

EPISODE 1547

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FT: So Money episode 1547, corporate recruiter, Farah Sharghi, on secrets to landing your dream job right now.

***FS:** Corporate recruiters such as myself, people who work at companies and not at staffing agencies, we are not compensated on how much you get in your salary. Meaning like my metrics of my measurements of success are not based on how much money you get in a salary negotiation. What it's based on are things such as how many offers did you close, how long did it take you to close this requisition, did you close it quickly or not. So recruiters are also incentivized to close a job quickly, so they can move on and work on other roles."*

[INTRO]

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FT: Welcome to So Money, everybody. I'm Farnoosh Torabi. If you are in the job market or think you might be in the next few months or next year, you want to listen to this episode and take some notes. Our guest is Farah Sharghi. She's the Director of Recruiting and Human Resources at Dil Mil, which is a South Asian dating app based in San Francisco. She's worked as a technical recruiter at so many top companies. In addition to Dil Mil, her resume includes Google, Lyft, Uber, TikTok, and the New York Times.

Farah also has a fast-growing social media presence where she shares her best job hunting and interviewing techniques on Instagram and TikTok. This is lesser known advice that really works like how to use AI, how to enhance your online resume to truly stand out on LinkedIn and get to the top of the pile, how to identify red flags when you're interviewing for a position, signs maybe you shouldn't work there. Farah began her career as a software engineer within the digital imaging space. She is an expert in technical recruiting and understands what drives companies to hire from the inside out.

So lots of good juicy behind the scenes today. Here's Farah Sharghi.

[INTERVIEW]

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FT: Farah Sharghi, welcome to So Money. Or can I say **[inaudible 00:02:27]**, my Iranian best friend on the Internet and now on So Money. Welcome. I can't wait to learn all about how to win on the job market. You're killing it with your advice. That's why I called you in because I'm like we need to get Farah on the show and tell us all the things.

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FS: Thank you. Thank you for such a wonderful warm welcome. Appreciate it.

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FT: Yes, absolutely. Always here to support my Iranian besties. Farah, but you are super-duper qualified. I mean, I couldn't think of a better person to talk about what I want to talk about right now, which is how we can all be more successful on the job hunt, whether that's learning how to leverage artificial intelligence and ChatGPT. Like should we really have it writing our cover letters? Do we even write a cover letter? All the red flag things that might come up during your interview.

For those of us who are perhaps coming out of a transition, whether that's a layoff or being home for a while, now going back into the job market, how to address gaps on the resume. I think that's something that is patterned right now. A lot of us have gaps for a variety of reasons. But let's talk a little bit about you. So fascinated with how you have managed to have a full-time profession in recruiting and HR, as well as a very visible online platform, giving advice about job hunting and job interviewing skills. A lot of people would be afraid to do this because what is my employer going to think.

So let's start there because I think there's some advice even there for all of us to learn from you in terms of like how you're operating as both the Director of Recruiting and Human Resources at Dil Mil, a South Asian dating app, and the creator of farahsharghi.com on Instagram. Are you on TikTok?

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FS: I am and I got on TikTok because I was working at TikTok. So that's really where the journey began.

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FT: You've worked everywhere. Wait a minute. You've worked everywhere. Tell us more about you. I think you're fascinating.

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FS: Okay. Oh, thank you. So I'll start from the beginning of my career because then it would make more sense. Just like every good Iranian, I became an engineer. So my degree is in computer science. I got my degree during the first tech crash of the early 2000s. So a lot of the current tech landscape is very familiar to me, where you're seeing new grads in engineering who are not able to get in secure jobs. So that happened to me as well.

I ended up doing a lot of freelance work. Then eventually, I fell into working into finance. So I worked in personal wealth management. I had my Series 7, 63, 66. I was a private wealth manager.

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FT: Good for you.

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FS: Good for me. Yes. I did that for about a decade, and that's when I experienced my first layoff. So after that layoff, I had this moment of clarity, and I went, "Wow, I'm just helping wealthy people get wealthier." That's really what ends up happening in your financial career is that you start moving up the ladder, and you manage millions of dollars. I think at one point, my book was around \$350 million that I was managing.

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FT: Oh, my God.

