their familiarity with company culture, internal candidates are generally preferred over external candidates for senior positions. Craft a career path that enables you to join the right company at the right time so that you can grow to a senior role.

## Stay relevant

In an ever-changing tech landscape, your educational degrees and current skills can become outdated over time. This can curtail your career growth and, therefore, your earnings prospects.

In the tech industry, competition is global. You're not just competing with the local talent pool but with talent that is potentially more affordable across geographies.

Staying abreast of the latest updates and new technologies and maintaining your value offering in the face of this competition is imperative to staying relevant.

Companies value engineers with the ability to learn and apply new concepts quickly as well as aid business progression and profitability.

## Business understanding

It's important to gain an understanding of the entire product development life cycle. Companies desire engineers who can go beyond core tech competencies to understand customer needs and meet them.

Engineers are also highly compensated for their awareness of the business side of technology. As you develop your technical skills, also learn about the market your company operates in.

## Appetite for risk

Getting into a high-paying senior tech role requires engineers to break out of their comfort zones. Most engineers plateau at mid-level positions, unwilling to pursue opportunities beyond perceived barriers.

Pursuing a new career path, relocating, learning a new technology, or investing in the right resources to uplevel your career are risky but necessary moves to attain your dream role and compensation.

The ability to take smart risks on the job is also a highly valued skill and a strong competitive advantage for engineers at large tech companies that thrive on innovation.

## Persistence and perseverance

Climbing the career ladder in tech requires constant and consistent effort. You will need to constantly identify opportunities for growth within your current organization or externally. You will have to update your skills and keep up with changing technological requirements.

Considering how competitive and demanding senior-level positions can be, few engineers are willing to put in the effort. Many find it daunting to pursue a new opportunity at a new company.

Sometimes, you may need to interview multiple times or at multiple companies to land the right offer. It demands perseverance, which is a skill only a few engineers develop.

# How to get noticed by **FAANG** recruiters



The first step to landing a high-paying offer from a FAANG or Tier-1 tech company is to get through the interview process. This begins with getting an interview at a FAANG company. For this, you need to:

- Create an ATS and recruiter-friendly resume
- Explore different job search and application routes

## Creating an ATS- and recruiter-friendly resume

When applying for a senior engineering position, you're bound to have considerable experience and skills. It can be challenging to condense all this information to create a concise yet impactful [resume](#).

Crafting a standout resume is the first and most important step to landing an interview at a FAANG company. Top tech and FAANG companies receive thousands of job applications every month. This makes it humanly impossible to efficiently filter the right candidates for interviews.

Given their strong financial and tech capabilities, large tech companies generally deploy internal automated systems to help manage their recruitment and hiring processes.

An Application Tracking System (ATS) is a software designed to manage applications that a company receives. The ATS tracks the hiring status of a candidate from application to interview to offer or rejection. Primary functions of an ATS are:

- Scan resumes online
- Match resumes to job descriptions
- Categorize and store information based on keywords and formats in the company database

- Assign a score or rank resumes according to their relevance

**About 75% of resumes submitted to FAANG companies are rejected during the application stage of the hiring process based on ATS screening.**

This means, if your resume is not ATS-optimized, it could be rejected even if you're an ideal candidate for the prospective role.

Recruiters then screen resumes filtered by the ATS.

Companies that don't use an ATS also screen resumes using high-level parameters to weed out those that don't meet basic requirements.

Ordinarily, recruiters spend about 5-10 seconds to scan a resume and filter desirable profiles. Shortlisted resumes are further studied to determine if an applicant can be a potential interview candidate.

Ensure your resume is optimized to clear screening by an ATS and scrutiny by recruiters in order to capitalize on as many opportunities as possible.

## Prioritize content over design

Pay attention to structure and format. Choose a simple, minimalistic layout that facilitates easy perusal of information. Visually scattered content makes it hard for recruiters to identify important information at a glance.

Use a traditional vs. a functional format that can be easily converted and read by an ATS. Avoid fancy templates that may be visually attractive but are usually incompatible with an ATS.

Avoid fonts and color schemes that distract from the contents of the resume. Stick to standard fonts and font sizes that are easy to read for machines or recruiters.

Avoid featuring information in headers and footers or tables and columns. This is not likely to be captured by an ATS.

## Provide a professional summary of your experience, skills, and interests

Provide pertinent information that tells the recruiter, at a glance:

- Who you are
- What you do
- What you're looking for
- Your total years of experience
- Why you're a good fit for the job

Use the right keywords to convey this information quickly.

The summary should entice recruiters to read through the rest of your resume. A summary that doesn't add value is best omitted to prevent recruiters from spending less time on other, more important sections of the resume.

## Ensure logical flow of information

If the summary serves to capture a recruiter's interest, the resume's body should hold their attention.

Ensure information is detailed in a clear, organized manner to allow recruiters to absorb key elements of each section of your resume.

## Create clear sections for specific types of information

Demarcate the different aspects of your resume, such as experience, skills, education, certifications, achievements, references, etc.

This will allow recruiters to scan and identify the information they are most interested in and match your profile to the job description.

An ATS will also parse information based on these sections. Stick to traditional headings and titles such as:

- Personal Information/Name
- Summary
- Career Objective
- Contact Information
- Work Experience
- Projects
- Achievements/Awards
- Skills
- Education
- Certifications
- Languages
- Conferences/Publications
- Organizations/Memberships
- References

Avoid clubbing information into one category. For example, list your skills in a separate section instead of itemizing them with each role. Also, avoid posting your summary along with your contact information.



## Utilize appropriate headings, titles, and formatting tools for key data

Provide clear titles for every section and subsection of your resume. Utilize bold or underlined text to highlight individual items and key points within the details of each section, such as roles, key tasks, relevant technologies, etc.

Include full forms of abbreviations to make it ATS readable. This applies to all sections of your resume.

### File format

Submit your resume in the file format specified by the company. The internal ATS may not accept certain formats, including PDF files. If there are no specifications, a word document (.docx) is the standard format.

### Keep it to one page

Try to keep your resume one page long, not exceeding two pages if needed.

Conveying information succinctly when applying for a senior role can be challenging, but readability is important.

Identify key information that will sell you for the prospective position. Avoid descriptive language; utilize bullet points with short, specific sentences.

## Keep your resume up to date and relevant

Ensure information is as topical as possible; eliminate any outdated information that will not impact the reader.

Your resume should be reflective of a seasoned professional applying for a senior or specialized role. Only include information that is relevant to the job and shows why you are right for it.

## Contact information

Besides your full name, include and highlight your latest contact information, i.e., address (location), phone number, and email address.

Include links to your LinkedIn / GitHub and any other relevant online professional profile. Ensure these are consistent with the information provided in your resume.

Ensure you use a professional email id and username. Ideally, this should include your first, last, and middle name, if necessary, or a variation using initials. Utilize a period to separate names or an underscore if a period isn't feasible. For example:

- john.doe@gmail.com
- j.doe@gmail.com
- john.d@gmail.com
- doe\_john@gmail.com
- jane\_d@gmail.com
- janejennydoe@gmail.com

## Experience

If your resume is shortlisted, recruiters will focus on the 'Experience' section of your resume to decide if you should be called for an interview.

The experience you list indicates your value-offering to the company and will also form the basis of interview questions.

This section should form the bulk of your resume and should include all relevant information.

List your experience in reverse chronological order, starting with your current/most recent role and company. Indicate the title and role, company name, and period of experience for each listing. This will make it ATS-friendly and allow recruiters to follow your career progression easily.

You may have garnered considerable experience over the years, either by working at different companies or by functioning in different roles within one company.

Avoid describing every role at every company you have worked for in the past. Detail roles and responsibilities only for relevant job experiences limiting descriptions to about six points or less per role.

Specify clearly what your past roles involved in terms of responsibilities since titles aren't self-explanatory. Don't assume a recruiter understands your role by your job title.

## Skills

Clearly mention key skills that you possess or have used in past roles. Highlight and detail skills most relevant to the prospective role. If applicable, mention skills you possess that are in demand or growing in demand in the industry.

Mention key non-technical skills needed for the prospective role in addition to technical skills, such as project management, communication, leadership, problem-solving skills.

Include proven or demonstrable skills or skills you have a working knowledge of; avoid mentioning skills you cannot elaborate on confidently.

Alternatively, indicate your level of proficiency for skills mentioned as Expert, Intermediate, Competent, etc.

## Achievements/Awards

Highlight achievements or recognition you've received as part of your work experience. Keep it short and specific, quantifying your achievements where possible.

Achievements can be related to your professional experience or external projects.

## Projects

Mention successful projects that you have worked on, highlighting your contributions along with the outcomes.

Include personal or side projects you worked on that showcase your skills and complement your professional experience. These can be consulting or external projects.

