

INTERVIEW NOTES — internal

Senior Backend Eng loop · Candidate: D. Hartley · Panel: 2x eng, 1x EM · 45 + 60 + 30 min

SYSTEM DESIGN (60 min)

- decomposed the image pipeline problem quickly, sensible service boundaries
- caching strategy good — thought about invalidation without prompting
- hand-wavy on failure modes at first (“we’d just retry”) — pushed on it, then gave a solid answer on idempotency + DLQs. needed the push though
- estimated capacity numbers confidently. didn’t sanity-check them
- ran slightly over time, we didn’t get to the scaling follow-up

CODING (45 min)

- clean, readable, wrote tests unprompted
- slower than most candidates at this level? finished the core task with ~5 min to spare, no extension
- talked through trade-offs really well while coding — best narration we’ve had this loop
- one off-by-one caught by his own test, fixed calmly

EM CONVERSATION (30 min)

- asked v good questions — on-call load, incident culture, how we run retros
- stakeholder conflict example (disagreement with PM over deadline) took a long time to get to the point. outcome of the story was unclear — did the feature ship or not??
- mentions mentoring twice, examples were a bit thin when probed
- genuinely enthusiastic about the product — is an actual active seller, talked about the platform knowledgeably
- said he prefers “measured pace, done properly” — not sure how that fits our current push?
- great energy in the last 10 mins, panel warmed to him

MISC

- hasn’t worked at our exact scale (their MAU ~2m, we’re bigger)
- but the event-driven migration story was strong and relevant
- salary expectations in band