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FS: So it's a pretty big book. Then I was looking for a job. The recruiter I was working with said, "You know, I think you'd be a great recruiter. Have you thought about going into recruitment?" I said, "Well, no. But I have recruited for my own teams. Let me give this a try." So that's how I got into recruiting. I started off in an agency. Then I ended up working at Google, Lyft, Uber, TikTok, the New York Times. Now, I'm here at Dil Mil.

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FT: Oh, my gosh. Give me some tea, something, like all those major publicly traded household name companies. A lot of people would say like that's the North Star. A lot of young grads graduating or young adults like, "If I could just get a job at Google or Uber." Tell us something. Tell us like a pro and a con of working for these front page news kind of companies.

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FS: Yes. I would say a fun pro is usually the food when you are in the office because it was pretty – I think I gained like 10 pounds working at Google because the food was just amazing, and it's always available.

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FT: As one should. Yes.

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FS: As one should. A professional plus, so when I had the offer from Google, I also had an offer from a startup that was based in San Jose. I was really weighing out the two because the startup had a greater opportunity in terms of learning and growth for me. But if I worked at Google, it really is that stamp of approval in Silicon Valley. I knew if I had that on my resume, it would really take me places, and it did.

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FT: Okay, okay.

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FS: So it does open up a ton of doors.

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FT: Was your engineering background helpful in your role as a recruiter? I think this is also helpful to listeners who want to make a pivot and something that seems such an aberration. But tell us about how it all fed one another.

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FS: Absolutely. So I grew up around engineering my whole life. My father was a university professor in engineering, and I was always on a university campus. I was always around software and hardware. So when I went to Google, I was recruiting for Google X, which is their moonshot factory. So these are usually the special projects. In this case, it was the Android team, so the phones, all of the home products. I was hiring primarily reliability engineers, so hardware reliability.

Taking these engineering courses were super helpful because I got it. So I was able to have thoughtful conversations with my hiring managers who are really the Yodas of their team because engineering managers at Google can do it all. They can be the whole team. They're not just managing your time cards. They're the person you go to with questions on anything, and they should be able to answer them. So that's really where the engineering degree helped, especially when it comes to like the integration of software and hardware.

That's why when people are trying to make a pivot in their career, they need to look at their transferable skills and realize that, hey, you know what, I haven't coded in 10, 15 years. But I still remember all of that training and all of the knowledge that I had, and I was able to apply it in my current role.

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FT: Speaking of transferable, your skills as a recruiting expert ninja also transferring to your personal, your personality-driven profile online where you're giving incredible tips for the modern worker on all the social platforms, how did you start that? Advice for somebody who's like, "I have a lot of transferable skills that I think could be in service of an audience on social media. How do I do it? And also, how do I do it, so I don't piss off my employer?"

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FS: Okay, that's a loaded question. So I'll start with the talk where as to why I even got on social, why I started creating content. That was never my intention. What happened was I was working at TikTok, and I had not downloaded the platform. So I finally downloaded it. Then an hour later, I was like, "Oh, my God. Mind blown. Where did the time go?" So I kind of doom-scrolled for a bit.

Then the algorithm is smart, and it will show you what you want to see. So I started seeing people who were not experts in talent acquisition give harmful advice to people and give people advice such as lie on your resume, lie in interviews and just – it's one thing to professionally lie. It's another to actually flat out lie, right? You don't want to do that. I just said, you know what, I have to start making content.

I didn't even speak in my first videos. I could not speak. It was just me with text on the background. Finally, slowly, I started speaking. Then I started to get more comfortable talking in front of a camera. Now, it's almost, I think, three years ago.

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FT: Oh, my gosh. Was that – so it was during the pandemic, TikTok. I think anyone who got on TikTok in the pandemic had some tailwind because TikTok was really trying to push the influencers and the content out. What's your thesis on TikTok? I'm not really – I don't know. I can't – yes, I just can't.

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FS: You got to have thick skin. You have to have thick skin on TikTok because it can be a treasure trove of comments from folks. So it's totally up to you. But I do believe in diversification. I'm sure you do as well, given you talk about finance. So it's better to diversify out your platforms and know who your audience is. I believe that with the TikTok audience, it's a bit of a younger generation. Of course, as time moves on, the older generations tend to adopt the platform more often. We're starting to see that with TikTok as well. But Instagram is great. YouTube is awesome. So, yes, I think give it a chance.

