Phone/Virtual Interviews

Many employers will conduct their first round interviews via the phone or virtually using Skype or another online videoconferencing tool. These interviews typically last from 15-60 minutes, and are used as a precursor to an in-person interview. Since so much of how and what we communicate is done non-verbally, the phone interview can present some unique challenges. The virtual interview also has its challenges.

When you are having an in-person conversation with someone, you can take in a lot of information through their body language; are they listening, do they seem engaged, do they seem bored? With a phone interview, it is much more difficult to gauge the interviewer’s interest. Some tips for a successful phone interview include:

- Make sure you are in a quiet, comfortable environment where you will not be disturbed. Use a land-line, rather than a cell phone, when possible.
- Have your resume, notes, job description, and employer research in front of you so that you can glance at them during the interview. Do not read anything verbatim to the employer, and try to minimize the sound of shuffling papers.
- Smile! Even though the employer cannot see you, smiling can help you come across as personable and warm.
- Some candidates find it helpful to dress professionally for a phone interview. Though the employer will not see you, it can be helpful to dress as you would for an in-person interview.
- Be prepared for pauses and silences. If there is an extended silence in between questions, you can ask confirming questions. Comments such as “Was my answer clear?”, or “Would you like me to elaborate more on that?” can help you and the interviewer connect and thus provide you with important feedback.

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