

How to respond intelligently in job interviews

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FULL TEXT

The introductory interview went well, you made a good impression, both parties are optimistic that everything will work out. But then comes the question that most people count on, but that makes many people's foreheads break out in sweat: "Any more questions?"

According to career coach Bernd Slaghuis, there's something good about asking questions, for one thing. "The question at the end shows that you value the interlocutor, because it gives the applicant the chance to ask something that hasn't been talked about yet," he explains.

Don't just ask for the sake of asking

On the other hand, the question creates a problem. "Most applicants learn that they should answer politely during the interview and show initiative only toward the end with their own question," says Slaghuis.

"They learn three questions by heart and pose one of them, just for the sake of asking something. That's silly."

Because that not only prevents the applicant from differentiating himself from the others and sticking in the memory, but also a good exchange.

Ask questions on your own initiative

"Applicants should not wait until they are prompted to ask questions, but use the interview time to clarify all the important points," says the consultant. Just as in life, you should ask questions if you don't understand something, if you want to know more, or if something is unclear.

Pamela Grüninger shares this opinion. She is a career coach and has worked in personnel development and headhunting. Her advice: "Go into the interview as an equal. Basically, both parties have the same interest: work that is fulfilling in the long term, that generates joy and that makes sense.

Find out what the demands are

But what questions really help to find out something important about the job or the employer? Grüninger mentions a few examples: "What does it take to be able to do the job well" is one possibility. Or: "What are the most important requirements?"

In this way, you get a good impression of what to expect and what the demands are.

Grüninger also advises to ask what a typical working day is like. This way the applicant can find out concretely what role the different tasks play in everyday life. The distribution of tasks is often not clear from the job advertisements.

It is also advisable to ask for a tour of the workplace and to talk to a colleague. This way you can get an idea of whether you will feel comfortable in the position.

Make a list of questions before the interview

Slaghuis suggests making a list of 15 to 20 questions about tasks, team, bosses, structure, connections and opportunities for development, depending on what is most important for your decision about the job.

Some examples: what exactly will my tasks be, on what basis will you decide in six months whether I am doing a good job, who is my direct boss, how is the team made up, how old are the team members, how long have they been with the company, what is the background of the job, was it created from scratch or am I succeeding someone else, how long have they been with the company, what is the background of the job, was it created from scratch or am I succeeding someone else?

Clarifying the motivations behind the questions

The coach also recommends not only asking questions, but making clear the motivations behind them. Instead of simply asking, "What will the training period on the job be like?", it would be good to clarify: "I want to familiarise myself with my field of work as quickly as possible. Will there be someone to train me and show me around in the first few weeks?"

Grüninger also recommends exposing yourself a little. "It's not good to go to interviews too strategically. It's better to be honest. Of course, every question sends a message. It makes a difference whether someone asks about events in the team or whether you can use a company car on holiday. But an honest and open exchange is beneficial for all parties.

All clear? Ask for a first comment or impression

But what is the answer to the question of all questions when everything has already been clarified? The person who is now asking what exactly the job consists of has either not listened before or something went wrong during the conversation, Slaghuis believes. In a good interview, both parties should have spoken for about the same amount of time.

The coach points out that if everything is clear at the end of the interview, you can thank the interviewer for the time given and ask how the application process continues. Candidates can also ask for a first reaction. "What is your impression after this interview?" The question "Are there any other applicants?" is also not forbidden, in your opinion.

If everything is said, then that's all that's left to communicate exactly that. "No, we already talked about everything that is important to me."

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