

The Art of the Phone Interview.

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To state the obvious ... recruiting activity has been *sluggish* the last few years. Companies were hesitant to add headcount, and employees generally took a "bird in the hand worth two in the bush" approach, choosing to stay with current employers despite increased workload from cost reductions, reorganizations, etc. But now, as the economy picks up steam, there is movement on both sides of the interviewing table.

- *Manpower Inc. Employment Outlook Survey*, December 2010, stated that US employers are forecasting staffing gains for the first and second quarter of 2011.

Now is the time to brush up on interviewing skills no matter which side of the table you occupy.

Critical first step - the Phone Interview.

Doing the recruiting...

Timing is everything. Good candidates still don't last long, so use your time wisely. Start with a prescheduled and well planned telephone interview to assess candidates. Make sure there is a match on qualifications, compensation, and commute. If there is, follow up quickly with an in-person interview. If not, tell them. How you treat candidates will be remembered and repeated to other potential candidates.

Preparation is everything else! Before you interact with the first candidate develop your phone interview questions. This should be done using the job description and collaborating with key managers involved in the hiring decision. Questions should be crafted so you can quickly get the information you need to make a decision on next steps. Getting the same type of information on all candidates will allow you to make comparisons and more intelligent selections. Provide information on the company, what makes it a great place to work, and a position overview. Ask open ended questions and listen more than you talk. Stay focused on the interview; a good first impression is important no matter which side of the interview table you are on!

Being recruited...

Telephone etiquette. Before you begin your job search listen to your voice mail greeting. Does it clearly state your name and sound professional? That goes for your email address as well. `getwild@abc.com` does not give a recruiter a good feeling for your professionalism.

Telephone technique. If you don't ace the initial phone call it's over. Schedule the call for a time and place when you will not be interrupted, or need to whisper because the person in the next cubicle can hear you. Do everything you can to be on a landline, not

a cell phone. No distractions: do not conduct the call while you are driving, answering emails, or telling your dog to stop barking. Best place is in front of a mirror. Keep your focus, make eye contact and smile, just as if you were sitting face-to-face with the interviewer. Dress as though you were there in person. Projection and appearance will boost your self confidence, which the person on the other end will hear. Review your resume before the call so you are prepared for any questions and can speak to your accomplishments. Show interest by researching the company and having a few questions ready to ask.!

Establishing rapport and communicating effectively via the phone is a skill sometimes lost to other social media venues, but in the world of candidate and job search, it is still critically important. Much like most skills...practice makes perfect!

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