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FT: All right. Let's move on to your fantastic advice. I want to dedicate the rest of our time together to your top tips for the modern person looking for work. Starting with tech because we know tech has been really affected in the last couple of years, at least, as far as like the layoffs are concerned. The mass layoffs at least started a lot in tech. You heard about it. Now, it's more widespread. But is tech coming back? Where are the hot jobs?

I know that the employment rate doesn't really tell the full picture. It looks like everyone who wants a job can get one, and yet people are struggling to find work. So you tell us. What's the temperature on the job market? Where is it hot? Where is it cold?

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FS: Yes. I would say that there has been a shift where I do believe during the pandemic, companies over-hired, especially the big tech companies. I have friends at all the Feng companies. Definitely, at Meta, there's been content out there, and I can validate that it's true that these companies over-hired their teams. There were teams that really didn't have a lot to do. So Meta recognized that, okay, we really need to start restructuring these teams. But the people they hired are awesome.

So I have friends. Like I had a friend who worked for Google for 11 years, was impacted. Two months later, got a job at Meta. So you're starting to see these tech workers getting laid off from one company and either getting rehired. Or they're just moving to other tech companies. When we think of tech, we think of big tech. Or we think of the unicorn companies. So they're Liu Fengs. There's Uber and all these other big companies.

There are other companies that do specialize in tech. They may be older tech, right? So we can look at like HP. Or we can look at companies like Abbott Labs. I think there are some opportunities that people aren't necessarily looking at because they think, "Oh, let me look at the shiny pearl over here," which is like Netflix or what have you. But there are still opportunities in tech.

Of course, AI is changing the landscape. I don't know if you've seen some of the recent findings that have come out. But ChatGPT isn't producing the level of output that it used to. It's actually like getting dumber over time. So I think they're trying to fix that. Yes. So the pendulum is swinging the other direction.

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FT: What? That's a surprise. You think that it would get smarter. Everyone's like, "Oh, it's just going to get smarter." What's going on?

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FS: That I don't know. But machines aren't people. People program machines.

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FT: Yes, thankfully.

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FS: Thankfully, yes.

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FT: I say the artificial is there. The intelligence is not – well, speaking of AI, maybe we could pivot now to talking a little bit about leveraging AI, smart ways to use AI on your job hunt, whether that's maybe a letter or how can we use AI to enhance our resumes. How are you applying AI? Or how will you recommend applying AI to the job search?

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FS: I think everybody should be using AI. AI is an assistant. It's just an assistant tool. It's not going to take over every single job out there. But if you can use it the smart way, it will save you just a ton of time. So from the moment that you want to do research on the type of companies that you want to apply for, you can ask, let's say in this case, ChatGPT or Bard, “Looking to interview at X, Y, Z company. Can you give me information about their mission and values?”

You also have to keep in mind that with ChatGPT, their database, I think, goes up to November 2021. So they're not going to be completely up to date with all of the news. But you can find out more about what what's really driving that business, right? So let's say you apply for a job, and you get that initial interview with a recruiter. Great. Ask ChatGPT. What are some great answers that I can give if I'm being asked, “Tell me about yourself,” given my credentials? You can paste part of your resume into ChatGPT, and it will give you some answers. So use that. Use the power of AI to really help you practice.

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FT: I want to get into some of those Q&As that we all come across during interviews. You have wonderful scripts that I've been watching on social media. So, guys, just got to follow Farah. I mean, she's – whether you're in the job market now or not, it's just fun to like – because we've all been there. We've all gotten these ridiculous questions like how much do you want to make and how would you deal with a difficult co-worker, which you say is a red flag because they probably have a difficult co-worker.

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FS: Exactly. Look, if the company is asking you anything about a toxic work environment, that is your indicator to dig a little deeper and possibly run, right?

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FT: I never thought of it that way. But my gosh, how many times have I gotten asked that during job interviews?

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FS: The follow-up question to that is if they ask you those questions during the interview, the question you can ask them is why is this position open. Is it because somebody left? Were they promoted? Or are you building a new team? So if they ask you this question and they're like, “Oh, how do you deal with toxic people, essentially,” and then you ask them why is this position open, and they said somebody left the team, oh, there's probably either a team member or a manager or someone around that's toxic. This is probably not a position that you want to put yourself in.

