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Online Career Tips  
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## Job Seekers: Don't Forget to Interview the Company (and Hiring Manager)

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Special to Online Career Tips



Most people believe job interviews are about the candidate proving they are the best fit for the open position. Having spent many years of my career as a hiring manager, I think it's actually a two-way street — because it's also about the job candidate making sure the company (and manager) will be a good fit for them. Are you interviewing the company? If not, maybe it's time you started.

Going into an interview realizing that you (the job seeker) also need to make sure the company and hiring manager will be a good fit for you, can actually help reduce some of the typical interview jitters and nervousness. Why? Because it requires you to focus on observing the company and the hiring manager, which helps keep your emotions in check and forces you to think rationally about what you're seeing (and hearing).

Here's what I mean:

**Take note of your surroundings.** From the time you arrive in the parking lot, take notes mentally in your head of what you see and hear. What does the office space look like? Is it clean and neat? Is it formal or casual in appearance? Is the receptionist (or other employees) friendly and immediately helpful?

**Observe the inside of the company.** Once you're inside, take a look at the office environment. Do employees look and act friendly and hardworking? How are employees dressed — casually or in formal business attire? Is the work environment open cubicles/workspaces or offices with doors? Is the office space quiet or fairly loud?

**Observe the hiring manager.** Is he/she prepared for your interview? How do they act when they greet you? If they walk you from the lobby to their office or a conference room, how do they behave when passing other employees on the way there? Is the hiring manager organized with a list of questions to ask? Do they have your résumé and the job description printed out with notes written in the margins? Can you picture yourself working for this person or does it conjure up mental images of sheer horror?

A career coaching client had twice previously accepted jobs which turned out to be a poor fit that had made her professional life fairly miserable. After practicing this technique, she realized she had accepted positions at companies that were much too formal and traditional for her personal style. Once she understood this issue she was better able to evaluate each company's culture and the hiring manager's style during job interviews — and ended up finding a position that was a much better fit.

To help you successfully evaluate a company and hiring manager, go somewhere right after the interview, like a coffee shop, and then write down everything you can remember about the interview, such as:



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- What did you observe about the office?
- What did you observe about the people you met?
- What did you observe about the hiring manager?
- What were some of the questions the hiring manager asked?
- Based on what you saw (and heard), how would you describe the company culture?
- Does your personal style fit in well with the company and hiring manager's style?
- Are there any potential issues that immediately stand out as you think about the company and hiring manager?
- Can you picture yourself working at this company? Working for this manager?

Reviewing your answers to these questions should give you a much better idea whether or not the company and hiring manager would be a good fit for your personal style and with what you want to accomplish in your career. Taking this time for evaluation will help you make better choices as you consider your job opportunities.

~ Lisa Quast

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