



[DR. SHIRLEY'S CAREER CORNER]

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Reprinted from the November 2006 issue of BIC

Mastering the phone interview, Part 2

In part one of this series, we talked about strategies you should consider prior to the interview. Now, we're going to proceed with some approaches to utilize during and after the telephone interview.

During the interview

Speak clearly, slowly and enthusiastically. Many candidates get very nervous during telephone interviews and may have a tendency to mumble into the phone. So, relax, be upbeat, and speak slowly. Try not to sound rushed or anxious. Take your time; it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts. It's also a good idea to keep a glass of water handy, in case you

*Be prepared, be professional,
and be yourself.*

need to wet your mouth.

Make preparation notes. Be prepared to give a 60-second summary of your professional career; at most — two minutes. Do rehearse this! Get ready to effectively answer questions the same as if you were in a face-to-face interview. Support your statements with examples of accomplishments when possible. It is easy for an interviewer to get distracted on a phone call, so paint a vivid picture to keep him interested. Of course, a thought to also remember is that depending on the situation, you want to be careful not to say too much. Phone interviews can sometimes be simply fishing expeditions for the

hiring company.

Do ask questions. Have a list of your own questions to ask the interviewer at the end. You want to leave the interviewer with a good impression of your interest in the company. Questions such as, "What are the most important factors you are seeking in the ideal candidate?" and "What are the measures of overall success within your organization?" can give you valuable information. And, if you think of a question or comment while the interviewer is speaking, just jot a note on your list, so you will remember it later. You might also ask if the interviewer has any unanswered concerns about your candidacy. Questions you want to avoid asking during a phone interview are ones that relate to salary, benefits, working hours, etc. There will be sufficient time to get these questions answered later on, or at the time of an offer.

Some miscellaneous tips for you:

➤ Don't chew gum, cough drops or candy, or eat or drink while on the phone. These noises can be amplified through the receiver.

➤ If you need to sneeze or cough, turn your head and cover your mouth and the receiver.

➤ Speak directly into the receiver; avoid holding the phone on your shoulder.

➤ Use the person's title (Mr., Ms., Dr. and his last name). Only use a first name if asked to.

➤ Avoid shuffling your papers while on the phone. If heard, it can suggest that you're not listening to the interviewer.

Before ending the call, be sure

you know the next step in the process, and offer to provide any additional information needed. Remember to express your appreciation for the time spent with the interviewer. And, wait until the interviewer hangs up before you do just in case he mentions something else at the last minute.

After the interview

Just as you should do after a face-to-face interview, follow up. Send a short thank-you note that reiterates your interest in the job and recaps your best selling points. An effective start for a note might read, "Thank you for spending time with me on the phone today talking about the _____ position. I enjoyed our conversation and have a better understanding of the job. I'd be interested in an on-site interview to further discuss my candidacy." Then, a few ending comments would be appropriate.

Finally, keep in mind that the phone interview is a key step in the hiring process for many employers. During the call, interviewers can check out if you are articulate, whether you are as good as you sound on your résumé, and if you are worthy of a face-to-face interview.

Few people get hired solely on the basis of a phone interview, though it's a way for both the candidate and the interviewer to test the waters. Gain the competitive edge — be prepared, be professional, and be yourself.

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