

Telephone Job Interviews

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Take telephone interviews seriously

Treat the telephone interview with the same level of significance as you would any face-to-face interview. If you're serious about the job, you should spend time planning and preparing for a telephone interview just as you prepare for every face-to-face job interview.

Telephone interviews growing in popularity

Many companies are discovering two great benefits in conducting telephone interviews. First, they like telephone interviews from a purely business standpoint because they save time and money in recruiting efforts. Second, it turns out that many interviewers admit to being heavily influenced by the interviewee's appearance, and telephone interviews help reduce that kind of bias. Given these two conditions, the telephone interview has become an increasing popular interview tool. So, you should not let anyone convince you that a telephone interview means the company is somehow less interested in you as a candidate.

Prepare your quarter-million dollar talk

If your boss asked you to give a presentation to a client with a \$250,000 contract hanging in the balance, you'd spend a little time planning and preparing your talk, right? Of course

you would. Yet, I'm constantly surprised by the number of people I talk to who believe they can give the job interview presentation on the fly--without any research, planning, or preparation.

I teach management communication at a tier one B-school, and when I'm asked to speak about job interviews, I always try to help our students put job interview talks into perspective. Our MBA students typically interview for jobs with starting salaries of \$80-100K, and our undergrads in the Business Administration Program interview for jobs with starting salaries of \$40-50K. I ask them to take a relatively short-term perspective and imagine themselves working at that job for a few years. I then ask them to do the math. If you consider the salaries over just three years for MBAs and five years for the undergrads, these interviews that the students go on, in reality, represent \$250K talks for the students. From that perspective, preparation starts to make sense given what's at stake in any job interview talk.

Many business people invest considerable time preparing for talks for far smaller payoffs. I worked with one woman who once spent a total of 25 hours researching, planning, and preparing a presentation in which she had to recommend to the boss which photocopying machine to purchase. The investment in this photocopy machine

was only about \$25K at the time and had an expected life span of 2-3 years. Do that math.

Realtors have a saying about the three most important things in the real estate business: Location, Location, Location. In communication the three most important things are Preparation, Preparation, Preparation.

Here are 8 useful guidelines:

1. Pre-prepare your accomplishment stories/examples to use in response to questions.
2. Write out some responses to standard questions and rehearse delivering them.
3. Make a list of questions you want to ask the interviewer about the company, the position, the field, etc.
4. Spread out your interview responses/notes on a table or desk so you can refer to them while talking to the interviewer; this is a big advantage for interviewees during telephone interviews. I'd include a list of the 5 major points you MUST communicate before you end the interview. Also list

questions you want to ask the interviewer.

5. Stand at the telephone when you talk; this typically allows you to pay more attention to the conversation because you don't get too comfortable.

6. Start smiling before you pick up the telephone to create a more friendly vocal tone on the telephone. Some of my students have even gone so far as to place a mirror near the phone with a "SMILE" sign above it for interview calls.

7. At the end of the interview, show you are highly motivated by asking, "What happens next?"

8. Thank the person for the interview, restate your interest in the job, and remind the interviewer of an important contribution you'll make.

(Note: For specific guidelines on face-to-face job interviews, see the *Communication Audit for Job Interviews* at the Communication Consulting Group web site: www.ccg-usa.com)