

OPINION

Questions to ask during the ‘stay’ interview

My boss asked me for a meeting to discuss my current projects. This is unusual. He’s not a micromanager and I love his management style. The trouble is my low pay and perks. I wonder if he knows about my plan to leave the company. — Indigo Reef.

Maybe. He may have received some news about your plan from the grapevine, if you talked about it with your work colleagues. Or your boss may have been assisted by a friendly headhunter to trick you with a lucrative job elsewhere. And you’re the only one who would know that.

Aside from those, there are many ways to know about your career plans.

How would you handle the situation if he asks you to stay? In your case, it’s unusual because your manager is not a micromanager, and you genuinely appreciate his leadership style. So why the sudden one-on-one?

Naturally, your mind races to some lingering concerns — especially when you think about your dissatisfaction with your compensation. The possibility of the boss knowing your plan adds a layer of tension. Now, would you be honest or offer a tactful white lie to keep options open?

Navigating this delicate conversation requires balancing transparency with strategy, weighing your loyalty and career ambitions against the realities of compensation and growth. It’s a test not just of negotiation, but of emotional intelligence in action.

Therefore, be prepared to answer questions, assuming this is a “stay” interview. A “stay” interview is the opposite of an exit interview. If your boss is truly worth his salt, he would know what motivates you to stay.

Of course, it’s not as simple as that. You should ask thoughtful questions about the progression of your career. If you’re prepared, such a meeting could be an excellent career conversation.

THE BEST QUESTIONS TO ASK

A “stay” interview is a rare opportunity for employees to pause, reflect, and have an honest conversation with their boss on what keeps them motivated — and what might drive them away. More often than not, a “stay” interview is the best time to discuss compensation.

Unlike exit interviews, which happen when it’s too late, “stay” interviews focus on engagement and retention. The key is asking the right questions: What challenges can be removed? What opportunities exist for growth, recognition, or skill development? How does your manager see your future in the company?

By framing thoughtful questions, employees can uncover actionable insights, strengthen trust, and po-

tentially reshape their work experience — sometimes even improving pay, perks, or responsibilities without changing jobs and while preserving seniority rights.

Here are some exploratory questions you can ask your boss during a “stay” interview:

One, performance expectations. This is first on your meeting agenda. Be ready to update the manager on the status of your projects. Review the performance standards and timelines. Ask: “What is needed so I can improve my performance the most?”

Two, work satisfaction. Find out from the boss how satisfied or dissatisfied he is. Ask: “Which parts of my work do you think add the most value to the team and the whole organization? Are there projects where you think I could contribute more?”

Three, support and resources. If you’re missing out on certain requirements of the job, then find out those other expectations. Ask: “What support can the organization provide to help me perform better? Are there training programs or learning opportunities you can recommend?”

Four, organizational direction. You can expect a broad answer from your boss as there could be things that may not be suited for everyone’s consumption. Instead, ask: “Where do you see our team or department in the next two years? How can I best contribute to that direction?”

Five, career direction. The answer to number four above could give you ideas about your career track. Ask: “What opportunities do you foresee for my growth in this organization? What skills should I develop if I want to take on bigger responsibilities?”

Six, communication process. Your boss initiated the meeting. That’s a good sign. But ask this question anyway: “How can we improve our communication and feedback process? How often do you want updates?”

ASKING FOR A RAISE

The above questions may appear intimidating to your boss. Better if you can focus on two to three thoughtful questions, not a dozen. If you do, ensure that you ask them towards the end of the meeting. If not, as soon as the boss asks you if you have questions.

Asking for a raise can feel awkward. The key is preparation, timing, and a calm, professional approach. If that “stay” interview proved to be well timed, for example when you’ve already proven your worth, then don’t hesitate to ask for a raise while diplomatically touting your track record.

Participate in REY ELBO’s public workshop on “Smart Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Employees” on April 17, 2026 at The Ascott, Glorietta 4, Makati City. For details or registration, send message via <https://reyelbo.com/contact-us>.



