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QUESTIONS FOR ADVICE CALLS

The following are examples of plus and minus questions to ask during your informational interview. The minus questions probe for problems which is what you are really after. But it is usually preferable to start with "safe" questions on the plus side. Start with Industry, then Company, then Personal questions. You don't ask all these questions in the first meeting. You listen in the first meeting. These questions are designed to help you get the person talking about the problems/challenges/issues/pressure points related to their sector. Ideally, you want to pose these questions over 2-3 meetings.

Again, I want to emphasize you will not have time to ask all the questions. However, several will be crucial in getting the information you need. Let's begin with a list of plus questions. There are generalized questions that will (1) give you some ideas about the scope of your questioning, and (2) establish the proper tone and approach. Your own questions will be more focused and refined, appropriate for the individual situation.

Plus Industry Questions

1. How are profits maximized--improved cost cutting, marketing, strategy, superior product or service?
2. What is responsible for the positive or innovative trends in the industry? Are they social, political or individual trends?
3. What factors are responsible for the growth of the industry?
4. What specific research has the industry found useful in terms of products or growth?
5. How has the development of the industry come about and what new strategy is being used to continue or diversify that development?
6. What are the overall earning potentials of your industry?

Plus Company Questions

1. What is the overall philosophy of management here in our organization? How is that specifically implemented? How can you personally measure that philosophy?
2. How accurately are new developments and markets perceived, and what is the management style? Open, vertical, horizontal?
3. What are the long-range goals of the company? The short-range goals?
4. What has been the major achievement of the company in the marketplace?
5. What makes your company better than others in the same field?



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6. What combination of aggression and analysts has been used to capture the market share?

Plus Personal Questions

1. What is the most significant contribution you have made to your firm in the last year? The last five years?
2. What person (or persons) have you recruited who has gone on to fulfill the potential you recognized in him or her?
3. What attributes are necessary for success for a person in your position?
4. How have you changed the nature of your job?
5. What are your short-range objectives? Your long-range objectives?
6. What professional in the field do you admire most and why?

Minus Industry Questions

1. What about government regulation in the industry--is it a plus or minus? Local, provincial, federal?
2. Are you affected by environmental restraints? Are you affected by any interest groups?
3. Is your growth fast or slow? Is it typical of the field?
4. How about supplies or suppliers and personnel? What material supply problems are there? Are you able to attract and keep good people?
5. What specific trends affect you? (Markets drying up, hostility toward the industry, cost factors, etc.)
6. Do you have too much competition, too little? Why is the competition better or worse?

Minus Company Questions

1. How does your firm respond to government regulation? What costs have been incurred as a result?
2. Who is responsible for responding to government regulations? What other political factors are at work in the industry that affect your organization?
3. How are you attracting people to keep up with your growth? (If growth is unusually fast.) What markets will you lose if you cannot attract people? What particular skills and abilities do you look for to help you increase your share of profits and earnings?
4. How is quality control maintained? By whom?
5. What influence do inflationary trends have on you?
6. What are you doing to capture and keep your share of the market?

Minus Personal Questions



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1. If you could do whatever you wish professionally, what would that be? What would it mean for your organization? What prevents you from doing it?
2. What feature of this position that you are presently holding would you change or eliminate?
3. What development has occurred in your field that you did not envision in your career plans? What did this development mean for your future and the future of others in this field?
4. What does increased government activity mean to your profession?
5. If you had to do it all over, would you join the same field and the same organization? If yes, why? If no, why not?
6. What is the opinion of professionals you respect about the growth potential in your field in the next five years?

Your ultimate purpose during these advice calls is to identify the problems, to see if you want to be the problem-solver! As rapport develops between you, move to the minus questions about industry, , then company affairs, then personal matters. Move back and forth, being sensitive to individual reactions. This process will lead you to your goal.