

Interviewing by Telephone

◆ Be Prepared for a Complete Interview

Job candidates often make a big mistake: They treat their first telephone interview with a prospective employer as a minor formality.

Don't be fooled. Companies look for reasons *not* to bring people in for interviews. Your mission is to convince them you're worth seeing. If you want to succeed, you must prepare for the initial "phone screen" as carefully as you will prepare later for the face-to-face interview.

The following guidelines will show you how.

◆ Put Your Best Foot Forward

Avoid being caught off guard by having the following items next to your phone in anticipation of the call:

- ◇ Your resume.
- ◇ A list of professional accomplishments.
- ◇ A list of questions you want to ask the interviewer.
- ◇ Background information on the employer.
- ◇ Outlines of stories that relate your competencies and problem-solving abilities.
- ◇ A list of possible interview times and dates.

Your SRA Consultant will arrange a specific time for the call to take place. In order to be at your best, make sure you have privacy for the call. Separate yourself from all possible disturbances (e.g., family members, friends, pets, TV sets, radios, etc.) in order to minimize possible interruptions.

◆ Project a Winning Image

In a face-to-face interview, your appearance and body language can help reinforce the impression you are trying to create. Over the phone, however, your communication skills and "voice" must carry the day. Do you sound confident, professional and relaxed? Or are you nervous, rambling and uptight?

The following pointers can help you create a winning telephone image:

- ◇ Be enthusiastic, but do not dominate the conversation.
- ◇ Be prepared to answer the "tell-me-about-yourself" question early in the conversation.
- ◇ Speak clearly and be aware of your pace – not too fast, not too slow.
- ◇ Use concise, fact-filled sentences and phrases.
- ◇ Don't ramble or over-explain. If the interviewer wants additional information, he or she will ask for it.
- ◇ Interject short responses intermittently to acknowledge the interviewer's comments (e.g., "That's interesting," "I see," "Great idea," etc.).
- ◇ Conclude responses with "check-back" phrases such as, "Does that answer your question?" "Is that what you're looking for?"
- ◇ Show that you've done your homework by asking intelligent questions based on factual information you have obtained about the opportunity.

◆ Your Mission

Your mission is to be invited in for a face-to-face interview with the employer. To accomplish this, you need to meet these three objectives:

1. Assume the role of "seller" during the interview. If you **sell your skills and abilities effectively**, the listener will be able to see the value in bringing you in for an interview.

2. **Describe your ability to impact the company** by using specific dollar amounts and percentages to explain your past accomplishments.
3. **Demonstrate industry knowledge** by asking "intelligence" questions. For example, "The industry seems to be moving toward [emerging technology]. How does your company plan to compete?"

◆ Close for an Interview

By asking questions during the interview, you subtly start taking control of the conversation. If you sense the interviewer relinquishing control, continue with your line of questions. As you proceed, try to get a feel for the chemistry or rapport that has been established. If you feel the interviewer is impressed with you, and you are interested in pursuing the opportunity, do not hesitate to close the conversation by pushing for a face-to-face meeting:

"(Interviewer's name), based on the information you have given me, I am very interested in pursuing this opportunity and would like to schedule a time for us to meet in person. What looks good for you?"

If the interviewer agrees, but cannot set a specific time, simply suggest when you would be available and ask when would be a good time to follow up. By following the SRA guidelines for telephone interviewing, you will come across as a candidate who should be invited in for a personal interview.



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