



Can You Hear Me Now? Effective Telephone Interviewing

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Many organizations now use telephone interviewing at various points during the hiring process. The fact that the recruiter has called you indicates that your resume or a member of your network has given him or her a favorable impression of you.

Unfortunately, job candidates often fall into the trap of not preparing for a phone interview in the same way that they do for an in-person interview. It's important to research the company, study the job description, and practice your responses to anticipated questions, just as you would for any other interview. Below are some tips and strategies to assist you in preparing for phone interviews.

Phone interview usually happen in one of three ways:

1. You're networking, your contact's interest is aroused and s/he goes immediately into a screening process.
2. An organization calls to follow up on a resume you previously submitted, and catches you off guard.
3. You scheduled a specific time for a telephone interview.

Unexpected Phone Interviews

While you are actively job searching, it's important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's



notice. You never know when a recruiter or a networking contact might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk. The phone interview can happen at any time of the day or night. In fact, some interviewers find evenings the best time to catch people at home, where they will be able to talk more candidly. Therefore, you should be on-call and prepared to receive a telephone interview at any time.

Tips for Handling Unexpected Interviews

1. **Try to reschedule surprise interviews.**
Say that you have a conflict and suggest a time you can call back. Remember to ask for a telephone number and get the correct spelling and pronunciation of the interviewer's name. This will give you the information you need to make a good impression during your first five minutes when you return the call.

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2. If you must proceed, take time to calm down and focus.

Gain time by telling the caller that you must go to another extension or need to close the door to your office, and then put down the receiver. Take some deep breaths and mentally clear your head of all thoughts and get focused on your job search. Then put a smile on your face and energy in your voice when you pick up the phone.

Preparing for a Scheduled Phone Interviews

- Turn off your stereo, TV, and any other potential distractions.
- Warm up your voice while waiting for the call; sing an uplifting song to yourself.
- Have a glass of water handy to wet your mouth.
- Turn off call waiting on your phone.

1. Make a cheat sheet.

Jot down a few notes about the most critical points you want to make with your interviewer(s). Are there certain skills and experiences you want to emphasize? Do you have certain interests or passions you want your interviewer(s) to know about and understand? Be sure these pieces of information appear on your sheet. Then touch on them during the interview, even if your only chance to do so is at the end of the session when the interviewer asks you if you have any questions or anything to add.

2. Speak directly into the phone.

The mouthpiece is most effective when approximately one inch from your mouth. Don't eat or drink while being interviewed. One of the mystical properties of the telephone is that it picks up and amplifies background music & voices. That includes food or gum being chewed.

3. Stand up, or at least sit up straight at a table or desk.

Again, there's a psychological frame of mind aspect to consider here. But on a more tangible level, research has shown that you project yourself better when you're standing up, and you'll feel more knowledgeable and confident.

4. Keep up your end of the conversation.

Ask a few questions of your own that will reveal you as an intelligent person and provide you the opportunity to promote your candidacy. Ask if the interviewer might like another example of something.

5. Take notes.

This can help you organize your thoughts and keep on track. In addition, they can be valuable when preparing for a later face-to-face meeting. If the interviewer gets interrupted for any reason, jot down the topic under discussion. Upon his/her return, offer to recap, "We were just discussing. . .", this will be appreciated and will likely set you apart.