At a senior level, engineers are expected to demonstrate the ability to identify and solve problems by leveraging their technical expertise. Showcase this aspect through your projects.

Avoid listing irrelevant projects as it implies that you haven't understood the role requirements.

## Education

As a seasoned professional, your education details should be limited to your top qualifications. Mention your degree, university, and area of specialization. Organize this information starting with your highest degree.

Mentioning your educational qualifications is important as senior job roles usually specify academic requirements.

Tailor this section to provide as much information as specified in the job description. This section should not consume more space than necessary and should feature below more important sections viz. work experience and achievements.

## Certifications

List certifications to indicate your level of expertise in various skills.

Include only relevant and credible certifications to appear professional and save space on your resume for more important information, viz., work experience.

Mention the skills you are certified in as these act as keywords, increasing your visibility in automated searches.

## Showcase contributions and impact

Your resume shouldn't be a laundry list of past positions and qualifications. Highlight the impact you created in your past roles instead of describing the responsibilities assigned to you. Quantify your contributions, if possible.

To stand out, your resume should communicate what you can bring to the table if considered for the position.

Highlight instances when you worked beyond the technical scope of your role. Talk about times you provided technical direction or influence, identified and solved problems, led small teams or projects, collaborated with stakeholders and clients to design solutions, etc.

Your resume should indicate that you're already qualified and capable of performing in the prospective role. It should convince recruiters you can add value and not just execute tasks.

## Don't repeat information

Show diversity in skills, experience, and technical knowledge. Repeating roles or projects that satisfied different goals but utilized the same technologies or skills won't help you stand out.

## Customize your resume

Besides industry and generic keywords, identify specific keywords and key phrases that you can utilize in your resume by studying job descriptions for prospective roles at companies you're targeting.

Tailor your resume for each job you apply for instead of sending out a generic version of your resume to all companies.

Your resume should specifically speak to the role you're applying for. For example, if you're applying for a position focused on client management, specify experience that relates to this.

Study profiles of people currently in the role you're applying for to see how they describe their work or role.

Study prospective companies to understand their unique cultures and practices, products, and business operations. Customize your resume to resonate with a company's culture and highlight how you can add value.

## Don't exaggerate or include incorrect information

Ensure the information provided in your resume is true and verifiable. If shortlisted, your resume will be referenced during interviews. You will be asked about past roles and achievements and will be expected to prove your capabilities during technical and behavioral interviews. FAANG recruiters and interviewers are seasoned professionals who can easily identify disingenuous candidates.

# Outline of an ATS and recruiter-friendly resume

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Name: first name + last name
- Title:
- Summary:

## OBJECTIVE

## CONTACT INFORMATION

- Address
- Phone number
- Email id
- LinkedIn profile
- Github profile

## WORK EXPERIENCE

- **Job Role 1 (most recent) - Title**  
Organization (official) name, Location  
Period of employment (starting month and year - present, if still employed at the organization)  
  
Key Responsibilities  
  
Achievements/Awards

## WORK EXPERIENCE

- **Job Role 2 - Title**  
Organization (official) name, Location  
Period of Employment (starting month and year - ending month and year)  
  
Key Responsibilities  
  
Achievements/Awards

## PROJECTS

- **Project 1** - Project title + Your Role in the project  
Project period (start date, month, year - end date, month, year)  
Link to project  
  
Key project details, including skills and technology used.
- **Project 2** - Project title + Your Role in the project  
Project period (start date, month, year - end date, month, year)  
Link to project  
  
Key project details, including skills and technology used.

## SKILLS

- Technical skills + level of expertise
- Non-technical skills + level of expertise

## EDUCATION

- **Highest degree, e.g., Ph.D. or Masters**  
University/Institution  
Year
- **Next highest degree, e.g., Bachelors**  
University/Institution  
Year



**CERTIFICATIONS**

Name/title of the certification  
Certifying authority  
Year

**CONFERENCES/PUBLICATIONS**

Name of conference/publication  
Year of conference/publication

**ORGANIZATIONS/MEMBERSHIPS**

Organization/community name  
Period of membership

**LANGUAGES**

Language 1 (most proficient)  
Language 2

Developing a professional, stand-out resume that gets noticed by FAANG and leading tech companies sets the stage for the rest of the interview process.

## Ways to find and apply for high-paying, in-demand, and senior tech roles

FAANG recruiters employ multiple channels to identify potential candidates for open positions. This means you have multiple routes by which you can identify and apply for roles of interest.

Understanding how each of these channels works can help optimize your job search and application process, which, in turn, can help increase your visibility to FAANG recruiters.

- LinkedIn
- Referrals
- Networking
- Informational interviews
- Job portals / tech job boards
- Company websites
- Emailing recruiters

## Leveraging LinkedIn for FAANG opportunities

[LinkedIn](#) is a key channel to find and apply for software engineering jobs at large tech companies, including FAANG companies.

### Tech job search

Utilize LinkedIn to discover opportunities at tech companies using the job search feature.

#### Keywords

Input relevant keywords to optimize search results. These can be industry-related keywords or job-specific keywords.

- Common keywords include roles, titles, levels, skills, technologies, education qualifications, industry, location, and company.
- Use a combination of keywords to narrow your search, e.g., “senior software engineer + location + company.”
- Identify keywords from job descriptions and profiles of people in similar positions.

## **Company career pages**

You can learn more about open positions at companies you’re interested in by visiting their careers pages on LinkedIn. These are similar to career pages on company websites.

Follow your preferred companies to have their posts show up in your feed and get alerts for new openings.

## **Build connections**

LinkedIn is, essentially, a professional networking site. Developing the right connections can help you unlock opportunities at your preferred companies.

### **Connect with recruiters**

One way to get your application to FAANG recruiters is to establish a connection and reach out to them on LinkedIn.

To identify recruiters at a company of your choice, perform a search using the keywords ‘recruiter’ and ‘the company name.’

You can also narrow your search by looking up recruiters in a location of choice.

## Once you've identified a recruiter, reach out to them in one of these ways:

- **View their profiles:** They may, in turn, view your profile and identify you as a person of interest.
- **Request to connect:** Large tech companies employ a large number of recruiters. Connect with as many recruiters as possible from each company of choice to improve response rates.
- **Send a personalized message:** Include a personalized message introducing yourself establishing why you're connecting with them. Mention a specific role or open position you're interested in.
- **Email with resume:** If a recruiter lists an email id, you can send out an email introducing yourself for any suitable positions or pitch for a particular position you're interested in within the organization.
- **Follow-up messages:** If you don't get a response, follow up after a while, restating your interest in the company. If you get a rejection, follow up to understand the areas you can improve on.

## Connect with employees

Check your contacts and identify people who work at companies you're targeting.

- Reach out to these contacts to enquire about open positions.
- Find out who you should connect with in the company to get your application noticed.
- Try to get a referral.

If you don't have contacts in a target company, look for employees at similar or higher levels for roles you are interested in. Add them as contacts. Reach out with a message stating your interest in a

particular role within their organization.

Try to connect with employees who can influence hiring decisions, such as hiring managers or senior-level engineers who can generate a lead or give you a referral.

## Increase your visibility

Recruiters use LinkedIn to scout for talent. Since senior tech talent is not as competitive as mid and junior-level talent, chances are, if you're qualified, recruiters will reach out to you.

Besides proactively discovering and applying for positions at various companies, optimize your profile to appear in recruiters' search results.

### **Complete your profile:**

- Upload a professional photo.
- Write a headline that immediately tells a recruiter who you are.
- Include a summary that entices recruiters to look at the rest of your profile.
- Specify your location since recruiters search for talent at specific locations.
- Since recruiters search or filter profiles based on these aspects, complete all sections, including education, skills, and endorsements.

### **Keep your profile accurate and up-to-date:**

Recruiters are constantly scouting for and reaching out to talent, especially senior talent. Keep your profile up-to-date so recruiters don't pass you over because they can't see your most recent experience.

Ensure your profile and resume are in sync and that all information provided is accurate.

### **Utilize keywords:**

Recruiters perform searches using keywords. Ensure your profile is optimized to show up in search results by including relevant industry and job-specific keywords.

Identify keywords from job descriptions and profiles of people in roles you are interested in.

Utilize the summary, skills, and endorsement sections to make your profile keyword-rich, organically.

## **Endorsements**

Create a strong professional image by featuring a few impactful endorsements instead of numerous mediocre ones.

Endorsements should relate to your prospective roles and top skills.

Choose a mix of reviews from superiors, colleagues, and juniors to show how different people you've worked with see you.

## **Build contacts**

Recruiters scan your connections for your associations within the industry. Having a network in your industry tells recruiters of your interest in the tech community. Too few connections can make you appear non-personable.

## Stay active

LinkedIn algorithms favor active users by featuring them in search results more than inactive users.

You can stay active by posting regularly on your home page, engaging through likes and comments on posts by others, and participating in discussions.

