

Six Questions You Should Ask to Learn About a Company's Culture

 lifehacker.com/six-questions-you-should-ask-to-learn-about-a-companys-1658633604

After hours spent meticulously fine-tuning your cover letter and resume, you've finally scored an elusive interview with the employer of your dreams. But how do you know if you'll actually fit in the company culture? You may need to ask a few key questions to learn if the company is right for you.

This post originally appeared on [LearnVest](#).

In our eagerness to impress hiring managers and potential future bosses, many of us come fully prepared to sell ourselves in a job interview—but neglect to ask key questions of our own. You know, the kind that can help reveal if it really is a dream to work at a given company.

"Most of us go into an interview like we would a beauty pageant, where we sit there feeling judged," says Suzanne Lucas, a human resources veteran and blogger at [EvilHRLady.org](#). "And we're okay with this because we have this idea that of course we'll be happy if we're offered the job. But learning about an organization's culture is so important because you'll *only* be happy—and thrive—at a company if it fits."

When it comes to learning more about a company's office culture, we're not just talking about free-flowing snacks and whether or not you can bring Fido to work on Fridays, either. It's about much more than that—like whether the management team values *all* staffers' opinions as well as fosters communication among coworkers.

And while you could come right out and ask your interviewer what the company's culture is like, experts say you'll get more honest and less-canned responses if you pose subtle questions—like these six asks.

What's the Difference between a Good Employee in This Role and a Fantastic One?

Lucas loves this question because it's a covert way to get a glimpse into whether a company's core values, like innovation or creativity, are aligned with yours. "Most jobs can be done 100 different ways, but a company's culture—or even a specific department's culture—often dictates what's important," she says.

So what should you hear? Answers that involve working well with others, being a great communicator and being an effective leader.

As for red-flag responses to watch out for, be wary if an interviewer mentions traits that sound like unattainable personal victories—such as winning a lot of awards and being chummy with the C.E.O.—or the ability to exceed results-driven expectations at all times.

What's the Process for On-Boarding Employees, and How Do You Handle Beginner Mistakes?

Asking about the kind of support that's provided to new employees can give you a sense of the organization's commitment to helping the workforce grow and learn.

If your interviewer doesn't really tackle the latter part of the question, follow up with something along the lines of, "what is the process for managing an employee who makes a mistake?"

"If your interviewer says that rookie mistakes happen to the best employees, and everyone at all levels of the organization is coached on how to improve and learn, it indicates that the company's culture is supportive and encourages professional development," says Nicki Morris, a Toronto-based business consultant and coach.

But beware of any interviewer who says something along the lines of, "Are you planning on making mistakes?" or "Well, we really hope people don't make mistakes."

"It indicates that the company may not be supportive when it comes to learning or taking risks," Morris says.

What Are Some Ways the Company Focuses on Team Development?

According to one [Gallup poll](#), not only do close work friendships boost employee satisfaction by 50%—but those with a best friend at work are also seven times more likely to engage fully in their job. So make sure to ask your interviewer about how the organization fosters such relationships.

"If an organization offers interesting and unique perks that encourage employees' growth and teamwork, the person interviewing you will love to talk about them," says Carol Cochran, the director of human resources at career site FlexJobs.com.

Maybe your interviewer will mention off-site brainstorming meetings, clubs meant to help develop employees' skills or even the company softball team. "But if they skirt this question, that tells you a lot about their culture... or lack thereof," Cochran says.

What Do You Love about Working Here—and What Do You Dislike?

Along with the usual questions about what your specific tasks will be, it's a good idea to ask your interviewer a few personal questions about his role at the company.

"The catch is to really listen and try to figure out whether your interviewer gives you a rehearsed, company-spiel kind of response," says Matthew Reischer, C.E.O. and hiring partner at LegalAdvice.com.

For example, if your interviewer says she loves running the company's town hall meetings, where employees get regular updates on how the business is doing, it'll show you a lot about the kind of open communication that's valued at the company.

- You come anytime of day, you get to see the crocodiles,

Volume 0%

Can You Be an Ecotourist Without Destroying the Environment?

3/28/19 2:30PM

But if the answer is incomplete—for instance, she flatly says she's "fulfilled" and "challenged" by her work—you might follow up with, "what are the most challenging aspects of working here?"

And keep in mind that there's a difference between a "good" worst thing about working at a company and one that should make you raise an eyebrow. One example of a positive challenge could be a heavy workload, which is likely proof of a company's success. But a more concerning response would be if the interviewer brings up some aspect of the management team as being a challenge.

What Would Your Employees Say Are the Top Three Reasons They Love Working for You?

Trying to suss out what your potential co-workers think about their work—and the manager you'll report to—can be wonderful insight into how happy you'll be as one of their colleagues.

Sure, it's great that employees enjoy three weeks of vacation each year, but what you really want to hear is a sense of pride and appreciation employees feel working for the company. A good hiring manager will use this as an opportunity to humbly brag about her capabilities—and all of the ways you'll be able to learn from her and further your own skill set and career as a result.

Not getting specific-enough answers? File that away, and then do something a little nontraditional once you have a job offer: Ask to meet some of your prospective new co-workers.

"The hiring manager is never going to tell you in an interview, 'I'm not going to support you, I'll yell at you for minor mistakes, and I'll take all of the credit for your hard work,' " Lucas says. "So arrange a lunch with the people you'll work with and it will start out all positive ... but halfway through lunch you'll get the whole truth."

How Does This Position Support the Company's Mission, Goals and Projected Success?

If you've done your homework and researched your potential new employer's mission statement and future goals, you might ask this question after saying how impressed you are by the projected growth—and that you're wondering how your role will help the company execute and succeed at those goals.

"You'll quickly learn how the person interviewing you views your role at the company, and whether or not they believe you will be a key player," says Jenee Kapela, a Florida-based career coach with over 10 years of experience as a hiring manager.

An encouraging response will include specific tasks and duties that give you a clear idea of whether your position is integral to the company's success. For instance, those seemingly insignificant spreadsheets you'll be in charge of creating might be used by the entire sales force when they're going after new business.