

I asked Qs 1 and/or 2 based on their original responses to the FB poll, and then in some (not very structured) cases followed up with whichever of the latter three questions seemed relevant. In a couple of cases I asked personal follow-up questions, indented above their replies with an '>'

- 1) 'Given that you selected the option about EA orgs not paying enough/not having good enough perks, I wanted to ask your impression of a) your first guess at how much you would expect to get paid at the orgs you might have been interested and b) the minimum salary you'd actually be willing to work for. Also, can you think of any non-income related perks they could hypothetically offer that would make you willing to work for something closer to a)?'
- 2) 'Given that you ticked 'career capital' as a concern I have a question about how you interpreted the question - was your concern that (in your former life as a software developer) you wouldn't have got good enough software dev experience, that you wouldn't have got enough of some other important type of experience that you might have gotten from a different software job, that working at an EA org just wouldn't look that great on your CV, or something else? (and if so, what?)'
- 3)
  - how much total experience do you have as a software dev (or related role)?
  - do you do any volunteer and/or hobby coding outside work?
- 4) The reason I'm asking about this is that I'm looking into the idea of setting up a tech org which is itself a charity, at least part-funded by donations rather than payments. The elevator pitch is that it would be more appealing for developers to work for than a traditional EA org, both by having a more diverse range of projects than the typical 'maintain our one website', and by being a bigger tech team who can peer review each other's stuff. It would also allow more granular distribution of tech work among very small orgs who might not have the budget to hire an agency, and probably don't have enough work for a single developer.

I'm hoping it could pay close to if not full market rates, and have relatively flexibility about eg full time vs part time work - though it would have some challenges of its own to deal with re incentives and longer term commitment to projects that need it (and many others!).

So - if you could work for such an org, to what extent if any would it address your concerns about doing EA tech work?

- 5) You also selected 'I want to work in a larger tech department (5+ people)'. Suppose you had the option to work at a department (or in this case an agency), with fewer than 5 FTEs, but those FTEs were divided between >5 employees (ie some worked part time). Would that improve things from your perspective, or make them worse, and either way by how much? Assume you would also have the option of working part time, and that you could arrange for your hours to overlap somewhat - but feel free in your answer to include any clarifications/other conditions that would be relevant to you.

**Alice (asked 2, a variant of 5)**

My background was in finance then moved to tech/ data science. So reflecting on my career, the career capital I got at Goldman in terms of training, network, prestigious name and projects worked on has been so valuable for me. But I wasn't in a software role then, I was in sales.

Since stepping into tech, I have worked and learnt in startups. This was great for the pace, but perhaps less structured training. I still think it was a fantastic way to learn those skills.

For the question on number of employees, for me that represents the number of people I can learn from and the potential to have mentors that work in a similar function to you but not in your direct team. Again, that's something I really valued at Goldman.

Also to add context, I'm now joining Entrepreneur First to start my own startup (keen for it to be for a socially impactful cause) - so the question around "would you join a department..." are less relevant for me

> Re the second q, let's assume the amount of contact hours you had with other developers was roughly constant, but in one scenario there was N developers, and in the other scenario there was N+1. Does the latter sound any better or worse to you, all else being approximately equal?

Depends on the size of N 😊. If N is 5 then yes. If N is 100, then no

(Yes meaning sounds better)

**Bob (asked 1, 4, 5) - plans to live in London (CS degree, no paid coding experience)**

Sure thing,

Ok so my current model for EA/tech things is that more longtermist orgs tend to maybe pay more (maybe due to talent bottle neck). Deepmind/open ai/Miri I imagine pay very well, founders pledge I imagine also pays well. I imagine that givedirectly may pay their engineers less well. So I'd imagine that Research engineering positions at ai safety orgs maybe start at £80k (very good

imo), software engineering roles at give well recommended charities maybe start at £25k (not great).

I personally would probably be willing to start at 35k (in London) but depends on cost of living and pay progression. Culture and career cap are both bigger deals to me.

Standard trendy startupy perks appeal to me (free meals, good time off, nice offices) althous I wouldn't be surprised if this wears off quickly one you have experienced it.

