

How to Get More Job Interviews in Tech

A practical system for full-time, freelance, remote, and contract work

1. First Principles: Why You Aren't Getting Interviews

An interview happens when two conditions are both true: a human sees your application, and that human trusts you enough to spend 30 minutes on a call. Most job seekers only optimize for the first condition (sending more applications) and ignore the second (building trust signals). This is why volume alone rarely works.

Break the hiring funnel into three filters:

Filter 1 — The ATS (Applicant Tracking System). Most mid-size and large companies scan resumes for keyword overlap with the job description before any human reads it. If your resume doesn't contain the same words the posting uses, you can be filtered out even if you're qualified.

Filter 2 — The recruiter skim. A recruiter spends roughly 10-20 seconds on a first pass. They're scanning for: right title/keywords, relevant company names, and no obvious red flags (unexplained gaps, mismatched seniority).

Filter 3 — The trust signal. Referrals, direct recruiter outreach, and visible proof of work (GitHub, portfolio, public writing) skip filters 1 and 2 almost entirely, because a human is vouching for you before the ATS ever sees your resume.

What this means practically: the highest-leverage thing you can do is not “apply to more jobs” — it's shifting effort from Filter-1-only channels (cold job board applications) toward Filter-3 channels (referrals, direct outreach, proof of work). Cold applications should be a supplement, not the main strategy.

2. Universal Techniques (Apply to Any Job Type)

Get referred instead of applying cold. A referral routes your resume directly to a hiring manager or recruiter, bypassing the ATS keyword filter. Find 2nd-degree connections at target companies on LinkedIn, send a short specific message (not “can you refer me”), and offer your resume + a one-line reason you're a fit for that exact role.

Tailor your resume to each posting's keywords. Copy the job description into a text editor, pull out the recurring skill nouns (e.g., “Kubernetes,” “A/B testing,” “React”), and make sure those exact words appear in your resume if you actually have that experience. This is an ATS-matching exercise, not a general writing exercise.

Apply within 24–48 hours of a posting going live. Recruiters often review the first batch of applicants first and stop once they have enough candidates in the pipeline. Set alerts (LinkedIn, Wellfound, company career pages) instead of browsing job boards weekly.

Message the hiring manager directly. Find the hiring manager (usually named in the posting, or the team lead on LinkedIn) and send a short message: what you'd do in the role, one relevant

proof point, and a link to your work. This works better than messaging generic recruiters because the hiring manager is the actual decision-maker.

Build a visible proof-of-work trail. For engineers: an active GitHub with real (not tutorial-clone) projects. For any tech role: a portfolio page, case studies, or public writing (blog, X/LinkedIn posts breaking down how you solved a real problem). This does the trust-building work before you ever talk to anyone.

Treat outreach as a numbers game with tracking, not a hope-and-wait game. Track every application/outreach in a spreadsheet: date, company, channel, whether tailored, response, interview, offer. Without this you can't tell which channel is actually converting, so you keep doing what feels productive instead of what is productive.

Follow up once, with new information. If no response after 5–7 days, send one follow-up that adds something (a relevant project, an article, a question about the role) rather than just “checking in.”

3. Full-Time / Corporate Roles

Optimize your LinkedIn headline and “Open to Work” settings. Recruiters search LinkedIn by keyword before they post jobs. Your headline should contain your target title and 2-3 core skills, not just “Software Engineer.”

Build a target company list and apply directly on their career page, not just through aggregators. Career-page applications sometimes route differently than a job-board repost of the same listing, and you can often also find the actual recruiter for that req on LinkedIn and message them.

Use recruiter outreach in both directions. Technical recruiters at agencies (and in-house sourcers) message candidates constantly — respond to these even if the specific role isn't a fit, since a good recruiter will consider you for the next opening.

Separate “getting the interview” from “passing the interview.” Many candidates lose offers not from lack of interviews but from being unprepared once they get one. If interviews aren't converting to offers, the problem has shifted from sourcing to interview prep (technical rounds, behavioral/STAR answers, system design).

