



Conducting a successful job interview over the phone
By Tom Whitley

When distance and time pose hiring problems for employers and candidates, it makes sense to get to know each other first in a telephone interview. It eliminates travel and provides an excellent vehicle to discuss key areas of the position to see if further dialogue is warranted. But the candidate must realize that it is a serious error to approach a telephone interview casually.

Factors to consider in a telephone interview:

*Plan for the telephone conversation just as you would a conventional face-to-face interview. Do your homework! Find out as much as you can about the interviewer, the company and the position.

*Lack of the face-to-face contact can be positive and negative. Don't talk to a machine -- talk to a person. The convenience factor is great but don't let the familiar surroundings fool you. A general rule is to use more voice inflection than normal to overcome the lack of body language. The voice becomes your primary selling factor.

*Speak distinctly. You should practice your diction and avoid mispronouncing words. Tape your voice to see if there are quick improvements you can make. But be prepared for a shock if this is your first encounter with your own voice!

*Be sure the room is quiet. Just as in a face-to-face interview, distracting noises can be embarrassing -- and may be deadly. Turn off the television and have someone keep the children quiet.

*Have your resume handy. The interviewer has your resume -- be sure you have one and it is the same copy. Have a notepad, pen, and other references you think you might need.

*Have a checklist of topics you want to cover. You need to have questions ready for the interviewer so the process moves quickly. Don't forget to write down the answers to your questions. The more information you have after the interview is completed, the better you can evaluate the results. Don't rely on your memory.

*Visualize the interview. Just as the interviewer is drawing a mental picture of you, picture the interviewer at a desk. It gives a human quality to your voice.

Etc., Etc. Be sure that the interviewer has your correct phone number(s). Schedule a specific time for the interview; make sure that you are at home, that your three-year-old doesn't answer and that your phone is not busy. Follow up in the same manner as you would after a face-to-face interview.