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FT: The questions are very revealing about – question the source of the question. Question the why, the motivation. We never do that as perspectives. We just are so happy to maybe be in the interview that we neglect to like think more constructively about like how do they even come up with this question. Why is it important to them?

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FS: Exactly. I think people need to realize they have more power in the interview than they realize. They're giving the company too much power. They're giving the recruiter too much power and the hiring manager.

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FT: Tell me if I'm right about this. I always think that if you're, let's say, round two, round three of the job interview, you've met with lots of people. Now, they're talking about money, how much – like going back and forth about negotiating. People sometimes are afraid to negotiate. But I say they're not going to – what are you afraid of? That they're going to stop interviewing you. I think that we have to remember that, and the employer at that point is equally as invested in making this work as you are, or at least like they're not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Like they've also recognized that this has been an investment for them, and they're going to try to maybe make it work. Or is that – am I being too optimistic? But I just feel like recognizing their POV is sometimes helpful to you as well. It gives you confidence.

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FS: Absolutely. I love – so as a recruiter, when I'm speaking with a candidate, it is the first thing I talk about within the first five minutes. I explain it to the candidate, and I go, hey, I know this is going to be a completely different conversation than what you're used to having. But I would initially like to discuss with you the compensation for this position. I'll cover base salary, bonus, benefits, all of that. We can have a discussion around it. And if that's in alignment with what your expectations are, then let's continue this conversation. How does this sound?

Not all recruiters do this. But as a candidate, you can do that. You can bring it up to the recruiter and say, "Look, I want to respect your time. I want to make sure this is an alignment for the both of us. Can we discuss compensation?" Then be silent. Silence is golden. I think people, when they're nervous, they just want to fill in the space and the void. Don't do that. Just be silent and be confident. If the recruiter doesn't want to talk about it, then they're hiding something. Something is being hidden, and it's probably because either the compensation is very low, and they know it. Or the company hasn't decided on the leveling, and there's something internal going on. But, yes, talk about it initially.

Just like you said, Farnoosh, I am a firm believer in we're not going to throw the baby out with the bath water. It's okay to negotiate, and don't be afraid to talk about money. Money is very important. We spend – this is the biggest –

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FT: Of course, it is.

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FS: To me, work is one of the biggest investments we're going to make in our lives. I think that when we look at the unemployment rate being as low as it is, you can see actually. You don't have to just guess. Like you can see when you go and try to apply for a job online. Like 2,000 other people have applied, so you may not feel like you do have that power or that voice. So maybe some advice around how to even get to the top of the pile, especially when you're applying online and maybe you don't know somebody. Is it really just like find a warm body to help you shepherd you through the process, even anyone, your neighbor?

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FS: Yes, anybody. By the way, you mentioned that 2,000 number. So when you're on LinkedIn and it shows that 2,000 people have applied, that's not how many people have applied. That's how many people have clicked the button to go and look at the application. Once it leaves LinkedIn and it goes to a company's careers page, they don't know what's going on.

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FT: Well, don't you think LinkedIn should update the word that they're using?

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FS: Yes.

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FT: Like 2,000 people looking at this job.

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FS: Oh, yes. Oh, and that's the other thing too. So there are some nuances to LinkedIn. Now, don't get me wrong. I like LinkedIn, so I'm not – I just want people to realize that as a recruiter, there's things that we know about LinkedIn that, let's say, the average person doesn't, only because we're in it all day every day.

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FT: Okay. So hold that thought. We'll talk about LinkedIn in a minute. Getting a job interview is –

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FS: Oh, getting a job interview.

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FT: That first step is hard enough sometimes.

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FS: I would tell people, if you really – okay, I'll explain how I got into Google, and then this will be a good story for others to listen to. I got my job at Google through a friend of a friend because my friend's friend – well, my friend said, “Hey, my friend works at Google and recruiting. Why don't you talk to him and see if there's any job openings?” I said, “That's great.” So I have a conversation. He goes, “Actually, we are hiring.” I go, “Oh, that's awesome.” He's like, “Yes, let me talk to my manager. I'll send your resume through.” “Awesome.”

That's how I got the interview. It was somebody I didn't even know who was a friend of a friend. Honestly, I found that those connections, those second-degree connections have been the most valuable connections for me and my career, more so than my own friends.

