8 Tips and tricks for a successful telephone interview

Often it is the case that managers are very busy, and so a telephone interview is a good way for them to find out a bit more about you before they commit to a face to face meeting. Or sometimes they will just want to find out how good a communicator you are, especially if the position you are interviewing for involves a lot of telephone-based work. Telephone interviews can be tricky, not least because you can't read the interviewer's expression to gauge how you are performing. We have put together a list of useful tips to ensure you get through the telephone interview stage, so that you can have the opportunity to go face to face with the prospective employer.

1. Find out as much as you can in advance of the call. What is the interviewer's job title? Will they be asking you any technical questions? Finding out how long they expect the call to last will give you an indication of how in-depth the interview will be, and if you are taking the call during work hours you will need to make sure you can be uninterrupted for the duration of the call.
2. If the interviewer is calling you on your mobile number, make sure you are in a quiet place where you can take the call without interruption or intermittent reception.
3. The interviewer will be referring to your CV while you are speaking – so have a copy in front of you so that you can quickly recall the information that they will be asking you about.
4. Have a look at the company's website in advance of the call. Many interviewers will ask what you know about the company, and if you have not done your research they will dismiss you out of hand swiftly.
5. Smile. It might sound silly, but anyone who has worked in telesales or market research will tell you that it will help you to sound more positive and help the interviewer to warm to you.
6. Speak slowly and clearly, especially if English is not your first language. The interviewer will be assessing your communication skills and also how you might come across to customers over the telephone.
7. Have some questions prepared. Most interviewers will give you a chance to ask them questions and candidates who don't ask any can be perceived as disinterested. If you find yourself tongue-tied, a good rule of thumb is to say 'I think you have answered all my questions during the course of the call, but would it be okay if I contact you/the agency if I have any questions at a later stage?'
8. If you don't know the answer to a question – don't panic. Long silences are difficult on the phone though, so using phrases like 'that's a good question, can I have a moment to think about my answer?' is better than saying nothing, or worse still, lying. Always think methodically – if you don't know the answer, it is okay to say so. And in that case, tell the interviewer how you would go about finding out the answer.

Try to stay relaxed and remember that the telephone interview is a great chance for you to sell yourself to your future employer without the inconvenience of taking time off work and spending money on petrol to get to a face to face meeting! It is a chance for you to ask questions and to develop an initial rapport with the interviewer. It is also your chance to give them a reason to invite you into the office for the next stage, at which you can convince them that you are the right person for the role.