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(Re 4)

I think this would address my concerns around pay and if the vision is to offer a similar techy experience to typical startups/big tech companies (social events, fun offices, meals ...) Then I would find the perks quite appealing. One concern would be around career cap. How credible is this organisation Vs working somewhere more established (although I might have the same qualm about working in certain startups). One concern I'd have about the model would be wrt incentive structures (the market is arguably much more objective wrt quality than donors) but within EA I am less concerned about this

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(Re 5)

I think that this would a bit worse when close to the counterfactual of 4 full time staff and progressively worse as you increase staff number (and decrease their individual hours). The main things that would make it better is if people worked at least 4 days per week and during those 4 days our days had a lot of overlap and we were working out of the same physical space (post covid).

I actually think that 4 days per week with 5 staff could be preferable to 4 staff at 5 days per week, but idk how close 4 days per week is to most people's view of part time

### **Charlotte (asked 1, 4, 5) - London, 8 years exp, a little open source work**

My answer to that was almost entirely a cached thought, mostly based on EA ~8 years ago and so likely not accurate now. Still:

a) 40-60k?

b) I would probably be willing to work for 50k or so, since I'm planning to give away a lot of my surplus earnings anyway, and if I thought my work was directly more useful than that then that would be enough.

For me personally, I also just don't expect that I would find the work that interesting, which is important for me being able to work well.

Regarding the money, I was also answering based on my impression of other people. It's pretty easy to earn 100k+ in today's tech job market, and a 50% pay cut is a hard sell psychologically for a lot of people even if they think it's better on net.

Finally, I can't remember whether I said this, but I think the replaceability argument seems strong for tech workers in EA. I'm not sure that value alignment matters as much as it does for researchers and strategists, and it seems like EA orgs should be able to get by with commodity tech workers (although they're expensive!).

I think an EA dev is likely to be only marginally better at their job (not true for all roles! But if you just e.g. need a functional website), so the main effect of taking the job atm is to save the org money. It seems to me that someone who's committed enough to earn X less working for an EA org could be committed enough to donate X working for market rates.

As I write this I think of a wrinkle: if the org starts paying market rates, and then hires our hypothetical EA dev at those rates, then they're neither getting cheap labour or donations.

So I'm confused. But it seems to me that in general EA orgs shouldn't buy commodities (e.g. pencils) from special EA suppliers. And it seems like in many cases developers are commodities.

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(Re 4)

Hmm, so basically a charity focused tech consultancy that partially subsists off donations? I guess my immediate question is: I could either donate X to your org in order to allow you to offer a charity Y services subsidised by X, or I could donate X to Y to allow them to pay the market rate and not need the subsidy - why should I donate to your org?

Here's one argument. In the past I talked to a couple of people who worked at tech consultancies focused on charities, and they said it was very hard to get work, which they thought was often because charities undervalued the advantages that better tech would give them, and so (incorrectly) perceived it as too expensive. If you believe this is true for EA orgs as well, then your org would allow donors to make tech work more appealing for charities, without relying on them to make that assessment (by just giving them the money directly). I don't know how compelling an argument this is, since it relies on an assumption that the orgs in question are being irrational about their resource allocation!

I think such an org would be quite appealing to work for, however (modulo the question of whether it's a good idea!). I would be worried about it's sustainability, I guess (but then I'd probably feel similar working directly for an EA org!).

For me personally consultancy is generally less appealing, partly because I have quite a bit of specialised knowledge at this point, and I lack experience in a lot of the stuff that you'd probably end up doing. I doubt any EA orgs need a compiler 😊

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(Re 5)

so the things that I actually want are:

- team feeling/camaderie. I don't actually know how it would feel in that situation, but I doubt you'd get it from the clients, so you probably want to have a good team internally.
- people to work with and learn from sustainedly. Again, I don't really know how this would feel in a consultancy, but unless you're actually working with your colleagues I'm not sure how much you'd learn from them. Maybe you'd learn from the clients.

Basically I'd worry that I'd be lonely and stagnant!

The working conditions sound ambiguous between slightly positive and slightly negative to me

> If you could tweak the parameters to bias them in your favour keeping costs approx constant, is there any obvious way you would do so?

not sure. These seem to be issues I'd have with most consultancy-style work, and part of the problem is I don't actually have experience of what that's like, maybe it would be fine. Probably something like "have everyone all together in one place at the same time to encourage team bonding etc." would be good, but I think that would probably be quite costly esp in terms of flexibility.

