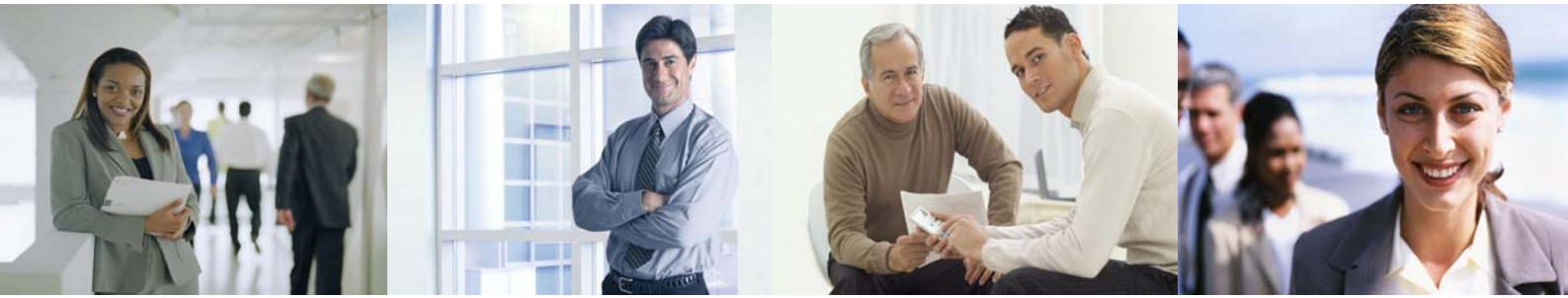


# Telephone Interviews



## The initial screening call

Telephone interviews are used frequently by many organizations, as the first stage in the candidate selection process. Employers and recruiters use the telephone interview as an initial screening interview. It is a quick, cost-effective way of finding out answers to a number of questions about the applicant, for example:

- Why does the applicant want to leave/why have they left their current role?
- What is their notice period?
- What is their current rate/salary and what is their rate/salary expectation?
- Why are they interested in this particular position?
- Why would they be a good candidate for this role?
- Would they consider a contract/permanent role?
- What locations will they consider?
- What is their residency status?
- How many years experience do they have in their primary skill?

It also allows the employer/recruiter to judge:

- Is this a serious application .i.e. has he/she made any effort to research the company/position or just sent out 100s of resumes on spec?
- How good the applicants oral skills are, how articulately they express themselves

A recruiter will disclose the client, and find out whether the applicant has applied previously to the organisation, or whether they are being represented by another agency. Ethical recruitment organisations will always get the applicant's permission for representation prior to sending their resume to a client, so the applicant should be aware if they have already been submitted. It is important that applicants disclose this information to the recruiter to avoid being submitted by more than one recruitment agency - it does not enhance their application if they are submitted in duplicate.

An initial telephone interview is unscheduled, unlike a face-to-face interview where the time, date and venue are scheduled well in advance. If you have applied for roles you should be aware that any call is a potential first interview, so prepare yourself. You could specify in your application a best time to be contacted, alternatively when you receive the call, take down the person's details and arrange to call back when it is convenient for you. This will give you time to collect your thoughts. Make sure you have a pen and paper handy and be clear in your mind about why you are leaving your role and why you are applying for this role.

# Telephone Interviews

## Scheduled Telephone interviews

In the case of scheduled telephone interviews, common with interstate applications, then you will have chance to prepare yourself more thoroughly. This will often be the second stage of the interview process and you will be expected to answer more in depth questions relating to your role, your achievements, your aspirations, your strengths and weaknesses, and your reasons for applying for the role.

### Tips to succeed

- Don't simply treat this as a casual conversation - remember the objective is to get short-listed. You are giving a first impression. Make it a good one. You are being evaluated on your communication skills - do you sound interested and enthusiastic, are you speaking at the right pace? Are you talking too quickly? Leaving awkward silences? Are you mumbling or articulating your words correctly? Try to pace yourself to the speed of the interviewer. Remember to smile - this will put positivity into your voice!
- Keep a copy of your resume handy, and any other useful information such as the job description. Go through both with a highlighter to help you make the relevant points - for example, highlight specific accomplishments on your resume, or highlight parts of the job description you feel you want to address such as "minimum 5 years experience in management". It may be worth jotting down other points you wish to make, for example "Led team of 15".
- If you have prepared well, i.e. thought about some questions that you may be asked, and thought about answers you may give, and questions you would like to ask, then you will find you are not stuck for words at that crucial point. Rather than write down and memorize answers give yourself a list of keywords that will jolt your memory.
- Preparation will not only help you focus and keep the nerves down, but will ensure you give the impression that you interested in the role and the prospective employer. It will also help you keep your answers brief and to the point, and reduce unnecessary gaps and long silences.
- Try to avoid lengthy answers. For example, if asked "Tell us about yourself" you could briefly describe your strengths and weaknesses, or use adjectives. Remember that this is not a face-to-face situation, where you can read non verbal clues, for example notice your interviewer appears to be getting restless, or looks about to speak, so you need to be as concise as possible, and listen carefully. Do not speak over the interviewer or interrupt.
- The duration of a telephone interview could vary from 5 minutes to an hour or even longer. Keep a glass of water by the phone and a pen and pencil. You don't want to appear unprepared because you have no means of writing down any information you are given.
- Make sure there is nothing to distract you - or your interviewer - from the purpose of this call. Turn off the TV or radio, shut other people and animals in another room, and if you are using a landline turn your mobile off. And if you are using a mobile, make sure it is charged beforehand so you don't get an embarrassing dead battery problem.
- Finally remember to thank the interviewer for their time.

