

Ten Great Questions to Ask at a Job Interview

By Paul Sloane

If you are going for an interview as a prospective employee then you should do some research. Read the job description and requirements carefully. Browse the web site to see how the organization presents itself. Search for news items and comments about the company on news sites and blogs.

For the interview itself you should dress smartly and appropriately. It is important to have some questions prepared and here are a few that could really help:

- 1. What exactly would my day-to-day responsibilities be?** It is essential that you clearly understand your role and the tasks that you would be expected to undertake. It is easy to make assumptions and get the wrong impression of what the work would be so it is vital for both sides that there is clarity in what is expected of you. If the interviewer cannot give a clear answer then this is a worrying sign, so politely follow up with more questions. Some people even ask to see exactly where they will sit.
- 2. What would be the expectations in my first quarter in the role?** What would you be expected to learn, achieve, accomplish? This is a business-like question which shows that you are thinking seriously about how to succeed in the role. It also helps you understand clearly the responsibilities and expectations.
- 3. What are the opportunities for training and career advancement?** This question serves two purposes. It helps you to understand where the job might lead and what skills you might acquire. It also signals that you are ambitious and thinking ahead.

4. **What is the biggest challenge facing the organization today?** This sort of question takes the interview away from the detail and towards strategic issues. It allows to you see and discuss the bigger picture. It proves that you are interested in more than just the 9 to 5 aspects of the job. It can lead to interesting discussions that can show you in a good light – especially if you have done some intelligent preparation. If appropriate you can follow up this question with some questions about the objectives of the department and the manager who is interviewing you.
5. **How would you describe the working culture here?** This question sounds innocuous, but you sometimes get revealing insights. Obviously, you take the answer with a grain of salt; your interviewer is hardly likely to describe any of the bad aspects of the company culture but it can still be useful.
6. **What do you like about working here?** After the interviewer has asked a number of questions about you it can make a good change to ask a gentle question about them. People often like talking about themselves and what they do. If you can get them talking about their job and their progress in the company you can learn useful and interesting things.
7. **What are the criteria that you are looking for in the successful candidate for this position?** The job advertisement may have listed what was wanted in a candidate, but it is very useful to hear the criteria directly from the interviewer. The more that you can discover about what they want and how they will make the decision the better placed you are to influence that decision.
8. **How do you feel that I measure up to your requirements for this position?** This follows on naturally from the previous questions. It may seem a little pushy but it is a perfectly fair thing to ask. In sales parlance this is a ‘trial close’. If they say that you are a good fit then you can ask whether there is any reason you might not be offered the job. If they say that you are lacking in some key skill or attribute then you can move into

objection handling mode and point out some relevant experience or a countervailing strength.

9. Would you like to hear what I could do to really help your department? If you want the job then this is a great question to ask at the end of the interview. Most interviewers will reply, 'Yes.' Drawing on what you have learned in the conversation, you can give a short sales pitch on why you fit the criteria and why your strengths and ideas will significantly assist the boss to meet their objectives. Make it short, direct and clear with the emphasis on the benefits for them of having you in the team. At the end ask something like, 'how does that sound?'

10. What are the next steps in the selection process? This is a very reasonable question to ask and helps you understand the interviewer's priorities, timescale and process. If it feels appropriate you might add that you would be happy to meet some other people from the organization or to make a short presentation if that would help. It shows that you are keen and professional.

Many candidates take a passive role at the interview. They competently answer the questions that are put to them but they never take the initiative by asking intelligent questions that steer the interview in a helpful direction. If you are a proactive candidate who asks the sorts of questions given above then you will be seen as more dynamic and you will significantly increase your chances of being offered the job.