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FT: So even you having a friend who has a friend who works at Google is – some people may be like, “Oh, how would I even know if I have that friend?” Like do we just start to – how do we start that process to identify that second-degree connection?

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FS: Well, first, we take a step back and we decide, okay, what do I want to be? What's the work that I want to be doing? What are the companies I want to work for? Identify those first. Then as you go out and you start talking to people, you meet people. Let's say you're at brunch with your friends, and then you just kind of make friends with the table next to you. You're like, “Oh, what do you do for work? Oh, my God. You work at Google. Oh, my God. I've always wanted to work there, and I want to do this. Would you mind referring me?” Most of the time, they're going to say yes. The reason why is because they'll get a bonus if you get hired. So that's number one.

The other reason is that at these larger tech companies, the recruiters have a mandate to action references, so any referred candidates. At Google, at the time I worked there, if a candidate was referred by an employee, the recruiter had to action the resume within 72 hours.

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FT: Oh. Wow, there's a mandate. Wow. I didn't know that.

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FS: Yes.

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FT: You talked about lies on TikTok, professional lies versus TikTok lies. Can you break that down a little bit? Give us some examples of what the culture is telling us to do, TikTok being the culture. As a professional recruiter and a person who works in human resources, like what's a safe way to sort of dance around a question that may put you at unease?

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FS: It's a good question. So I mean, flat-out lies are just blatant lies, right?

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FT: Yes. Well, you don't want to lie about where you went to college or that you worked somewhere or your years of experience, right? Those are obvious.

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FS: Exactly. But you'd be surprised.

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FT: We would like to think.

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FS: We'd like to think. But there are creators on TikTok who are telling people, "Just lie. HR is not going to check." It's like, yes, most companies do check. They have background checks. I've seen my own background checks. If they don't do a background check, some companies can ask for your W-2s or your pay stubs, just to verify employment. So those are things we don't want to lie about, right?

When a company is doing a background check, they will look at your dates of employment and the last title that you had held at that company. That's what shows up on the background check. In terms of lies, you can say – so this is us kind of bending things a little bit. I haven't made a video about this. But I'll put it on your show, so if the listeners can enjoy this.

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FT: Exclusive. You've heard it here first.

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FS: Exclusive. You don't have to put the month or day of your employment on your resume. So this also helps to address any gaps. So you can just put the years of your employment and put the year of your graduation. But you actually don't even have to put your year of graduation. So somebody is worried and concerned that they feel like they'll face age discrimination. Just put your education on there and don't put the year. Also, don't put your GPA unless you're a new grad. Other than that –

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FT: Yes, yes. I mean, people at a college will put their SAT scores on their –

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FS: Yes.

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FT: Okay. Unless I had a perfect score or even near that, I may –

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FS: Even –

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FT: Try to leverage that for as many years as possible. I just –

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FS: I'm going to milk that.

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FT: I couldn't wait to escape my SAT scores. Okay, let's talk about LinkedIn. We brought it up a little bit earlier. I was actually watching one of your videos about tools you can use to augment your LinkedIn profile. What's your advice for how to make the best LinkedIn impression?

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FS: Oh, my gosh. Well, first of all, I'll – we'll, again, take a little step back. So when recruiters use LinkedIn, if they work at a larger company, we have a tool called LinkedIn Recruiter. LinkedIn Recruiter is a license that companies purchase, and they're very expensive. What it does is it allows a recruiter to go in and do some Boolean searches. So Boolean search is like if you were to go into Google, for example, and you typed in like software engineer and Silicon Valley. You will pull up all of the software engineers in Silicon Valley that are listed in LinkedIn, and you want to be one of those people that can be found by a recruiter.

If you were to Google yourself, if you were to find yourself using as few search terms as possible, how would you do it? So think of it from that perspective of, okay, I do this work, and I

want a recruiter to find me. How are they going to find me? This is when you start using keywords in your LinkedIn profile. So that's a way to optimize for search. Now, they have a new feature where if you upload your resume into LinkedIn, a LinkedIn Recruiter can actually scrape through the resumes as well and actually find keywords in the resumes. It didn't – it wasn't able to do that in the past. So that's something important.

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FT: Is there a shortcut for getting those keywords? You mentioned a tool online that we can use.

