

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN AN INTERVIEW

One of the most important pieces of interview preparation is developing a set of questions to ask the interviewer. Many interviewers say that is the questions job search candidates ask, not the answers they give, that determines who gets the job. In preparing for any interview, you should consider both what you will be asked, and what you will ask.

These questions to the interviewer accomplish several things:

- 1) they highlight the research you have done on the company;
- 2) they convey a high degree of competence and knowledge about the field/function;
- 3) they provide you with some insight into exactly what you may be getting into; and
- 4) they give you something to say when the interviewer asks, as they inevitably will, "What questions do you have?"

Finally, these questions will be necessary to dodge questions about salary (*See the salary negotiation resources on this website*)

You should create your own customized list of interview questions, based on your research into the field and the company. Type up the list of questions, and have it with you in the interview. Refer to it when asked what questions you have: "Let me just review my list of questions...you've answered many of them, but let me ask you this....."

Below are some ideas to get you started.

Questions about Expectations and Priorities

These questions are aimed at getting a clear sense of what the job will entail. Ask enough questions that you can see clearly what your day and week will be like, and what issues you will need to address immediately.

- If I get this job, and have a terrific first year, what will I have accomplished in that period?
- What are the most pressing issues that the person who takes this job will have to confront?
- What are the top three priorities for this position, and how much time do you expect to be devoted to these three priorities?

Questions About the Position

These questions will help you sniff out problems with the company, the supervisor or the position.

- Why is the position vacant?
Or
- Why has this position been created?
- What happened to the previous incumbent?
- What is the previous incumbent doing now?
- How long was the previous incumbent in the position?
- How long has the current supervisor been in his/her position?

Culture/Management Style

Questions such as these are open-ended, but if an employer can't describe the organization's culture or management style, then you should do further digging to find out what's going on.

- How would you describe the culture of this organization?
- How would you describe your management style?
- What do think employees say are the things they like most and least about working for this organization?
- If you could fix one problem with the way the organization does business, what would it be?
- How is performance evaluated and rewarded?

The Four Horsemen

When I prep a client for an interview, we always prepare responses to the questions I call the "four horsemen of the interview apocalypse:" greatest strength, greatest weakness, greatest success, greatest failure. Turn-about is fair play, so consider asking similar questions of the employer:

- What are your organization's greatest strengths?
- What is your organization's greatest weakness?
- What would you cite as your greatest success as an organization?
- Where would you say the organization had its blackest moment?