

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Remember, interviewing goes both ways. You need to find out stuff too!

What are the details of the position I am interviewing for?

- Who is the typical audience for your products and/or services?
- Who are your major customers, and how many are there?
- How do you find out what your customers want and need?
- Do you have plans to do things differently in the future?
- Describe and prioritize the job responsibilities of the position for which I'm applying?
- What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
- On which factors will my performance be evaluated?
- What kinds of technologies will I learn, and will I be formally trained on them?
- Which of my current skills do you consider most appropriate for the kind of work you need done?
- Would you describe an ideal match for this position?

What is this company looking for?

- Which personal and cultural characteristics are most important to an employee's success at this company?
- Is tools/technology knowledge more important than understanding the customer's needs and being able to gather and organize information to meet those needs?
- Are you looking for an employee who follows orders and delivers — no matter how unrealistic the demands — or one who does their best but also insists on sane schedules, mutual commitment to deadlines, and appropriate attention to process?
- What problems do you hope to solve by hiring me?
- What do employees say are some of the consistently good things about working here?
- Which kinds of people don't work out in this group/company?

Who am I working with?

For your prospective manager:

- Which department(s) do you manage?
- For how long have you held the position of Manager?
- How would you characterize your management style?
- What would you say are your strengths as a manager? Please give examples.
- What do you like best and least about managing this group? Why?
- How many people report directly to you? Has this number changed over the past two years?
- How do you keep in touch with your employees' progress?
- To whom do you report?
- What meetings do you attend, and why?
- What do you do when you feel you (or your group) aren't given enough time to complete a project?
- What was your position before you were a manager?

For your prospective colleagues:

- Have you had problems working with other employees? How did you resolve them?
- Do you feel that you're given enough time to complete projects? If not, why not?
- Have you been able to meet deadlines consistently? What kinds of tradeoffs do you find yourself making?
- Do you feel that you're valued here? How have the company/your manager/coworkers shown appreciation?
- How often/closely are you being supervised? Are you comfortable with this?
- Do you feel that management has been receptive to your suggestions and ideas?
- Do you feel that your customers are well-served by the existing products and/or service? What would you like to see added or improved?
- What do you like about working here? What are some things you dislike?

For your prospective colleagues:

- I would appreciate knowing more about you. Would you please describe your background?
- How does your role fit in the big picture? What are your responsibilities?
- In which department will I be working?
- What is the size of that department and how does it compare to the size of other departments?
- How does my department fit into the company?
- How is my department perceived within the company? Where is there room for improvement?
- With whom will I be directly working?
- With which departments will I be collaborating most often?
- How often (if at all) do you use the services of outside vendors? Will I be working with them?

How serious is this company about its success?

- What evidence do you have that this company's product and/or service is helping the customer?
- In your experience, is product and/or service quality pursued and taken seriously? (If so, how? If not, why not?)
- How effective/busy is tech support?
- Does this group/company take part in any formal or informal team-building exercises?
- Do you feel your team's efforts/products are respected by management as well as the other departments?
- What kinds of incentives are in place to motivate people to go above and beyond the call of duty?

Will my professional development be supported?

- How do you train new employees?
- Has my department had onsite training thus far? In what?
- Will I receive training on tools, technologies, and methodologies to improve my performance? If so, who will be training me? How soon will such training occur?
- Which software applications, if any, will I be using on a day-to-day basis?
- Will the company cover the cost of seminars and conferences that are directly applicable to my work, and give me time to attend these events?
- Does the company sponsor or support industry memberships to professional development organizations?

What are the current dynamics in this company?

- Give me an example of how you have dealt successfully with major change.
- What happened to the last person who held the position for which I'm applying? Why?
- How often are deadlines pushed back?
- Which department consistently 'drives' this company's progress? What are the implications of these dynamics for this group?
- How many hours a week do people in the group I'll be joining currently work? Is this normal, higher, or lower compared to the average work day?
- How many employees has your company hired (or laid off) within the last year?
- Is telecommuting an option and, if so, under what circumstances?
- How does the company plan to address its competitive challenges? How might such plans affect me?
- Rank the following employee traits in terms of their value to this group's management: productivity, independence, interpersonal skills, resourcefulness, and subject-matter expertise.

What are some of the dynamics in the workplace?

- Characterize your working relationship with other departments. Are you able to query other department members until you thoroughly understand a subject without them getting mad, impatient, or condescending?
- What kind of friction occurs within or between departments? If so, how is this typically resolved?
- Where do you foresee potentially serious conflicts within the company?
- Is communication evolving in the company? Does management take seriously the task of improving communication? Is management winning or losing this effort?
- How long have you reported to your current boss?
- When was the department last organized, and why?
- In general, are meetings productive? Could you describe a particularly productive meeting?