

## 5 Key Questions Before Taking a Job

When you're considering taking a new job, it's important to find out how a potential employer treats employees. But getting the answer to that question, along with others that will help you determine if you'll be happy at the company, may take some sleuthing. Here are five questions that will help you decide if the company is a fit - and some unconventional ways to find the answers:

**What makes employees join this company and stay here?** You can always ask your potential manager this question in an interview. But if you ask the employees you see while walking around the premises, as Griffen did, you'll get a wider variety of answers - and possibly more honest ones.

**How are people treated here?** You may not even need to ask anyone this - just observe carefully from the time you set foot in the building. When you arrive for your interview, are you kept waiting with no explanation? Does the interviewer interrupt your conversation to take phone calls? "Try to come at different times if you have multiple interviews," advises Gail Ginder, a leadership coach with the Claros Group in Healdsburg, Calif. That way you'll see if the mood around the building changes with the time of day.

**What are the unspoken rules?** For this and other questions that are best asked of employees, you have two options. One is to use your network to find employees who work at the company but aren't involved in hiring you. The other is to ask your interviewer - but only when it's clear that the interviewer has decided you're the best candidate and is trying to get you to sign on. "When they've decided you're the one, you can ask pretty much anything as long as you ask it well," Ginder says.

**What happens when people make mistakes?** The answer to this will give you insight into the company's management and culture. You can ask it of an interviewer late in the interview process, or ask employees who aren't involved in hiring. The key is to pose the question without sounding like someone who is planning to make a lot of mistakes. Use humor, Ginder advises. "Say, 'If I were lucky enough to be offered this job, I would never want to make a mistake. But what happens here when people make a mistake?'"

**What is a typical week like?** The answer to this question can give insight into everything from how long the workdays are to how many after-hours phone calls you can expect. Vic Snyder, senior career counselor at the University of Washington's Center for Career Services in Seattle, suggests that in informal conversations with employees, you pair this question with one about how often employees take their full vacations.