

Smart Questions YOU Should Ask in Interviews

You will be judged as much by the quality of your questions as the quality of your answers.

Strategic questions will do the following:

1. Exude confidence in your marketability - you are not desperate for any job.
2. Suggest that you are likely at the mid to top of the salary range because you are being very selective.
3. Reveal your research and preparation by showcasing your knowledge of the company and industry.
4. If there are any areas where the interviewer perceives you are not a strong match you can remedy their perception with additional examples of experience and competencies.

Questions About The Company

- Are you currently planning any acquisitions?
- How fast is the company growing?
- How many employees work for the organization?
- Please explain the company's organization chart?
- What are the key challenges facing the company?
- What are your goals in the next few years?
- What are your key markets? Are they growing?
- What are your leading products or services?
- What are your plans and prospects for growth and expansion?
- What do you like best about this company? Why?
- What growth rate are you currently anticipating? Will this be accomplished internally or through acquisition?
- What has been your layoff history in the last five years? Do you anticipate any cutbacks in the near future, and, if you do, how will they impact my department or position?
- What have you enjoyed most about working here?
- What have you liked least about working here?
- What is your hiring philosophy?
- What is your ranking within the industry?
- Does this represent a change from where it was a year or a few years ago? What is your share in each of your markets?
- What kinds of people seem to succeed in this company?
- What major problems or challenges have you recently faced? How were they addressed? What results do you expect?

- What products or services are you planning to introduce in the near future?
- What sets you apart from your competitors?
- Which other companies serving your markets pose a serious threat?
- Will you be entering any new markets in the next couple of years? Which ones and via what types of distribution channels?

About the Department

- How many people work exclusively in this department?
- To whom does my boss report?
- To whom will I be reporting?
- What are its current goals and objectives?
- What are its specific objectives for the next three months?
- What has the turnover been in the last couple of years?
- What kinds of people seem to succeed in this department?
- What problems are this department facing?
- What would you most like to see changed in this department?
- With which other departments would I work most closely?
- Describe the working environment and the company/department?
- Could you describe to me your typical management style and the type of employee that works well with you?
- Would I have the opportunity to travel? How much?
- Are there times of peak activity?
- Why is the position open? What happened to the previous person?
- How long has the current senior management been in place?
- What has the turnover in upper management been?
- What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
- What new endeavors is the company currently undertaking?

About the Job

- What are the specific duties or tasks of the position? (If not clearly specified in the job posting).
- How would you rank duties in terms of importance?
- Who would I supervise?
- Who would be my direct supervisor?
- Who would be my key associates?
- How would my performance be measured?
- At what intervals would I receive feedback on my performance?
- What would be the extent of my authority in carrying out my responsibilities?
- How will success be measured in this position?
- What challenges/obstacles might I encounter if I take on this position?
- What are your major concerns that need to be immediately addressed in this job?
- What areas in this job would you like to see improved?
- What is the budget this department operates with?

- Are there any restraints or cutbacks planned that would decrease those budgets?
- Are there any weaknesses in the department that you are working on improving?
- What is the broad purpose of the position?
- Could you describe a typical day in this position?
- Does this job usually lead to other positions in the company? Which ones?
- How did this job become available? Was the previous person promoted? What is their new title? Was the previous person fired? Why?
- How do you see me working with each of the department heads?
- How do you see my role evolving in the first two years?
- How has this job been performed in the past?
- How long has this position been available?
- How many hours a week do you expect your STAR employees to put in?
- How many people will be reporting to me?
- How much budgetary responsibility would I have?
- How much day-to-day autonomy will I have?
- How much travel should I expect to do in a typical month?
- How will we work together to establish deadlines and objectives in the first months of this job?
- How would my performance be measured?
- Is relocation an option, a possibility or a requirement?
- Is there no one from within the organization who is qualified for this position?
- Please tell me a little bit about the people with whom I will be working most closely.
- What decisions can I make without oversight?
- What do you think my biggest challenge will be?
- What is the first problem I should tackle?
- What is the one thing I can do right at this job to assure my success?
- What kind of training should I expect and for how long?
- What skills are in short supply here?
- What specific goals should I set for my first three months on the job?
- What three things need immediate attention?
- What would be the most logical areas for me to evolve into?
- Where will I be working? May I see it?
- Would I be able to speak with the person who held this job previously?
- What specific skills or knowledge does a person need for the job?
- How will I be introduced to the company/position?
- Is there a formalized orientation program?
- What personal values does a person need to have to be successful in this position?
- How important is teamwork or group effort to the success of the department?
- What systems or programs does the company have for recognizing superior performance?
- What is management's method of motivating the employees?
- Why isn't the position being filled internally?
- What is the company's policy toward promotion from within and what could this position lead to?