Might be good to ask some people with consulting experience what made it better or worse for them!

### **David (asked 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) - London, 12y exp, a little work on side occasionally**

Both of those answers are really about compensation, although I suppose if I worked at an EA org at the end of my career then career capital wouldn't be a concern (unless I unexpectedly needed to keep working after 65, but I think that is unlikely). I think Miri might be an exception to the lower salary thing, so I will exclude them. <salary guess and expectations withheld on request>. Although an awesome perk would be the ability to work part time (which would also be really helpful if I was at the end of my career and/or bringing up a family at that point in my life). Or I guess a really low productivity expectation, but I guess no-one really does that, because it's better to just offer part time hours - the employee gets more free time and the employer gets more productivity.

Although, my views on this might change over time, e.g. if I pay off my mortgage early, or if I move somewhere where the cost of living is lower, or if I find I'm unable to have children.

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(Re 4)

I'd probably still prefer to earn to give

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(Re 5)

I don't think it would improve things to have 5 people with some part time. The point of being in a larger department, for me, is (a) a better division of labour, so a more reasonably-defined role rather than a jack-of-all-trades, and (b) a greater feeling of job security

**Elizabeth (asked 2)**

I think dev experience, potentially with CV effects too.

Dev experience and rate of technical improvement is probably larger (as a factor)

CV concern is just that I'd expect less brand name from an EA org.

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(Re 4)

I think it sounds good! The devil is going to be in the execution though

**Frances (asked 2, 4)**

Hi Sasha, a mix of 1 (not enough software dev experience) and 3 (doesn't look good on CV), I'd say at a 70/30 ratio.

Mostly that working at a small non-profit signals to potential future employer that I haven't been exposed to best practice, and other benefits usually associated with bigger, for-profit organisations (This concern was particularly significant at the beginning of my career, it's decreasing with every additional year of experience)

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(Re 4)

I think your idea to have a group of devs (rather than being the only dev at an org) addresses it significantly, the more experienced and high-calibre the other devs the more.

**Garry (asked 1 & 2, 3, 4) 2-4 years experience. Strictly no but practically treated as if I am for a degree. (Mixed undergrad + half a master's)**  
**No volunteering**

My thoughts on career capital was that, for the EA aligned or eng jobs I had seen, the level of engineering ability of those orgs was far less than say that at the average good tech firm. Hence working at them would lead to substantially less engineering skill development and far less opportunity to tackle interesting technical challenges/have good mentoring than I had received in the private sector.

The signalling aspect, how good things would look on my CV, wasn't a factor.

On pay/perks, my current expectation for salary is around 75k total comp which I'd say is pretty normal for a decent engineer with two - four years of exp in London. For people who have graduated with CS degrees and work at top tier tech firms (google, etc...), I'd say 100k is a more realistic salary. EA orgs I saw often offered salaries close to half that. The minimum I'd be willing to work for depends on the organization on job (more interesting problems/better career capital/more interesting org = lower requirement). At the moment I'd say my "average" minimum would be 45k although it would be higher for an org which I thought didn't have good potential for personal development (no real eng department/culture, simple tasks like maintaining a website) and lower for an org where I thought I would learn a lot (e.g: research engineer position at imperial)

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(Re 4)

A few thoughts from what you've told me so far. it sounds interesting but there are a few issues I can see coming up. Specifically:

- Org specific knowledge (e.g: their codebase, website etc...) is pretty useful and is one of the main reasons why orgs hire people full time in the first place instead of only using contractors. This is also true for understanding broader organizational goals and proposing technical solutions to them, which may not be possible for a 1 day a week contractor. Ditto for changing organization strategy with things like making an org aware of the value of analytics, targeted advertising, A/B testing etc... usually taking months if not a year or two of work and a good understanding of org dynamics
- You'll likely face a higher tax burden as you'll pay VAT for services rendered + ordinary NI contributions for employees. This can be avoided if you register as a non profit but you'll still need to deal with the additional costs arising from having your own firm and reporting requirements.

