

What Top Tech Firms Look for in Entry-Level Hires (Hint: It's SCAV)



The Dream That's Not Out of Reach

Every year, thousands of engineering graduates apply to companies like Google, Microsoft, and Amazon. Only a fraction hears back. Fewer still make it through.

But here's what nobody tells you: **getting hired at these companies before 25 isn't rare.** It happens every year. And the pattern is consistent—students who invest their undergraduate years building relevant skills, solving real problems, and creating a track record beyond their transcripts are the ones who get noticed ^[1].

So, what exactly are they building? And how can you build it too?

The Shift: What Hiring Looks Like in 2026

There was a time when strong data structures and algorithms, backed by a recognisable college name, were enough to open doors at top tech firms. That reality has changed.

Recruiters at companies like Microsoft, Google, and OpenAI are now looking beyond exam scores. What matters is the ability to think clearly about real-world problems and demonstrate it through actual work ^[1].

Today, candidates stand out through:

- **Substantial project portfolios** that show applied thinking
- **Familiarity with cloud infrastructure** like AWS, Azure, or Google Cloud
- **Hands-on experience with AI and machine learning systems**

Academic performance still plays a role in early shortlisting, but it quickly stops being a differentiator. Engineers who get noticed bring proof of what they have built, not just what they have studied.

The Numbers: What India's Hiring Landscape Looks Like

The scale of India's tech hiring is massive—but so is the gap.

India's technology sector will need over 1 million engineers with advanced AI and other tech skills in the next 2-3 years. Yet NASSCOM predicts the digital talent gap will widen from 25% to 29% by 2028 ^[2].

TCS, Infosys, and Wipro plan to recruit around 72,000 fresh graduates in fiscal year 2026. But they're being selective. Recruiters are now giving preference to candidates with certifications, real-world project experience, and demonstrable

coding skills. Companies are integrating hackathons, coding challenges, and virtual assessments to filter high-potential candidates early ^[3].

India now holds **16% of global AI talent**, projected to reach 1.25 million professionals by 2027. More than **90% of employees across sectors already use Generative AI tools** in their work. **70% of IT companies and 50% of BFSI firms have implemented AI in their recruitment processes** ^[4].

The message is clear: **knowing a programming language is no longer sufficient. Working with AI tools effectively is now the minimum bar.**

What Actually Works: 6 Patterns from Successful Hires

After analyzing conversations with students who landed jobs at Google and Microsoft, here are six recurring patterns that set them apart:

1. They Mastered One Language Deeply (Not Ten)

Successful candidates doubled down on one core language—Java, Python, or C++—and became exceptionally good at it. System design and projects were all in that language ^[5]. Depth beats breadth.

2. Referrals Were Their Cheat Code

Almost all successful candidates said their first interview invite came through a referral—not cold applying, not career portals. **Actual human connections opened the door.**

3. Consistency Beat Intensity

They didn't grind DSA for 12 hours a day. Most solved **2-3 quality problems every day for 6-8 months straight** ^[5]. Consistency compounds.

4. They Practiced Mock Interviews Religiously

Not just with friends. They used paid platforms, Discord servers, and even strangers from LinkedIn to simulate real interview pressure.

5. They Had "Brag-Worthy" Projects

They knew exactly what questions could be asked about their projects and could explain them end-to-end. Recruiters remembered them for their clarity.

6. They Built Resilience Against Rejection

Most of them got rejected at least once before cracking interviews. **The difference was that they didn't internalize failure—they rectified after each one.**

What Top Recruiters Are Really Testing

The recruitment process at top tech firms is structured to evaluate candidates thoroughly and consistently. Most follow a multi-stage approach ^[6]:

1. **Resume screening**
2. **Technical assessments**
3. **Coding challenges**
4. **Behavioural interviews** (Amazon uses Leadership Principles; Google tests problem-solving skills)
5. **Final evaluations**

The Technical Bar

DSA is not optional. Tech giants expect candidates to be strong in fundamentals—Arrays, Trees, Graphs, DP. But it's not just about solving problems. **Master core patterns like Sliding Window, DFS/BFS, Binary Search, and DP transitions** ^[7].

The Behavioural Bar

Behavioral rounds can make or break your candidacy. Amazon and other product-based companies focus heavily on impact and leadership. As one successful candidate put it:

✓ *"Led a team of 4 engineers to reduce API latency by 30%"*

✗ vs. *"Worked on APIs"*

Always quantify your results.

The System Design Bar

System design will come up even for mid-level roles. Microsoft and others expect you to:

- Clarify requirements
- Draft high-level architecture
- Model data + APIs
- Discuss scalability and trade-offs

The way you structure your thinking is as important as the solution.

The AI Bar

Google CEO Sundar Pichai stated in an earnings call that **over a quarter of Google's code is generated by AI before being checked by employees**. A manager at Microsoft similarly shared that AI reduced **70% of the time he used to spend on coding** ^[8].

The work is evolving. As Instagram's cofounder Mike Krieger, now Anthropic's chief product officer, put it: "The work will be more about coming up with the right ideas and learning how to delegate correctly to models".

The Gap: What's Missing in Most Students' Preparation

Here's where the problem hits home. According to the India Skills Report 2026 ^[4]:

- **92% of engineering students can correctly explain technical concepts in MCQ format**
- **Only 38% can partially write the relevant code**
- **A mere 4.4% can produce a fully working, efficient program**

India's engineers can describe what to do. Far fewer can actually do it.

Meanwhile, **AI/ML job postings recorded over 600% growth**. Yet **only 46% of graduates are considered proficient for these roles**.

How LNBE's SCAV Assessment Bridges This Gap

This is exactly where LNBE's SCAV assessment becomes your competitive advantage.

SCAV evaluates you on exactly what top recruiters are looking for:

1. Skills

- Code accuracy, quality, and edge-case handling
- This is what you need to clear technical assessments

2. Capability

- Problem decomposition, system thinking, and abstraction
- This is what you need for system design and behavioural rounds

3. AI-Augmented Development

- Prompt engineering, AI evaluation, and debugging
- This is what you need to work effectively with AI tools

4. Velocity

- Learning ability, reasoning, and critical thinking
- This is what signals your long-term growth potential

16,728 students proved it: every 1-point increase in Litcoder score was associated with a 1.43% higher probability of placement. Higher scores consistently correlated with better job categories and salary brackets.

Your Next Step

The candidates who stand out at top tech firms are not always those with the highest grades. They are those who build, experiment, and tackle problems without predefined answers.

The most important question isn't where you study. It's whether you're building the skills that top recruiters are actually looking for.

Ready to Build What Recruiters Are Looking For?

Take LNBE's SCAV assessment to measure your readiness across all four layers—Skills, Capability, AI-Augmented Development, and Velocity.

Get a personalized score and a roadmap to become the candidate that Google, Microsoft, and top GCCs can't ignore.

References

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