Ensure your activity is relevant to your tech interests.

## Check settings

Ensure that your settings show that you're open to new opportunities. This improves your visibility and signals to recruiters that they can approach you.

## Referrals

Referrals are more effective when it comes to getting interview calls than applying for a job yourself.

Recruiters prefer candidates referred by internal employees. This is because recruiters believe employees know what the company is looking for and whether their referral will be a good fit.

Employees are usually financially rewarded if a referral is hired. This motivates them to refer the right people and to ensure their referrals' applications reach the recruiting team.

Employees can also get valuable feedback about their referral's profiles that applicants aren't usually privy to.

## To get referrals at your preferred companies

- Reach out to people in your social or professional circles who work in companies you're targeting.
- Look through your LinkedIn contact list to see if anyone in your network works at companies you're targeting or is connected to someone at these companies.
- Search for employees working in roles you're interested in at your targeted companies. Reach out to them and add them as a contact or send them a message.

Unless you're reaching out to someone you know personally and know well, you'll first have to establish a relationship with your connection before asking them to refer you. This takes time and effort but can yield positive results in getting interviews.

## Networking

Building a network and cultivating relationships to a point where you can leverage them takes time. We recommend it because having the right network of people can:

- Help you get referrals at multiple companies.
- Keep you updated on the latest opportunities and recruitment processes in different companies.
- Help you learn about what people are working on at their companies and the skills in-demand.
- Help you meet people of influence at various companies.



## To build a network

### **Connect with colleagues:**

Deepen professional relationships with colleagues beyond your team; connect with a wider circle of people within your organization.

Connecting with superiors and members of hiring teams can help you gain insights into how to grow into senior roles. Ask for introductions to their network outside your organization.

### **Connect through professional interests:**

Attend events that draw people from various companies. It's easy to connect and build a professional network with people when you share a common ground. Find events online or via social media or meetups. Common avenues to do this are:

- Hackathons
- Conferences
- Company-sponsored events and career fairs
- Tech communities or groups

### **Connect online:**

Connect with people of interest via social media channels like LinkedIn, Twitter, and online platforms like tech forums, tech communities, etc. Follow people of interest online, share relevant content on your social media feeds or web pages or blogs, and engage with third-party tech content.

## Job portals and tech job boards

Job portals feature tech job postings for various levels at top companies. Tech job boards are dedicated to job openings within the tech industry.

Recruiters scout job portals and tech job boards for prospective talent. Submitting your resume to these sites lets recruiters contact you if you're a match for a job opening in their company.

## Company website

Companies feature career pages on their websites, listing job openings for various levels within their organizations. You can read job descriptions and apply directly through these sites. Instructions on how to apply are usually clearly stated on these pages

## Email recruiters

Emailing your resume to recruiters is one way to get your application noticed.

If you've already applied for an opening, use your email to draw attention to this and pique the recruiter's interest to learn more about you.

If you haven't applied, use your email as a cover letter. Introduce yourself, mention how you learned of the job opening, highlight your key skills, and explain why you're a good fit for the position.

It helps to research the recruiter for any common talking points; for example, you may have gone to the same school, have mutual connections, etc.

## Informational interviews

Informational interviews are a great way to get insights about job openings, build connections, expand your network, and get referrals.

An informational interview is an informal interview or meeting with people from within the industry who can offer advice and information about prospective jobs.

These interviews are particularly useful because they can equip you with information you may not find online or from your regular network. Use these interviews to get insights into:

- The types of projects currently being undertaken or upcoming projects and skills companies are looking for.
- Company interview processes and the best way to prepare for them.
- Company culture, career growth prospects, and compensation.

You can set up informational interviews with:

- People in your professional network
- Friends and family, who can provide relevant information
- People of interest via professional networking platforms

A lot of job postings are never advertised or are filled via referrals only. Through these informational interviews, you may learn of career paths or positions you were unaware of or may have never been privy to.

Remember, informational interviews are only to seek information and advice, not to solicit favors or directly enquire about job openings. Utilize them to build valuable professional connections that can lead to a referral at a later point.

# FAANG interview process



FAANG and other top tech companies follow a [rigorous and long-drawn hiring process](#). FAANG tech interviews are considered to be among the toughest tech interviews to crack. Landing a FAANG offer will indicate your ability to land an offer at almost any company in the tech industry.

Interviews at top tech and FAANG companies usually require months of preparation. To establish a sound preparation process, it's imperative you understand the FAANG hiring and interview process.

Once your application has been screened by a company's ATS and its recruiters, your resume will be passed on to a hiring committee.

The hiring committee will assess your experience and skills to determine if you should be considered for an interview. If shortlisted, a recruiter will contact you to schedule an interview.

Recruiters usually provide information on the interview process, including what to expect during the interview, topics to study, and interview preparation resources.

## The FAANG interview stages and rounds

Broadly, interviews at FAANG companies follow a similar pattern. The process comprises:

- Phone screen
- Onsite interviews, comprising:
  - Technical Interviews
  - Behavioral Interviews
  - Offer discussions, team-matching interviews, and salary negotiations

The number of rounds at each stage can differ depending on the company at which you're interviewing.

## Phone screen: 1-2 rounds

Depending on the company, the [phone screen interview](#) could comprise up to 2 rounds of interviews, each lasting 45 mins- 1 hour.



## HR phone screening

This involves the first-level assessment of your skills, experience, projects, education, your understanding of the role, interests, and personality. The recruiter may also try to gauge your salary expectations and onboarding timelines.

This round determines if you're a potential fit, technically and culturally.

Depending on the company, you may speak with a recruiter, hiring manager, or tech personnel from your prospective team.

## Technical Phone Screening

This involves a coding test conducted by a tech team member to determine if you meet minimum technical skills and knowledge requirements for your prospective role.



## Onsite technical interviews: 2-4 rounds

Candidates who successfully pass the screening stage are scheduled for [onsite interviews](#). This stage comprises technical and behavioral interviews.

Depending on the company, this comprises 2 to 4 rounds of interviews, held on a single day or over multiple days. At some companies, this stage may also feature an informal lunch with a hiring manager or tech team member.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has prompted a shift in working dynamics. With staff working from home, interviews have also gone remote. This has changed the way onsite interviews are conducted.

It is now, largely, conducted remotely. Which means you'll have to be prepared for an online interview format.

While the interview process, structure, and assessment areas remain the same, you'll have to be mindful that it's taking place in a virtual interview environment and not a physical interview environment.

During this stage of the interview process, you'll be tested on your ability to apply your skills, knowledge, and experience to role-relevant and real-life situations.



## Coding interview

FAANG coding interviews focus on the following key areas:

- **Data Structures and Algorithms:** Focused on logic and problem-solving skills.
- **System Design:** Focused on your ability to understand and break down problems and conceptualize and build large-scale distributed systems.





## Behavioral interview

[Behavioral interviews](#) may be conducted as a separate round of interviews or form a part of the coding and system design interview.

You'll be assessed on key demonstrable soft skills, interpersonal skills, and behaviors. This will be based on your experiences and on situations you may face in the prospective role.

## Interview focus areas

The weightage assigned to each interview stage depends on the level of your prospective role.

## Entry-level and mid-level positions

At these levels, hard skills, such as writing and developing programs, are of key importance. Hence, coding interviews are assigned the highest weightage compared to design or behavioral interviews.

## Senior-level positions

High-paying senior positions involve leading or directing large-scale projects and teams. Here, the emphasis is on system design interviews and soft skills and behavioral interviews.

# How can you prepare for **FAANG** interviews?



Only about 1-2% of applicants make it through a FAANG interview.

This indicates how challenging and competitive the process is and how much preparation is required to crack a FAANG interview.

We outline key aspects you should consider for your preparation for [FAANG technical interviews](#):

- Timelines and time management
- Tech knowledge and skills
- Behavioral skills
- Preparing for the coding interview
- Preparing for the system design interview
- Preparing for the behavioral interview
- Preparing questions for the interviewer
- Interview approach
- Mock interviews

## Timelines and time management

Regardless of your level of expertise, practice and preparation are imperative to succeeding at a FAANG interview.

Preparation timelines range from two months to a year or more, depending on an aspirant's skill levels and ability to prep in time for an interview.

A major challenge FAANG interview candidates face is juggling the demands of existing work responsibilities, personal commitments, and interview preparations.

To devise a suitable prep schedule, you should determine:

- Your existing level of knowledge and skill
- The knowledge and skills you have to acquire
- The time required to do so
- The time available to you, given your present and future commitments

Getting into a FAANG company or a top tech organization is akin to having a second job.

It takes considerable time and effort to plan, source information, organize resources, study, prepare, practice, and interview at a FAANG company.

Even seasoned professionals find the process challenging enough to deter them from pursuing new opportunities.

