

VERSATILITY! Virtual Assistance for the Real World

PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS TO HELP YOU LAND THE JOB!

First off, congratulations for making it to the phone interview stage of the employment search process!

Before the actual phone interview, you'll want to do some research to support this important step and enhance your desire to be the most qualified candidate.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK:

- Know something about the organization - growth, trends, etc. You'll want to answer intelligently and insert comments where appropriate. Don't do the disservice of saying, "I just looked at your website 10 minutes ago and your business looks great." Be specific and sound interested!
- Anticipate questions that might be asked. Align your values to the type of candidate they are seeking. Make sure you mention key words and phrases from the ad you are answering.
 - How long have you been in this field?
 - Describe your current job duties.
 - What makes you better than other candidates?
 - Where do you see yourself in 3, 5, 10 years?
 - What attracted you to this advertised position?
 - What do you know about the clientele in this industry?
 - What's an example of how you met monetary goals for the company?
 - What is our management style? Are you a team player? What demonstrates your style?
 - How do you handle difficult people?
 - How do you intend to market our company through personal and online presences?

If you don't know an answer you can reply with, "I have a broad resource bank; I'm sure I will be able to find someone who can bring me up to speed in this area."

- Show that you are already an expert in the field by asking a question about a competitor. For instance, if your interview is for a position at a golf course, you might say, "Other than Augusta National, who do you consider your primary competitor?"
- Think of (and list) 8-12 biggest strengths. This question will come up and you want to be prepared. Make the interviewer actually visualize how you will contribute to the success of the organization. Be specific.

Examples:

- I'm passionate about ___ (make sure it relates to the job)
- I enjoy the ability to meet and exceed goals and expectations.
- I love working with ___
- I love building relationships through personal connections and networking.
- AND ABOVE ALL... DON'T SAY, "I LOVE WORKING WITH PEOPLE!"

- **GOLDEN NUGGET TIP!** Save one of the "strengths" as a weakness (or challenge)! When asked to give an example of a weakness, show the weakness in the beginning of your explanation, and end the example with how you overcame that weakness to make it a strength. For instance, if you think you can do better at closing a sale, mention it only as a preface to your example: "Six to eight years ago when I was first starting out in sales, I realized I needed more practice in the closing process. Since that time, however, I have improved greatly in this area. Have I sold to everyone? Probably not, but I plan to continue improving in this area." Pick a few lesser strengths and have this handy for your weakness question. That way, you're not focusing on an actual weakness; you're ending with a positive solution.
- Against your personal temptation to find out the one question on the tip of your tongue, **DON'T MENTION MONEY!!!** It's what we all want to know, but the interviewer wants to know that you have an interest in the job, not that you are only driven by money. Show that you are 100% involved and that you can focus on selling yourself. (On the upside, the company might even change the salary requirement in your favor after talking with you.) Stating your requirement at this stage in the process imposes limitations. So, when asked, "What are your salary expectations?" You'll answer with, "I am confident that X company is competitive and has the ability to meet the standard monthly requirements for this position".
- Anticipate some of their objections. Objections are areas where you may not quite fit the bill. Remember, you made it to this stage of the process so your offerings outweigh your shortcomings. Still, you might be called out on the fact that you don't have a college degree if that was one of the requirements. Look for holes in your resume that might highlight some scrutiny and be prepared to answer intelligently.
- You'll generally be asked how you handle conflict with staff, or give an example where you had to discipline or handle an objection. Think about an example that you'll give – pick one that had a positive outcome. For instance, with an angry client... you were able to let them express their dissatisfaction and diffuse the situation by...
- Prepare some questions about the position because you will be asked if you have any questions. Ask something that actually influences your decision - "How many people have held this position previously, and why is there such a great turnover", "Did the previous person leave for personal or professional reasons", "What is the opportunity for growth and advancement in this position", etc. These could be red flags for you, and influence whether your interest in the position remains high or not. Trust your instincts.
- Don't expose minor concerns such as: "Do you have childcare", or "I have to pick my kids up at 3 every day, is that a problem?" Chances are you'll resolve those issues before the next phase if the position is important to you.

ON THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW:

- Set yourself up in an undistracted environment.
- Have the following at hand: resume, notes, questions that you've prepared. Having an outline of your job history is helpful so you don't have to fumble with remembering dates or what you did in a certain job capacity.
- Have your water bottle nearby.
- SMILE – use a mirror if you have one handy. Keep the conversation natural, and let your enthusiasm translate over the phone.
- Always end on a positive note and say you're excited to a candidate. Don't close communication! Stay enthusiastic and keep the door open on your end by saying, "At this point, what do I need to do to get to the next level of this process?" Stay proactive.
- End with "Thank you for your time, I look forward to talking with you further" – be sure to sound interested and upbeat so that you are remembered for ending on a positive note.

GOOD LUCK!!!



I welcome your feedback, comments and questions about your interview experience.

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