

3. Telephone Interview

Objective

The objective of a telephone interview for a candidate is to share enough information with the client to either be asked for a second phone interview or to receive an invitation for an onsite interview. A second objective for the candidate is to get your initial questions about the job and company answered.

Preparation

You should allow up to one (1) hour for a phone interview. Find a quiet, private location with a good connection to conduct the interview where distractions and interruptions are at a minimum. Test your connection and equipment beforehand. Have the following available during the interview:

- A copy of the version of the resume sent to the interviewer
- A notepad and pen
- Five or six carefully worded questions you'll want to ask
- Company literature with pertinent sections highlighted

Phone Personality

The need to make a good impression on the phone cannot be overemphasized. The telephone screening interview is a make-or-break proposition, your one chance to convince the interviewer that you are worth serious consideration.

Here are some practical tips to enhance your phone “personality” and overall presentation:

- Talk directly into the mouthpiece. Hold the receiver approximately three inches from the mouth, not below your chin or above your nose. Speak in a relaxed, conversational style as though the other person was in the same room, not on the other side of the planet.
- Sound upbeat. Genuine enthusiasm is contagious and very important. Smile to show a sense of humor. After all, the interviewer may have had a bad day too.
- Be a conversationalist. Listen carefully to get the big picture and to avoid saying something that indicates any momentary mental distraction. Allow the interviewer to complete questions without you finishing his train of thought or blurting out answers prematurely.
- Handle any trick questions in stride. The interviewer may throw in several to test your alertness or mental keenness. Showing verbal adeptness is a sign of how



quickly you can “think on your feet.” Be cautious: the interviewer may say something that puzzles you or that you firmly disagree with, Show enough respect to voice your thoughts in a professional manner.

During the Conversation

Begin the interview by thanking the client for taking a few minutes to speak with you.

Establishing rapport at the beginning of the phone conversation sets a favorable tone. During the first few minutes, mention something that shows the commonality of interest or similarity in the background. This helps both parties feel more comfortable as the conversation progresses.

Your prepared list of questions will indicate that you have given careful thought to the prospect of joining the firm. Even though you don’t know everything about the position at this point, convey the impression that it’s something you are interested in and competent at handling.

What the interviewer needs to hear and conclude is that you can get the job done. Mentally, they are making the connection between the company’s problems and you as a problem solver. Don’t overwhelm them with facts and figures; they’re only going to remember so much.

You can best make your point by reciting memorable stories that document your ability to analyze a dilemma, weigh alternative responses and choose the appropriate action. By selectively highlighting turnaround situations you spearheaded, you are communicating a willingness to tackle similar problems for your company.

By the end of the phone conversation, both parties should know how much of a “fit” there is. Provided the job interests you, express your desire to proceed to the next step: a company visit. End the conversation on a positive note. End the conversation by thanking the interviewer for the information shared, asking about next steps, and again let them know that you look forward to visiting their company.

Afterward

After the phone interview has finished, call your recruiter and give them feedback. Share the following information with them:

- With whom did you speak? Names and titles.
- What was the content of the discussion?
- Did you discuss salary?
- Are you interested in pursuing this opportunity any further?
- What did they say about next steps?

What’s Next? Video Interview