About the Hiring Process

- Is there anything that is stopping you from offering me this job right now?
- Are there any specific areas in which you believe my qualifications are lacking?
- Before you're able to reach a hiring decision, how many more interviews should I expect to go through and with whom?
- Can I assume I am a serious candidate for the job?
- Can we discuss the details of my package?
- Can you tell me where you are in the process?
- Do I remind you of another employee who succeeded at this job?
- Do you have any concerns I haven't adequately eliminated?
- Do you have any reservations about my ability to do this job?
- How do I compare with the others that have interviewed for this position?
- How many other candidates have you interviewed? How many more will you be interviewing, before you expect to make a decision?
- How many other people would you say are serious candidates for this position?
- How much time have you set aside for interviews before you make a final decision?
- How will you weight your subordinates' input?
- Is there anything else I can tell you that would help you make the decision to hire me?
- Over what period of time will additional interviews take place?
- What are the key criteria you're going to use to decide callbacks?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?
- What kind of feedback does your boss expect you to give him/her?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- When can I start?
- When did you start interviewing for this position?
- When do you expect to make a final decision and fill the position?
- When may I meet some of my potential colleagues (or subordinates)?
- When do you plan to make a decision or fill the position?
- How many candidates are you considering?
- How many interviews will there be?
- Who will conduct the interviews? What is his or her title and working relationship to the position?
- What is the next step in the process? Who will contact me? When?
- If I don't hear from you by a certain time, may I call you?
- Who will make the job offer?

About your Boss's Style

- How do you define success?
- How would your staff describe your management style?
- In your experience, are there particular types of people who seem to work better than others?
- What approach do you take to develop your people?
- What kinds of people seem to succeed working for you?
- What particular traits do you value most in your subordinates?

Questions for Human Resources

- What is the greatest challenge facing this department that you are aware of?
- Can you tell me more about what I'd be doing on a daily basis?
- Can you tell me something about my boss?
- Can you tell me something about the interviewer?
Can you tell me something about the people I will be managing?
- Can you tell me something about the people with whom I will be working?
- Do you have a written description of the position?
- Do you have any concerns about my abilities?
- Does the company have a mission statement or a written philosophy?
- How quickly are you hoping to fill this position?
- How would you describe the corporate culture?
- How would you say I stack up against the other candidates you've interviewed?
- Is this a newly created position?
- What happened to the last person who held this job?
- What are your recruiting plans this year?
- What other positions at the company should this job prepare me for?
- What particular attributes or skills do you want a candidate to possess?
- What key thing about the company would you like me to know?
- Where are you in the decision making process?

After Receiving an Offer

- Are there any upcoming events occurring before my start date in which I could participate?
- If I have further questions, whom should I contact?
- Is there any reading I can do to prepare for my first day (reports, memos, etc)?
- What could I do before I start to jump-start my entry into the department?
- When would you like me to get back to you?
- When would you like me to start?

Questions for Agencies and Headhunters

- Could I meet with others you've placed at this company?
- Do you see any problem with the company meeting my financial needs?
- How integral to the company's success is my department?
- How long has this job been open?
- How long have you been working with this company?
- How long will the interview process for this job take?
- How many people have you placed at this company?
- How many people would be reporting to me?
- Is a written detailed job description available?

- Is the interviewer my potential boss?
- Is the interviewer the decision maker?
- Is this a new position?
- To whom would I be reporting?
- What can you tell me about the culture of the company?
- What else do I need to know?
- What happened to the person who previously held this job?

Works Cited:

Fry, Ronald. 2003. 101 Smart Questions to Ask on your Interview. Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press.

Brainstorming sessions with recruiters and professionals in career transition. 2012.