

8 Questions Objectives for Your Next Interview

Preparing for an interview is one of the most important parts of the interview process. Before we provide some example interview questions for particular aspects of the job, company, and environment that you want to gauge, let's outline the top goals you want to achieve with your interview questions:

Interview Question Goals

1. Validate job description
2. Learn more about company
3. Understand tech landscape and roadmap (current vs. future state of technical environment)
4. Determine the operations of the company: how they do things
5. Capture key priorities/expectations
6. Identify success criteria
7. Determine interest
8. Identify manager concerns about candidacy and plan how to overcome

Interview structure and interview length can vary, but it's important to remember that asking concise, thoughtful questions can leave a lasting impression. Instead of waiting until the end of the interview, take advantage of any opportunity in the conversation that would allow you to ask a question. Coming to the table with some of the below examples could set you apart from the rest of the candidate pool.

Validate Job Description

While this statement is frustrating, the reality is most job descriptions are not 100% accurate; many of them aren't even 50% accurate. With that in mind, you want to ask a question or two to get an idea of the accuracy of the job description to prepare for your interview. For instance, you could ask, "Was the job description I received written for this specific opening?" or "Is there anything on this job description that may have been left off; such as, technologies needed, scope of work, or candidate requirements?" Focus on asking questions that really paint a picture of what the job will entail. Asking where this position fits into the company "food chain" is another great way to determine if the job description is accurate and it will help you identify what impact the position will have.

Company

You can gather a lot of information by reviewing the company's website, social media channels, and online searches. Always take that knowledge a step further during interviews and learn more about benefits of working there, organisational structure, macro level company goals, what the executive team is like, etc. Ask questions such as, "What are the goals of the executive leadership team for this company over the next year? Five years?" "What's the company culture like?" "What are a couple key initiatives of the company and this group?"

Understand Tech Landscape and Roadmap

As a technology professional, it is incredibly important to review all of the technologies, tools, etc. you'll get the opportunity to work with, both right out of the gate and in the future at the company! Many managers don't think to share the roadmap of their projects and the new technologies they'll be implementing and upgrading to in the future, so trigger them to share through open-ended questions, such as "Break down your technical landscape for me. What are all the tools, technologies and versions you use?" "Is there anything you're able to share around your technical roadmap (i.e. any new tech/tools being implemented, any migrations/upgrades happening, etc. over the next say 3-12 months)?"

Determine the 'How'

Your interest level in a position, team, and company can be greatly shaped by how they do things. Therefore, ask questions like "How do you approach _____ here? What processes, methodologies, standards, and other approaches do you utilise?" and "How would this position fit into taking on a new or existing project?" to determine if their approaches align with your own.

Capture Key Priorities/Expectations

Be sure you walk out of the interview truly understanding the top priorities and expectations of the role. Asking some version of this question is a must: ***"What do you want this individual to come in and accomplish over the next 3 months, 6 months, or year?"***

Identify Success Criteria

What managers say they need on a job description and what they truly need often differs. Therefore, seek to understand needs vs. wants during the interview! Ask: ***"What are the top skills you need this individual to walk in the door with and what skills could be built or further enhanced via on the job training or personal development?" or "What experience and skills are a must have immediately?"***

Determine Interest

By following all the above, you should gain a solid understanding on whether this is the right company, culture/environment, and role for you. However, there might be key motivators and preferences you have which haven't been addressed. For example, if longevity, upward mobility, reimbursement around training or certifications, or flexible schedule is high on your list, you want to see what this company offers in those areas. Flush out your key motivators, and then turn each into a tactful question you could ask the manager. You can also be direct with questions like, ***“What makes this a great company and a great team? Why do you enjoy working here?”***

Identify Manager Concerns

Near the end of the interview, if it hasn't been brought up organically, it's good to address “the elephant in the room” (i.e. concerns). As a candidate, especially for jobs you're really excited about, you want to have a gauge as to what would prevent a manager/company from giving you an offer. Asking a question such as ***“Are there any concerns about my background that I can address for you?”*** can open the door for a manager to share, and then for you to tactfully address!

As an additional best practice, supply references, letters of recommendation, or other items that could refute or dissolve those concerns. For example, if the manager mentions that you are a bit light on a technology they're using, take a technical assessment and provide the results, as well as provide a reference who could speak to your experience working with that technology or your ability to quickly pick up new skills.

