

Good Call: How to Make a Positive Impression during a Phone Interview

By Robert Half/Accountemps

Given the plethora of applications that employers are receiving today, many hiring managers are using phone interviews to narrow the pool of candidates. Since your chances of scoring an in-person interview can be based on how well you perform on a preliminary phone screening, it pays to know a little about them in case you're called. Following are tips that will help you make it to the next round.

Don't get dropped. It's best to use a landline when answering a call from a prospective employer for a phone interview. You don't want to have to worry about having the call drop or a static-filled connection. Also, be sure to disable your phone's call-waiting function before the interview begins.

Eliminate distractions. Conduct the call from a quiet and private setting. You won't impress hiring managers if they can hear background noise like the sound of kids playing, dogs barking, horns honking or a keyboard clicking.

Have reference materials nearby. Prepare a bulleted list of speaking points and questions you'd like to cover. In addition to a pen and notepad, you'll also want your resume, the job description and any company research you've collected to be within arm's reach.

Keep the conversation flowing. Speak clearly and verbalize your thoughts beyond quick utterances of "uh-huh" and "okay." After the hiring manager outlines some of the duties of the position, you might say something like, "Yes, those aspects of the job really interest me." And always make sure the interviewer has completed his or her thought or question before responding.

Be all smiles. While it may sound odd or unnecessary to concern yourself with facial expressions and body language that nobody will see, smile and maintain good posture as you answer questions. This mental trick will help you project a more enthusiastic, confident and positive image – even over the phone.

Follow up. Promptly send the interviewer a thank-you card or email, just as you would after a face-to-face meeting. Use the note to reiterate your strong interest in the job and re-emphasize a few of the skills and qualifications that make you the perfect person for the payroll position.

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