However, approaching the process in a structured and planned manner, with access to the right resources and professional guidance, can go a long way in ensuring a smooth and highly successful transition to your dream role and company.

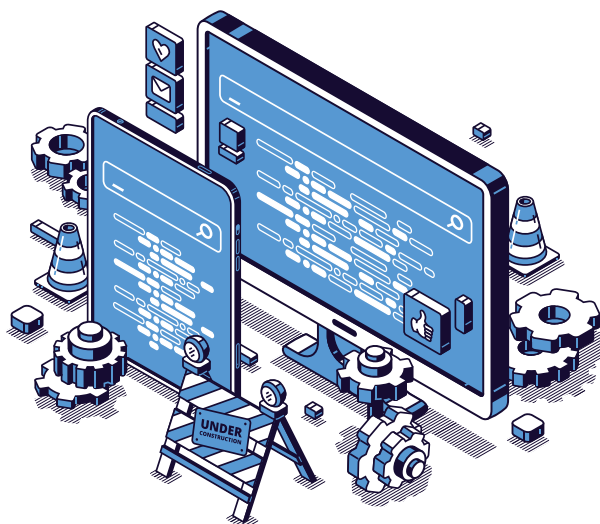
A mentor or industry peers can help manage and accelerate the process without disrupting your regular professional and personal commitments.

## Tech knowledge and skills

Regardless of the level you're targeting, you'll have to demonstrate sound coding capabilities.

At a FAANG coding interview, you'll be tested on core computer science fundamentals.

- **Algorithms**
  - **Sorting algorithms:** [Quicksort](#), [Bubble Sort](#), [Insertion Sort](#), [Merge Sort](#), [Heap Sort](#), [Selection Sort](#), [Linear Search](#), [Binary Search](#), A\* Search, etc.
  - **Big O Complexity**
- **Data Structures:** [Arrays](#), [Linked Lists](#), [Trees](#), [Stacks](#), Hash Tables, Graphs, Queues, Strings
- **System Design:** At senior levels, you will have to show deep knowledge and capabilities of large-scale distributed systems in areas such as scalability, storage, query languages, reliability, maintainability, data models, etc.



## Behavioral skills

Based on past projects and experiences or role-relevant situations, you will be tested on non-technical soft skills, such as:

- Communication
- Leadership
- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Project management

## Preparing for the coding interview

Knowledge of data structures, algorithms, system design, and various other computer science concepts will not suffice; interviews will be based on the practical application of these concepts. You'll need demonstrable skills to make it through a technical interview.

Like most software engineers, you probably don't use core coding concepts at work daily. You're likely out of touch with the practical applications of many of these concepts. If so, you should revisit these concepts and uplevel your skills to meet technical interview standards.

Below are effective ways to [improve your coding skills](#) to prepare for FAANG coding interviews.



## Practice solving problems

Preparing for a FAANG technical interview requires a lot of practice. You may not have time to solve an exhaustive number of problems; however, to effectively improve your coding skills, aim to solve at least one or two problems every day.

## Solve for different levels of expertise

While practice is necessary, don't focus on solving a large number of similar problems.

Instead, focus on building your skills by working through problems at different levels of difficulty. Start with easy problems, then move to medium and hard problems, ensuring you're thorough in each level before moving to the next. This way, you'll build a solid understanding of concepts and their applications.

Remember that at interviews, it's not all about arriving at the right answer. It's also about finding the most optimal and efficient solution. Your approach to a problem is just as important as the solution itself.



## Practice with time constraints

Coding interviews at FAANG companies are particularly challenging because of time constraints. Arriving at an optimal solution in a short time frame adds to the difficulty of a problem.

The right way to enhance your problem-solving speed is by improving your pace incrementally.

Begin by solving easy problems with generous time limits. As you gain expertise, increase time constraints, i.e., reduce time limits to learn how to arrive at answers faster.

Repeat this for the next level of difficulty, and so on, until you're able to solve very difficult problems within the desired timeframe.

Remember that understanding the problem, determining the approach, and finding a solution quickly and efficiently, can only be achieved if you have a strong grasp of the subject.

## Learn patterns to solve unseen problems

Interviewers may introduce variations of common problems to assess your understanding of core concepts.

Knowing how to apply the right concepts in different contexts is an important skill to develop during your interview preparation.

Here, utilizing patterns is especially important. By relating new problems with familiar ones, you can arrive at solutions to different problems quickly and efficiently.

## Practice coding on paper, an online editor, and a whiteboard

Interviewers will assess you on your understanding of tech concepts and your approach to solving the problem.

At FAANG technical interviews, you'll be asked to solve problems using a [whiteboard](#), an online editor, a shared doc, or a sheet of paper. If you're only used to coding in an IDE, you'll need to familiarize yourself with these platforms.

Companies may specify a list of common programming languages you can choose from for the interview; choose the coding language you're most comfortable with.

## Practice thinking out loud or talking through a problem

Coding interviews are not solely about solving a given problem. Interviewers are more interested in understanding your approach to solving a problem than the solution itself.

You'll be expected to communicate your thought process constantly. This includes:

- Stating your understanding of the question
- Asking for the required information to solve the problem
- Explaining your approach
- Asking clarifying questions
- Refining or optimizing your solution

Thinking out loud and solving problems simultaneously is almost impossible without practice.

- Organize your thoughts before voicing them — don't ramble.
- Practice selective communication; identify the right moment and right matter to communicate, don't convey every thought you have.
- Communicate clearly — direct the conversation to the interviewers, not to yourself or the whiteboard.

Proper communication will allow interviewers to interject with useful hints as you proceed or if you find yourself stuck for a solution.

Demonstrating sound analytical and logical reasoning skills can get you through the interview even if you arrive at the wrong answer.

Your communication skills and critical thinking skills will be closely assessed if you're interviewing for senior positions.

## Preparing for a system design interview

[System design interviews](#) are quite different from coding interviews. Where coding interviews focus on arriving at an optimal solution, there are no standard or 'right' answers in a system design interview.

System design is complex, and the eventual design is not as important as your approach to the question. You'll be tested on your ability to solve a high-level problem by arriving at a workable design solution in the context of real-world situations.

This is also why system design interview questions are usually open-ended. Different interviewers can focus on different aspects of the problem.

There isn't one single way to prepare for system design interviews. However, we've outlined key areas you should focus on during your system design interview preparation:

### Understand the system design interview

A system design interview can differ based on what the interviewer chooses to focus on — either a high-level design or low-level design. Alternatively, you could be asked to expand on a project you've worked on in your past.

Do prepare for different types of questions, including questions based on projects listed on your resume.

At the interview, you may be given the opportunity to talk about a project of your choosing. Choose one that's most relevant to your prospective role in terms of complexity, scale, and other relevant design aspects.

Research the role and level you're being interviewed for to gauge the level of system design expertise and knowledge interviewers expect.

## Strengthen system design concepts

Understand the various concepts related to system design. Some key concepts to brush up on are:

- Caching
- Load Balancing
- Consistency and Availability Patterns
- CAP Theorem
- Proxies
- Databases - NoSQL, RDBMS
- Scalability
- Performance
- Throughput
- Latency
- CDN, DNS
- UDP, TCP
- Object-Oriented Design

## Practice solving system design using a framework

Here's a framework that you can follow while practicing system design questions:

- Understand the purpose and requirements of the system
- Identify features of the system
- Identify scope and constraints
- Ascertain the scale of the system
- Draw a high-level design and work down to low-level design
- Use the right data structures and algorithms
- Identify bottlenecks
- Discuss trade-offs

## Practice with time frames for each part of your solution

System design interviews typically last for 45 mins to an hour.

You may not be able to complete your entire design within the limited time afforded to you at the interview.

Practice identifying time requirements for each part of the solution; for example, allocate 5 minutes to determine requirements, 20 minutes to detail the design, 3 minutes to summarize, etc.

Don't get caught up in details that can leave you rushing through the rest of the solution. Remember to allocate time to summarize or go over your design with the interviewer at the end.

Also, account for the time you'll spend communicating with the interviewer, clarifying requirements, justifying choices, explaining technologies used, etc.

Sometimes, interviewers begin the interview by asking about past projects and experiences. Be mindful of the amount of time you spend on your response to avoid eating into the time needed to solve the problem.

Prepare concise answers to describe projects listed on your resume or those you wish to bring to the interviewer's notice

## Focus on communication skills

Similar to coding interviews, you'll have to communicate with interviewers as you solve problems. Follow the guidelines on how to effectively talk through a problem as outlined for the coding interview.

Communication is more important at a system design interview than a coding interview. It is a key skill that you will be tested on besides your technical knowledge.

interview. It is a key skill that you will be tested on besides your technical knowledge.

Engaging in open-ended conversations requires strong communication skills. Clarity of thought is key. Get comfortable talking through your solutions just as you would with coding interviews.