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FS: Yes. I mean, you can use ChatGPT or Bard. You can, let's say, put in a job description that best describes what your background is and then ask it and say, "Hey, can you pull out the keywords from this job description that a recruiter would be searching for?" It'll pull them out. So take those words and incorporate them into your profile. So every job that you've had, find a way to incorporate maybe two or three keywords into each bullet point that best describes your background.

The other thing I would also say is your LinkedIn headline is super important because if you could see what I see when I look up LinkedIn Recruiter, when I get – when I search for a candidate, all I initially see is your profile photo, your LinkedIn headline, and then just a few blurbs of the – like a few little sentences of the companies you worked at and the time you worked there. That's all I see.

So when you have a LinkedIn headline, your headline should be like your – oh, what are these called at in movies? Not a tagline, logline. It's like a logline, right? So it's like leader in recruitment, director of HR and human resources, specializing in tech, yada, yada, right? I have some videos on this. I'm sure you've seen them. But that's also very important too.

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FT: I have seen them. I don't really use LinkedIn because I find that as a creator or entrepreneur, it's not as meaningful to me at this place in my career. Though I think it's great for community building. But I will say like people will message me, and months will go by, and I'll realize, oh, my God, these people messaged me. That was the only way they thought to reach me. It could have been urgent. But there have been some like gems of messages that I've gotten on LinkedIn that I'm like, "Oh, man. I should have really like followed up on this." But –

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FS: You can update your LinkedIn and have your email addresses there.

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FT: Yes. Oh, okay.

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FS: You can actually put in your headline if you want. For reach outs, email me at – so you can put that in your headline for PR inquiries or what have you. Put that there.

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FT: Please don't message me here. What are some things to watch out for? We mentioned one example. For example, if a recruiter is asking you about, well, how would you handle a toxic worker or something like that. What are some other maybe red flags as you are interviewing, and what can you even do about it? Like if someone is really pushing you to tell them your previous salary history, which we know in some states is completely illegal, at that point, for me, it's like a dead end. I'm like, "Oh, too bad I'll never be able to work here because this person is just so difficult."

I mean, what do you do if you really want to work at a company, but the recruiter is being tough and maybe even crossing a line? Do you take it as a sign like this isn't the right company for you? Or do you hope that maybe this person is not reflective of the overall culture there?

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FS: I'm in your camp, Farnoosh. I am not a fan of recruiters who just aren't transparent. So for me, as a recruiter, this has happened to me before too. So you go, "Wait, hold on. You're also a recruiter. Why aren't you telling me what's going on with the compensation?" I know this has happened to a lot of people because I get a lot of comments on my videos. I tell them like, look, just walk away because your time is so valuable. Do you really want to be going back and forth with a company who's not going to be honest with you? If they're not going to be transparent and honest with you at the beginning, what is it going to be like to actually work for them? So take it as a sign of what it could be like to work for this company.

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FT: So frustrating because I know as someone who's a job seeker, you are so hopeful. You get the interview. You're 50% there at that point, maybe 60% there. So to encounter someone who is difficult at the interview, it's such a bummer. I would say that if you got this far, you're going to get this far somewhere else. You're competitive. Don't feel as though you should just be happy to be there.

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FS: Correct, yes. I agree. Another – something that people can also leverage and utilize, especially if they're in a role where this keeps happening, is reach out to recruiting agencies. So there are recruiting agencies. Let the recruiter do the negotiating for you because they get paid based on what you get paid. It doesn't impact your pay. But if you get a job and you're paid hourly or you're paid a salary, they are compensated a percentage of your pay. So they are incentivized to actually get you a higher pay. Let them do the dirty work for you.

[00:30:53]

FT: Totally, yes. There's even been stories about how when people are negotiating over email, pretending you're like somebody else, like maybe you're Joe on the team who's now the

negotiator or the agent. Joe gets a better deal than if the individual – typically, if the individual is a woman, is negotiating herself on her own behalf. Having that middle person – I don't know. It makes them more objective and more clear-cut in some ways.

[00:31:25]

FS: Totally, totally.

[00:31:27]

FT: And fair.

[00:31:27]

FS: And fair. Yes, absolutely. I mean, it can be really nerve-wracking. I think because I've been negotiating for so long, and this is just my job to negotiate, I guess, for me, it's more second nature. But for those of us who don't negotiate very often, I would say be comfortable in the uncomfortable nature of it. It's okay to feel uncomfortable and just accept that it's going to be uncomfortable. That's okay.

