



The Most Important Questions You Should Ask During Your Interview

1. What is the company culture like?

Company culture means more than happy hour and free coffee. Candidates need to ask questions about the dynamics of a company's environment. That means discovering what the company's communication channels are and how they match your personality.

If you're a really outgoing and chatty person, you want to find out what the meetings are like, are they speak-when-asked-to or are they interactive?

If the company is hierarchical, and who speaks during meetings is determined by a pecking order, then the position is probably not well-suited for a creative type brimming with ideas.

2. What constitutes success?

Don't become preoccupied with the power structure in an interview. Just because you're looking for a job, it doesn't mean you can't show excitement about a position and ask the interviewer about how the company would measure your success if hired.

Within context, there's no presumption in asking questions like, 'If today is my 90th day on the job, what criteria are you looking at to determine if I've been successful?'. This information gives you the ability ahead of time to ask yourself if you're capable of accomplishing the company's goals for your position.

3. Who previously held this position?

When a position opens up, there's always a backstory. Was the previous employee promoted? Was he or she let go? Is it a new role, created out of an expansion at the company, or, on the other hand, a consolidation of positions?

These may not be the first questions a candidate thinks to ask, but they're essential and far from intrusive.

People need to know what they're getting into and how this job has been performed in the past.

If the company promoted the previous employee, then you can ask what made him or her successful and learn from that experience.

On the flip side, it's important to ask whether there have been a series of individuals in roles for short periods of time with a high turnover rate. It can be an uncomfortable question to ask, but it's critical to ensure that you don't become a statistic there.

4. What keeps you here at [company]?

This is one of my favorite questions. Why?

- The interviewer doesn't expect this question — so they reply honestly.
- The answer gives you a more holistic and philosophical picture of the company — “I stick around because I get to work on any project that I fancy — no cubbyholes for the employees.”
- The interviewer is impressed with your question. In fact, a number of my clients, after being hired, asked what was the decision-tipping point — the interviewer said this question.

5. Is there anything missing from my resume?

You may not feel comfortable highlighting your shortcomings during an interview, but you should, and for tactical reasons.

You need to think of yourself as a salesperson and set yourself up to close.

By asking an interviewer if there's something missing or of concern on your resume, you give yourself an opportunity to address that problem before your potential employer makes a decision. Plus, you never know where that subsequent conversation might lead. More often than not, it'll open the door to showcasing more of your strengths and interests.

6. What comes next?

Don't be silent at the end of an interview. Even if you've asked a slew of great questions, you need to find out about the next steps so you can close on a strong note.

Many people are afraid they'll impose at the end of an interview by asking more questions. But the worst thing you can do is not ask any questions. Employers want to hire positive and eager people, and you want to let them know you're interested by asking about the next steps.

After your interview ends, you should put yourself in the shoes of the recruiter, who, realistically, will be meeting with a handful of other people. How, then, might an employer's expectations evolve as the search progresses?

Candidates need to keep themselves in a recruiter's ear for this purpose — to demonstrate not only persistence, but also adaptability.

As a candidate, you never want to let an opportunity slip through your fingers because you haven't stayed on top of how you fit into a company's needs.