

Winning That Job – The Questions You Should Ask at the End of an Interview

An interview with Tim Crowden, Executive Coach and Founder of Coaching and Leadership

You've prepared for your interview, researched the organisation, reflected on your achievements and practised answering the questions you're likely to encounter.

The interview is going well. You've answered the panel's questions and you're beginning to relax.

Then comes that familiar invitation:

"Thank you. That's the end of our questions. We have a few minutes left – do you have any questions for us?"

For many candidates, this is the moment they realise they've spent all their preparation time thinking about what the employer might ask them, without considering what they might want to ask in return.

But those final few minutes can be among the most valuable parts of the interview.

We spoke with Tim Crowden, Executive Coach and founder of Coaching and Leadership, about why asking a thoughtful question matters and how to make the most of the opportunity.

Tim, why is it important to ask questions at the end of an interview?

Because an interview should be a two-way conversation.

The employer is assessing whether you have the skills, experience, judgement and potential to succeed in the role.

But you should also be assessing whether the role and organisation are right for you.

Will you enjoy the work? Does the organisation's purpose align with your values? Will you be able to make a meaningful contribution? Are there opportunities to learn, develop and grow?

A thoughtful question can help you explore those issues while also demonstrating genuine interest, curiosity and an understanding of the position.

It's not simply about making a good final impression. It's about continuing the conversation and helping both parties make an informed decision.

What sorts of questions should candidates avoid?

I encourage people not to use this opportunity simply to ask about administrative matters that can be addressed elsewhere.

Questions such as "When will I hear from you?", "Will you contact my referees?" or "What happens next?" are perfectly reasonable, but they generally don't make the best use of those final few minutes.

Similarly, salary, leave arrangements, flexible working conditions and other employment benefits are important considerations. But that is something to discuss when you are being offered the position..

But when you've been given an opportunity to engage directly with the selection panel, I think there are often more valuable questions to ask.

And you certainly don't need to ask whether you should take your glass of water to the dishwasher on the way out!

So, what questions would you recommend?

I suggest preparing two or three questions in advance, knowing that you'll probably only have time to ask one or two.

The best question will depend on the role, the organisation and what you've already learned during the interview.

Here are some examples.

Understanding the role and expectations

- What would be the most important priorities for the successful candidate in their first three to six months?
- What would success look like in this role after 12 months?
- What are the greatest challenges someone stepping into this position is likely to face?
- What capabilities or personal qualities would distinguish an excellent performer in this role?

Understanding the team and organisational culture

- How would you describe the culture of the team I'd be joining?
- What qualities do people who thrive in your organisation tend to demonstrate?
- How does the team approach collaboration, differing perspectives and challenging decisions?
- How does the organisation recognise and celebrate team achievements?

Understanding the future and opportunities for growth

- What are the most significant challenges or opportunities facing the team over the next few years?
- How do you see this role evolving as the organisation's priorities change?

- What opportunities are available for professional development and leadership growth?
- How does the organisation encourage people to contribute ideas and improve the way things are done?

You don't need to ask all of these questions.

In fact, I would strongly discourage it!

Choose one or two that genuinely interest you and are relevant to the conversation you've just had.

Is there one question you particularly like?

One of my favourites is:

"What would be the most important priorities for the successful candidate in their first three to six months?"

It's a relatively simple question, but it can open up an extremely useful conversation.

It helps you understand what the employer is really looking for, what challenges you might encounter and where they expect you to make an early contribution.

And depending on the answer, you may have an opportunity to connect those priorities with your own strengths and experience.

For example, you might respond:

"That's interesting. The focus on building stronger stakeholder relationships particularly appeals to me. It's an area I've worked extensively in, and one where I believe I could make a valuable contribution."

You're not delivering another rehearsed interview answer.

You're demonstrating that you've listened, understood the organisation's needs and can see how your experience might be relevant.

How important is it to listen to the answer?

Extremely important.

Sometimes people become so focused on asking an impressive question that they forget to listen carefully to the response.

But the value isn't simply in the question you ask.

It's in the conversation that follows.

The panel's response might reveal something about the organisation's priorities, leadership expectations, team culture or challenges that you hadn't previously considered.

It might reinforce your interest in the position.

Or it might prompt you to think more carefully about whether the opportunity is right for you.

And if the response naturally creates an opportunity to briefly connect your experience with the employer's needs, that's a bonus.

The objective isn't to impress the panel with a clever question. It's to ask something meaningful, listen carefully and engage thoughtfully with the answer.

What if the panel has already answered all my questions?

That's entirely possible, particularly if the interview has been conversational.

There's no need to ask a question simply for the sake of asking one.

You might say:

"Thank you. You've actually covered the questions I had prepared, particularly around the priorities for the role and the team's direction. Our discussion has reinforced my interest in the position."

That's a perfectly reasonable response.

It demonstrates that you've listened and that you've thought seriously about the opportunity.

Finally, what's your advice for those last few minutes?

Remember that the interview isn't over.

Those final moments are an opportunity to reinforce your interest, demonstrate your curiosity and leave the panel with a clear sense of who you are.

But perhaps more importantly, they're an opportunity for you to make a better-informed decision about your own future.

I often remind clients that getting a job offer isn't the only measure of a successful recruitment process.

Finding the right role, in the right organisation, where you can contribute, develop and enjoy your work is equally important.

The employer is deciding whether you're the right person for the job. You should also be deciding whether it's the right job for you.

About Tim Crowden

Tim Crowden is an Executive Coach, International Coaching Federation Professional Certified Coach (PCC), and founder of Coaching and Leadership.

Following a 32-year public sector career, including 16 years in the Australian Government Senior Executive Service and senior leadership appointments in Australia and internationally, Tim transitioned into executive coaching and leadership development.

With more than 1,700 hours of documented professional coaching experience, he partners with executives, senior leaders, managers and teams across government, business and other organisations.

Tim established The Coaching and Leadership Hub in Canberra at the beginning of 2025.

Through **Coaching and Leadership**, Tim and his colleagues provide executive coaching, career transition support, leadership development and highly individualised *Winning That Job* workshops. These services help participants understand their professional capabilities, prepare for new opportunities and navigate important career decisions with clarity and confidence.

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