

# How To Interview A Potential Employer

You've read the job description, but the interview is the time to read between the lines. Find out as much as you can about the company you may work for before you take the job. It could save you time and frustration down the line.

We all know to have questions prepared when we head into an interview. It makes us look interested and on the ball. But the list of questions you ask a potential employer should be as much about you interviewing them, as them interviewing you.

## How To Interview A Potential Employer

Before you sign on the dotted line, be sure you know what you're getting in to. Here are some things to think about:

### ***What's It All About***

All titles were not created equal. Just because you've had a similar title in a previous job, doesn't mean the responsibilities will be the same at the new company. Dig deep when it comes to the details of your potential position.

- What role does your department play in the overall organization? For example, does the marketing department lead product development or vice versa. You may be surprised how differently work flows in different organizations.
- Do you or your department have budget oversight? Who has the final decision on how and where that money is spent?
- How many times has this position changed hands? A high number may indicate the supervising manager cannot be pleased or is not a good leader.

### ***Where's It Going***

This position may be perfect for the here and now; but what about tomorrow? Make sure your potential company fits into your long-term career goals.

- Does the company encourage, or even fund, continuing education?
- What is a typical career path for someone in this position? Think twice about a company that cannot lay out a clear growth path for you.
- Does the company promote from within? You will only be able to follow a career path if the company believes in growing employee's skill sets and responsibilities.

## ***What's In It For Me***

Salary negotiations are the worst. There's no getting around that fact. But be sure you don't miss the important—smaller—details in an effort to close the deal. They can make a big difference in your final paycheck.

- Does the company have a health plan? If so, what percentage of the premium does the company cover? Don't forget to factor your portion of this cost into your mental salary calculations—it will affect your take-home pay.
- Does the company contribute to a 401(k) or similar retirement plan?
- If bonuses have been mentioned as part of your compensation package, what criteria will be used to determine eligibility? Does the bonus depend on your performance only, or does the department or company performance play a part?

## ***How's It Going***

Understand how the company is performing, and how it views itself. Are you joining a winning organization or a sinking ship?

- What is the company's mission or vision for itself? Is it living up to that vision?
- If you are applying for a senior enough position, ask to review the company's business plan.
- Is the company meeting its revenue goals? If they have fallen short of their goals, it may be worth understanding how the company is funded. If the company is funded through venture capital or bank loans and is not meeting revenue projections, major changes may be brewing.
- Companies have personalities. Make sure yours matches by asking your prospective boss and others at the company how they would describe an ideal company employee.

If you've been looking for a job for a while, it can be easy to jump at the first offer you get. But looking before you leap can help ensure you don't land in the wrong place; right back where you started, in a job that wasn't a good fit.

Besides, you're worth every penny and perk the company is offering you!