

Executive Appointments

Is it OK to say 'I think we covered everything'?

Your Questions Answered

GILL PLIMMER

Sometimes an interview goes really well and there's genuine interest in the questions, so when we get to the end and the interviewer asks me if I have any questions, I can't think of any.

Is it OK just to say "No – I think we've covered everything." Or does that look bad? If I do need to come up with something, are there any good questions that would work in any interview, even when we seem to have covered everything?

Chris Jackson, head of global banking and markets, graduate recruitment and development, for Europe at RBS, says:

If you're going for the right job, questions should come naturally. But don't ask them for the sake of it. If you've had a good interview and you don't have any, then don't force it; it will break the positive flow you have created.

Try to make the questions an extension of the conversation you've been having, rather than introducing new topics. Make them relevant. It's generally better to prepare broad topics for discussion rather than specific questions so you can tailor

them to the interview. This can be a good opportunity to emphasise your interest in the job.

Find out about the person interviewing you beforehand. That way, you can personalise the questions and ask about specific projects or things they've been interested in. It will make things flow better and you'll get a more honest answer.

If you can't find out who is interviewing you beforehand, find out something about them during your conversation. Take a pad and feel free to make notes so you can link back to their introduction at the end of the interview.

If, for example, one of the interviewers says she works as part of the energy sector team, when it comes to your questions you can say: "You said you're part of the energy team; what's your view on the soaring oil price?"

Feel free to ask the interviewer about themselves. Ask them what they like about working there. Remember they are selling the job to you; it's not just you selling yourself.

Helen Pitcher, chairman of Iddas, a boardroom effectiveness consultancy, says:

No, it's not OK to say "No – I think we've covered everything."

But you can mention what the questions you had before the interview were, and say that you feel they've been answered to your satisfaction. List them, though; reel off the questions you had beforehand.

One of the best questions you can ask is: "Is there anything you, as the interviewer, feel I haven't answered?"

It's also worth asking what the time frame for the interview procedure is, where you go from here and when you're likely to find out whether you got the job. It's amazing how many people leave an interview wondering what will happen next.

The golden rule is don't go into the interview without having done your homework – your research into the industry, the employer, and the job itself. Anyone who goes into an interview without questions at the ready is messing with their own career. You need to find out about this organisation for your own sake. It's classic due diligence.

Try to find out about the person interviewing you, what they are interested in and where they fit in the business. Most people like talking about themselves and you need to create a rapport.

Then you can ask them about their



You might ask an interviewer for their view on oil prices. (Though this might not be appropriate in every case)

Reuters

experiences at the company. If they are new, you can ask them how they found the induction process; if they've been there a long time, you can ask about the company's attitude towards career development.

Even if they answer in formal terms – this is our career development package etc – and you know they are giving you an impersonal reply, it will still give

you a sense of their management style. They might have told you, for example, that they have an open door policy but you'll know that's unlikely to be the case.

Beware of asking too many questions about the package, though. You can ask in broad terms but if you ask in too much detail you will give the impression that you're only interested in the money and the

holidays. You can negotiate the package once someone has decided they want to take you on; you're in a much stronger position then.

NEXT WEEK: 'What are we supposed to DO about getting more women on to boards?' E-mail your recruitment questions – or suggested answers to next week's query – to: recruitment@ft.com