



# Zeta Consulting

## Executive Search

### **TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING**

Often the first step in an interview process, sometimes the only opportunity to make an impression, telephone interviewing is a skill it pays to master. Because the interview is visually impartial, content, voice and tone are critically important factors.

#### **What is the person on the other end of the line assessing?**

How well does the candidate express him/herself? How well does he/she listen? Does the candidate ask quality questions? Is there excitement about the prospect of visiting the company?

#### **Prepare for a telephone interview as you would for an in-person interview (check out our interview tips) plus keep these things in mind:**

1. Set the stage. Arrange a time that is mutually agreeable so you can speak freely. If you are called unexpectedly and the time is inconvenient, ask the caller if it is possible to talk at a more convenient time.
2. Allow sufficient time.
3. Do not drink, smoke, chew gum, eat, chew on a pencil, chew tobacco or do anything else that will interfere with your voice.
4. Have a pad and pencil in front of you to take notes with prepared questions.
5. Listen carefully, do not interrupt, and pause to collect your thoughts before launching into your answer. Do not talk too softly or too loudly.
6. Smile, it comes through over the phone.
7. Modulate your voice to emphasize points.
8. Keep your answers concise and to the point. Rambling answers lose the listener.
9. Remember that word choice, pitch, modulation, and other verbal clues signify intelligence, alertness, and enthusiasm. The telephone magnifies subtleties that may go unnoticed in face to face discussions. Voice inflection gives color and texture to ordinary words.
10. Don't read too much into the way an interviewer responds to your answers – some people – especially HR professionals have great “poker faces” and are hard to get feedback or a read on.
11. Always project a “positive” image. Don't talk negatively about past employers or position responsibilities. You can justify your decisions without “bashing” anyone.

12. Use the interview prep worksheet to refresh your memory about your past accomplishments before you get asked the questions. You won't have to appear to be "digging" for answers.
13. The money question – If you get asked about your current compensation – answer honestly and accurately – don't hedge. Make sure to include all the things that make up your compensation – Base, Bonus, Vacation, 401K, Stock options. **When they ask what you're looking for in an offer** – tell them you don't have a "hard" number in mind but that you certainly would expect to improve on your current compensation and leave it at that...if you lock yourself into a number that is the number they will use for any offer or consideration when weighing candidates.
14. Ask for the next step. *"I know that you're busy. There is only so much that we can measure on the phone, based on my background and what needs to be done for this job, I believe that I can add value. Should we go ahead and set up the face-to-face meeting?"*
15. Lastly – and this is **VERY IMPORTANT** – as soon as you hang up the phone please shoot me a quick email that answers the following questions so I am prepared for when the client calls me back.
  - Why do you feel you can do this job?
  - Why do you feel you want this job?
  - What about the company/position is attractive to you?
  - What red flags came up as a result of your interview?
  - What questions do you still want answered?
  - Do you want to continue the interviewing process for this position?

Follow these tips for a productive, conversational phone interview!