How to Get Noticed and Hired as a Software Engineer

Who’s This Idiot?
- Chip Anderson
- President, StockCharts.com, Inc

Worked at Microsoft from 1987 to 1997
- Worked on Windows 1, 2, and 3.0
- Worked on Visual Studio
- Helped lots of Fortune 500 companies transition to Client/Server computing

Founded StockCharts in 1999
- Website provides high-quality financial charts for online investors
- 40,000+ paying subscribers
- 24 employees - Offices on Willows Road
- 100+ servers running Java servlets

Adjunct Professor, LWTech
- CSD228: C#
- CSD299: Programming Project (of Doom!)
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• The Game
  • ↓== You are here
    ? ?
    ? ?
    ? ? ? ?
  GRADUATION!!!! #woot
  ? ???
  ? ?
  ? ?
  ? ? ? ?
  ? ? ? ?
  HIRED!!!! #WOOT
  ? ?
  ? ?

• ↓== $150K+ per year

CHIP ANDERSON
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• Reality Check
  • The Good News
    • Lots of jobs - Seattle is the 2nd most tech heavy job market in the country
    • If all else fails, you can invent your own company!
  • The Bad News
    • Nobody owes you a job!
    • Tons of competition for these jobs
    • Not all employers value LWTech as much as they should :-(
    • Getting your dream job requires WORK and TIME
  • The Good News
    • The work is WORTH IT!
    • I can show you the steps...
    • LWTech instructors really do care about your success!
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- The 12 Steps to $150K+
  1: Reconnect with your Passion for Programming
  2: Get As Much Programming Experience As Possible!
  3: Package Yourself Properly
  4: Research Your Competition
  5: Grow Your Job-Hunting Network
  6: Research Your Target Company
  7: Create Targeted Cover Letters and Resumes
  8: Pass the Initial Interview
  9: Pass the Technical Interview
  10: Get on the Right Team
  11: Make Yourself Invaluable to Your Company
  12: Keep Learning!
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Step 1: Re-connect with your Passion for Programming

- Why is this important?
  - Job interviewers are looking for signs of passion about programming.
  - They love what they do. They love their company. They don’t want to work with people that aren’t as passionate as they are.
- Programming is the power of pure, raw creation
  - It lets you create very valuable stuff out of nothing!
  - Remember the feeling when you created your first real program? that you wrote yourself? for you?
- OK, Here’s a “More Pragmatic” Approach...
  - WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH $150K+ PER YEAR?
  - WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE TO MAKE THAT SALARY?
- Stir your passion for programming by writing code that helps YOU do things that YOU really want/need to do!
  - You’re gonna spend the rest of your life writing stuff for someone else - NOW is the time to do it for yourself!
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Step 2: Get As Much Programming Experience As Possible!

- Why?
  - Companies do not train you! You are expected to hit the ground running!
  - Companies only hire when they really need someone. You are expected to hit the ground running!
  - There are TONS of other candidates out there with more experience than you. (Sorry.)
- How?
  - Go above and beyond in your classes. Take FULL advantage of your teachers and classmates!
  - WRITE YOUR OWN PROGRAMS! CREATE YOUR OWN PROJECTS!
  - LEARN ON YOUR OWN!
  - Get an internship - any internship. Take full advantage of it when you are there!
  - Learn as much as you possibly can about as much as you possibly can.
    - Do you have your own cloud server? WHY NOT?!?!?!
    - Your competition does.
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Step 3: Package Yourself Properly

• You will be researched online before being asked to an interview
  • Make yourself easy to find
  • You must be much more than just a resume
• LinkedIn AND Your Own Website!
• Give yourself a compelling story
  • Showcase your passion and your experience
  • Provide examples of your work including source code
  • Don’t over-exaggerate but don’t under-exaggerate either
  • Don’t use fancy graphics or add-ons unless you created them yourself
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Step 4: Research your Competition

• What are other programming job-seekers doing on-line?
  • Google: “Amazon Programming Job” and start clicking
  • LinkedIn
  • Indeed
  • Glassdoor
  • Quora
• Is your “packaging” as good or better than your competition?
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Step 5: Grow your Job-Hunting Network