You'll have to constantly ask clarifying questions to obtain sufficient information to solve the problem. You'll also need to explain your design choices.

Questions can be quite complex, and you'll be required to expand on different aspects. Since communication can be harder with system design questions, look at your solution from an interviewer's perspective. Identify questions interviewers are bound to ask and prepare for them.

## Practice solving complex problems

For senior-level and specialized positions, system design questions are much more complex than those asked for junior or mid-level positions.

You'll be expected to draw on work experience and apply real-life context to develop systems. If you don't have sufficient experience or exposure to designing large-scale systems, you could:

- Try attending design meetings at your company
- Study design documents of existing systems
- Study an existing system and figure out how you can develop a similar system
- Try to acquire adequate practical experience through side projects

## Familiarize yourself with related as well as the latest technologies

Update yourself on the latest technologies and applications. During the interview, you'll be required to talk about the different technologies used in your design, as well as why you're using them.

Talk about alternate technologies you can use in your design. This will show your knowledge of different technologies and your interest in keeping up with the latest trends.

## Practice using a whiteboard

As with coding interviews, you won't have resources that you're normally familiar with. Practice using a whiteboard to develop your solution.

Step back from time to time to get a good look at your diagramming and ascertain if all components are depicted as desired, including how they relate to each other.



## Preparing for the behavioral interview

[Behavioral interviews](#) are usually conducted after the technical interviews. At this stage, you'll be assessed for behavioral or soft skills needed for your prospective role. A lot of emphasis is placed on soft skills for senior-level positions.

You will, usually, be required to draw on past instances to showcase behavioral skills. Unlike coding or system design interviews, there are no solutions to be arrived at.

### Understand your prospective role responsibilities

Behavioral questions normally focus on key soft skills and interpersonal principles needed for your prospective role.

Identify key requirements for the role you're applying for. Prepare corresponding instances from your past roles that showcase these specific skills.

### Practice the STAR approach

STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result and is a useful way to structure your answers. It helps keep your responses succinct yet informative and clear.

- **Situation:** Describe the context in which you had to utilize the skill in question.
- **Task:** Describe your responsibilities or goals to remedy or enhance the situation.
- **Action:** Describe specific activities you performed to achieve the goal.
- **Result:** Describe the outcome and its impact; explain learnings

and achievements.

Besides assessing your existing skills, interviewers will also assess your ability to think on your feet. There's no way to predict what questions an interviewer will ask. The STAR approach is useful when you don't have actual experiences to draw from. Describe the situation as you think it might play out, then identify the tasks and actions needed to obtain the desired results.

When utilizing the STAR approach, focus on positive results, achievements, and impact. In case of negative outcomes, identify reasons for the same and explain your learnings or areas of improvement.

## Write down answers to commonly asked behavioral questions

Unlike coding and system design interviews, you won't have to write or draw solutions and answers. However, writing responses is a good way to organize and structure your thoughts. The STAR method cannot be used for all types of behavioral questions; identifying relevant events and explaining them on the spot is hard to do. Noting down key points to be covered can keep answers relevant and prevent you from rambling.

## Prepare an impressive introduction

Almost every interviewer will ask you to introduce yourself, usually with the question "Tell me about yourself" or its variants: "Explain your background," "How did you get to your current position," etc.

At senior levels, it can be challenging to answer this question in a succinct yet impactful way. To successfully answer this question and create a good impression, prepare a response that is:

- **Relevant:** Highlight aspects of your profile that closely match the job description for the prospective role.
- **Specific:** Talk about key roles and responsibilities, not job titles.
- **High-level:** Don't go into details; summarize your background and overall years of experience.
- **Impactful:** Highlight achievements and how you created value for your team, business, or company.
- **Short:** Keep your answer under 2 minutes.

Close your answer with your reasons for applying for the role and why you would be a good fit.

## Study the company culture

A large percentage of candidates fail to make it through the tech interview process because they aren't a suitable cultural fit. This, despite being an ideal technical fit.

Understanding a prospective company's culture will help you gauge the kind of behavioral questions to expect. Amazon, for example, centers its behavioral interview on its leadership principles. This makes it possible to anticipate questions and prepare answers to showcase the skills they are looking for.

You can also assess your strengths and weaknesses as they will be

perceived from the company's perspective.

Key aspects about a company you should study to understand its culture are its:

- Vision and mission
- Core values
- Performance evaluation systems
- Organizational setup
- Employee interactions
- Communication systems
- Work-environment

FAANG and other top tech companies put out a lot of information about their company culture.

Additionally, getting an employee's insights can be useful to understand what really makes for a good cultural fit at your targeted company. Reach out to people in your network to get a real understanding of how people function at the level you're targeting in their respective companies.

While ascertaining success factors, try to also gauge what the company considers deal-breakers in assessing a candidate's culture fit.

## Prepare questions for the interviewer

Interviewers expect you to have [questions for them](#) about the role and company. As a candidate for a junior or mid-level role, you can run through common questions about the role, prospective team members, reporting hierarchies, etc.

However, candidates for senior positions should focus on highly role-relevant and professionally insightful questions befitting a seasoned professional.

In a senior role, you will be in charge of providing technical direction and creating business impact. Questions should focus on business operations, problem-solving approaches, innovation, products, growth prospects, prospective teams, projects, technologies, departmental challenges, etc.

Asking the right questions is not only expected, but it's also a way to reaffirm your suitability for the role. For example, if you ask about the company culture and the interviewer mentions innovation as an important aspect, highlight how your skills align with it.

## Interview approach

Many FAANG aspirants go through multiple attempts to get offers from companies of choice. You'll have to consider:

## Which companies to target

Identify the right companies for the roles you're interested in. Also, consider locations you're willing to relocate to. Target companies in order of your preference. Study company cultures and requirements to see how they align with your career and compensation goals.



## Applying to multiple companies

Getting into a top tech company is not easy. You'll have to consider applying to different companies to explore all available opportunities. This is also an important step to getting competing offers that can help establish your market value and negotiate salaries.

## How to line up interviews at multiple companies

Consider how much time you need to prepare for interviews. Accepting dates scheduled by recruiters can create conflict in your preparation and interview schedules if you're interviewing at different companies. Schedule interviews such that you have adequate time to prepare and consider offers from multiple companies.

## The nuances of interview processes at each company

Hiring and interview processes have high-level similarities among large tech companies. However, each company has its own way of conducting interviews. Study how each company assesses candidates and tailor your preparation for the ones you're applying to.

## Getting interview experience

Interviewing at Tier-2 companies or companies that are not your preferred choice will help you gain interview experience in a real setting but without the pressures of achieving a successful result. Utilize learnings from these experiences to improve your interview performance at your target companies.

## Mock interviews

[Mock interviews](#) play a proven and crucial role in interview preparation. It is one of the best forms of interview preparation you can undertake.

Mock interviews are especially effective for system design and behavioral interviews. For the best results, prepare for a mock interview with the same gravity as you would a normal interview.

## Benefits of mock interviews

Mock interviews can help improve your interview performance in many ways. By simulating real interview experiences, you can:

- Gain confidence
- Overcome interview anxiety
- Prepare and practice answers to common questions
- Identify errors and areas of improvement
- Identify and enhance strengths
- Improve your body language
- Identify and control reactions to environmental distractions
- Obtain feedback and learn how to incorporate it

## Mock interview methods

Mock interviews can be conducted in different ways:

### Live interviews, conducted in-person and in real-time

Mock interviews are most effective when conducted in real-time with industry professionals, especially with hiring personnel from FAANG or top-tech companies.

FAANG interviews are very competitive, and candidates get rejected for a variety of reasons. Moreover, interviewers rarely provide interview feedback to candidates.

Mock interviewers can help you analyze your performance in a typical interview situation and provide real-time feedback from an interviewer's perspective.



Mock interviews with FAANG hiring personnel can give you insights and competitive advantage on what FAANG interviewers really look for in candidates based on their company-specific backgrounds.

If you can't access professionals with the right expertise, practice interviewing with peers who work at the level of the roles you're interested in or with friends from the industry.

## Recorded and self-analyzed

Record yourself answering pre-recorded questions, replay the interview, and analyze your performance. This can help identify and eliminate common and obvious mistakes.

# How do you negotiate a **\$500k** compensation?



Candidates who successfully pass the interview stage move on to the final stage of the hiring process, which involves:

- Team-matching
- Offer generation, which includes receiving and accepting an offer
- Salary negotiations — negotiating the right compensation structure

This section also covers:

- Factors that influence salary negotiations
- Salary negotiation tips
- Re-negotiating an offer — when the offer doesn't meet expectations

Broadly, senior roles in in-demand domains command high salaries. However, there are no fixed payouts for a particular role at any company. Two engineers with similar backgrounds may be paid differently for the same role.

