

## **Questioning the interviewer**

When asking employers for feedback as to how they selected their preferred candidate in a closely run interview contest, the answer often comes down to the quality of questions asked at the end of the interview. Yet whilst preparing for such meetings, jobseekers often neglect spending time in selecting the most appropriate questions to ask.

### **Why do employers place such importance on asking questions?**

The questions you ask in interview reveal more about your personality than you may think. These clues are readily picked up by employers and used to help them select their desired candidate. Like anything else in the interview process, once you understand the dynamics involved, you can use it to help give yourself a competitive edge over other candidates.

### **Proof of real interest in the role and company**

Asking questions is an excellent way to demonstrate your knowledge of the company and the commercial environment they operate in. This is a chance for you to demonstrate that you have done strong research on the company, through looking at their website, annual reports, archived newspaper articles, trade journals etc. The more senior the position, the more important this becomes. Conversely, if you ask questions that are easily answered by reading readily accessible corporate information, you risk leave a poor impression.

### **Ability to ask the hard questions**

If you neglect to ask questions in the interview, many employers will wonder if you will avoid asking questions in the job. The way you formulate a question, your tone of voice and your ability to seek clarification if required are all important. Referring back to information given in the former part of the interview can show good listening skills. Open-ended questions that generate information-rich answers indicate a resourceful candidate who knows how to make informed decisions. Recruiters can learn as much from someone's questions and their thought process as they can from their answers.

### **Making an informed decision**

Recruiters expect candidates to ask enough questions in interview to form an informed opinion about whether they want the job or not. Thoughtful questions emphasise that you are taking an active role in the job selection process, not leaving the interviewer to do all the work. Well chosen questions show that, far from being a passive participant, you are action-oriented and engaged, reinforcing your interest in the job.

### **Opportunity to establish a rapport**

Asking questions helps you to break down the formal interview/candidate relationship, establish a more relaxed style of conversation, and build trust and rapport. Developing a more personal relationship can be critical. Remember, most finalists for a job are similar in terms of qualifications. What determines the winning candidate is often down to rapport.

## Stand out from the crowd

The questions you ask, and how you ask them, play a key role in differentiating you from the competition. You can use this as an opportunity to emphasise certain qualities. For example if you want to highlight that you are a goal oriented, ambitious individual you could ask – “what three top priorities have you identified that you would first like to see accomplished?” Likewise, if you wanted to show that you are a results driven person you could ask in what way performance was measured and reviewed etc. Other possible questions to ask include:

Do you have any questions or concerns about my ability to perform this job?

What's the makeup of the team as far as experience? Am I going to be a mentor or will I be mentored?

What are the key characteristics you're looking for in the person who you select for this position?

## Conclusion

Asking intelligent questions at the end of an interview is a real chance for you to shine and set yourself apart from the competition. By spending time carefully choosing questions, you can give yourself a competitive edge and increase your chances of leaving the interview as a future employee.

## About the Author

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