- There are two ways to get hired:
  - Blast resumes everywhere
  - Know someone
- YOU NEED TO USE BOTH METHODS FULLY!
- Make sure everyone you know knows you are looking for a job and what general skill set you have.
- Stay in touch with your college professors
- Get letters of recommendation from the good ones
- Take full advantage of the job placement resources at the college.
- Join the alumni organization and attend their events.
- Continue to stay in touch with your network after you get hired.
- You’ll never know when you’ll need it again.
- Many times, timing is everything. Your network can help you know when a possible position opens up.
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Step 6: Research your Target Company

- What does the company desperately need?
- What does the company already have?
- What kind of programmers already work there?
- What tools/skillsets do they typically look for?
- What is their corporate structure? Do they have multiple programming teams?
- How many programmers did they hire last year/quarter/week?
- What does Glassdoor say about them and why?
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Step 7: Create Targeted Resumes and Cover Letters

• Never, ever send a generic resume for a job you really want.
• Always send a personalized, unique cover letter.
• Both items should DIRECTLY connect your experience and skill set directly to the needs of the company.
  • This is no time to be shy / bashful. Crow about yourself!
  • BUT DO NOT LIE OR EXAGGERATE!
  • Bring up your reasons for being passionate about programming
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Step 8: Pass the Initial Interview

- Their goals:
  - To understand how you might fit into their team
  - To validate your experience
  - To gauge your interest in the position

- Your goals:
  - To appear like you already “fit in” with the company
  - To make 100% sure they understand why you want to work there
  - To answer any questions they have about your resume
  - To identify the skill[s] that they are most interested in
  - To show them that you really want to help them with their problems
  - TO GET INVITED BACK FOR A TECHNICAL INTERVIEW
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Step 8: Pass the Initial Interview

• Your enemies:
  • Being Boring
  • Keep the interviewer entertained! Tell stories about your successes. Tell stories about your failures (and what you learned from them). Talk about why - specifically - you want to work there. Just DON'T BE BORING!
  • The Clock
  • It's OK if you have to wait, it's not OK if they have to wait.
  • Try to arrive at the interview location 30 minutes ahead of time
    • (In case you get lost, have trouble parking, etc.)
  • Walk into the company 5-10 minutes early.
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Step 8: Pass the Initial Interview

• Your enemies:
  • The Dress Code
    • Important to match their expectations
    • It’s also OK to ask them ahead of time about the dress code.
    • Don’t assume formal. Don’t assume casual. Ask!
  • Nervousness / Shyness
    • Practice, practice, practice.
    • Research, research, research
    • Go on 2 or 3 “practice” interviews with companies you aren’t super interested in
    • YOU MUST TELL YOUR STORY IN A CLEAR, PASSIONATE MANNER
  • Getting Caught Off Guard
    • It happens. Don’t let it throw you completely.
    • If you get completely confused, try to relate things back to your previous programming experiences.
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Step 9: Pass the Technical Interview

- Their goal:
  - What happens when this person gets stuck? How do they react?
- Your goals:
  - Communicate what you are thinking!
  - Ask relevant questions
  - Show what you know
  - If you get stuck:
    - Keep explaining what you are thinking
    - Keep asking questions
    - Be honest about what you don’t know
    - Draw/diagram whatever you can
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Step 10: Get on the Right Team

• Getting hired is NOT the end of the journey!
• Discover which teams in the company are mega-important and try to get one of those teams
• Grow your network inside the company.
  • Meet and remember as many managers as possible!
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Step 11: Make Yourself Invaluable to Your Company

- Think META! What problem(s) are driving your manager crazy? Fix those problems!
- What problem(s) are not being worked on at all? Why?
- What new skills / tools could greatly enhance productivity? Why aren’t they being used?
- etc., etc. etc.
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Step 12: Keep Learning!

- This industry completely reinvents itself every 4-8 years. You cannot sit still!
- Get a Master’s Degree if your company supports it
- Teach others. It’s the best way to learn.
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Questions?
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• CSD299!
• http://workflowy.com