There are a number of factors that influence the offer a company extends at the end of the hiring process, including the team and level you join at and the applicable salary band. However, a pivotal aspect to achieving your target compensation is salary negotiation.

## Team matching

While you may interview for a particular role, some companies — Google for one — will perform a team-matching round to determine your fit in the organization.

Big tech companies are considered to be portfolio-based companies, i.e., they're constantly working on many different projects, products, and businesses, simultaneously. If the hiring team has not already decided on your prospective team in the company, you may enter a team-matching round. This involves speaking with hiring managers or tech leaders to ascertain which team you will be absorbed into.

You must understand the team and project offered to you and your value in the prospective role, as this will help you negotiate the right compensation structure and amount. Is it a large team? What kind of technology will you work on? How important are your experience and skills to the company? What kind of business impact can you create?

The project you work on can have a bearing on your salary, especially for a senior role. Top senior engineering talent is not always easy for companies to find. Roles and skills that enjoy high demand in the industry tend to command higher salaries.

## Offer generation — receiving and accepting an offer

When you're paired with a team, and the company decides to hire you, the company will then move on to extending an offer. They will seek to understand your expectations as well as your salary history before making an offer. It is crucial at this time to anchor high to avoid getting a lowball offer from the company. To anchor at the right value, you'll have to be sure of your value in the market and the value you can bring to the company.

Research salaries paid for the role at the company you're interviewing for to decide how much to anchor at. You can find information online on sites like [levels.fyi](https://www.levels.fyi) and LinkedIn Salary. Alternatively, you can reach out to connections you have in the prospective company or similar companies, or within your network, to garner more accurate information.

Typically, the first offer you receive will be lower than what they actually value you at. This is because companies expect candidates to [negotiate salaries](#).

## Salary negotiations — negotiating the right compensation structure

Compensation packages vary as you progress up the career ladder. Negotiating your compensation requires an understanding of what constitutes the compensation offer made to you.

The difference between cash and stock components increases markedly as one moves from junior to mid to senior-level positions. Compensation packages comprise higher stock or equity components at senior levels or jobs that pay \$500k and above.

Let's look at each of the components of total compensation and how to approach negotiations for each one.

## Cash

This is the liquid component of your compensation, i.e., the actual amount paid to you, either on a recurring or one-time basis. If you prefer or require liquidity to meet cash expenses, you should try to negotiate a higher cash payout. Some companies limit their cash components while others are flexible with it.

## Base salary

This is the fixed component of your compensation paid on a regular basis during your tenure with the company.

Companies generally work within salary bands that limit the amount a company can offer you for a particular position. You can expect a high base salary for a high-level position.

However, the range of base salary offered narrows as you go higher up the career ladder.

Try to negotiate for a base salary at the higher end of the relevant salary band. This will have a positive impact on future earnings.

Salary hikes and bonuses are based on base salaries. A higher starting salary will compound to yield higher earnings over a period of time.

Suppose you accepted a job offer of \$70,000 instead of \$90,000. Assuming a 5% raise every year, what will the difference be in 5 years?

Year	Offer 1 \$70,000	Offer 2 \$90,000
Year 1	\$70,000	\$90,000
Year 2	\$73,500	\$94,500
Year 3	\$77,175	\$99,225
Year 4	\$81,033	\$104,186
Year 5	\$85,084	\$109,395
Total	\$386,792	\$386,792

After five years, the difference in earnings (cumulative), considering salary hikes alone, will be \$110,514, which is a significant amount.

## Joining or signing bonus

This is a one-time inclusion in your compensation package paid out either as a lump sum at the time of joining or in a prorated manner over time.

Not all companies include a joining bonus in their offer. The joining bonus can vary quite a bit among those that do, leaving a lot of room for negotiation.

Sometimes, companies leave out signing bonus amounts in their offer, expecting candidates to negotiate for the same. Negotiating a higher bonus amount can increase the cash component of your total compensation.

If your current company offers a retention bonus, or you have competing offers, you can use these as leverage to increase your signing bonus at the prospective company.

Companies add a signing bonus amount to make your overall compensation offer appear attractive. However, remember that when paid out as a lump sum in the first year, your overall compensation figure will stand reduced by the same amount in the following years.



## Annual or performance bonus

Performance bonuses are usually calculated as a percentage of your base salary and add to your cash earnings. Unlike your base salary, the bonus is a variable component that depends on your and the company's performance. However, you can estimate a certain percentage as an achievable amount that you will receive every year.

It's not uncommon for engineers to earn bonuses higher than their annual targets. This component varies widely between companies. Performance targets are set based on levels and are usually non-negotiable. However, estimating this component will help you understand its impact on your overall compensation on an annual basis and help you compare offers.

## Stock

Engineers who break out of the mid-level plateau see compensations increase exponentially. This is mainly because at senior levels or for high-paying roles, the compensation structure goes from being cash-heavy to being stock-heavy.

Stock is usually highly negotiable as stock bands are broader at senior levels. Stock forms a part of the non-cash component of total compensation. However, this amount can substantially increase the cash component of total compensation for the year in which it's encashed.

## Equity/Restricted Stock Units (RSUs)

Employees are given shares in the company for a certain value (based on the stock price at the time of offer) as part of their total compensation. These RSUs (Restricted Stock Units) can be encashed after a vesting period. This will increase the cash component of total compensation in the years they are encashed.

Compensation at some companies, e.g., Netflix, tends to be more cash-heavy, while at others, e.g., Amazon, it's more stock-heavy.

Most companies follow a four-year vesting period with an equal number of shares vesting each year. However, some companies, e.g., Amazon, follow an atypical schedule, i.e., a different amount of shares vest each year.

Although stock bands are set for a particular level, this component is usually negotiable.

Stock performance affects the value of the stock. Consider the value of the stock you receive in your offer to ascertain how it affects your compensation during the vesting period.

Startups and other top private companies may also offer large equity stakes to make their offers lucrative. Still, equity at FAANG companies can be easily traded and is, hence, considered more valuable.

## Top 20 tech companies by market cap (publicly-listed)

- Apple
- Microsoft
- Alphabet (Google)
- Amazon
- Facebook
- Tencent
- Alibaba
- Tesla
- TSMC
- Samsung
- NVIDIA
- PayPal
- ASML
- Oracle
- Intel
- Cisco
- Netflix
- Broadcom
- SAP
- Qualcomm

## Refresher grants or stock refreshers

These are additional RSUs given to employees who were given an initial grant of RSUs. These are usually performance-based grants at FAANG companies. This component can vary widely between companies. To understand their effect on your total annual compensation, you should try to ascertain how stock refreshers are granted at your prospective level.

## Others — Perks and benefits

This includes cash or cash-equivalent payments made for one-time or recurring expenditures offered as part of your overall compensation. Once you've optimized your pay for cash and equity, you can negotiate further for perks and benefits.

### Perks

This includes payments for relocation expenses, commuter allowance, phone, and other reimbursements, etc.

### Benefits

This includes employer-sponsored expenses and contributions such as health insurance, contributions to 401k plans, paid time off, etc.

Once you understand the structure of the compensation package offered, you can better negotiate the various components to achieve your desired compensation mix.

In some cases, we've observed that deserving candidates have been able to increase their compensation offer over prescribed salary and stock bands through skilled negotiation.

Alternatively, if you can't negotiate any higher in terms of the total amount of compensation offered, you can try to negotiate various components to arrive at a preferred compensation mix.

## Factors that influence salary negotiations

To successfully negotiate and achieve your target compensation, it's important to understand the different factors that influence offers and negotiations.

### Salary or pay band

A salary or pay band is the range of salary a company offers for a specific role or level based on market and internal value for talent. It indicates the minimum and maximum amount a company will offer for a particular role at a particular level.

When negotiating compensation, ensure your target pay lies at the upper end of the salary band. Research salary bands for your prospective role at your target company. You can glean this information:

- Online, from sites that collate salary data in the tech industry, such as [levels.fyi](#) and [Blind](#).
- Offline, by talking to recruiters or employees from the same company or similar companies to get a more accurate estimate.

In some states (California, for one), companies are required, by law, to disclose salary bands for prospective levels when requested by candidates.

In some cases, candidates have been known to negotiate offers above prescribed bands. This happens when a higher authority in the company approves a candidate's counteroffer for a higher salary.

## Levels

Levels are the most important factor in determining compensation, especially for senior-level positions. A candidate's level is often determined at the end of the interview process.

Every level has a defined salary band. Candidates with specialized skills or deep expertise, especially for hard-to-fill positions, can command top-of-band salaries or premiums on salaries.

Salary bands for successive levels tend to overlap. For example, if the salary band for Level X is \$150k-180k, it may be \$170k-200k for Level Y.

Sometimes, companies peg candidates at lower levels because you can earn a higher salary in the upper band of a lower level than the lower band of a higher level.

