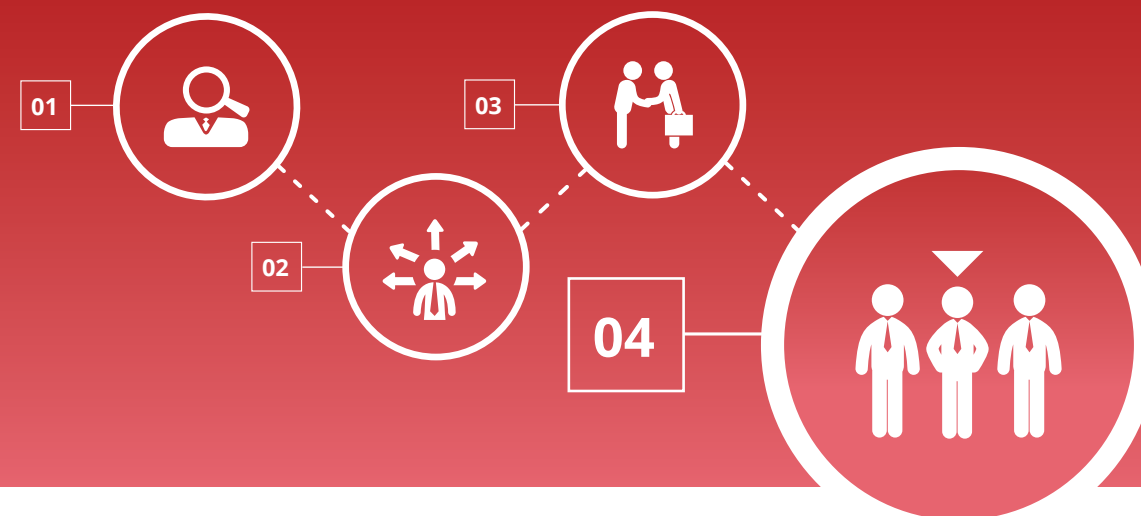


Discover your match

You are almost ready to enter the world of work! Now that you have learnt about yourself, the market, and viewed the many employer profiles, it's time to choose the right fit for you. Read useful preparation tips, like which questions to ask your potential employer, and how to conduct yourself in the workplace. Take the final step and visit careerssa.net to apply online, and browse more content, like employer videos!



The perfect match – choosing a company culture that suits you

Given that most people will spend between 40 and 50 hours a week working it is vitally important to be happy at work! According to Harvard Business Review's Annie McKee, "Happy people are better workers. Those who are engaged with their jobs and their colleagues work harder – and smarter." It can be daunting for a young graduate to find a job – and how do you ensure that you choose the job and work environment that's right for you?

Many factors determine whether or not you are happy at work – but mostly it is determined by compatibility between you as an employee, the company's culture, values and challenging work content.

What is "company culture"?

Simply put, a company's culture is "the way we do things around here". Company culture is often determined by the organisation's leaders – how they behave and how they expect employees to behave. Values, attitudes, behaviours and unspoken rules determine a company's culture.

How can you evaluate company culture?

There are many ways in which you can find out what a company's culture is like:

- Visit the company website and read up on the company's vision and values.
- Observe and interact with a potential employer at careers fairs, open days or through job shadowing or internships.
- If there are opportunities to do so, interact with a potential employer as a customer and see how you are treated.
- Talk to family, friends or recent graduates who work for the company and ask them to share "stories" of their experiences. Examples of questions you can ask are:
 - What makes you proud to work at this company?
 - What is it about the company that makes you want to stay here?

Five steps to arriving at authentic self-disclosure

1 Build a foundation of self-knowledge

There are many ways to learn about yourself- one of the best ways is to seek honest feedback from co-workers, and follow it up with coaching.

2 Consider relevance to the task

Skilful self-disclosers choose the substance, process, and timing of revelations to further the task at hand, not to promote themselves or create personal relationships. Efforts often fail because they try too hard to foster intimacy instead of focusing on task-relevant disclosure and social cohesion.

3 Keep revelations genuine

Making up stories or exaggerating parts of a narrative to fit the situation may seem like a good idea, but it is easily discovered and can do a lot of harm.

4 Organisational and cultural context is key

In any context, but especially one new to you that involves teammates from other countries, companies, or functions, you should talk to respected insiders about how people operate and what level of candour is expected.

5 Delay or avoid very personal disclosures

Intimate stories strengthen relationships; they don't establish them. Sharing too much personal information too quickly breaks all socio-cultural norms of behaviour, making one appear awkward, needy, or even unstable.

- How does the organization support your professional development and career growth?
- Is risk-taking encouraged, and what happens when people fail?
- What role do company values play in hiring and performance reviews?
- What's one thing you would change about the company if you could?
- Evaluate how you are treated when you submit your CV or apply for a position. Do you feel your application is valued?
- If you are invited to attend an interview or assessment at the company this will be a golden opportunity to find out more about the culture. Arrive early and observe the "mood" in the office. Are people friendly, how are you greeted and treated?
- Prepare a list of questions you would like to ask and use the interview as an opportunity to evaluate whether the company values match your own and find out about the job specification and development opportunities.
- Ask to be shown around the offices and whether it would be possible to meet some of the people you would be working with if you joined the employer.

Criteria to evaluate

Recent research by SAGEA (South African Graduate Employers Association) among over 2000 successful graduate job seekers revealed that the criteria below are critical to decision making when weighing up

a potential employer. Assess whether some or all of these factors are important to you and use the check box to tick off your priorities – and whether you think a potential employer is able to match your requirements in this regard.

Important factors to consider when evaluating a prospective employer

- Training and development opportunities
- The overall reputation of the organisation
- The long-term career prospects and opportunities for advancement
- Security of employment
- Opportunities for further study
- Challenging, varied work assignments
- Mentorship
- Reputation for ethical, environmental and corporate social behaviour
- The remuneration package
- International opportunities
- Work-life balance
- Flexible working options
- Working with friendly and collaborative colleagues
- The job location
- The office environment and facilities

Finally, rely on your instincts. If you have dug beneath the surface, asked the right questions and spoken to enough people, you should have a reliable "gut feel" for whether an employer is the right one for you.



Many factors determine whether or not you are happy at work – but mostly it is determined by compatibility between you as an employee, the company's culture, values and challenging work content.



Continue your journey online at careerssa.net! Sign up to discover your match, and submit your CV directly to your company of choice.

References

Annie McKee (November 2014), *Being happy at work matters*, Harvard Business Review
 Mikaela Kiner, *The best interview questions to ask if you want the truth about company culture*
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<http://99u.com/articles/39027/13-questions-to-ask-your-next-employer>