



## Guide to Questioning Companies

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

### Why bring up climate when talking to companies?

Asking recruiters and hiring managers about their company's stance on climate is a great way to get these important issues noticed and flagged by employers. The logic is simple: 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 **political engagement for the climate** during these conversations, employees will pass this information along to the company's managers and decision-makers. So, **let's start talking about climate!**

To create this guide, we spoke with recruiters and employees from a variety of companies. We've compiled their advice on how companies absorb job seekers' preferences, and how to best start conversations that will move the needle on climate at the company, while also helping you get hired!

### What are good venues to ask questions?

- **Career Fairs.** These interactions are lower stakes, which makes it 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 and recruiters will take notice.
- **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; the recruiter knows the entire audience now also cares about the answer, and it becomes particularly important for the recruiter to feel that 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.** It's crucial to ask questions at later stages of the interview process and when speaking with a hiring manager. Often, at the end of interviews, your interviewer 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.

## How does asking questions affect companies?

- **It affects the individual.** Many employees don't know much about their company's climate stance. By showing interest in the answer, you legitimize it as a question they could be asking about themselves.
- **It carries back to the company.** Recruiters track what candidates care about, and report it back to the company. If a recruiter is asked about a company's climate advocacy stance by two different candidates, they'll likely see it as a pattern, and are more likely to bring it up internally when they get the chance. Of course, your question will have the most impact if you ask a hiring manager when further along in the interview process.
  - **The best climate question is one that the employee doesn't know the answer to, but is a natural enough question that they feel like they should know the answer.** This will ensure they ask their manager for the answer, initiating a conversation among decision-makers in a company about the importance of climate advocacy and recruiting.

## How can you ask about climate in an effective, positive way?

The most important thing when talking to a company is making your questions seem **reasonable**. Primarily, this is because you probably want the job, and don't want to seem like a troublemaker. Thankfully, every recruiter we've talked to has told us that if you're coming with **respect, facts, a desire to learn**, and an eagerness to **make the company better**, no one will think less of you for asking about issues that matter to you. The second reason to be extra reasonable is that it's easy for an employee to dismiss someone who comes off as adversarial, because they probably aren't engaging in good faith and wouldn't join the company anyway. Instead, you want it to seem like your questions are reasonable and even obvious.

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

1. **Positive recognition.** 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 while showing 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. The important thing to convey is how they respond may actually make the difference in whether or not you choose to move forward with this company.
3. **Avoid "gotcha" questions; be compassionate.** The employee you're talking to might not know much about a company's climate stance, and probably doesn't feel like they have much power to change it within the company - though, as a good employee, they have more power than they think. It never hurts to be compassionate.

## How should you steer a conversation towards climate?

Here's an example guide for how to guide a conversation towards a company's climate advocacy record.

- 1. Start with a broad question.** Ask something that everyone has a response to, like “what’s the company’s stance on its responsibility toward the world?” It’s good to give the employee or hiring manager the opportunity to frame their workplace positively.
- 2. Emphasize that a company’s stance on climate is important to you.** Ultimately, what you want to convey is that you personally will think about this when choosing your workplace. It’s good to just say that: “It’s important to me to work for a company that shares my values.”
- 3. Slowly narrow until the person isn’t sure.** “Has the company done anything on climate?” If they have an answer, “has the company taken a public stance on climate? I know many companies have started releasing net-zero by 2050 plans.” If they have an answer to that, “I’ve been following the news about [insert climate-positive politically-active company, e.g. Salesforce/Unilever - even better if they’re a competitor for talent]. They’re doing really cool stuff lobbying for local climate policies. I looked online about [insert employee’s company], but couldn’t find anything. Have you heard anyone talk about it?” Eventually, you’ll ask a question for which they won’t have an answer. That’s alright! It brings us to the last part.
- 4. Show you care about solving problems, not just finding them.** Show that you would be the change you want to see. For example, ask them, if you were to work there, “what the right way to get people thinking about these questions would be. Is there an employee environmental group? Could you start one? Does the company have a culture of listening to its employees?” These are great questions not just because they help you understand and communicate about climate, but because they tell you a lot about how the company would treat you if you worked there.
- 5. If a person isn’t responding well, it’s ok to drop it.** Ultimately, it’s important that you find a job you like. The more companies you talk to about climate the better, but it’s a numbers game. We want you to feel good about bringing your passion for climate to your work, and that means sometimes you should feel fine putting your work first.

\*If you only have time to ask a **single question** on climate, ask employers “**what has your company done to support climate policy being passed?**”

## Resources

Here's a shortlist of online sources where you can look up a company's existing climate commitments, to better inform your conversations:

- [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. Even just a couple people asking gentle questions could lead a hiring manager to start conversations around climate policy at their company.

### 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 important 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. To quote recruiting directors we spoke to, "If you ask nicely, generally they'll take it well, and if they don't they're probably a bad company."

### 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 would know more as a follow up. You can also research the person you are interested in talking to ahead of time to help save the recruiter some time finding the correct person.