4. Freelancing / Contract Work

Niche down instead of listing every skill. “I build Shopify apps for DTC brands” gets more replies than “full-stack developer.” Platforms and cold prospects both respond better to a specific, recognizable category than a generalist pitch.

Optimize your platform profile like a landing page (Upwork, Toptal, Contra, Fiverr): a specific title, a portfolio with outcomes (“increased conversion 18%,” not just “built a website”), and a rate that matches your positioning — not the lowest rate, which signals low quality on most platforms.

Cold-pitch businesses directly, don't rely only on platforms. Platforms take a cut and put you in a bidding war. Find businesses with an obvious gap (broken site, outdated app, no automation) and send a short, specific pitch: the problem you noticed, and what you'd do about it.

Build a repeat-client and referral loop. Freelance income compounds when past clients refer you or rehire you — this is far higher-trust and lower-cost than acquiring a new client each time. Explicitly ask satisfied clients for a referral or testimonial at project close.

Show up in communities where your buyers already are — niche Slack/Discord groups, Indie Hackers, relevant subreddits, X/LinkedIn — answering questions and sharing work in public. This creates inbound leads instead of only outbound pitching.

5. Remote / Work-From-Home Roles

Use remote-specific job boards, since general boards are flooded and remote-native companies often post first on these: We Work Remotely, Remote OK, Wellfound (AngelList), NoDesk, and remote-focused company career pages.

Address timezone overlap explicitly. Many remote postings specify required overlap hours; state your availability and overlap directly in your application/cold message since this is a common filter.

Prove you can work async. Remote-first companies specifically screen for async communication skill — clear written updates, documented decisions, minimal need for real-time hand-holding. A portfolio README or writing sample that shows clear, structured written communication is itself a signal.

Research the specific company's remote culture before applying, since “remote” ranges from fully async/distributed to “remote but expects 9-5 sync meetings.” Tailoring your pitch to their actual remote style (found in careers pages, Glassdoor, or team blog posts) increases response rate.

6. The System: Track and Iterate

Run your job search like a funnel, not a series of one-off attempts:

Stage	What to track
Outreach sent	Channel (referral / cold apply / direct message / platform)
Response rate	$\text{Responses} \div \text{outreach sent}$, by channel
Interview rate	$\text{Interviews} \div \text{responses}$
Offer rate	$\text{Offers} \div \text{interviews}$

Review weekly. If a channel has a near-zero response rate after 15-20 attempts, that channel isn't working for you right now — shift effort to the channels that are converting instead of doing more of what isn't.

7. Common Mistakes That Suppress Interview Rate

- Sending the identical resume to every posting instead of matching keywords per role.

- Relying only on job boards and skipping referrals/direct outreach entirely.
 - No tracking system, so effort isn't redirected toward what's actually converting.
 - No follow-up after the initial application or message.
 - For freelancers: staying platform-only and never building a direct-client pipeline.
 - For remote roles: ignoring timezone/async requirements stated in the posting.
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8. First-Week Action Checklist

1. Rewrite your LinkedIn headline with target title + 2-3 core skills.
 2. Build a list of 20 target companies (mix of full-time targets and/or freelance prospects).
 3. Identify 10 people who could refer you or 10 businesses to cold-pitch; send the first 5 messages.
 4. Tailor your resume/portfolio to keyword-match your next 3 applications individually.
 5. Set up a tracking spreadsheet (channel, date, response, interview, offer).
 6. Publish one piece of visible proof of work (project writeup, case study, or post).
 7. Schedule a weekly 15-minute review of your funnel numbers and adjust channel mix.
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Confidence note: the frameworks above (ATS filtering, referral advantage, funnel tracking) reflect widely reported hiring practice and are broadly applicable across tech roles. Exact response-rate figures vary by company, market, and timing and are not quoted here as fixed statistics — treat the checklist as a system to test against your own results, not a guarantee.