



THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DISCOVERING AN ORGANIZATION'S WORKPLACE CULTURE

From GEMM, the Gender Equity in Museums
Movement

Use this quick read to get some key information about building and sustaining your career, dealing with gender bias in your workplace, and making change. Feel free to share this resource with colleagues and friends.

If you're about to accept a job offer – or haven't yet thrown your hat into the ring for that dream job – understand that workplace culture drives is at the core of whether an institution's mission is achieved or not. It permeates interpersonal interactions, creativity and productivity, as well as organizational image.

1. Do your research. Before you even apply, ask your network what they've heard of the organization. Enthusiastic responses are a good sign; a "let's talk over drinks" is less encouraging. Small organizations won't usually be on Glassdoor.com, but it is worth checking out. Another good, anonymous source is your local museum association. They often have a long view of a museum, and can tell you if they've seen the same jobs listed on a regular basis (suggesting high turnover).

2. Look for clues. When you are onsite for the interview, take mental snapshots of the space. Are desks personalized? Are employees conversing with each other in a pleasant way? Are there passive-aggressive notes on the shared office fridge? Pay attention, also, to how you are greeted by staff, what people wear to work, and whether staff arrive late/leave early.

3. Ask questions of the staff. Appropriate questions include: How do you celebrate employee milestones or team successes? Where do most employees eat lunch? "We don't celebrate when someone graduates from their master's program" or "at their desks" could be red flags. Steer clear of more overt questions like "Why do employees leave?" Be sure to ask the same questions of different employees to gather more information.

4. Ask questions of yourself. What is important to you in a workplace culture? Do you want to go out at night with your work buddies or do you prefer socializing at lunch only? Maybe you like to use your breaks for personal errands and not to engage in light gossip or chit-chat around the leftover bagels in the conference room. Knowing what you want will help you align better with the organization.

5. Understand that culture changes, but go in eyes open. What might have been a dysfunctional workplace five years ago might now be completely different under new leadership or with the departure of a toxic employee. If you find yourself hesitating, but feel confident you can turn it around, rethink your motives. Being a change agent is hard, especially in a new position. There's only so much you can do!