

Watch-outs: what your new workplace won't tell you about

Advancing through a job application process can be thrilling, but sometimes you can get swept up in the moment and forget to find out all of the important information before you say yes to a job offer.

To help you out, we asked Matt Harrison, Managing Partner at Hope & Glory Executive, and Leah Lambart, Career Consultant at [Relaunch Me](#), what to look out for and ask your prospective new employer.

A great first step is to check out SEEK's Company Reviews, which will provide insight into how employees past and present have found the business you're applying to work at.

- **Undercooked salary.** “Beware of vague promises of reviewing an undercooked salary six months after you start,” Harrison says. “Any meaningful pay rise attached to an arbitrary date almost certainly won’t happen. You need to start on day one being satisfied. Be prepared to negotiate.”
- **No flexibility.** If the company isn’t prepared to offer flexible start and end times, make sure you know for certain how long the commute will take, says Harrison. “I encourage people to do the commute during peak hour and see how that works for them. This is something people often fail to account for, and it eventually bites hard.”
- **Unclear expectations.** “Not everything can be easily defined,” says Harrison, “but beware of lack of effort to articulate KPIs.” As an example, Lambart cites a client who had left a job after burning out, and took a new role without getting a clear understanding of the expectations. “She thought the work-life balance would be much better. Three months in, it quickly became apparent that the hours were just as excessive, if not worse.” It pays to do your research.
- **Bad culture fit.** Make sure the employer’s culture aligns with your values and interests by seeking a range of opinions. Harrison advises, “Ask the hard questions, and schedule another meeting if there are doubts.” For example, he says, “I had a candidate who was going to accept a role with a football club. I asked them if they liked football, and they said they didn’t follow it. They took the job and failed quickly.” It’s important you’re passionate about roles you apply for. Otherwise “you have a much diminished chance of fitting the culture.”

- **Limited opportunities.** All good businesses should provide possibilities for career development to their employees. “Are you joining a growth company in a growth sector?” Harrison says, “This homework is basic in terms of estimating the potential for career growth.” So study up!

How to broach these topics

A great first step is to utilise your networks to research the organisation. Look in your social and professional networks to find past or present employees who might share with you what it's like to work there.

Then when it comes time for your interview, you can pose strategic questions to ensure you find out what you need to know. Lambart recommends asking the following:

- **Can you describe the culture of the organisation?** “If the interviewer described the culture as ‘flexible’ or ‘innovative’, I would ask for some concrete examples to see if they practice what they preach.”
- **Why has the position become available?** This will tell you whether they're happy to create new roles instead of overload current employees, and whether or not the business has high turnover.
- **What do you like most about working here?** “If the interviewer struggles to find something nice to say about the place I would run a mile.” Lambart also advises asking everyone you meet during the recruitment process this question, to see if their answers are consistent.
- **Can you describe the key traits of the most successful leaders in your business?** Gain insight into which skills the organisation values most, for example technical or leadership skills, says Lambart. “This will help you understand whether your particular skillset will be valued by the organisation.”
- **How would you describe your management style?** Ask this if you're meeting with your potential new manager, Lambart advises. “Managers can have very different management styles and this can potentially make or break you in a new role.”