



## Tips for a Successful Phone Interview

The initial phone interview is arguably the most critical step in the selection process. It is a good method for a hiring manager to become personally acquainted with you and to ensure there is a good fit for their organization. In this fast-paced environment, *phone interviews are becoming a common screening method used in the initial phase of the hiring process.*

### Preparing for a Phone Interview

#### 1. Dress for Success

The way a person dresses says a great deal about their attitude. Therefore, you should always dress in professional apparel even if it's a phone interview. Clearly, this is a mental concept, but it will support your attitude. Your seriousness about the opportunity will be reflected in the way you dress and subsequently communicated by your professional tone.

Appearance is an important part of a face-to-face interview. But even though you may not be able to see each other during a phone interview, your appearance will still be interpreted. Your ability to project a professional appearance will be just as important during the phone interview as in a face-to-face meeting. Although you cannot visibly highlight your discussions with physical gestures and expressions during a phone interview, **you must be confident in projecting your character and personality through your tone, pace, and words since you cannot impress the hiring manager with your presentation.**

#### 2. Solitary Confinement

Find a quiet, secluded room where you will be separated from noise (radios, TV, etc.) and background talk (children, family, etc.). Be sure that everyone in the house knows you are taking an important phone call so that you are not disturbed. Above all, make sure that no one picks up an extension in another room until after the interview is complete. It's best to use your cell phone to avoid interruptions.

#### **BEFORE THE PHONE INTERVIEW:**

- Prepare 15 minutes before the phone interview.**
- Have a note pad, pen, your resume and PAQ (if applicable) in front of you.
- Research the company.** Do your homework and learn as much as you can about the company, key players (executives, management team), products and services. Conduct a search on the Internet for press releases on the company and executive team. Print, read, highlight company information to demonstrate your knowledge of the company, its mission, products, service offerings, and years in business. This way, you can refer to any pertinent corporate information during the interview and answer any questions that may come up.



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- ❑ **Print the job description.** Have it in front of you for reference on key duties and required qualifications.
- ❑ **Review your resume and catalog your skills and accomplishments.** Bring a list of your soft and technical skill sets with you. Differentiate yourself by highlighting your qualitative and quantitative accomplishments for past employers. Be prepared to share the contributions you can do for the company.
- ❑ **Rehearse.** Practice your answers. Role play with your spouse, friend or Recruiter to evaluate your answers to general interview questions.
- ❑ **Don't ask questions about compensation or benefits.** Avoid asking questions regarding compensation, benefits or bonus incentives in the initial interview. Doing so will make you come across as being self-centered instead of company centered.
- ❑ Spell out the name of the person who will conduct the phone interview. Say the name out loud until you are comfortable with it and are sure you are pronouncing it correctly.
- ❑ Prepare a list of 3 to 5 company or position related questions (see samples under letter F) that you intend to ask during the phone interview. Asking intelligent and relevant questions demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm about the opportunity and organization.
- ❑ Take a few minutes before your scheduled phone call to gather your thoughts and get in the right frame of mind.

### The Phone Interview

Here are a few steps to follow during the phone interview:

- A. Greet the interviewer with the same enthusiasm that would be demonstrated face-to-face. This initial impression should set a positive tone that will carry through the rest of the interview.
- B. Be sure to speak clearly into the phone and maintain a professional posture. Act as if you are speaking to the hiring manager in person.
- C. Mirror the pace and tone of the interviewer.
- D. Maintain a positive, upbeat tone throughout the interview.
- E. Give clear and well-thought-out answers to all questions, however, do not over talk. It is okay to pause when preparing for an answer, but try not to take too much time. You want to avoid any uncomfortable periods of silence. Remember, the hiring manager has no way of recognizing your reaction to the question, so it's impossible to see that you are formulating an answer.
- F. Conclude by asking smart questions that are related to the company or position. For example:
  1. *What are the company goals for this year?*
  2. *What type of growth are you experiencing?*
  3. *What do you attribute the growth and success of your company to?*
  4. *What attracted you to this company and how long have you been with the company?*
  5. *What is the biggest challenge facing the company?*
  6. *How does your company differentiate itself from other competitors?*



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7. *What type of employee thrives within your company?*
8. *How would you describe your corporate culture/environment?*
9. *What are the top three to five key accomplishments that this position needs to achieve in the first 90 days to help the department/company?*
10. *Biggest challenges facing this position?*

- G. Convey your interest in the position if it's a good fit. *"I'm very excited about this opportunity and think I would be a valuable asset in helping you achieve your goals."* *What is the next step in the interview process?* (This demonstrates your interest in possibly becoming a member of the organization)
- H. E-mail the interviewer a well thought out thank-you letter.

### **Other helpful hints to make your phone interview go smoothly:**

- Have a glass of water nearby so you can take a drink when your mouth gets dry. (Just don't sip audibly enough for the interviewer to hear you!)
- Stay focused on the question(s) you are asked and make sure you provide specific examples.
- Avoid interrupting the interviewer. Wait for a pause.
- Do not take any medication.
- Do not chew gum or eat while you are on the phone.
- Jot down the important questions that you are asked so you can check to see if you have answered the question to their satisfaction.

**The objective of the phone interview is not to just to advance in the process, but to get to the offer stage.** Undoubtedly, the phone interview will be your first opportunity in making a great first impression. Applying these guidelines will help differentiate you from other candidates and give you an added advantage in being considered as the ideal candidate for the opportunity.