

5.2: Phone Interviewing

Learning Objective

- Discuss the process of effective phone interviews

Quite a few job applicants look “good on paper,” meaning that their resumes are impressive. Once you actually speak with them, however, it may become obvious that they don’t really meet the requirements of the job. Alternatively, a moderately attractive applicant might turn out to have personal qualities and abilities that are better than they appeared on paper.

A phone interview is a second level of screening used to reduce the pool of qualified candidates to a manageable number that will be invited in for a face-to-face interview. A phone interview can be voice only or voice and video, using technologies such as Skype. For both interviewee and candidate, the preparation is similar to preparing for a live interview. The basic 5-step process (from the interviewer’s perspective) is as follows:

1. Review the job description and job specifications
2. Prepare and validate a set of questions (for candidates: anticipate & prepare for questions)
3. Review submitted materials, including application form, cover letter and resume
4. Conduct the interview
 1. Open the interview
 2. Ask your prepared questions and any follow-up questions based on the candidate’s responses
 3. Invite candidate questions
 4. Close interview
5. Summarize the interview. For the interviewer, that involves writing a candidate evaluation. For the candidate, that involves summarizing notes and writing a follow-up.

Keep in mind that active listening and effective interpretation and note-taking are essential interview skills. This is especially true when interviewing a large number of candidates—it can get tricky remembering who said what. Keeping notes will help you make a final decision as you weigh candidates against one another.

If there will be a video element to the phone interview, there’s an additional level of planning and coordination, including exchanging user names, issuing and accepting connections and testing technology. (See [Module 9: Communicating Through Technology](#) for further assistance.)

Learn More

For perspective on how to conduct a phone interview, view this [U.S. Department of Labor Recruiter Training video](#). In this video, you’ll hear an abbreviated (six minute) interview with a West Virginia University Journalism major. The video illustrates the primary interview steps and interpersonal interactions, including introduction, setting the agenda, inviting questions, and establishing next steps.

View More

University of Hartford Barney School of Business staging of a mock phone interview with student evaluation:



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