

Research Findings

Team TBD

Project Description

In our research, we tried to understand and summarize the needs of our users (Students at the University of Washington). And, by analyzing their pain points, we learned their dissatisfaction with the current job sites. By analyzing their desires and goals, we know the requirements of our product.

Interview Questions

- What is your major/intended major?
- Have you had any internship/research experiences in the past?
 - If YES: What are your previous experiences
 - If NO: Are you interested in internship/research experiences?
- What area of research/internship (software engineering, product manager, etc.) opportunities are you interested in?
- What are some of the difficulties you've experienced when trying to find an internship/research opportunity?
- What resources do you use to find information about internship/research opportunities?
- Do you currently use any apps/websites/communities to find/apply to internships/research?

User #1

Insights:

- LinkedIn, Handshake, and Ed (Edstem) are used by the interviewee to apply for internships.
- The student thinks preparing for (technical) interviews is one of the most helpful things they could do to improve their chance as a candidate.
- Talking with other students is helpful as it not only provides valuable insights to the specifics of getting an internship at a particular company but can also lead to resource sharing.
- The interviewee is frustrated by the repetitive and tiring process of filling in their personal information and application materials many times across the website of different companies.
- The student is stressed about the limited availability of spaces for technical positions and the actual technical interview.

Interview Record:

Interviewer's note: the interviewee has provided answers to several of the above questions before they were asked, hence there are some discrepancies between the list of questions and the transcript of the actual interview.

(Transcript begins on the next page)

Q: (Interviewer) We will be conducting an interview, and I'm going to ask you some questions about your experience when finding and applying for internships or research positions as a college student. So first, why don't you tell me about a little bit about yourself? What is your major? And what year are you in?

A:(Interviewee) Oh yeah, so my name is [Tim]. I'm attending the University of Washington. My major is computer engineering. I will be graduating in the summer of 2023, so I'm looking for summer internship for software engineer role.

Q: So, have you had any internship or research experiences before?

A: Uhm, yeah. I have the... I I've worked as an intern in like number of companies in my home country, but I've never worked in the United States.

Q: Oh, that's interesting. So, what are some of your previous experiences like? Eh, how did you find those internship opportunities?

A: Oh yeah, so. Uhm, there are like the several websites I usually look for. There's like LinkedIn, UM, and there's a one called Handshake that is for, like, the college students. Yeah, I also look for like the job board on the CSE Edstem (Interviewer's note: CSE department discussion board).

Q: OK.

A: Yeah, but the most popular one is still LinkedIn. And that's where I usually find a job.

Q: OK. Have you ever looked up a specific company directly and just applying from their website?

A: Uhm yeah, yeah, I did. For the like the large companies I know, such as like Google, Microsoft, Apple. Yeah, I directly looked for the application for that company. And yeah, applied on their website. And you know, if you use LinkedIn, if you've ever used it [LinkedIn] directs [you] to the page of the like the company website for application. I mean most of the time you are not able to directly apply from LinkedIn.

Q: OK, so LinkedIn is more like a place where you find posts about those jobs and then?

A: Yeah, yeah, right.

Q: OK, so. We kind of touched on this a little bit about the process of finding an internship. So, you mentioned how you would look up online and try to find an internship. Can you tell me a little bit more about what you would do after you went to the website and apply [for the job], how would you prepare yourself for the next steps?

A: Yeah, there are always like interview [that are necessary for] getting into company. So yeah, I prepare for the interviews. Because I want to work as a software engineer, and there must be like a coding interview especially for software engineers, I prepare a lot using Leet Code.

Q: I guess something else I was thinking about is, uh, have you ever talked to your peers, your classmates, or others about internships before?

A: Oh yeah, a lot. Yeah, I mean it's always getting nervous because all the internship roles are getting filled. And I think there is not so many spaces for me right now. So yeah, I'm getting nervous, and I talk a lot with my friends.

Q: Have you ever asked for advice from them about how they got in [or just in general their internship experience]?

A: Yeah, I mean I did ask two TAs of my class about it.

Q: How do you feel about the advice they gave? Are they helpful for you?

A: Yeah, of course, and there's a friend who's looking for an internship like me, and we interviewed each other likely technically. So yeah, that could be really helpful, yeah. And one of the TAs I asked, he gave me kind of like interview hacks or a cheat sheet. [On the cheat sheet] there's a bunch of like explanation of the data structures and corresponding Leet Code problems. And yeah, whenever I asked for help, they really helped me out.

Q: That's great. So, for you personally, what would you say is the most difficult part when you're looking for an internship?

A: Most difficult part. I mean, is it the hard part for getting in or hard part for applying for internship?

Q: It's more like just the process of applying.

A: Uhm, I would say. I have written my resume. There's already a lot of like information about me on LinkedIn, you know. But whenever I tried to apply to those companies. Uhm, they want me to write everything again. I have to fill out all the same information, so I have to like copy and paste again and again, whenever I apply for [an internship] at each company. That really disturbing, yeah.

Q: So, on top of your resume, which already includes all the information, they would still ask you to repeat it in their forms?

A: Yeah, yeah, right. I send resume and I have to fill out all of my work history every time.

Q: Do you, uh? Is there a particular like pattern amongst the employers? Do they all ask for like similar information?

A: Yeah, they ask always same [questions].

Q: Have you ever tailored the content you put in [the application form] based on where you're applying to?

A: Yeah, if they ask for a cover letter. I mean that that is the only part I can like “make a difference”, I mean. But if they ask for a couple cover letters, I usually just don't apply.

