

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

What are the characteristics of a successful person here?

What qualities are you looking for in your new employees?

What is the overall structure of the department where this position is located?

Please describe the work environment for the position.

What kinds of career advancement opportunities are available?

How would you describe your company's personality and management style?

What makes this business different from its competitors?

What is the turnover rate for employees?

Is the company stable and financially sound?

What are the company's plans for future growth?

What are the biggest challenges I would face in this job?

Please tell me about initial and future training programs for this position.

What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I am interviewing?

How are employees evaluated and promoted?

What is a typical career path for this position, based on performance? What is a realistic timeframe for advancement?

What is the most important task or duty of the position?

What should I pay most attention to in my first few months on the job?

What is the chemistry and personality of the people in the section where I would be working? How well do workers in that section get along with each other?

What is the #1 problem you see in this position, that needs immediate attention by the new employee?

Why do you enjoy working for this company?

What attracted you to this organization?

Can you describe the work environment here?

How do you describe the philosophy of the company or organization?

What do you consider to be the organization's strengths and weaknesses?

Can you tell me more about my day-to-day responsibilities?

How soon are you looking to fill this position?

How do my skills compare with those of the other candidates you have interviewed?

I have really enjoyed meeting with you and your team, and I am very interested in the opportunity. I feel my skills and experience would be a good match for this position. What is the next step in your interview process?

Before I leave, is there anything else you need to know concerning my ability to do this job?

In your opinion, what is the most important contribution that this company expects from its employees?

Is there a structured career path at the company?

What are my prospects for advancement? If I do a good job, what is a logical next step?

Assuming I was hired and performed well for a period of time, what additional opportunities might this job lead to?

Do the most successful people in the company tend to come from one area of the company, such as sales or engineering, or do they rise from a cross section of functional areas?

I know that for the position for which I am interviewing, the company decided to recruit from outside the organization. How do you decide between recruiting from within and going outside?

How does this position relate to the bottom line?

What advice would you give to someone in my position?

What major problems are we facing right now in this department or position?

Can you give me a formal, written description of the position? I'm interested in reviewing in detail the major activities involved and what results are expected.

Does this job usually lead to other positions in the company? Which ones?

Can you please tell me a little bit about the people with whom I'll be working most closely?

As I understand the position, the title as _____, the duties are _____, and the department is called _____. I would report directly to _____. Is that right?

Can you talk about the company's commitment to equal opportunity and diversity?

Who are the company's stars, and how was their status determined?

How are executives addressed by their subordinates?

What can you tell me about the prevailing management style?

If you hired me, what would be my first assignment?

Does the company have a mission statement? May I see it?

Could you explain the company's organizational structure?

What is the organization's plan for the next five years, and how does this department or division fit in?

What specific skills from the person you hire would make your life easier?

Will we be expanding or bringing on new products or new services that I should be aware of?

What are some of the problems that keep you up at night?

What are some of the skills and abilities you see as necessary for someone to succeed in this job?

What would be a surprising but positive thing the new person could do in first 90 days?

What challenges might I encounter if I take on this position?

How does upper management perceive this part of the organization?

What are your major concerns that need to be immediately addressed in this job?

What do you see as the most important opportunities for improvement in the area I hope to join?

What are the attributes of the job that you'd like to see improved?

What are the organization's three most important goals?

What is your company's policy on attending seminars, workshops, and other training opportunities?

How do you see this position impacting the achievement of those goals?

What is the budget this department operates with?

What attracted you to working for this organization?

What committees and task forces will I be expected to participate in?

What have you liked most about working here?

How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured? By whom?

What are the day-to-day responsibilities I'll be assigned?

Are there any weaknesses in the department that you are particularly looking to improve?

What are the department's goals, and how do they align with the company's mission?

What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared with the competition? (name one or two companies)

How does the reporting structure work here? What are the preferred means of communication?

What goals or objectives need to be achieved in the next six months?

Can you give me an ideal of the typical day and workload and the special demands the job has?

This a new position. What are the forces that suggested the need for this position?

What areas of the job would you like to see improvement in with regard to the person who was most recently performing these duties?

From all I can see, I'd really like to work here, and I believe I can add considerable value to the company. What's the next step in the selection process?

How does this position contribute to the company's goals, productivity, or profits?

What is currently the most pressing business issue or problem for the company or department?

Would you describe for me the actions of a person who previously achieved success in this position?

Would you describe for me the action of a person who previously performed poorly in this position?

How would you describe your own management style?

What are the most important traits you look for in a subordinate?

How do you like your subordinates to communicate with you?

What personal qualities or characteristics do you most value?

Could you describe to me your typical management style and the type of employee who works well with you?

Corporate culture is very important, but it's usually hard to define until one violates it. What is one thing an employee might do here that would be perceived as a violation of the company's culture?

How would you characterize the organization? What are its principal values? What are its greatest challenges?

How would you describe the experience of working here?

If I were to be employed here, what one piece of wisdom would you want me to incorporate into my work life?

