

EFFECTIVE PHONE SCREENING - YOUR GOAL IS TO GET THE INTERVIEW

The phone interview is often the first hurdle that a candidate must cross successfully to proceed further in the interviewing process. It shouldn't be taken lightly. Effectively representing yourself over the phone can be challenging. Unlike an in-person interview, the conversation doesn't include the nuances and visual aids that we often use in a conversation. For example, the person on the other end of the phone can't see you shaking your head to answer no, or the smile on your face in agreement. The goal of a phone interview is to secure an in-person meeting.

Before the Call-Prepare Your Environment

- Always research the company prior to your interview
- Research the interviewer's background; use LinkedIn, Google, etc. as well as the company's website and look for commonalities
- Identify a good space to take your call - no pets, cell phones, doorbells, trucks, etc.
- Have paper and a pen laid out; take brief notes using keywords
- Prepare yourself – dress the part, smile, be aware of your body language
- Use a land line and turn off call waiting (*70)
- If you must use a cell phone, be sure you're in an area with strong reception

Have a Preparation Worksheet

- List the attributes of the company
- Have your value proposition close at hand:
 - Know what skills you bring to the role
 - Know your accomplishments
 - Prepare some examples
 - Have your resume available for reference
 - Use the job description to prepare key points
- Prepare 2-4 questions for each phone interview
 - What are the company's current challenges?
 - Why is the position open?
 - What do they like best about the company?
 - What type of individual is successful at the company?
 - How will you know if you're successful in the position 3-6 months later?
- Make a connection to the company and the interviewer - Why do you want to work there?

Key Tip

If you're contacted by an employer without a pre-arranged time slot, don't be afraid to respond by saying:

"I'm very glad you called me. I'm highly interested in this position and am looking forward to talking to you. Unfortunately, I'm in the middle of something. Can I call you back in 1/2/3 hours OR Can I call you back at x:00?"

This way, you'll have time to prepare.

Effective Communication

- Use professional grammar; act as if you were speaking in-person
- Use pitch and SMILE; it can be heard in your voice and adds energy and warmth
- If you're not asked about your value proposition, state it anyway; this is your opportunity to market yourself in a brief and articulate way
- Build rapport; make it friendly, professional and conversational; ask questions that demonstrate you're listening; repeat a phrase back to the interviewer or ask for clarification to ensure you're staying on point
- Answer questions directly and follow up with validation
- You only have a brief period of time on the phone, so be concise and stay on point; don't ramble
- It's tough to build rapport on the phone; just be yourself and don't overdo it with too much humor
- Stand up and keep up your energy, but don't walk around too much and get winded

Align & Close

- At the end, be sure to express your interest and ask about the timing and next steps
- Don't be afraid to ask, "Based on our conversation today, how do you feel I would fit into this role and your company?"
- Ask if the interviewer has concerns or any questions you can clarify
- Ask the interviewer for his email address and whether it's OK if you follow up with him via email
- Finally, ask the interviewer if he's on LinkedIn or Twitter and if it's OK to invite him to join your network

Thank You

- Send a hand-written AND email thank you within 24 hours of the phone meeting
- If you secured the interview through an introduction or warm referral, call the referral source to update and thank him