Q: Do you consider that as additional work?

A: Yeah, it's more work. And I don't know, I just... it would take a lot of time, more than you think, for the application. I would rather practice for like Leet Code than writing cover letters.

Q: Yeah, so talking about Leet Code. When you get stuck on a problem, do you talk to others about it?

A: No. I mean I would try my best to solve the problem, but if I got stuck on it, I would just rather see the expert answers. (Interviewer's note: Expert answers is a paid service on Leet Code that shows you the solution to a given programming problem)

Q: Do you have anything else you want to add to what we talked about today?

A: I mean the preparing part is more like interesting you know, because I get excited to get in the company. I get really nervous when it really begins, and it's a lot of pressure when you're doing a real interview. So doing mock interviews and just talking to others who are going through the same process is pretty helpful.

Q: Yeah. OK, that's great. I think that's all I have for today. So, thank you for your time.

[Stops recording]

User #2

Project Description:

Although we are not exactly sure what the deliverable for our group project will be, we are leaning towards creating a platform that helps students find research and internship opportunities. Our general user base is engineering students at the University of Washington that are searching for internship and research opportunities during the pandemic. These users are most likely looking for both remote and in person opportunities. We assume that they would like to have a platform that compiles all the opportunities they are qualified for in one convenient place. We also presume that they would like opportunities to network and connect with recruiters and other individuals associated with the roles at the respective companies they wish to work at.

Insights:

- Most of the current internship and research opportunities available in person are tailored towards essential workers. So, when individuals are applying for internship and research opportunities, it is difficult for them to know whether the opportunity is remote or in person.
- One of the negative aspects of Handshake is that it doesn't always show all the roles from big companies. One thing that the user wishes to see is all the roles in one place.
- Most of the apps and websites that the user uses are either for applying to internship and research opportunities or making connections. There is not a single interface that allows for both building connections and applying for opportunities.

Interview Record:

[I interviewed a 22-year-old male undergraduate student at UW who is pursuing a degree in bioengineering.]

Q: To start, what is your major/intended major?

A: I am currently pursuing a degree in bioengineering.

Q: Have you ever had any internship/research experiences in the past?

A: Yes.

Q: What are some of your past experiences?

A: I researched at UC Irvine – general biomedical research. I have also worked on many startups. I love designing projects and bringing them to life by correlating it with the business and engineering aspects.

Q: What area of research/internship (software engineering, product manager, etc.) opportunities are you interested in for the future?

A: I am interested in program and product manager roles. I am also interested in data science roles because I like using data to improve products. Recently, I've also been interested in exploring nanotechnology.

Q: What are some of the difficulties you've experienced when trying to find an internship/research opportunity, if any?

A: During the pandemic it has been difficult to find in person research opportunities, as they are prioritizing essential workers only.

Q: What are some of the resources you use to find information about internship/research opportunities?

A: I go to career fairs at UW. I also use Handshake and Google. I talk to a lot of people who graduated as well, and they help connect me to a lot of internships that aren't listed on Handshake.

Q: I know you mentioned using Handshake, are there any other apps/websites/communities that you use to find/apply to internships/research?

A: LinkedIn to connect with people in the roles I am interested in. Having the connection lets me have a foot in the door. I use glass door to understand salary of different roles

Q: How was your experience with these apps? Did you have any difficulties?

A: Handshake is great, but it doesn't show all the roles that many big companies offer. It would be nice to have all the opportunities in one place. Handshake asks for resume, but I eventually have to send resume to companies separately.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say?

A: In an app I would like to have the ability to talk to people in the given area — for example, handshake is not tailored to connect you with people. Ideally, an app or website will allow you to contact a person at the company that is connected to the role.

User #3

Project Description:

As sophomores, we were also eager to network and look for internships, but we often didn't have the guts to reach out or missed opportunities. We want to design a program that acts like a mind map to show a large map of internship experience and work status of seniors in your field of interest. You can turn to them when you need to know about a career or an internal referral. And now I'm going to do a small interview with you about your experience with finding and applying to internships/research opportunities as a college student. Your feedback will be very helpful for us.

Insights:

- Students are hungry for connections and jobs
- Students are sometimes afraid to network or have no idea how to search for information about jobs.
- Our goal is to make it easier and more accessible for engineering students to connect and find information.
- A lot of current websites and apps for job searching are not friendly for college students.

Interview Record:

Q: What is your major/intended major?

A: HCDE

Q: Have you had any internship/research experiences in the past?

A: No.

Q: Are you interested in internship/research experiences?

A: Yes.

Q: What area of research/internship (software engineering, product manager, etc.) opportunities are you interested in?

A: UX Designer, Research Assistant

Q: What are some of the difficulties you've experienced when trying to find an internship/research opportunity?

A: As an international student, I need H1B work visas for interns. However, the algorithm in some companies filter out the international students because of their status, prioritizing the native students. The designer of the algorithm just doesn't care about the international students. What resources do you use to find information about internship/research opportunities?

Handshake and LinkedIn

Q: How was your experience with these apps? Any difficulties?

A: When searching for job opportunities on Handshake, it often directs me to external websites. And these websites require me to create an account for browsing more information. I have wasted a lot of time on this process without getting clear and direct information. Also, I cannot exclude keywords for job filtering. For example, as a second year student, I don't have a rich portfolio, so I want to filter out the jobs that require a portfolio. However, I cannot do that on Handshake