



JOB AND CAREER ADVICE

TYPES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER DURING YOUR INTERVIEWS

I'm often asked my opinion on what sort of questions are good to ask an employer during interviews. And while in future blogs I'll get into detail about specific questions and the rationale for asking them, today I want to paint with a broader brush. Let's have a look at varying types of questions and what you're trying to accomplish by asking them.

The interview is an exchange of information. The employer is trying to do two things. They want determine whether you have the necessary skills/experience to perform the work. They're also trying to get a sense for culture fit.

You also have two primary goals. You're trying to learn whether the position is something you can perform well. You're also trying to get a sense for whether the job & company are the right fit for you. After all, you may be able to do the work, but if you don't feel positively about your future boss or the company as a whole, there's a decent chance you wouldn't accept an offer if it came to that.

It's important to ask questions. But what kinds? Let's start by making sure you know to ask open ended questions and not closed ended ones. What's the difference?

Open ended questions are ones designed to encourage conversation. They can't be answered with a simple yes or no. They also aren't a multiple choice sort of question. Open ended questions typically begin with words such as how, where, why, what, etc.

Closed ended questions tend to restrict the receiver into answering with a yes or no. Examples of closed ended questions might begin with words such as do, did, are, is, will, could, would, etc. Typically you'll want to steer clear of closed ended questions.

Now that you understand the value in asking open ended questions, let's move on to information questions. After all, you're trying to determine whether this job is something you can do and would want to do.

Gathering information is important, but what sort of information takes precedence? Certainly questions aimed at understanding what'll be expected of you would make the most sense. Ask questions related to what they'll want this person to achieve and, possibly, what challenges that role faces today.

Avoid basic information questions – ones you could readily learn from a glance at the employer's website. "What does your company make," would be a lousy question. So would, "How long has this company been around?"

Those of us with any sort of background in sales will understand the value of asking good questions. As with the sales process, a candidate's questions should help to uncover the employer's wants and needs. As you begin to understand those needs, you can ideally tailor your responses with examples of how you've successfully tackled some of those same areas.

Remember, your goals with questions are to determine whether it's a job you can reasonably perform AND whether it's a place you'd like to work. Questioning can help with both areas as well as positioning you in the employer's mind as someone who comes to the interview prepared and engaged. Good luck!

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