

## Four Questions You Must Ask During An Interview

Posted by [Donna Fuscaldo](#) • April 10th, 2013

When it comes to [interviews](#), most people think their job is to answer questions not ask them. But an interview is a two-way street, and the more questions you ask the better your chances are of making a lasting impression.

“It’s always smart to ask questions in an interview,” says Joel Garfinkle, author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. “Most people are afraid to ask questions. They don’t realize it’s something they are supposed to do.”

By asking questions you can not only determine if the company and culture is the right fit for you, but also impress the interviewer with your [preparation](#) and knowledge of the firm. “The more the interview feels



conversational the better the chance you both have of learning about each other and the company,” says Garfinkle.

But not all questions are created equal. Some will illicit better responses than others. With that in mind, here’s a look at four [interview questions](#) you should always ask.

### 1. What are the top priorities of the job?

Often, when we interview for a potential [new job](#), we don’t have a complete understanding of what the role will entail outside of what was in the job

advertisement. Because of that, career experts say it’s a good idea to ask what the top priorities are of the job and how to be successful in the position. If you ask that early on in the interview, the conversation will focus on what the job entails and how you’ll meet the objectives as opposed to talking about your past performance or going over your resume. It eliminates all the guesswork and enables you to spend the interview time telling the hiring manager how you can do what they want, says Garfinkle.

In addition to learning more about what you’ll actually be doing, you also want to ask the interviewer about the history of the role. According to Mark Jaffe, president of Wyatt & Jaffe, the executive search firm, you want to know if it’s a newly created job or if you are replacing someone. If it’s a new position, he says to find out why it was created, and if it’s an existing position, you’ll want to know what happened to the last the person in the job.

### 2. What are the biggest problems right now?

Ask the hiring manager what problems the company or department is facing, and there’s a high likelihood that you’ll get an honest answer. “You’ll get a pretty good idea of the type of company you are joining,” says Garfinkle. “If it’s a problem directly related to your position, you may be able to offer a solution on the spot and show your value.” According to Garfinkle it’s fair game to ask that question because it’s not any different than the interviewer asking you what your greatest challenge was at your previous job or what was your biggest failure.

### **3. How will you measure a good performance and an outstanding one?**

It may seem like you are sucking up by asking this question, but what you are really doing is finding out what qualities you need aside from the technical qualifications to be successful in the job, says Jaffe. “A role is not just about a laundry list of qualifications that some HR person put on a piece of paper, it’s about meeting the business objectives,” says Jaffe. Having the knowledge of what you need to do to exceed expectations gives you the opportunity to weave in examples of how you met similar goals.

### **4. Can you tell me how you came to the company and why you stayed?**

Not only will you get insight into what’s good about the company, but you’ll also build a relationship with the person doing the interview if you ask this question. “It gives them an opportunity to tell you about their own value system and the culture of the company,” says Jaffe. Not to mention that most people love to talk about themselves and will remember that job candidate that hung on every word. “Showing interest in that person raises your stock immeasurably and gives them a chance to tell you truthfully why they accepted the job,” he says.



Donna Fuscaldo is a freelance journalist hailing out of Long Island, New York. Donna writes for numerous online publications including FoxBusiness.com, Bankrate.com, AARP.com, Insurance.com and Houselogic.com. As a personal finance reporter for years, Donna provides invaluable advice on everything from saving money to landing that dream job. She also writes a weekly column for FoxBusiness.com focused on technology for small businesses. Previously, Donna was an equities reporter for Dow Jones Newswires and a special contributor to the Wall Street Journal. Through the Glassdoor Blog, Donna will provide tips on how to find a job and more importantly keep it.