



## **TURNING THE TABLES IN THE INTERVIEW**

### **IT'S YOUR TURN**

You've sat through most of the interview and have answered all the interviewer's questions. You know you've made a good impression because you prepared for the interview and your answers were articulate and decisive. You've come across as a very bright, capable candidate when the interviewer asks something you didn't anticipate: "Do you have any questions?"

As you try to form an impromptu question it is apparent to the recruiter you didn't prepare any questions. You could kick yourself because you had thought to prepare for everything the interviewer would ask you, but this. You realize now that the positive impression you tried so hard to create and reaffirm during the interview may be at risk.

If you don't have any questions prepared and you try to cover your mistake by asking a spur-of-the-moment question, chances are you have damaged your chances for a successful interview. Some interviewers refuse to hire people who don't ask intelligent questions. Don't ask questions just for the sake of asking questions—make sure it is information that you need. During the first part of the interview, the interviewer was in control and asked the questions. This was an attempt to determine if you could fit into the organization, via your qualifications, abilities, background and personality. It's your turn now to see if the employer offers what you are seeking.

### **PREPARE QUESTIONS IN ADVANCE**

You should have a list of questions prepared for this crucial part of the interview. Every question you ask should demonstrate your interest and confirm your knowledge of the organization. You should read publications in the field. You can get information about new products or policies by reading general magazines or trade publications. It is appropriate to address some of your questions to what you have read. Of course the questions should reflect positive—if the company is currently involved in labor problems or a lawsuit, don't bring up embarrassing situations.

### **QUESTIONS NOT TO ASK**

Not only should you know what questions to ask during the interview, but it is important to know what questions not to ask. You do not want to alienate the interviewer by putting him / her on the defensive.

1. Avoid asking questions that are answered in the company's annual report or employment brochure. Interviewers are familiar enough with their own information to recognize when you haven't done your homework.
2. Do not bring up salary or benefits in the initial interview. This is a major mistake. The majority of companies interviewing are very competitive and will offer approximately similar salaries and benefits. The interviewer may choose to bring up the information, but you should not initiate the topic. You will give the impression that you are more concerned with fringe benefits than the substance of the position.
3. Avoid asking any personal questions or questions that will put the interviewer on the defensive. This includes questions such as the interviewer's educational background, marital status, past work experience, and so on. This information is none of your business.
4. Don't ask questions that have already been answered during the interview. If you have prepared a list of questions and some of them have been addressed during the interview, do not repeat them.

## *Interviewing Tips*

### **QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK**

Now that you know what you shouldn't ask during the interview, determine what questions you should ask. If you plan to ask a lot of questions, it would be wise to have a typed list.

1. Ask specific questions about the position. You need to know what duties will be required, and if this hasn't already been covered, it's time to ask appropriate questions to find out. You need to know what will be required of the person in the position to see if there is a fit between your interests and qualifications and the requirements of the company.
2. Try to find out as much as possible about qualities and skills the interviewer is looking for in job candidates. Tom Jackson, an authority on career planning and author of several books including Guerrilla Tactics in the Job Market, suggests this question: "Could you tell me what qualities you are looking for in candidates for this position?" Once you determine the necessary qualities, you can then explain to the interviewer how your background and capabilities relate to those qualities.
3. Ask questions concerning advancement and promotion paths available. Every company is different and most advancement policies are unique. Try to find out what the possible promotion path is to see if it fits your career goals. You may also want to ask about periodic performance evaluations and pay reviews.
4. Ask questions about the company's training program. If you are seeking a position with structured, formal training and the company offers on-the-job training program, you know the position may not be right for you. You may have specific questions about the training program not covered in the company literature.
5. Ask questions about location and travel required. If you have limitations regarding location, relocation possibilities, or expected travel, this is the time to find out what is expected in the position. If you have limitations based on health or family commitments, these should be discussed with the recruiter.

### **SOME FINAL ADVICE**

The key to successful interview is good communication and rapport with the interviewer. One of the fastest ways to damage this kind relationship is by exhibiting ignorance about the company and asking inappropriate questions.