

Telephone Interviewing Tips

The goal you want to accomplish during a telephone interview is to receive an invitation for an on-site interview. Remember, without that invitation to an on-site interview, you have nothing to decide.

- Conduct your telephone interview in an area where you can have privacy. Noisy distractions take their toll so make sure the television or radio are turned off, any young children are with an adult in another room and household pets are out of the area.
- Whenever possible, do some research on the company before you talk with them. The recruiter you are working with can provide you with some of the information. However, you should also take the initiative to check the internet (use the computer at the local library if you don't have one) and read trade magazines to stay abreast of what is going on in that particular industry.
- Whenever you talk with a company, have a copy of your resume with you.
- Have a pad and pen/pencil available. Write down the caller's name and title. Ask him/her to spell their name if need be.
- Don't eat, smoke or chew gum during the phone conversation, but do have a glass of water nearby. (I highly recommend this)
- The employer's impressions will be based not only on your ability to answer questions correctly, but also on your tone of voice, choice of words and enthusiasm. Smile--it comes through the phone. (This is so true)
- In addition to answering the company's question, be prepared to ask some of your own. Interviewing should be a two way street, where both parties get to know each other better. Have a list of questions ready. The hiring company wants to talk to someone who is interested in helping them solve some problems. The focus of your questions should cover the company, what they do, the position responsibilities and how your skills, talent and education can contribute to the company's growth and profitability.
- When the interviewer asks questions, don't just answer "yes" or "no"---elaborate--use this time as an opportunity to sell your talent, skill and abilities.
- When the interview appears to be coming to a close, let him/her know you appreciate their time, have interest in learning more, and would like to come in for an on-site interview.
- We recommend that you stay away from asking questions about benefits and salary. Take the approach of "What problems are you having, and how can I help solve them?"
- Not to be insensitive to important issues of compensation, benefits, relocation, 401K/pension, etc. but this is not the time to bring these things up. You are trying to get one another. On your side, the company's expectations, challenges, responsibilities of the job. On their side, the skills, technical abilities, and enthusiasm you can potentially bring to the company, as well as, a personality fit.
- If someone does ask the salary, benefits, etc. question (which they rarely do at this level) you have two options:

- Answer a question with a question – for example, “What have you paid someone with my background in the past?” OR
- Defer by saying “Let’s get through the interviewing process and then make me a fair offer based on your assessment of my abilities, skills, etc. We will go from there”.

Quite honestly, the second option is the best.