But also realize and take that step back and try to step away from the discomfort and be more rational about what's going on. The company will try to hire you for as little money as they possibly can get away with. It doesn't matter what the company is, right? It's true.

[00:32:08]

FT: Yes. True, true. It's true. Do you find that since, say – I don't know. When did we start having more conversations around salary transparency? I would say in the last few years, especially because I've been seeing there's always that viral story about – you've must have seen this. This person in HR who –

[00:32:29]

FS: Mercedes?

[00:32:31]

FT: What's that?

[00:32:32]

FS: Was it Mercedes?

[00:32:32]

FT: I don't – oh, yes. She gave – she lowballed basically an employee and was like bragging about it. It was also like here's when you don't negotiate. You're going to get lowballed or something like that. People were like, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Why was your goal to lowball this person?" I think she got fired. Then since then, there's – I've been there with people who've talked a lot about salary transparency and the need for that at companies, at least, and how that helps to level the playing field.

Are you seeing more of that? Or is it – I mean, obviously, you still have to negotiate. But are prospective employees at least arriving at the negotiation with a little bit of a better chance because there is this pressure, especially on the big companies that are in the spotlight to do what's right?

[00:33:19]

FS: Absolutely. I think there are platforms such as the Blind app. So I don't know if people are aware of the Blind app, but you can sign up with a work email. So people will anonymously talk to each other and say, "Hey, I got an offer from Google. This is my offer. Is this fair?" Other people from Google will chime in and say, "Yes, it is. No, it's not." There's also websites like levels.fyi which is all self-reported data. So please keep in mind, this is not audited information. But it will give you a good benchmark and a sense of what to expect from an offer. So, yes, I'm a

huge proponent of salary transparency. I always put it on my job postings. I always discuss it at the very beginning because it's only fair.

The other thing I want to mention is that internal recruiters, so corporate recruiters such as myself, people who work at companies and not at staffing agencies, we are not compensated on how much you get in your salary. Meaning like my metrics of my measurements of success are not based on how much money you get in a salary negotiation. What it's based on are things such as like how many offers did you close, how long did it take you to close this requisition, did you close it quickly or not. Recruiters are also incentivized to close a job quickly, so they can move on and work on other roles. So keep that in mind too.

[00:34:35]

FT: Ah, that is such a good point.

[00:34:38]

FS: Yes.

[00:34:39]

FT: Yes. So it incentivizes you, I would think, to not lowball people because you want to like sweeten the deal and get them in as soon as possible because time is money. Time is money for everybody.

[00:34:48]

FS: Exactly. I would tell – so something I always say to my candidates too along that point is I promise you as your recruiter, my role is to get you the best offer I possibly can because everybody hates negotiating. I always get a nervous laugh, and I'm like, “No, I don't like negotiating. You don't like negotiating.” But my goal is to get you the best offer I possibly can, so we can close this, and you can start your new job. Plus, the candidate starts. They're super

happy. The company's super happy because they got the person that they wanted. Everybody wins.

[00:35:19]

FT: Farah, thank you for this insider baseball. This is such gold like to know all this behind the scenes. I would also think that a metric for the success of a recruiter is retainment. If you hire someone but then they leave in three months, maybe you didn't vet that candidate well enough to know if they're going to be a good fit because maybe they get there, and they realize, I am sorely underpaid. Or this is a toxic environment or what have you.

[00:35:44]

FS: I know. Well, recruiters are not incentivized for that at larger companies because that's really the job duty of the hiring manager and not human resources. So I always say like it's my job to bring them in. It's your job to keep them.

[00:35:57]

FT: I always wonder about that when you buy like a dress from the store, and then you bring it back. That person made a commission when they sold it to you. Do they give back of the commission when you return it?

[00:36:05]

FS: I think so. That's what happens at recruiting agencies. So if a candidate leaves before a certain period of time, they have to pay back their fees.

[00:36:14]

FT: Oh. Well, that's a built-in incentive as well.

[00:36:18]

FS: Exactly.

