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Phone Interviewing Tips: A Candidate's Perspective

Advanced Purchasing Dynamics recently talked with several high potential candidates who did not make it through their prospective employers' phone screening, to put together a list of interviewing tips that you may find helpful.

1. **Try and reschedule surprise interviews.** You want to be as prepared for a phone interview as you would for a face to face interview. So if you are called without notice, say it is not a good time for you to talk (it's not!) and suggest a time you can call back. When you call back, be prepared for the call just as you would for a face to face interview.
2. **Set a realistic objective for the phone interview.** Your objective should not be to get the job as a result of the interview. Candidates who have an objective of landing the job tend to overreach and push. Your objective for a phone interview should be to interest the interviewer enough that he/she will schedule a face-to-face interview.
3. **Remember that the prospective employer's goal for the phone interview will not be to find the right candidate but to reduce the candidate pool.** They will be looking for obvious mismatches by asking about your experience, availability and salary requirements. Your strategy is to provide facts that support your resume with some context about your performance. Try using numbers and facts to be effective; however, you don't want to volunteer anything that could disqualify you.
4. **Be prepared for the interview:**
 - a. Review your resume and be prepared to identify how your competencies, skills, and experience correlate to the needs of the target position.
 - b. Have ready your pen, paper, job description, resume, calendar, and any correspondence you have had regarding the position.
 - c. You probably will have many questions about the position and the company but you should limit your questions to the most relevant. If asked if you have more questions say "Yes, but I have enough knowledge now to tell you that I am interested and would like a face to face interview."
 - d. Prepare, prepare, and prepare. Those who have really learned the company and the industry will interview well. You have to wow the interviewer with your knowledge. Have your research about the company highlighted and in front of you.
5. **Let the interviewer set the pace.** Let the caller do most of the talking without interruptions. Use the technique of repeating or rephrasing the question. Remember to sell at every opportunity avoiding the simple yes or no response. If you need time to think, say so; dead silence can be awkward.
6. **Be cordial but not too friendly.** Employers are aware that job candidates will be nervous and will try to make the interview process as relaxed as possible. You should make every effort to sound professional but not personal, as this call is not to establish a rapport. The caller wants a selection of highly qualified candidates and the phone screening is used to eliminate the not-so-strong candidates.



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7. **Stay positive regardless of the circumstances.** Never refer to a major problem with management and never speak ill of supervisors, co-workers, or your organization. If you do, you will be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an opportunity, a chance to do something special, or other forward-looking reasons. If you stand up and speak directly into the phone, your voice will sound stronger. Also, try to avoid “ah,” “er,” “um,” as this is very noticeable on the phone, so practice.
8. **Don't get drawn into detailed compensation discussions.** Compensation negotiations should be left to the end of the interviewing cycle. If it comes up in the phone interview, indicate your preferred range but state that you will need to have personal interview to fully understand all aspects of the position before settling in on a compensation requirement.
9. **Close knowing:**
 - a. Interviewers' name, phone number, and e-mail address.
 - b. Who is responsible for next steps and when. Show your organization skills by listing all of the actions you and the interviewer have agreed to during the interview.