

## TOP 4 QUESTIONS TO ASK IN A JOB INTERVIEW: HOW TO “BLOW AWAY” INTERVIEWERS WITH INCREDIBLE QUESTIONS



You're just about to wrap up a great job interview. You've aced every question the employer has thrown at you -- questions ranging from how you deal with difficult customers to your interpersonal style; you've even given specific examples of how you've handled past situations.

Then, the interviewer asks a final question. It seems more like a formality in contrast to the difficult questions you've already answered. Yet how you answer this question could make or break your candidacy. This question is, "Do you have any questions for me?"

If your best answer is, "No, you've pretty much covered all I need to know," then you're missing a great opportunity to make yourself stand out from the rest of the candidates. In a competitive job market, it's essential to use every opportunity to make a lasting impression.

Both human-resources and hiring managers often like to pose this as their standard, final question. Most of the time, managers expect you to ask about salary, benefits or other perks. Although these are important issues, you should never raise them in an initial interview. Instead, impress the interviewer by asking questions that can help you do the following:

**1. Uncover the hiring manager's needs.** The company obviously has a need or it wouldn't be seeking to hire. Look beyond the job title and what you think that role would require. Find out what problems the company or department faces and tell how you've previously handled similar problems. To do this, you might ask these questions at the close of an interview:

- *In six months, what would the successful candidate have accomplished?*
- *What is the most important and pressing problem for the new hire to tackle?*
- *What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this job?*

The manager's answers to these questions likely will reveal an issue or problem that could affect your work. If you can show that you've already tackled similar problems, your perceived value to the company could skyrocket.

**2. Reinforce that you're extremely interested in the position and truly curious about the company and its opportunities.** Employers want energetic and enthusiastic employees who are excited about the company. They may believe such candidates are more likely to stay with the company. In a competitive job market, there may be many people with skills similar to yours. Your interest and enthusiasm may give you the edge over other candidates. Some questions to ask that show your interest are:

- *Can you tell me more about the company's mission?*
- *What are the company's short- and long-term goals?*
- *How does this department affect the company's profits?*

Listen to the responses. Research the company extensively before the interview so that you can intelligently discuss its products and services. Remember, enthusiasm may count as much or more than qualifications.

**3. Learn about corporate culture, company values, ethics and management style.** Remember that in a job interview, you're interviewing the company just as much as they're interviewing you. Asking the right questions may keep you from joining the next Enron. It also could help you find a company that truly values its human capital and wants to help its employees succeed. To learn more about corporate culture and company values, you could ask:

- *What is the company's code of ethics and how is it communicated to employees?*
- *How would you describe the company culture and personality?*
- *How are risk-taking and creativity rewarded?*
- *How does the company recognize outstanding employees?*
- *What do you value about this company and why do you enjoy working here?*

Hiring managers who work for companies that value their employees will have ready answers to these questions. If they aren't sure or become uncomfortable, there may be a problem. Deepen your research on the company or speak directly to employees if possible to determine what issues might exist.

**4. Uncover and discuss any concerns the hiring manager has about your candidacy.** As your interview ends, thank the interviewer, express your interest in the position and determine the next step in the hiring process. This is also an excellent time to address the interviewer's concerns about you. Some questions that might help you do this are:

- *Do you have concerns or hesitations based on our discussion of my candidacy that I could address for you before I go?*
- *What is the next step in the process?*
- *I am very excited about this position and feel that it would be a great fit. When will you make a hiring decision?*

In a job market flooded with qualified candidates you must take every opportunity in an interview to make yourself memorable and increase your perceived value. Find out what matters most to the hiring manager. When invited to ask questions, ask some! But make your questions count. Show your interest in the company. Establish yourself as a proactive thinker who's able to uncover the tough challenges and tackle them. Asking the right questions in an interview is just as important as giving the right answers.