However, compensations increase exponentially with every promotion at senior levels. But promotions also take longer to achieve at senior levels. So, always try to join at a higher level to improve your future earning prospects.

Since every company levels differently based on roles and responsibilities, try to ascertain the level you should be hired at before you receive an offer. Understand how your skills match up to the level offered and negotiate accordingly.

FAANG companies don't normally negotiate levels and don't normally uplevel candidates. However, you can compare offers from different companies based on levels to ascertain the best offer.

## Location

Companies tend to compensate based on the cost of talent available in a particular location. San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, and New York have the highest-paying tech jobs. Given how competitive salaries are at these locations, you can earn a \$500k compensation at a lower level with less experience.

The average compensation for a software engineer with over 15 years of experience at Amazon, San Francisco Bay Area is \$200,000 vs. Amazon, Ohio at \$118,000.

One way to land a \$500k compensation is to relocate to a location that has a high concentration of companies offering high-paying tech jobs.

But note that compensations are relative. Considering the cost of living expenses and taxes in these areas, a \$500k job in these locations is probably the equivalent of a \$250k job at other locations, and vice-versa.

Consider the range of salaries offered in your preferred location. If you're more competitively placed vis-a-vis local talent, try to negotiate your offer upwards.

Alternatively, consider relocating to areas where talent for the role you're interested in is low in supply. If your skills are in demand in these locations, you can leverage this to negotiate higher compensation.

## Interview performance

Your performance at every stage of the interview process goes a long way in determining the level you'll be hired at and is a key driver for compensation at FAANG companies.

Since levels are based on roles and responsibilities, displaying a high level of expertise during your interview can see you slotted at a senior level.

At the interview, perform in line with the requirements of the prospective role. Proper preparation for the interview will ensure this. Study the job description thoroughly and demonstrate skills and knowledge in line with it during the interview.

For senior roles, your performance in the system design and behavioral interviews will be considered the most. If you've performed well at the interview, use this as leverage while negotiating your offer.

If you've practiced mock interviews with industry professionals, the feedback you received during these sessions will enable you to gauge how well you performed during the actual interview. Being called in for offer discussions is an indication that you performed well at the interview.



## Experience

Work experience indicates if you have the required skills for the prospective position and is also the main predictor of the value you'll bring to the recruiting organization.

However, having many years of experience will not suffice. A good interview performance demonstrating relevant and provable experience is what will lead to a high compensation offer.

The more relevant your experience for the prospective role, the higher your value to the company and, consequently, the higher your offer. This is especially true for high-paying, senior positions requiring specialized skills and many years of experience.

If you've worked on relevant projects, this can add to your competitive advantage and value. At senior levels, diverse experience is valued over the number of years of experience. Leverage these aspects to negotiate a higher salary.

## Skills

If you possess in-demand or highly specialized skills, companies are likely to compete for your talent. This gives you leverage to land multiple competing offers and negotiate for high compensation.

For senior roles, showcasing strong behavioral skills in addition to strong technical knowledge is important. Strong leadership, problem-solving, technical stewardship, and other preferred behavioral skills are advantages when negotiating higher salaries.

## Competing offers

This is one of the strongest forms of leverage a candidate can have during salary negotiations, especially for senior positions and especially at FAANG companies.

At senior levels, good talent is not as easy to come by as it is at mid or junior levels. Compensations that run as high as \$500k or more are only offered for roles requiring specialized skills and knowledge. The talent pool that makes this cut greatly narrows beyond junior-level positions.

If you can clear an interview at one FAANG company, you're more than likely to be able to do the same at other FAANG and top tech companies.

Explore as many opportunities as possible to get as many competing offers as possible from multiple companies. Leverage these offers to increase your bargaining power during salary negotiations at the company of your choice.

Companies often compete for senior talent and are likely to negotiate upwards to outbid a competing offer, especially if they don't want to lose a candidate to a competitor.

## Company brand

This is a challenge when negotiating with top tech companies, especially FAANG companies, because they enjoy greater leverage in terms of brand value.

Candidates will often accept offers from FAANG companies over better competing offers because working at a FAANG company significantly adds to their own market value.

FAANG companies bank on this to attract talent, reducing a candidate's bargaining power.

## Your value

The offer you receive is based on the recruiting company's perception of your value. This may not be in line with your actual value. Consider your market value as well as the value you can add to the prospective company.

Establishing your value is essential to ensuring you don't accept an offer below your true value. Ascertain your market value by considering salaries offered for similar positions and skills at other companies. Base your expectations on your expertise and competitive advantages and hold firm to your worth.

You can gather information online, from sites like [levels.fyi](#), [LinkedIn Salary](#), [Blind](#), etc. Ensure you obtain information from reliable sources to avoid relying on skewed information. For more accurate data, ask your connections, preferably engineers or recruiters within the prospective company or at competing/similar companies. If you can't obtain specific salary information for your prospective role, try to find information on salary ranges and compensation mixes for similar levels.

If possible, try to collect as many as 30 data points. This will provide a fair idea of the range in which you should expect an offer. Excluding the outliers, negotiate for a figure in the upper-end of the salary data range. This will give you a competitive baseline to work from. Even if you don't reach your target compensation, the resulting offer will be at the higher end of your expectations.

The more in-demand your skills are in the market and to the prospective company, and the smaller the talent pool in the market, the higher your market value.

Talent is not as easily available for high-paying, senior-level positions as it is for lower levels. So if you qualify for a senior-level tech job and you enjoy a high market value, you're better poised to negotiate a lucrative compensation.

Competing offers also signal your market value. Multiple offers from different companies signal high demand for your talent in the market. This will increase your bargaining power during negotiations.

## Current salary

You don't have to share information on your current salary unless you think it's absolutely necessary or beneficial. In many states, California is one of them; companies are prevented by law from asking candidates for their salary histories.

If your current salary is higher than market standards, it indicates you're highly valued in the market. In this case, you can disclose your current salary and use it as leverage in negotiations with the recruiting company. However, if your salary is lower than market standards, it signals poor market value. In this case, you may not want to share your current salary to avoid receiving a low-ball offer from the recruiting company.

Current salaries are also not necessarily a reflection of a candidate's true value. If you disclose your current earnings, recruiting companies may make you an offer that appears attractive compared to your current earnings. However, this may not be commensurate with your actual skills and value and may also be lower than the standard pay for the prospective role at the recruiting company.

Negotiating upwards is very challenging when the initial offer extended is low, to begin with. If discussions on existing salaries cannot be avoided, you can provide a salary range instead of specific figures to avoid revealing too much information about your salary history.

# Salary negotiation tips

## Anchor early

Contrary to what most candidates believe, [salary negotiations](#) don't begin when you receive your first offer at the end of the interview process. It begins as early as when you get your first interview call. It's important to set expectations as early as possible in the hiring process.

Recruiters try to ascertain your expectations as early as the first telephonic screening after you apply for a role. While you don't have to disclose specific figures, you should have a target compensation range. This creates a tacit understanding between you and the recruiters about your expected compensation.

If successful at the interview, the company is likely to make an offer to meet or exceed your expectations. This provides a comfortable starting point to negotiate upwards for higher compensation.

By not anchoring early, you indirectly signal a preference for position over pay or a lack of awareness of your true value. Leveraging this, recruiting companies are bound to make an initial offer that is lower than your expectations.

For offer negotiations to be effective, you have to sell yourself throughout the recruitment process. Showcase your skills, knowledge, and experience such that you position yourself as a 'must-hire' candidate, thereby increasing your leverage through the hiring process.

## Anchor high

Always consider the top-end of the range of compensations prevalent in the market for your prospective role and level. This will ensure your final outcome lies at the higher end of the range even if you can't secure the highest compensation.

For senior roles, companies are usually willing to sweeten the deal to rope in good talent that is also in short supply.

## Pace yourself

Even during the pandemic, many top tech firms were hiring at record levels. Data shows that in 2020, Google saw a 46% increase in open tech positions.

Companies are always vying for top talent. FAANG companies spend considerable time and effort identifying the right talent to hire. They are also aware that candidates that clear their interviews can also land offers at competing firms.

Avoid falling for recruiters' pressure tactics to get you to close on offers extended at the end of a successful interview process. Recruiters bank on a candidate's fear of losing out on a lucrative opportunity. Don't close on an offer that's below your expectations without considering all options.

Companies will try to pressure you for a response to prevent you from 'shopping around' using their offer. Avoid discussing specific salary figures until you obtain competing offers to stave off these concerns and buy more time.

Take enough time to explore multiple opportunities and obtain as many offers as possible. When you get an offer, ask for time to consider it carefully; consider how the role, level, and compensation offered aligns with your career and financial goals.

Identify what leverage you have to negotiate with prospective companies in a planned and studied way. Consider various possible outcomes of the negotiations and how to counter them for the best possible result. Don't be afraid to reach out to recruiters to obtain more information to make an informed decision.

