THE PHONE SCREEN INTERVIEW

Did you know that employers use phone screen interviews as a preliminary screening tool to determine whether a face-to-face interview will be granted? It’s important to be prepared since you are often not given much advance notice.

Pre-Interview Tips

Your phone and voicemail
- Be sure that whomever is answering your phone is polite, knows how to take a message, and will relay information to you.
- Make sure your voicemail messages reflect that of a serious job-seeker. Leave your name on your voicemails so the caller knows that he/she got the right number.
- If you choose to put your cell phone number on your resume, be aware that whenever you answer your phone, the caller might be a phone screen interviewer. Answer your phone in appropriate places where you have the opportunity to talk or ask if you can schedule another time for the phone screen.

Have your resume, job description, employer research materials, calendar, pen, & paper near the phone. You’ll need all of these during the phone screen.

Prepare your answers to common questions such as:
- What are your strengths & weaknesses?
- What were your most significant accomplishments in your last position?
- Can you identify related projects on which you have worked?
- Why are you applying to our organization?
- What can you contribute to our organization?

The best way of answering this last question is to research the organization: check out the employer’s web site, find out what their goals and objectives are, and be prepared to discuss how you can help them achieve their goals.
During the Phone Screen

- Be enthusiastic and assertive.
- Remember that you don’t have the benefits of expression and eye contact to show your excitement and interest. The listener can tell when you are smiling, so smile!
- Be ready to provide specific examples of projects and accomplishments which demonstrate your skills.
- Avoid: speaking too fast, having music/TV or other noises in the background, chewing or smoking, speaking too close or too far from the receiver - anything that can create an unpleasant image of yourself.
- Do not ask questions that appear to be selfishly motivated. This is a very common mistake people make on phone interviews - you should not bring up the subjects of money or benefits. Your only goal at this point should be selling the organization on your skills and experience - talking about money prematurely can only have negative effects.
- End your conversation on a positive note...focus on how you can benefit the organization. Reinforce with the potential employer that you are very interested in the position and why. The enthusiasm you display could be the deciding factor between you and another candidate.
- Ask for the interviewer’s name, contact information, and permission to follow up.

After the Phone Screen

Follow up: Make sure to contact the interviewer a couple of days after the phone screen with a thank you. You could send an email, note, or voicemail, depending on the contact information that they give you. This demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm about working for that employer. Since such a small percentage of people follow up, employers really pay attention to the candidates that do.