



# Telephone Interviews

Hints & Tips

## Overview

Telephone interviews are now common practice in many a hiring process. They are a convenient screening tool for companies to identify serious candidates early in their recruitment and give themselves a good degree of confidence that when they call face-to-face interviews, they will be able to make a hire. For this reason alone, they should not be overlooked despite often being more informal. On the contrary, a good performance will secure you a place at final interview amongst those the line manager is confident of making a positive hiring decision upon.

Whilst telephone interviews can be unfamiliar territory, preparing properly will help you to make an excellent first impression and affords you the opportunity to strike a chord and build a rapport with the hiring manager. It is an opportunity to set yourself aside from the crowd without either party putting themselves out too much with time, travelling or cost.

## Preparation

Prepare as you would for a face-to-face interview. You might not want to put your suit on (unless it helps get you in the right state of mind!) or do the journey as a trial run before the interview, but otherwise your preparation should be on point.

- **Profile** - Read the job description or advertisement and make sure that you not only are aware of the key deliverables, but that you understand exactly how your experience applies and have suitable examples prepared to illustrate where you have applied such knowledge in the past and what the outcome was.
- **Company & Interviewer** – Research the business and your interviewer as best you can beforehand. Have a look and pick out key information from their website (Have you looked at our website is an oft asked interview question), their Social Media output and see if you can find the interviewer in LinkedIn. You never know, you might have something in common such as previous businesses, mutual contacts or shared interests that might help you build a rapport. Consider some of the more often used interview questions and make sure you have some answers prepared; you know the ones... Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What drives you? Why do you want this job? What attracts you to the company? (This is where reading the website will help.) Tell me about yourself.
- **You** – Focus on things that are going to help put you at ease, perform at your best and help you focus.
  - **Environment** – Make sure the environment that you plan on taking the call in helps you rather than hinders you. Quieter environments work best, a room away from family or housemates where you are unlikely to be disturbed or quiet meeting room. Cafes, trains or stations are not the best option if you have the choice. Turn off any electrical distractions such as radios or the television. You might want a table, pen and paper close to hand to make any notes as well.
  - **Practice** – Practice some of your prepared answers with a family member or friend. This will help prepare you for the interview, get some ideas flowing and warm up your interview voice. It

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will make sure you can iron out some unwanted habits as well, such as ‘ums’, covering your mouth and words phrases that you may use day to day but would not want to use in a telephone interview.

- **Energy** – You are hoping to strike a balance between being energetic and being considered. Being too laid back and sat down on a sofa may not help, nor will being too nervous and speaking too quickly and rushing information. Stand up and walk around or sit at a table with your notes. Be positively energised but not laid back or frantic.
- **Focus** – Don’t multitask, focus on the job at hand. By all means have a glass of water nearby should you get a dry mouth during the call, but don’t plan to eat, drink, use chewing gum, text, reply to emails, wash up or do anything else during the call! Give the interviewer the kind of attention you want them to give you.
- **Time** – make sure that you leave time before and after the telephone interview slot. If you have planned time beforehand then you won’t be rushing to make the call. If a hiring manager has arranged a handful on telephone interviews they often have a habit of over-running - if you have left some time afterwards then if this scenario occurs, or your own conversation overruns, you have planned contingency time to allow for this.
- **Questions** – This interview is as much about you as it is about the interviewer, make sure that you have prepared questions to ask them in order to satisfy your requirements at the end of the interview. It will also show the interviewer that you are interested, prepared and organised. Strike the balance between important information and detailed information. Remember this is only the preliminary assessment, you will have the chance to ask more detailed questions on progressing to face-to-face interviews.
- **Mobile** – If you are taking the call on your mobile, make sure it is fully charged and you are in a good signal area.
- **Support** – Make sure that you have all the necessary information prepared and to hand should you need it – Job Descriptions

## **The Telephone Interview**

- ✓ **Visualise** – In general you will be awaiting a call rather than be expected to make one. Sometimes waiting can exacerbate any nerves, so take deep breaths and think positively – remember all the examples that you have prepared, consider your achievements to date in your career and imagine being offered the job. It is what you are here for after all.
- ✓ **Set the Tone** – When the call comes through, take your final deep breath and make sure that you smile before you speak. Think about it, you might not be able to see the other caller, but you can tell when someone is smiling when you are speaking to them. It will set a positive tone for the interview ahead. Answer the call professionally and address the interviewer in the same manner that they address themselves, if this is not apparent then start formally until you are invited on to first name terms. Let the interviewer structure the call, listen and respond accordingly.
- ✓ **Take Notes** – Taking notes during the interview if you feel capable of doing so, otherwise make your notes when you put the phone down whilst the information remains at the forefront of your memory. Those notes may prove invaluable for the next interview stage and will ensure that you don’t forget the ‘devil in the detail’.
- ✓ **Perform** – Most importantly remember to be positive, speak at an even pace, listen and deliver your knowledge targeted to the specific question. Be succinct, don’t waffle around the point without hitting the mark and always back your answer up with an example from your own experience. Remember a pause to think is okay, just don’t let it turn into silence – buy yourself sometime by asking the interviewer to repeat the question or take a sip of water.

- ✓ **Conclude** – Ask your questions if they haven't been answered as yet before concluding by thanking the interviewer for their time, restate your interest in the position and by confirming the next steps in the hiring process. Leaving a strong final impression can certainly not hurt. Next, call your consultant at Informed Recruitment and feedback. By reiterating your positive impression and interest, it can only help us to secure the face-to-face opportunity.

**Good luck!** We are with you every step of the way.