

Ask the Right Questions!

Culture Shock!

Can you fit into your new employers corporate culture? Ask the right questions!

Stress is one of the factors in why employees move on and change jobs. In order to find the right workplace, jobseekers should ask questions about an organisations corporate culture before accepting a job.

Corporate culture is a set of behaviours and codes that employees use to govern their interactions with each other. This includes formal, written company policies and informal unwritten codes that you learn as you gain experience.

Recognising and responding to corporate culture is a crucial step in managing workplace stress. It is the culture of an organisation that will determine whether you enjoy working for a company.

All of you who are potential employees to a company should observe and ask questions about company policies.

The following are some questions that you could ask:

- Does the company have a tall hierarchy of reporting channels? If this is so, it means that there is a need to seek approval through several layers of management. If you are someone who is dynamic and assertive, you may not be able to fit well into the role.
- What does the organisation chart look like? What is the age range of the team? The answers to these questions will determine the mix of the team members.
- How is feedback given to employees? If you have done a good job, how would you know? Likewise, if you have done something wrong, are you provided with constructive feedback?



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- Do workers eat at their desks? Are there personal belongings such as pictures or plants at their workstations? Do workers socialise outside of work, share personal details or do they keep work and personal lives separate? This will indicate whether personal life and work/life balance are integrated into the work culture.
- How do the supervisors relate to their team members? Do they take on a friendly role, maintain a boss figure, or switch between both?
- If you are a replacement, why did the previous person leave? It would be good to know the reason behind the resignation of the previous employee. The company may reveal reasons, such as a lot of overtime required for the job, workplace politics, etc. If the previous staff was terminated due to performance, you could then probe further by asking how the company measures performance.
- How do people communicate to each other? Is it informal or at organised meetings? If there is a receptionist in the company, observe how she mingles or talks to the staff. Conversations that you hear in the office reception or pantry could provide useful hints on the workplace culture.
- Do you observe a lot of files and papers in the office? If this is so, it may mean that the company is not investing in IT solutions to minimise paper work.

Once you know what the corporate culture of the company is like, you are in a better position to see how the culture matches your style and expectations.