

# The Charlotte Observer

## Getting Ahead

### Great questions can lead to great jobs

IN MY OPINION  
ERIC MURPHY



In interviewing for a job, we all know to be prepared for the interviewer's questions. But what questions should you put to your interviewer?

It is important than ever to ask great questions when being interviewed for a job, particularly if you are being interviewed by the person who will be your supervisor.

Assuming you want to be successful in your new position, gathering as much relevant information as possible is vital to achieving that goal. You'll also leave a better impression on the interviewer if you are diligent in finding a good career match.

Here are some of my favorite question for the interviewer who would potentially be your supervisor and how the answers might play a role in your job search.

**1. How would you describe your management style? If I asked another employee, how do you think they would describe it?** Match their style against what you know about yourself. Do you see this as a productive working relationship?

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**2. How would you describe your communication style?** Consider your

communication style and the interviewer's style. Are they complementary?

For example, I am direct and can take criticism. I work best with people who tell me exactly how they feel. Working for someone who wants to deliver information in a politically correct way drives me nuts. What works best for you?

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**3. When was your last coaching/mentoring success with an employee? Tell me about it. What made it successful?** I hope the interviewer has one to tell you about. Otherwise, beware: He doesn't coach employees and the company may not have a culture that encourages mentoring.

There may be no desire or ability to help you advance to the next level in your career.

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**4. How long have you been here? Why did you decide to work here? What do you see as your long-term career goal?** Be careful how you ask this one. You are not asking because you want the interviewer's job. You are asking to get a feel for her commitment to the company and position.

If you take a position based on your chemistry with the manager and that manager leaves the company soon after you start, you may find yourself in a difficult situation. You should be aiming for a working relationship with the interviewer as your supervisor for at least a year to build some independent

credibility within the organization.

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**5. What would you characterize as your No. 1 priority? What drives you?** Remember, what drives him will be driving you. Look for commonality in your priorities.

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**6. What is your biggest fear? What keeps you up at night?** Their biggest fears are opportunities for you. Can you alleviate some of these fears? Can you bring something to the table to assuage those? If so, you may find some big payoff down the road.

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**7. What would you consider your biggest strength?** Look for ways you can complement her strengths. The most difficult assignment I ever had was working for a manager who was as

disorganized as me. We were both vision-driven creators, but neither of us took care of the details. Guess whose responsibility she believed that was? You guessed it, mine. It was painful.

If you get to know your boss before you accept an offer, then you can determine whether his values and beliefs match your expectations and whether working together will be a positive experience.

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