Female workforce seen held down by expectations of childcare, housework

By Erika Mae P. Sinaking Reporter

THE PHILIPPINES is grappling with weak female labor force participation even though it has some of the best gender gap ratings in the region by traditional metrics, advocates for women in the workplace said.

At a conference this week, participants singled out the persistence of social norms like childcare roles as well as what they called structural workplace biases.

Julia Andrea R. Abad, executive director of the Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment, said societal expectations remain the primary hurdle, as both men and women continue to view men as the primary providers.

“In a stage of a family, whether it’s caring for a child or household duties, it will be the woman who drops out because it’s the man who’s seen as the primary (breadwinner),” she said at a panel discussion in Mandaluyong this week.

She added that even when women reach executive levels, estimated at nearly 40% of leadership teams in publicly listed firms, they are often confined to secondary roles rather than operational positions with the high visibility required for top-tier promotions.

Anna Leah Colina, project officer and women coordinator for the Federation of Free Workers, said that culture that favors men remains deeply rooted despite technological advancements.

She noted that 17 million women aged 15 and above remain outside the labor force, largely due to invisible labor or unpaid care work.

“We are still perceived as secondary to men economically, politically, and socially,” Ms. Colina said, adding that even when women seek work, they often are relegated to vulnerable informal jobs.

Anita E. Baleda, deputy executive director for operations at the Philippine Commission on Women, said that as of 2024, women spend

an average of 3.2 hours a day on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to just 1.7 hours for men.

“If we’re talking evidence-based, we know for a fact, that women do twice as much, spend twice as much time as men in doing unpaid care and domestic work,” she told *BusinessWorld*.

Reducing this burden, she said, requires investment in care-support infrastructure such as facilities and labor-saving household technology.

Merriam Leilani M. Reynoso, director of the Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns at the Department of Labor and Employment, noted a 99.9% compliance rate among monitored establishments for laws protecting women workers, including maternity and solo-parent leave benefits.

Panelists urged employers to complement regulatory enforcement with proactive workplace reforms, including bias-resistant hiring practices, transparent promotion pathways, and intentional inclusion of non-traditional candidates in leadership pipelines.

These discussions accompanied the launch of the “Juana Trabaho Framework,” an initiative of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development in partnership with the Australian government. The program aims to achieve the female-related goals of the Trabaho Para Sa Bayan Plan 2025–2034, which targets a female labor force participation rate of 59% by 2034, up from 53.7% in 2025.

“This reality underscores why increasing women’s labor force participation is a clear priority of the Philippine government,” Economy Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said. “Achieving this requires not only creating quality, secure, and accessible jobs for women but also ensuring that these jobs align with emerging industry demands brought about by a modernizing economy.”

Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Marc Innes-Brown added that the collaboration focuses on policy reforms that support gender-inclusive workplaces and a care economy to drive sustainable economic growth in the region.

A GAS STATION is seen along Norzagaray Road in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, March 8.



BSP, from SI/1

The United States and Israel’s attacks since late February triggered Iran to block off the Strait of Hormuz, fueling volatility in global oil markets due to concerns over major oil price spikes or shortages. The strait serves as a vital chokepoint where nearly a fifth of the world’s oil supply passes through.

Mr. Taningco said the Philippines is only experiencing price-driven shocks and not supply issues as “we still have in the world a glut of oil supply.”

“It’s just that chokepoint in the Middle East has really disrupted the flow of oil and other energy supplies, and therefore we have this price shock,” he added.

Still, Mr. Taningco said it is unlikely for oil prices to soar to \$200 per barrel, adding that it has yet to reach the \$140-per-barrel worst-case scenario anticipated by the market.

Meanwhile, ING Economics said insufficient buffers and wide current account deficit exposes the Philippines to more risks amid sharp oil price swings, citing the 17% climb in local gasoline prices.

