



Asking Questions In the Job Interview

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When interviewing for a career opportunity, you should always keep in mind that the interview is not only an opportunity for the organization to decide if you are the right candidate for the position, but also is an opportunity for you to decide if the company is the appropriate employer for you. Asking well-planned questions during the interview is a good method to use in making your evaluation.

Questioning Prospective Employers

The questions you ask during an interview may come from two different sources. First, you should always prepare at least four or five questions before your interview and have them listed in your portfolio when the interview begins. Secondly, as the interview progresses, you should note any points about which you felt unclear. These points may be clarified at the same time as you ask your other questions.

When should you ask your questions? As an interview draws to a close, employers typically ask, "Do you have any questions?" This inquiry opens the door of opportunity for you to gather more information about the employer through questioning. If an employer does not offer you this opportunity, you may want to politely express your interest in asking a few questions.

When asking your questions, be careful not to interrogate an interviewer with a lengthy list of questions. Basic information about the prospective employer should be obtained through researching the company prior to your interview, not by asking questions during the interview. Questions during the interview should pertain to specific details of the position, in-depth facts about the organization that could not be obtained through your company research, and/or points needing clarification from the interview.

✓ **HOT TIP:** Don't talk more than you listen during an interview.

Potential Questions to Ask

- Informational questions (Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How?)
- May I take a few notes? (Caution: Constant note-taking during the interview may project a bad impression by focusing your attention away from your interview and by implying that you are conducting the interview.)
- How would you describe the company's business focus? Core values? Mission? Goals?
- What are the trends in revenues and profits?
- What makes this firm different from your competitors?
- What are the company's competitive strengths compared to its major competitors?
- What is the greatest challenge that the company will face during the next year?
- Where is the company going in the next three to five years?
- What are the short-term and long-term strategic directions for the company?
- Does the company have any plans for expansion/new product lines?
- What areas do you see that need the most improvement within the company?

- How would you describe the corporate culture? (When asking this question, be sure you understand what you are asking. Don't risk someone saying, "What do you mean," or "In what way" and finding yourself unable to respond.)
- What are the specific responsibilities of the job?
- What qualities would the ideal candidate have?
- What would you expect of me in this position?
- Is this a new position?
- May I see an organizational chart? Where does this position fall within the organization?
- How does this position interact with the rest of the organization?
- How does this job contribute to the mission or goals of the company?
- How do you see this job evolving?
- What education and training programs does the company provide?
- How long is the typical training program? How many people train annually?
- What latitude would I enjoy in determining my goals, work objectives, due dates and measurement methods?
- What resources are available to perform this job?
- How, when, and by whom will I be evaluated in this position?
- Have others who started in this position been promoted? Into what positions?
- Where can this job lead for a top performer?
- Is overtime part of the position?
- How much time will this position require me to travel/spend away from home?
- When/where are employees transferred?
- Is there a dress code?
- What is the company's record of employment stability?

- Is there anything else I need to know?
- I am very interested in this position. What is the next step?
- How did you get started in the company? What made you successful?
- Why do you enjoy working for your firm? Why do you think I should enjoy working for your firm?
- How will the final hiring decision be made? By whom? When?

NOTE: Use your best judgement in evaluating how the interview has progressed before asking some of the questions listed above.

Asking about "What's in It For Me?"

Questions regarding salary, benefits, vacation or any other areas that suggest, "What's in it for me?" should be avoided during an initial interview. The initial interview should focus on what you can provide to the company and not on what the company can do for you. You should be prepared to negotiate your salary and benefit requirements during a later opportunity and after a job offer has been extended.

However, if the interviewer introduces the issues of salary and benefits do not avoid discussing them. When addressing these issues in an initial interview, try to get the interviewer to disclose what the company considers equitable or what the organization has budgeted for the position. If an interviewer insists that you provide a figure, begin by providing a salary range unless asked for a set figure. If an interviewer demands a set figure during your initial interview, simply state the top figure in your range being careful not to price yourself out. The Salary Negotiation Ready Reference (G7) can provide you with more tips for resolving salary and benefit issues with a potential employer.