## Set realistic expectations

Don't be over-optimistic. Anchoring early and anchoring high are essential to negotiating attractive offers. However, quoting unjustifiably high or non-negotiable expectations can deter recruiters from considering you as a potential candidate.

High-paying, senior tech jobs have narrower salary bands than mid or junior positions. Companies may not be able to enhance your salary/cash offering. Be ready to negotiate a compensation mix instead to achieve your target offer.

## Negotiate for the long-term

Don't negotiate for an increase in compensation in the short term without considering how the role contributes to your career progression.

A \$500k tech job doesn't come easy. Sometimes, your current level of expertise or experience may fall short of the requirements of a high-paying, senior-level position.

If the prospective role you're offered is a stepping stone to further your career and salary prospects in the near future, consider accepting it even if it falls short of your target compensation.

## Interview at non-FAANG companies

A number of startups and non-FAANG companies offer competitive salaries that can equal or exceed FAANG offers. While these may not be your companies of choice, obtaining these competing offers is important to gain leverage in negotiating higher compensations from FAANG companies.



## Negotiate to optimize, not win

Salary negotiations are misconstrued as conversations between two opposing parties, each trying to achieve their own goals at the expense of the other.

However, it's actually a process through which both parties, i.e., the candidate and the recruiter, try to align their interests, to arrive at an offer that works for both sides.

The goal of the interview process is to hire successful candidates. Contrary to popular perception, recruiting companies will try their best to remunerate candidates fairly and competitively. Engage in negotiations as a discussion, not a battle, to arrive at an optimal result.

# Re-negotiating an offer — when the offer doesn't meet expectations

If the final offer is below expectations, consider the following courses of action:

## Talk to the hiring manager

Request a meeting with the hiring manager via email or call. Present your case to reopen negotiations. State your gratitude for the offer and reasons why you believe your expectations are justified.

## Negotiate a formal salary raise

If the present offer of compensation cannot be increased or changed, negotiate for a guaranteed salary raise, based on completion of a certain tenure or performance. Obtain this as a written agreement.

## Negotiate a formal salary review

This is not a guaranteed increment in salary. A guaranteed salary review on completing a certain period in the organization is the right to restate your case for an increase in compensation.

## Revise your expectations

A marginal downward revision of your target compensation will indicate flexibility. The recruiting company may be willing to increase their final offer marginally in response.

# What is the Interview Kickstart advantage in landing a **\$500k** offer?



Unlike most other job interviews, technical interviews at FAANG and other top tech companies are highly specialized and deliberately challenging. Considering this, self-study can only take you so far. Preparing for a tech interview requires a lot of time and effort.

## Key challenges engineers face in preparing for a FAANG tech interview

- Zeroing in on the right subject matter to study
- Identifying and organizing study and prep resources
- Creating study plans and schedules
- Balancing work and personal commitments
- Developing competitive advantages through professional feedback and industry insights
- Tracking progress and gauging preparation effectiveness
- Getting results and staying motivated

## How Interview Kickstart helps software engineers land FAANG offers

Interview Kickstart (IK) provides [best-in-class interview coaching](#) for software engineers, coding engineers, and software developers. With an unmatched curriculum, teaching methods, and instructors, our programs are uniquely geared toward the interviewing requirements of FAANG and Tier-1 tech companies.

IK's program focuses on developing and strengthening your:

- Technical skills focused on computer science basics which form the foundation of all technical interviews.
- Non-technical skills focused on interview performance and offer negotiation.

## Nailing tech interviews through strategic prep and professional guidance

Your journey to receiving a good offer begins when you apply for a job and ends when you complete compensation negotiations.

Your final offer will be based on your performance through the entire interview process, not individual rounds.

This is why your prep plan should be a perfect mix of the right strategy, guidance, and consistency.

Interview Kickstart offers just that!

### **Our 2-month, intensive, professionally structured technical training program includes:**

- A comprehensive program that covers core computer science concepts viz. Data Structures, Algorithms, and System Design to solve common and unseen problems.
- Instructors who are actively employed as hiring managers and technical leads at FAANG and leading companies.
- Live mock interviews with industry professionals with firsthand knowledge and experience on how interviews are conducted at top tech companies.
- A wide network of alums employed at leading tech companies across varying roles and levels.
- Salary negotiation assistance; nuanced guidance and support to help you land unbelievable offers.

**We offer a 6-month support period on completion of the program during which IK's counselors will work with you to:**

- Strengthen your interviewing skills through live behavioral interviews and mock interviews; you will receive crucial feedback from industry professionals.
- Refine your negotiation skills with guidance from our career coaches to land lucrative and competitive job offers.

## Landing attractive offers through smart negotiations

Effective compensation negotiation is crucial to landing lucrative offers.

Avail expert guidance on compensation negotiation from our team of career coaches led by Nick Camilleri, former Silicon Valley tech recruiter and Head of Career Coaching at Interview Kickstart.

# **\$500k and beyond!**

How an IK alum landed a **\$933k** offer from Facebook



Breaking into high-paying, senior roles can see compensations rise exponentially as compared to mid-level and junior positions. This is because senior engineers have a greater business impact.

Engineers can command and negotiate top-of-the-industry compensations with the right preparation and strategy, as evinced by an alum of Interview Kickstart who recently landed a \$933k offer from Facebook.

Based on his interview preparation and performance, the alum was extended an attractive initial offer of \$858,000. However, with guidance from IK career coaches and mentors who understood his true value, this offer was negotiated upwards to a whopping \$933,000!

This broke IK's previous record-setting compensation, received by an alum, of \$780,000.

Landing a \$933,000 compensation resulted from concentrated efforts by the alum and the guidance of IK mentors. This result was borne out of IK's proven strategy to help software engineers land lucrative offers at leading tech companies.



## Problem-solving and mock interviews

Given that the alum's prospective role was that of 'Engineering Manager,' a senior-level position, interview preparations were focused on the system design and behavioral rounds of the interview.

Having already interviewed with Google and Facebook earlier, he had a fair understanding of what to expect at the interview.

But he acknowledges IK's structured approach to problem-solving, and the sessions with IK's technical counselors helped him hone his skills and excel at the interview.

He also noted that the mock interviews conducted by IK's highly qualified instructors played a crucial role in delivering a [stellar interview performance](#).

# Tips to help software engineers take their career to the next level

Our alum outlined these key aspects as having contributed to his success:

## Schedule interviews to your advantage

Technical and behavioral interviews are usually onsite interviews at company campuses and last a whole day. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most top companies now conduct these interviews virtually.

This presents candidates the opportunity to schedule their remote interviews to their advantage.

Line up interviews to suit your preparation requirements. Ensure you choose interview dates that provide you adequate time to prepare.

## Practice mock interviews extensively

Identify and improve on weak areas and enhance strengths to ensure you deliver a strong interview performance.

Practicing mock interviews with actual hiring managers and tech leads, as done at Interview Kickstart, will yield the best results.

Practicing live mock interviews with those well-versed with FAANG interviewers and hiring managers will give you a strong competitive edge.

## Create a portfolio of important projects

A strong project portfolio enhances your value and sends the right signals to recruiters.

Large tech companies place a lot of emphasis on understanding the depth and extent of your experience and skills, especially for senior roles.

List projects using the STAR approach, i.e., Situation, Task, Action, Result. The STAR method is a recruiter-recommended approach to elaborate on past projects, experience, and skills, as well as behavioral questions.

## Adopt a role-based approach

Base your interview preparation on the role you are interviewing for. While all candidates are tested for coding, system design, and behavioral skills, the weightage assigned to each of these areas differs based on the prospective role.

Interviews for junior and mid-level roles focus more on problem-solving skills, algorithms, and data structures. However, interviews for senior roles focus on system design and behavioral skills.

What our alum's success shows you is that with the right mindset, approach, strategy, and professional guidance, it's entirely possible to achieve not only your targeted goals but to go beyond them to land really lucrative offers.

## Conclusion

- Identify the tech field and role that will get you to your target compensation.
- Identify companies that can offer top-of-the-industry compensations.
- Craft a career path toward the level associated with your target compensation.
- Identify the technical and non-technical skills and attributes required for career progression vis-a-vis your current profile; upskill to move up the ladder.
- Pursue opportunities at your dream companies; craft a resume profile that stands out and grabs recruiters' attention.
- Explore various routes to uncover career opportunities and connect with recruiters to land interviews at your dream companies.
- Study the hiring and interviewing processes at your dream companies and what it takes to get through them.

The key to success is following [a structured and tailored preparation process](#) to nail the toughest technical interviews and land top-of-the-industry offers from FAANG and leading tech companies.



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# Take your career to the **next level**

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Get the **Interview Kickstart advantage**  
to uplevel your career!

**Learn all about how we can help you  
nail your next tech interview**

**Sign up for our FREE webinar**