

MASTERING THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Many times the first real step toward a new position is the phone interview or more likely the phone screen as we like to call it (more on that in a minute). Sometimes the phone interview / screen is done by the actual hiring manager...that is usually good. However, often times it is done by someone other than the hiring manager...not as good. The reason the former is “not as good” is that the non-hiring manager, many times does not feel the pain as acutely as the one with the “open position”. Also, another key to remember is that many phone screens are meant to do just that; screen out people, not screen them in. The skills needed in getting beyond the phone screen are different from those used in a successful face to face interview. So, with that in mind, here are some **Does** and **Don'ts** to help keep you on track:

Do: Remind yourself that this is not a real interview, it is a screen. Their objective is to screen you out!

Do: Sell yourself hard. Given the tendency for the employer to eliminate during this phase, you must sell yourself a bit harder. The key objective here is to get to the Face to Face interview!

Do: Know exactly before the screen what the criteria for the job are. Rehearse addressing those needs. Your recruiting consultant will help you here.

Do: Keep your comments concise and to the point. The more rambling, the more likely you are to be screened out. Say what you have to, but stay focused on getting the personal interview

Do: Be fully prepared. Have your resume, any research on the company you have gathered and questions that you have put together that show you know something about the company as well as the industry.

Do: Set an appointment for the phone screen, this will show that you are busy and you will come off more professional.

Do: Try to initiate the call if you can. The one doing the calling tends to be in control of the process more so than the one being called.

Do: Announce yourself when you are calling or being called as professional as you can. This is not the time for lazy talk or cute answering styles. This is the big leagues; make sure you are acting like you deserve to be there.

Now, here are some definite **Don'ts** to watch out for:

Don't: Have a cute message on your cell phone or home phone. You run too great a risk at turning off the potential employer. Keep it simple and professional

Don't: Use a cell phone on the road if you can help it. The connections can be spotty and you run the risk of really frustrating the interviewer.

Don't: Discuss money in depth...this is not the time for that...not even close.

Don't: Ask what can you do for me questions...enough said!

Don't: Avoid obvious sensitive issues like too many jobs, being out of work for a while. Take it head on and address it and move on. Trying to avoid it only makes it worse!

Don't: Say you know what you do not! There is nothing wrong with being human and comfortable enough to say I don't know to any question that you shouldn't know.

Prepare for the phone interview / screen in the same manner you would prepare for a face to face interview. Take it seriously and sell yourself!

