

## 6 Tips To Ace Your Phone Interview

If your resume has made it into the 'YES' pile, then the first thing a company will do is a phone screening. The purpose of this is to test your communication skills, and to do a quick check of your skills and experience to determine if it's worth bringing you in for an interview.

Here are six important tips that will make sure you ace your phone interview:

### 1. Be Prepared

Basic preparation steps include having your resume in front of you, making sure you are on a good phone line where there are no disturbances, and allocating enough time for the screening, even if it goes beyond what was scheduled.

### 2. Research The Company And The Interviewer

The first question I used to ask job seekers was, "What do you know about us?" If I did not think they had spent the time to do their homework, they were immediately downgraded. So, spend some time to check out their website and press releases, and see what employees say about them on Glassdoor.com.

Also, go to LinkedIn and review the background of the person conducting the interview. Check if the manager you will be reporting to participates in LinkedIn groups and discussions, and see if you have anything in common.

### 3. Exude Energy And Interest

The words you use account for only 15% of the effectiveness of your communications. Intonation and body language are most important, and since you are on the phone, you live and die by your intonation.

Put energy in your voice and demonstrate a high level of interest. An old telemarketing trick is to have a mirror in front of you and smile when you speak since that automatically affects your tone in a positive way.

### 4. Ask Questions And Build Rapport

People hire people they like, so it is important to turn the interview into a conversation by asking intelligent questions. Show off your expertise by following up their question with an insightful question of your own. Those who just answer questions and wait for the next question will lose here.

Use a conversational tone, as if you are having lunch with a friend, telling a story, instead of just responding to questions.

For example, here are two ways to respond to, "Can you tell me about your experience at Bank of America?"

"At Bank of America, I was hired to oversee the integration of systems that were the result from acquisitions."

Or...

"You know, that was a really challenging experience because I had to integrate all the different systems that were the result of acquisitions. You can just imagine how tricky that would be since there

were so many differences between them, and I had to research and document the trade-offs from an integration of each one.”

Which is more interesting?

I did some interview coaching with a highly accomplished technical manager at Intel who was getting interviews and no call backs. It was immediately clear that he was just responding to questions in a fairly monotone manner and was about as interesting as a memory chip. After some coaching on how to build rapport using the above technique, he had three offers in four weeks.

#### 5. Ask The Most Important Question

Companies have a reason they are looking for talent and it is your job to find out what their chief source of “pain” is. Do this by asking:

“What is the biggest challenge someone will face in this job in the next six months?”

This lets you target your responses and demonstrate how you have successfully handled these challenges before.

#### 6. See If They Have Any Concerns

Don’t just end the call wondering how you did, ask them. If you are going for a sales position, this is mandatory.

State something like:

“Based on what we discussed today, do you think I am a good candidate for this position?”

Now, when they respond, you can handle any concerns they may have.

Using these six simple techniques will make sure you have made a favorable impression with the employer.

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### The Biggest Mistake You Can Make In A Phone Interview

I have to admit, with more than 12 years of hands-on experience interviewing candidates for various positions, I find the biggest mistakes aren’t made during the face-to-face interview – the ones that have really shocked me have been when I’ve interviewed a candidate over the phone.

#### What Not To Do In A Phone Interview

I find this especially serious for those who are looking to work from home or telecommute. So, if that’s you, listen up: I’m about to save you from making a mistake that will most definitely cost you the job.

I would assume, if you’re interviewing for a position, it’s because you want the job; I wouldn’t assume you’re just wasting your time and mine by having a phone interview if you weren’t truly interested in the position or didn’t want to learn more about it. Yet I find some candidates just don’t take the phone interview very seriously.

Let me be very clear here—the phone interview is the hiring manager’s first impression of you (aside from your resume, of course). You don’t want your first impression to be, “I don’t care enough about this position to use proper telephone etiquette.” Make it a good first impression.

If you are interviewing for a work-from-home position or a telecommuting position, then this is not only your first impression but may be the ONLY impression the hiring manager will have of you; and it’s even more critical to ensure you’re conveying your interest in the opportunity—but also that you take this position seriously.

The number-one way to turn off the hiring manager and ensure you don’t get the job is to conduct your telephone interview while driving.

Others may disagree with me, but to me, this is the biggest mistake you can make—especially if you want a work-from-home position. This tells me you don’t take the opportunity seriously enough to set aside dedicated time to talk without distraction. It also tells me your consideration for my clients will probably be about the same—or worse. If you don’t take the interview seriously, then the hiring manager will make the assumption you won’t take the position seriously either; and when it’s a work-from-home or a telecommuting position, that can be very damaging.

If you’re driving while interviewing with me, it tells me you’re distracted; you’re not taking notes, you’re not giving your complete attention to answering or asking questions, and you’re not evaluating the position. I can also hear the background noise, and it can be very distracting.

It’s critically important during a phone interview to communicate you value the interviewer’s time and you take the position seriously and will do your best. Putting your best foot forward during a phone interview shows the hiring manager you’ll put your best foot forward with their clients, customers, and needs.

Credit: <http://www.careerealism.com>