

An Employment-Guidelines Checklist for the Engineer Job Applicant

Selecting your first engineering job can be confusing. This checklist can help you sort out the strengths and weaknesses; of each employer you consider. The checklist is based on the Guidelines to Professional Employment for Engineers and Scientists which was developed and endorsed by 25 engineering and technical societies.

Rank firms in order of preference in each checklist category. Use 1 for best, 2 for second best, etc.

Recruitment

- A. Thoroughness of presentation: You cannot always judge an employer by recruiting technique, but more often than not, it reveals a great deal about the organization and its attitude toward professional employees. Rate employers by which did the best job of explaining the overall employment situation to you, including salary prospects, fringe benefits available, company policy and objectives, educational and professional opportunities, and career potential. Be careful not to judge here in terms of the best job benefits, but rather on the clearest explanation of them.

Firm A _____

Firm B _____

Firm C _____

- B. Supervision: Especially on the first job, the qualities of your supervisor and his or her position in the organization can be one of the most important elements to consider. The more time you can spend with the supervisor before deciding on a job, the better. There are three primary questions to consider:
1. Which supervisor appeared to be the best qualified from a technical standpoint to help you learn the job and develop professionally?
 2. Rate the supervisors on the basis of their ability to communicate and deal with people. Who would you rather work for as a person?
 3. Rate the companies on how much authority and discretion your supervisor would have within the organization. Does he or she have authority to approve raises, make and change assignments, and make other decisions which concern you; or is this done by someone higher up?

Firm A _____

Firm B _____

Firm C _____

- C. Personnel planning: Some companies do a better job than others in forecasting professional personnel needs to minimize fluctuations in employment levels. Rate companies on the basis of reputation for stability of employment.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- D. Employment: Nearly all companies require technical personnel to sign pre-employment statements regarding patents, trade secrets, and future employment. Which company has agreements most favorable to the technical employee?

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

Terms of Employment

- A. Communications: Which company appears to have the best program for keeping employees informed about the organization's objectives, policies, and programs?

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- B. Salary: Rate companies on the basis of:
1. Starting salary.
 2. Experienced engineering rates.
 3. Performance review and merit increase plan.
 4. Top salaries for engineers in technical positions, as opposed to supervisory or managerial positions. (Eliminate question if management is your goal.)

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- C. Fringe benefits: Rate companies on the basis of:
1. Pension plan: Which is best for your personal situation? In addition to potential benefits upon retirement, take into account the waiting time to enter the plan, the value of employer contribution, the length of time before employer contributions become your own if you should leave the company (vesting), survivor benefits, and other features.
 2. Health insurance: Again, judge on the basis of your personal needs.
 3. Life insurance.
 4. Leave: sick and annual.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- D. Company attitude toward professionals: There are several recommendations in the guidelines, which, taken together, give a pretty fair indication of a company's basic attitude toward professional employees. In rating companies, consider the following: Is there a separate department or section within the overall personnel department which devotes its time to professional employees? Is there a separate brochure listing benefits and other job features of particular interest to professionals? Do job titles clearly indicate function and responsibility and distinguish professional-level jobs from others? Are engineers required to punch time clocks? Are they required to join a union as a condition of employment? Rate on the basis of these and other signs that show how great an interest the company really takes in its engineers.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- E. Physical facilities: Rate companies on the basis of overall physical facilities, including office, laboratory, or other engineer work areas.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- F. Support staff: Rate companies on the basis of clerical, administrative, and technical support staff available to professionals.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

Professional Development

- A. Educational opportunities: Rate companies on the basis of educational assistance in the form of tuition reimbursement, in-house courses provided, leaves of absence for professional study, or other policies to encourage and assist professionals seeking formal instruction. Ask how widely employees actually participate in such programs. Low participation may mean the company puts a low priority on continuing education, even if the written policies are good.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- B. Society participation: Rate companies on the basis of their support for employee participation in the activities of professional and technical societies. Again, attempt to determine how widely employees actually participate.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- C. Publication: Rate companies on the basis of assistance and encouragement in connection with the publication of professional employees' papers in society journals and elsewhere. Again, actual performance is a better measure than written policies.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- D. Licensure: Rate companies on their overall program to recognize and encourage licensure. Are employees given time off to take licensure exams? Does the company give refresher courses or help employees find them? Do employees use their P.E. suffix in correspondence? Is special recognition given to licensed engineers?

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

Termination and Transfer

When interviewing for a new job, nobody likes to ask about termination and transfer policies. Nonetheless, these things can be important, especially in the more unstable industries, and should be examined carefully. Hopefully, this information will be spelled out in printed material so you won't have to ask.

- A. Termination pay: Rate companies on the basis of the most liberal termination pay policy.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- B. Relocation assistance: Rate companies on programs to place terminated employees either within the organization or elsewhere.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- C. Continuation of benefits: Some companies continue major medical and insurance programs for a period after termination, and some reinstate such programs fully without loss of seniority upon subsequent re-employment. Rate companies on policies in this area.

Firm A _____
Firm B _____
Firm C _____

- D. Transfer: Recognizing that transfers are occasionally necessary, compare the companies on the basis of reimbursed relocation expenses. These may include travel expenses in advance of the move to local housing, living expenses until housing is found, and realtor fees or other costs associated with a move, which represent an actual loss to the employee.

Firm A _____

Firm B _____

Firm C _____