ASK ELLEN – what questions to ask interviewer?

2/2/12

Q: I have heard that in a job interview, you should not ask questions about salary, benefits, perks, flex-time, etc. until you’re being offered the position. What questions *should* I be asking, though?

A: You are right that you should not be bringing up the topics you’ve mentioned above, especially in a first interview and/or before you have been offered the job. If you ask questions about those things, it will seem as if you are only interested in what you can get from the employer, and not in how you can serve that employer or do the job well or fit in at that workplace.

Your questions, usually asked at the end of the interview, should be about: the position and its responsibilities, the workplace, what the interviewer is looking for, and what the next step will be in the hiring process.

Here are some suggestions:

Is this a newly-created position? [if not:] Why did the last person in this position leave?

What will be some of the primary challenges for the person in this position, over the next six months (or a year)?

How would you describe the culture at this workplace?

How long have you worked here? What do you like about working here?

Are employees promoted from within here, or are open positions usually filled from an outside applicant?

What would the person hired need to do to succeed in this position?

What skills and characteristics would you say are the most important, for the person hired for this position to have?

Are there any other responsibilities of this job we have not already discussed? (What is the next step in the hiring process? (the answer to this last question will help you to understand how and when you should follow up)
Here is a wonderful, brief video on “closing” an interview, with more suggestions for questions for the interviewer: http://careerconfidential.com/dont-make-this-critical-interview-mistake-listen-to-this/

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Thank you and good luck!

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