



A Guide to Positively Questioning Companies as a Prospective Employee

Tips on making your voice heard while showing companies
you care about their public support of climate policy

ClimateVoice's Theory of Change

Every nation needs strong climate policy if we are going to meet emission targets set out by the Paris Agreement to limit the increase in global average temperature to 1.5 °C. Companies could play a crucial role with their huge influence over public policy. However, due to heavy lobbying against pro-climate legislation (especially by the fossil fuel companies) we are now on a [pathway to 4°C + global warming](#). In order to get the policies needed to address climate change passed, companies must speak out in support of and actively lobby for pro-climate policy.

Many companies currently have strong commitments to climate action, such as making their internal operations use [100% renewables](#), but they often remain silent on important climate policies. We need to change this pattern and activate companies to go **#AllinOnClimate**. To urge companies to speak out, ClimateVoice is working to mobilize the voices of the workforce. Once the workforce is engaged, it will incentivize companies to take pro-climate action in order to stay competitive, attract new talent (students like you!), and retain their current employees.

ClimateVoice was started by a multi-disciplinary team led by Bill Wehl, who headed sustainability at both Google and Facebook. Wehl saw firsthand the need to pressure companies to step up their efforts on climate to include impacting public policy. Students from around the U.S. have helped to push the efforts further. See [this article](#) for more information.

Address Climate During Your Interviews

Asking recruiters about their company's stance on climate legislation is a great way to get these important issues noticed and flagged by employers. The logic is as follows: employers care deeply about attracting top talent. That's why they spend tens of thousands of dollars for a spot at a single career fair. Most companies closely track what prospective employees value in order to attract the best talent. If enough job candidates start asking companies about their stance on climate policy during these conversations, recruiters will likely pass this information along to higher-ups.

How to Make Yourself Heard

What are good venues to ask questions?

- **Career Fairs.** While these interactions are lower stakes, it's a lot easier to ask many different companies about their climate lobbying efforts. When enough of your friends and peers are asking these same types of questions, the repetition is bound to sink in.
- **Info Sessions.** Info sessions are a little different, because your question is not only for you — it's also being heard by everyone in the audience. This means it carries more weight, because the recruiter knows the entire audience now also cares about the answer. Because it carries more weight, it's more important to make sure it's clear the question is being asked in good faith. If you are shy about speaking up, Zoom info sessions often allow you to post questions in the chat, which is another great way to showcase it's a priority to you.
- **Interviews.** Often, at the end of an interview, interviewers will ask if there is anything additional you'd like to know about their company. This is a great opportunity to ask a question about their public policy commitments with regard to climate.
- **Offer Negotiations.** After a prospective employer has extended you an offer, you have a lot of leverage. This is a great opportunity to let employers know that you prefer to work for a company that has taken a public stance in support of pro-climate policy.

What questions should I ask about?

- **Ask questions related to policy.** Here are a few questions we believe send the right message:
 - Does [Company] follow the AAA Leadership framework for climate responsibility? (This is where we'd like companies to be at. Check it out here: [The AAA Leadership Framework. A Guide for Companies | by Climate Policy Leadership](#). A core group of companies are already onboard: Unilever, Salesforce, Ikea, Mars, Patagonia. If they don't know what this is, consider it a teachable moment to inform them about it.)
 - What has [Company] already done to publicly support climate policy being passed?
 - Has [Company] taken a political stance on any current climate related matters?
 - For example, if they say "we support the Paris Agreement," or "we support a carbon tax," consider asking them to be a bit more specific. Many companies support these policies in principle, but do not put any effort into making them a reality. Have they pushed any smaller scale legislation to encourage all countries to comply with the Paris Agreement's goals?
 - How many lobbying dollars has [Company] spent in support of pro-climate policy?
 - What are examples of [Company]'s leadership taking employees' demands on climate seriously?
- Do your research ahead of time.
 - What existing initiatives has the company launched in support of climate?
 - Has a competitor done or supported something impactful on climate you wish this company would also replicate?
- Ask about specific issues, but not so specific they wouldn't be expected to know.

- For example, a recruiter might not know what the particular quality standards the company's carbon offsets must adhere to, but it's reasonable to expect them to know whether the company has lobbied in favor of the Clean Power Plan.
- When in doubt, default to asking about culture: "Have you been a part of conversations about [Company]'s climate impact internally? What are examples of the company's leadership taking employees' perspectives around climate seriously? If I wanted to get [Company] to take climate lobbying more seriously, as an employee how would I go about doing it?"

How to ask about climate in a positive way

Here are three steps to asking climate questions in a positive tone:

1. **Positive recognition first.** Start by mentioning a positive action the company has taken in support of our climate. Do your research! This is likely to impress the recruiter, and show them you're both serious about your interest in the company and passionate about climate. Keep in mind, action is more important than commitment.
2. **Show you care.** Clarify that the company's stance on climate is a big factor in your decision. If the intro was to get them comfortable, this is to show you're serious, that you aren't going to give them a pass based on the singular positive action you mentioned, and that how they respond may actually make the difference in whether or not you choose to move forward with this company.
3. **Ask your question.** Ask one of our policy-related questions from above, or come up with your own.

Here's an example:

"I love the DocuSign for Forests initiative. Hearing about DocuSign's actions to preserve the environment is actually what convinced me to apply for this position. Given how important it is to pass key climate legislation right now, I am curious to know much DocuSign has pledged in lobbying dollars to advance pro-climate policy at the state and federal level."

Resources

Here's a shortlist of online sources where you can look up a company's existing climate commitments:

- [InfluenceMap](#) is an independent think tank providing data and analysis on how businesses are affecting the climate crisis. Use this as a resource to learn more about companies' existing climate initiatives. There are [Climate Policy Scores](#) for some of the largest companies.
- [The Ceres Network](#) is a climate-focused lobbying group funded by member companies and acts on their behalf to push forward climate policy.
- [The Open Secret Project](#) can help you identify which members of Congress a company supports. You can cross reference this information with [LCV's Environmental Scorecard](#) to see if a company is supporting politicians who are pro-climate or anti-climate.
- Google! You'd be surprised at how much you can find (or not find, which also tells you something) by simply searching "[Company] climate policy/advocacy."

Here are some additional guides on how to bring up policy questions at your future workplace:

- [A Personal Guide to Corporate Climate Action](#) by Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)
- [A simple guide to talking about workplace issues with your coworkers](#) by Coworker.org
- [Do's and Don'ts for Engaging Colleagues and Supporters on a Workplace Issue](#) by Coworker.org
- [ClimateVoice's Policy Guide for Business Leaders](#) includes examples of what types of climate policies companies should actively be supporting.

FAQ

Does asking these questions actually do anything?

Yes! Repetition is key. When recruiters consistently hear this message, they are more likely to bring up these issues to their higher-ups after the recruiting season and potentially spark action.

Will bringing up climate to a recruiter or interviewer hurt my chances of landing an offer?

No! Don't be afraid to speak up. Speaking up about issues like climate demonstrates to prospective employers that you care and can even make a positive impression on recruiting teams. You are not trying to expose a company's weak commitments to sustainability or policy action in a "GOTCHA" kind of way. Start the conversation with a nod to something positive the company has done towards sustainability, which will show you've done your homework on the company. Companies want to hire individuals that will make them better, but not rock the boat too much. These are valid concerns, but you should not feel this will cause you to miss out on job opportunities. You are simply speaking with respect, facts, a desire to learn, and an eagerness to make their company better.

What should I do if the recruiter does not know about their company's climate stance?

If your recruiter is unsure of the company's policy stances, you can ask them to put you in touch with someone who is on the company's sustainability team as a follow up.