[00:36:19]

FT: For those of us who are in transition, we have been out of the job for a while for what any host of reasons, what are some good ways to sort of button that up on the job interview? I would like to think that recruiters aren't as – they're not as picky about that anymore because they realize like life is full of uncertainty, and we can't expect that people are always going to have jobs all the time and no gaps in between work.

[00:36:43]

FS: Totally. I would – I'll give you an example. So when I – I once had a candidate whose mother passed of COVID, and so he had to take care of – he had to move. He had to go halfway across the US to move, take care of his family, take care of the mother's estate. So he was out of work for two years because he was working on all of those. So he was very transparent. Of course, I'm understanding, and that's terrible. I want to make sure that I can be as supportive of him and his journey as possible.

When it came time to interviewing him and we got to the debrief, so a debrief is when all of the interviewers get together to discuss a candidate. One of the interviewers brought up the gap in his resume. I stood up and said, "Listen, I've already discussed this with the candidate, and it is perfectly fine. Everybody has their own personal reasons as to why they have gaps in their resumes, and we shouldn't hold that against a candidate." That buttoned it up really quickly, and so –

[00:37:40]

FT: Yes. You've advocated for this person when they weren't in the room. I wish more companies could have – we need to clone you at all the companies, so we all get a fair shot and then get a job.

[00:37:51]

FS: Thank you. But in lieu of that, I think if you have a gap on your resume, no matter what it is, let's say you were sick, if you had cancer or if a family member was not doing well, or you just needed a mental break, whatever stories –

[00:38:04]

FT: Yes. That's a lot of us.

[00:38:06]

FS: It's a lot of us. Life happens, right? We're not all immune to life. This is what makes life worth living. So the good and the bad, right? We have to take it all in. Be as transparent with your recruiter as you feel comfortable. You don't have to tell them everything, but you can just be open and say, "For medical reasons, I had to leave the workforce. Everything's great now. I'm better, and I'm so excited to be interviewing with you." Also keep in mind, if you got the interview with the recruiter, don't worry about your gaps. The gaps have already fixed themselves because you're in front of the recruiter.

[00:38:42]

FT: Yes. True, true, true. I think that was something you said in one of your videos. They've already looked at your resume. They've done the math. They've seen maybe you were out of work for six months or what have you. They still called, so you're good.

[00:38:55]

FS: Yes, exactly.

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FT: No need to dwell on that.

[00:38:58]

FS: Now, if you have a resume that you've been sending out, and you're not getting any callbacks, then that's another issue of, okay, we need to address the resume and see what we can do on the resume to make it more appealing to recruiters and companies. So that's a whole another – that's another story. But in general, if you get the interview, it's a good sign. So be confident and feel comfortable knowing that whatever the reason is, whatever you're comfortable saying, it's going to be okay.

[00:39:23]

FT: Great. Farah, I knew this was going to be a fantastic episode. Thank you so much for hanging out with us and giving us all these gems. Farah Sharghi. I want to say Sharghi.

[00:39:35]

FS: Sharghi.

[00:39:36]

FT: It's just I can't, but I know. I mean, we were actually joking audience that she and I both have brothers that are named. What's your brother's name?

[00:39:44]

FS: His name is Kevin.

[00:39:46]

FT: My brother's name is Todd. So there you go. There's a story there, and mine is in *A Healthy State of Panic* coming out October 3rd. If you are curious to know how he got that name. But let's just say it's about the first-gen experience, the first-gen kids. I mean, I was born in 1980. He

was born in 1991. As time evolves, as your family evolves, as we spend more time in America, the names change.

[00:40:13]

FS: They do. Also, my brother and I have the same almost exact same gap as you and your brother. How ironic.

[00:40:18]

FT: Eleven years. Oh, my gosh.

[00:40:20]

FS: Yes, yes.

[00:40:21]

FT: I mean, yes, lots to unpack there. Well, Farah, thank you. I knew I'd love to spend time with you. I hope to meet you in real life one day. But in the meantime, keep rocking it on your socials. I'm loving everything you have to say. Thanks for all your help.

[00:40:36]

FS: Thank you so much for having me. It was pleasure.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:40:41]

FT: Thank you, Farrah, for joining us. Farah Sharghi, everybody. Check out her website at farahsharghi, S-H-A-R-G-H-I.com. Of course, that link will also be in our show notes. I'll see you back here on Friday for Ask Farnoosh. I hope your day is So Money.

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