

Hurray!
You have a phone
interview, Result!...



Easy, it's not like a face to face interview is it?

Great, no need to get stressed, worry about what to wear, take time away from the office or be stressed through a face to face interview with a recruiter or line manager. You can find some time in between work, chores and sorting out the kids' tea to take the call.

If only life was that easy!! Don't be fooled, first interview and screening calls are a fact of life these days and if you don't 'perform' during the call you have blown your chances of moving any further in the interview process.

Common causes of failure include not taking the call seriously, lack of preparation, using a mobile phone with a dodgy signal, not expecting technical or specialist interviewers at the other end of the phone or indeed the kids running about and your dogs barking in the background!

Telephone interviews can take many forms. From initial screening calls from someone who doesn't know anything about the role to check out whether your CV is accurate to an HR specialist to a technical expert who will assess your technical competence at the first stage.

So your interview is confirmed, what next?

The basics;

Know your stuff!

- Read your CV and have a copy handy!
- Read the job profile or advert and cross check where your CV is a great, average or no match!

Do your research!

- This includes reading the company website; talking to anyone you know that might know the company, 'Google' the interviewer online or through LinkedIn to know more about your interviewer. Be prepared and ready to answer the "what do you know about our company" question!

Prepare for the call

- Plan a quiet space where you can talk with no visual or noise distractions. No kids, deliveries planned at home where the doorbell will ring, no music playing in another room and such like. Close the windows to reduce background noise.

- Make sure you can use a landline for your call. Turn off call waiting if it is likely to bleep in the background.
 - If it is Skype interviews then you really need to think through where is the best place to take the call and plan to have no visual distractions in and around you. Effective Skype calls are an art in themselves!
 - Practice with a friend, colleague or relative. How do you sound on the phone, mouthpiece close and it muffles? Too far away and you can't hear you clearly? Do you mumble on the phone? Better to know this in advance.
 - Practice your answers to obvious questions. "where do you see yourself in 5 years' time", "why our company". "what interests you in this specific role", "why did you leave your last job or why do you want to leave your current job"
 - Think about the questions you might have for them and be sensible about what you ask! Don't try and negotiate your salary at the interview stage!
 - Expect the unexpected! For example 3 interviewers on the end of the line, a one hour technical call, someone at the other end who knows you from a previous role, a dodgy phone connection and such like.
 - Find out in advance if you can who is interviewing you, what form the interview will take and what is being assessed. Most interviewers will tell you if asked!
 - Plan for success. If you don't get past the telephone interview you go no further in the process.
 - Be comfortable, glass of water, pen and paper close by, internet open at the company page and have a last visit to the toilet!
- During the interview**
- Take notes. You will be stressed during the interview and you may need to answer the same question at face to face interview. Record the questions and ask them to repeat them if they are unclear.
 - Listen to what is being said. Don't anticipate what the question is and start answering without being clear you are answering the question asked!
 - When you speak slow down! Be clear and concise. Ask for clarification if you are unclear what is being asked of you. It's okay to pause and think before you answer.
 - If you are reading through your CV or job profile or any other information during the call don't be heard shuffling paper or clicking a keyboard. It will suggest you are distracted.
- Think about your body language!**
- Yes even for a telephone call. Research shows that standing up for a call and smiling has a positive impact on your voice, tone, attitude and impact.
 - Have your questions ready. Ideally relate them to points the interviewer has made to demonstrate you have been listening. Make sure you know what the next stage of the process is likely to be. A favourite last question of mine as a candidate is "I'm very keen to move forward in the interview process, are there any areas or points where you feel you don't have the full information or great evidence from me to successfully put me forward for stage two"?
- After the call**
- Email the interviewer to thank them for their time and reiterate why this is your ideal job and why you are very motivated to get to the next stage.
 - Share anything else that on reflection you wished you had shared or agreed to forward such as an enhanced CV, certificates or examples of work that you have completed in the past
 - Use your notes to plan for success at the next interview stage!
 - Use your notes to improve your performance during your next telephone interview!