This is not to say I think your proposal is a bad one, it sounds like an interesting idea, just that I'd strongly suggest reaching out to various EA orgs and seeing how they would feel about it and what rates they would be willing to pay. It's also worth bearing in mind that this may be a hard sell to existing mid sized - large EA orgs as they'll already have their own engineers in-house.

### **Hamish (asked 2)**

I think it was a mix of all of those 3 things  
probably second one slightly less than the other two, but that might be me now rather than me at the time I answered

> Do you think working for a hypothetical EA tech agency would be more CV-friendly than working directly for one of the main EA orgs?

depends on the specifics, but likely it could

**Iona (asked 1, 2, 3, 4), London, experience 'depends what you count, between 1.5 -5 years'**

**Volunteers in 1. Impactlabs.io and 2. In EA. I'm now working on building an ikact projects hub and to connect people and projects. Plus some community building help.**

In terms of "Career Capital" - then yes some of the above:

1. I wouldn't have got good enough software dev (in my case Data Science + Product Management) experience. Also it's slightly specific since my current role is quite rare to find (at least that was my experience) so it's also the type of role (it's called "Deployment Strategist", which is somewhat of a solution architect, and it's between PM and actually building the technical solutions).

2. working at an EA org just wouldn't look as great on my CV as my current alternative. Given that I chose to go to a new unknown university (Minerva), it's really helpful for me to have a good familiar organization as a stamp on my CV rather than an obscure startup or org.

3. I assume orgs would pay at or below average market salary; around the 50k mark or below for a Product Manager role, or around the 70k mark for a solutions architect.

Since my opportunity cost is to earn double as much in a big tech firm, it's hard to choose not to. I would still consider sacrificing ~25% of my alternative salary for an organization I love and am super passionate about, so meaning at least 60-70k per year.

There's lots of benefits and perks that would be nice to have: Wellness budgets or generous wellness offerings, Learnings budgets or generous learnings offerings; potentially it could be



about working fewer hours (like, half a friday off) or diverting that to pure learning; strong community building with the workplace; and of course if it's a startup, then equity

...

(Re 5)

Interesting.

I think for me yes I would prefer to have a few more people where some work part time. This is to know more people and learn from them. But it couldn't be all since there should be some committed core to the team.

And in my case maybe i would prefer to work part time as well but only if I'd decide to go the more independent route then

For me I mainly would necessarily HAVE to have a working environment which is at least a high growth, highly motivated, challenging, learning and grow oriented environment. Like a start up. I worry that if it's a public sector work (with lower pay and conditions) it doesn't attract the same talent, the motivation of everyone is lower, and there isn't that much growth and ingenuity

**Jamie**

I know that I tend to prefer larger engineering teams, like 15-100s.

I'd be happy working on a team that included part-timers, as that is a work schedule I'd like to have for myself. I am wary of how it will impact engineer and team velocity and if those expectations/standards are properly understood by product owners, managers, and executives.

**Kevin (asked 1)**

I don't remember filling this out as it was probably a long time ago but I think I was probably thinking more about how some of the better non EA tech companies do all sorts of things for their employees and I guess that EA ones might not be able to do that, not just because they're EA but because the bigger more prestigious places to work just offer more than most places. I was probably working at Goldman Sachs at the time I wrote this and their benefits are fantastic.

As for how much I expect I might get paid at EA places I would think maybe 10-20k less than other places at least but that's a wild guess and I'm realising I'm not actually very well informed on the topic. I'm not sure how easy it is to volunteer software engineering experience for EA purposes so it could be more if I needed an industry change.

As for the minimum salary if work for that would depend on where my career is at, currently I wouldn't move jobs for less than 70k, but I wouldn't want to stick at 70k forever as a few years later I'd expect to be on 100k as a senior engineer, and then options for team lead and more will be less likely at EA places for developments afterwards for example.

I think another big thing about whether I would want there that I didn't mention was what the work was itself. I'm personally specialised in distributed systems, I do Java and AWS, which I could be flexible on, but cloud based APIs and distributed systems with monitoring, alerting, high availability, CI/CD automation is the sort of area I would like to continue in.

Also I don't know how promotional opportunities would work in an EA setup but I'd want to work on my career, continue to rise, and make team lead at some point - I'm not looking for a dev job I can sit in for the rest of my life capped at senior engineer