

## PHONE INTERVIEWS

In today's times it is logistically very difficult to organize/attend interviews in person, at least the preliminary ones. Therefore it becomes more and more commonplace to hold interviews over the telephone – a situation which demands a completely different set of skills.

In many ways the telephone interview can be even more mentally challenging than a face to face situation; requiring more focus and concentration.

### Preparation

The key to getting the most from a phone interview, as in most situations, is plenty of preparation. The biggest advantage you have is the ability to have all your notes in front of you, so research the company every bit as thoroughly as you would for a face to face interview.

### Tailor your answers

Depending on what stage of the recruitment process you're at, the person interviewing you could be at a different level within the organization, therefore you may need to tailor your answers slightly. For example, if this call is in the very early stages of the process you may get someone from HR calling you, whereas if it happens later down the line then it will be a senior manager or even the CEO. Ask in advance who will be calling – this also gives you the opportunity to research them. Even if it's a simple case of looking at their LinkedIn profile, it's always useful to have some background information.

### Seek information beforehand

If you know roughly how long the call will be, you will know whether you need short succinct answers, or more in-depth detail. As in any interview, you want to ask questions of your own and don't want the interviewer to overpower you. At the same time you don't want to be overly

dominating either – so be aware of your tone of voice. Remember the interviewer will not be able to read your body language, but they certainly will pick up on how you speak so be aware of this. It can be harder to grasp when somebody has reached a conclusion or when there is a natural break in the conversation, so pause for a second or two before answering. This way you are not constantly talking over the interviewer.

### **Keep key points ready**

As well as your research, have your CV, covering letter and the job description in front of you. Often in an interview situation nerves can get the better of you and you might forget key information. Many times candidates walk out of an interview regretting not mentioning a certain experience or skill. In a telephone interview though, you can eliminate this regret. Have a structure in your mind for the conversation that is about to take place. The suggestion is drawing up a note of the key points you want to make, as well as questions you need to ask.

### **Keep your mind clutter-free**

Finally, always give yourself plenty of time and space – there is nothing more unprofessional than conducting a phone interview while you are rushing to be somewhere, or in a noisy environment. Some people may only be able to do these interviews during office hours, which makes things more difficult as you can't go home. But even going to a quiet road can suffice, and you will find that a quick stroll just prior to the interview will clear your head.

The important thing is not to let the conversation wander or go off at a tangent as that will be a waste of everyone's time and effort. Stay absolutely focused on the main reason for the interview.