“The Philippines is likely to feel higher oil prices sooner than most Asian counterparts, such as Thailand or Indonesia, given its modest fuel buffers, rapid domestic price pass-through and a structurally wider current account deficit,” Deepali Bhargava, regional head of research for Asia-Pacific at ING, said in a commentary published late on Wednesday.

Inflation has been on an uptrend since December last year, accelerating to 2.4% in February as costlier oil, particularly fuel and liquefied petroleum gas, weighed on households’ pockets.

According to Ms. Bhargava, how quickly elevated energy costs will translate into higher prices in transport, electricity and food will determine the country’s inflation trajectory.

“In our scenario of sustained oil disruptions for a month, CPI (consumer price index) inflation for the Philippines is expected to inch closer to the upper end of 4% of the BSP’s target range,” she said.

Ms. Bhargava said this may warrant a prolonged pause by the BSP, ending its nearly two-year easing cycle.

Meanwhile, the ING analyst sees the Philippines hitting its growth target at 5.2% despite uncertainties from last year’s graft scandal and the Middle East war.

“We maintain our 2026 GDP forecast at 5.2%, with a meaningful upturn expected only in the second half of the year,” Ms. Bhargava said.

“We anticipate weak growth pressures to persist in the first half of 2026, at least, as ongoing investigations and unresolved political and oil price uncertainty continue to weigh on both business confidence and broader economic sentiment.”

Last year, Philippine gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by just 4.4%, the lowest since 2020, as the flood control corruption issue took a toll on investments, government spending and household consumption.

For Mr. Taningco, the ongoing oil crisis calls for long-term government reforms beyond short-term solutions such as subsidies or excise tax suspension to prevent a drag on growth.

“These short-term solutions in terms of fuel subsidy and even the suspension of the tax on fuel (have) to be time-bound and well-targeted. And that has to be, I think, communicated clearly,” he said.

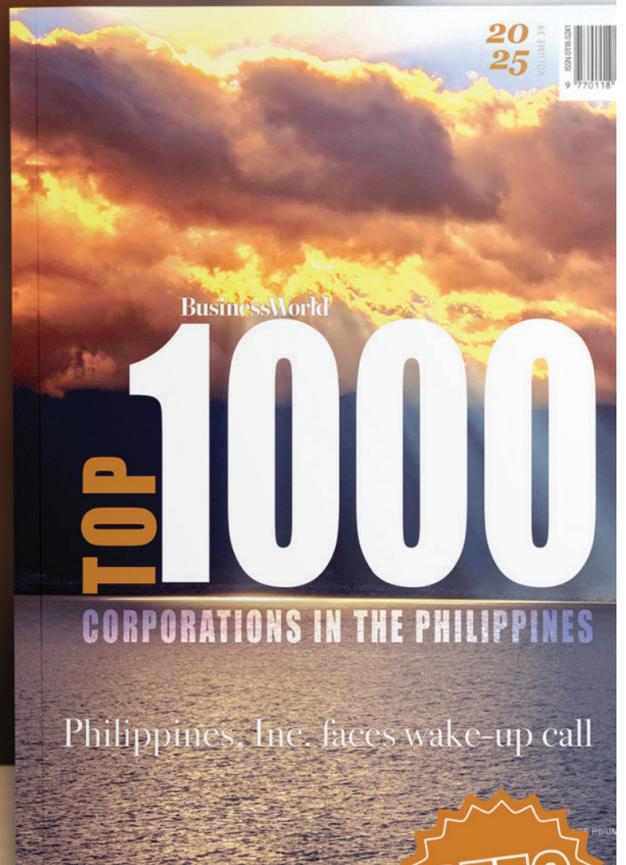
“In addition, you have to push through with the other governance reforms that will help boost investor confidence and be able to at least temper the potential weakening of demand-side growth,” he added.

Such reforms could help the Philippine economy recover and potentially attain the low end of the government’s 5%-6% growth target for the year, Mr. Taningco said.

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