

HOW SHOULD I APPROACH HIGH TECH JOB INTERVIEWS?



Question: My fiancée, a [software engineer](#), has been job hunting for six months. He's landed second interviews with eight prospective employers, but not one offer. Although I'm a [human-resources specialist](#), I can't give him any suggestions, since he feels that [technology recruiting](#) is different from other fields. Do you agree that there's a unique recruiting process for high-tech candidates? Should they [dress up for interviews](#) (suit and tie), [send thank-you letters](#), not expect acknowledgement or rejection letters, but be ready for [personal interview questions](#) unrelated to the open position (one interviewer asked his favorite movie)? Any thoughts you have would be helpful.

— *Gemma, San Mateo, Calif.*

Gemma: High-tech recruiting can be a different world, sometimes to such an extent that any advice I offer may be useless (one Silicon Valley recruiter says he purposely leaves the room in mid-interview to see how long it takes for candidates to respond; I'd say that shows a lack of respect for job hunters). If you assume that a recruiter is acting professionally and judging you primarily based on your skills, talent, track record and enthusiasm for the job (this may be too many assumptions for Northern California, but basically OK elsewhere), the answers to your questions are:

- **Look your best for all interviews.** If the company has a casual atmosphere wear a colorful tie and blazer instead of a suit (in this environment, a skirt and blouse would work well for women).
- **Always send a thank-you note within a day of each interview,** and start to follow-up by phone a week later. It's never passe to appear interested.
- Don't be surprised if you never hear from the company again. That's true in many industries, as more HR departments buckle under the weight of too many resumes and too few employees.
- Expect the unexpected and respond based on the company's culture, but never risk embarrassing yourself.

If you play by the book and react to whatever arises honestly, you'll land an offer from a company that will value you as much as you value them.