



# Nicholson McFadden group

## ... PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS ...

**D**uring a phone interview, it is difficult to communicate personal presence. Moreover, you lose the benefit of body language, eye contact and hand gestures to communicate key points. Instead, you must assert yourself verbally to effectively communicate your fitness for the position. Answers to interview questions must be coherent and thorough, yet concise.

### **THOROUGH PREPARATION**

Being fully prepared for a phone interview is essential for success. Thorough preparation includes reviewing likely questions, formulating potential answers, and role playing with a friend or family member to fine-tune your responses and minimize the likelihood of verbal stumbles.

### **USE TRANSITIONAL PHRASES**

In a live interview, if you take a moment to answer a question, the interviewer can observe that you are being thoughtful or reflective, and considering your response. On a phone interview, the interviewer will simply hear silence and may assume you've been stumped by a question, or can't articulate an answer. To help bridge this gap in communication, be sure to *think out loud* during a phone interview – become comfortable with transitional phrases such as "let me consider the question for a moment" or "let me think that over for a minute". If necessary, you can buy time by asking the interviewer to repeat the question or to provide clarification.

### **CLARIFY & CONFIRM COMMUNICATION**

In a phone interview, it is essential to clarify and confirm understanding. If you are unclear about an interviewer's question, repeat back what you think you've heard, and ask for confirmation of your understanding. If you think you may have misinterpreted a question or answered poorly, be sure to address this prior to the end of the interview. For example, it's perfectly appropriate to tell your interviewer, "I'm not sure I addressed your question about XYZ very clearly, and I'd like to come back to it to demonstrate that I do have the experience" or "If it's all right with you, I'd like to give you another response to your question about XYZ" or "I'm not sure I provided my best answer, I'd like to clarify my experience with XYZ".

Even though these moments may be awkward, it may be your only opportunity to correct mistakes. Remember, once the call is completed, you've lost your chance to influence the interviewer's decision-making.

### **BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS ...**

- Your career path and career decisions you've made.
- Your interest in the job AND your reason for considering roles outside your current company.
- Positives reasons you are seeking a job change (long term opportunity, company reputation, cultural fit, etc.); stay away from negative comments.
- Your career ambitions/interests — ensure that these are consistent with the position for which you are interviewing.

**QUESTION:**  
What makes a phone interview so different from a face-to-face interview?

**ANSWER:**  
Both parties lack the benefit of *visual cues*.



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### TECHNIQUE FOR ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The *SAR Technique* offers an effective way to stay focused and clear in your responses.

**SAR = SITUATION → ACTION → RESULTS**

**S** - Characterize the **Situation**

*What was the context? Describe the setting, background, or overall situation.*

*Provide pertinent details, but don't get bogged down in minutiae.*

**A** - Describe the **Action** you took

*What specifically did you do? Focus on your role and contributions.*

**R** - Communicate the **Results** of your action

*What was the outcome? How did the situation end?*

*This is most effective when there is measurable result.*

### GENERAL TIPS FOR PHONE INTERVIEWS

- Avoid using a cell phone for a phone interview – a poor or lost connection creates frustration and interrupts the flow of the discussion.
- Call from a quiet location (minimize background noise).
- Keep answers clear and concise; do not ramble.
- Check that interviewer is engaged (i.e. is she/he actively listening?)

### CLOSE THE INTERVIEW

- At the conclusion of the interview, make sure you clearly communicate that you are interested in and want the job!
- Work hard to *close* the interview by asking if you've met the basic criteria to move on to a live interview.
- Inquire about next steps and the timeline for follow-up communication.