Telephone Interviewing

Why are telephone interviews used?
Employers use telephone interviews to narrow the candidate pool when filling an open job position. These kinds of interviews appeal to employers for several reasons. Employers may utilize a telephone interview to save on costs of on-site interviews, narrow an extremely large number of candidates prior to on-site interviewing, screen candidates living at a distance that is not conducive to on-site meetings, or interview candidates whose schedule cannot be met with an on-site interview. It is important to understand that the telephone interview is a formal interview and should be treated as such. You should use the same level of professional behavior and preparedness as you would for an on-site interview.

How to prepare for telephone interviews
It is important to be prepared to receive calls from interviewers from the time you send out your resume. Here are some tips to make sure you are prepared.

Things to keep nearby for ready access:
• Blank paper and a writing instrument.
• A copy of your resume and cover letters you have recently sent out.
• An appointment book or copy of your class schedule.

Waiting for the call:
• Record a voice mail message that is brief and professional.
• Be sure those around you understand you may receive an important job-related call at any time.
• Be careful of rude roommates, forgetful message takers, and proud parents who brag shamelessly when allowing others to answer your phone.

What to do during a telephone interview
Answering the call:
• Answer the phone professionally, beginning with a simple “Hello” or with your name.
• Immediately express your enthusiasm when the caller states his/her company affiliation.
• Assess the environment around you. If there are distracting background noises, ask permission to leave the line while you turn off the stereo, or inform others present you have an important call.
• If the call comes at an impossible time, tell the caller that you are eager to talk but cannot speak freely at that moment. Ask to call back in a few minutes. Record the person’s name and number and return the call promptly.

Ending the call:
• Express your interest in working for the organization and thank the person for calling you.
• Before the interviewer hangs up, be sure you have his/her full name and job title. If you didn't catch the caller's name at the beginning of the call, you can ask how to spell the name correctly.
• Immediately send a thank-you letter for the phone interview and refer to topics that were discussed.

Things to remember:
Don't chew gum, sip a drink, eat, smoke or listen to music. Don't put the caller on hold for more than a few seconds and only if absolutely necessary. Use appropriate language. Avoid slang and fillers such as "you know," "uh," and "like." Ask questions and be enthusiastic.
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