What are a couple of misconceptions people have about the company?

Work-life balance is an issue of retention as well as productivity. Can you talk about your own view of how to navigate the tensions between getting work done and encouraging healthy lives outside the office?

How does the company support and promote personal and professional growth?

What types of people seem to excel here?

Every company contends with office politics. It's a fact of life because politics is about people working together. Can you give me some exams of how politics plays out in this company?

What have I yet to learn about this company and opportunity that I still need to know?

I'm delighted to know that teamwork is highly regarded. But evaluating performance of teams can be difficult. How does the company evaluate team performance? For example, does it employ 360-degree feedback programs?

What are the organization's primary financial objectives and performance measures?

What operating guidelines or metrics are used to monitor the planning process and the results?

To what extent are those objectives uniform across all product lines?

How does the company balance short-term performance versus long-term success?

What kinds of formal strategic planning systems, if any, are in place?

Can you describe the nature of the planning process and how decisions concerning the budgeting process are made?

Can you identify the key corporate participants in the planning process?

How often and in what form does the company report its results internally to its employees?

In the recent past, how has the company acknowledged and rewarded outstanding performance?

What are the repercussions of having a significant variance to the operating plan?

Are budgeting decisions typically made at corporate headquarters, or are the decisions made in a more decentralized fashion?

I'm glad to hear that I will be part of a team. Let me ask about reward structures for teams. Does the company have a formal team-based compensation process?

Is the company more of an early adapter of technology, a first mover, or is it content to first let other companies work the bugs out and then implement a more mature version of the technology?

How does the company contribute to thought leadership in its market?

How advanced is the company's commitment to knowledge management?

I was pleased to hear you describe the company's branding strategy. How does branding fit into the overall marketing mix?

How does this position contribute to the company's goals, productivity, or profits?

According to (name source), your principal competitor, Brand X, is the best-selling product in the space. What does Brand X do better than your product?

Business Week magazine ranks the company second (or whatever) in its industry. Does this position represent a change from where it was a few years ago?

How accessible is the CEO (name him or her) to people at my level of the organization?

Does the CEO (name him or her) publish his or her email address?

I understand that the CEO is really approachable. Are there ground rules for approaching him or her?

Staff development is mentioned in your annual report as a measure on which executives are evaluated. What kinds of training experiences might I expect?

Is the department a profit center?

Can you please tell me about the people who will look to me for supervision?

Would I encounter any coworker or staff person who's proved to be a problem in the past?

What happened to the person who previously held this job?

The incumbent was dismissed? How could the problems have been avoided?

The incumbent was promoted? I'm delighted to hear it. Would it be possible for me to talk to him or her?

What is the company customer-service philosophy?

Could you tell me about a time when the team/company went out of its way to provide knock-your-socks-off service?

The best companies rely on rich customer data to fuel personalized content and services. How is the company doing in personalizing its offerings?

Customers are expecting companies to protect their data. Does the company have a privacy policy for its Web initiatives, and how does the company balance the momentum for ever-increasing personalization with rising concerns for privacy?

How empowered are employees? How much of the company's money can your people (including the ones with single-digit pay grades) spend on their own recognizance to satisfy a customer or address a work-process issue?

How often would I come into direct contact with real, living, breathing, paying customers?

What are the success factors that will tell you if the decision to bring me on board was the right one?

To make our working relationship successful -- something we both want -- we'll need to be sure we have good chemistry together. How might we determine this, and then what action would you see us engage in to build that relationship?

If you and I were developing some sort of philosophical difference, how would you want to go about resolving it?

Other Probing Questions -- often for high-level assignments

Could you please describe the management team to me?

Does the company have a Net-use policy?

Will I receive my assignments from IT or from the business unit?

Do developers have little contact with the business unit or significant contact?

Can you show or sketch me an organizational chart?

If for any reason you were unable to function as CEO, how would you like to see the company managed?

To whom does the chief information or technology officer report?

How would you describe the degree to which you want your heirs to have strategic or operational influence in the company until one of them is ready to assume the role of COO or CEO?

What are you hoping to accomplish, and what will be my role in those plans?

May I see a job description? What are the most important responsibilities of the job?

How much time should be devoted to each area of responsibility?

What is my spending/budget authority?

What initial projects would I be tackling?

What are the biggest technical challenges ahead for this department/ company?

Presuming that I'm successful on this assignment, where else might I be of service to the company?

Traditionally, companies have used IT to reduce bottom-line costs. But I am excited about the use of IT to advance top-line opportunities such as creating new products and identifying new markets. Can you talk about how IT is used in this company to create top-line value?

What structured strategies for software testing have you found effective here?

Does the company use an IT steering committee?

If you put all the salespeople in a line from your best to the merely acceptable performer, what are the earnings of the 50th percentile? The 25th? The 75th?

Can you describe the performance of the sales team?

What is the commission structure, and what is my earning potential in 1,3,5, or 10 years?

What percentage of salespeople attain objectives?

What percentage of the current people are above and below their set goals?