

A Headhunter's Secret Tip List for Electronic Interviews

Dear Stephen:

I am applying to jobs now and am stuck in an unfortunate pattern. I apply online or am approached by a recruiter. Usually, the first step is an interview, which they set up to me on the phone or over Skype with some HR representative or manager. After this interview, however, the process seems to stall time and time again. Somehow I cannot find a way to get to the next step, an in-person interview.

I think I am a good reader of social and business situations, and I can usually tell when I do well, or I blow the interview. Something about this technology keeps throwing me off though. I know if I were given the chance to speak with someone face-to-face, I would make a much better impression.

What am I doing wrong? How can I get past this first step and let the true me shine through?

Hung Up on Phone Interviews

Dear Hung Up,

Today, most candidates for most positions are screened with an initial interview over skype or on the phone, even when the company's HR is in the same city as the candidate. This is standard operating procedure because it is useful and efficient. Trust me, you are not alone. Over and over, I hear the same bemoans from candidates: "I would do better in person." Sorry, those days are over.

Phone interviews might eliminate some good candidates from the pool but they have become the only way for hiring managers to begin weeding out candidates quickly and efficiently.



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press.

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

You are right these interviews can be tricky, and it is very hard for the "true you" to translate over the phone. You came to the right place, though. As the author of the Harper Collins bestseller "Bulletproof Your Job" and a successful headhunter, I have built a list of nine specific tips I share with clients, candidates and friends to help guide them through this grueling and confusing first step of the process. I should probably be selling this list, but I love my BoF readers, so I'll give it out for free.

Being kind, courteous and professional can go a long way.

- Telephone interviews are fickle and easy to screw up. Companies do not have much patience for technical glitches, so whenever possible, try to use a landline. Always be in a quiet and comfortable space, and never put the phone on speaker.
- Always have your resume sitting in front of you. You can bet the interviewer does, and it is important to use as reference.
- You must have a photo uploaded on LinkedIn before you begin the interview. You are kidding yourself if you think the person on the other end of the phone doesn't care what you look like.
- Make sure you and the interviewer both know who will initiate the call. Also, be sure to have the interviewer's number in case you get disconnected and need to call them back.
- Don't freeze up when asked about compensation. It is not at all uncommon for an HR executive or hiring manager to ask for your income the previous year. Expect this question, especially for sales positions, and have the answer ready. Remember that this is a screening step. Candidates who skirt around this question are unconditionally disqualified.
- While on a Skype interview, always look the part. Treat this like a real interview and dress exactly as you would if you were visiting the company headquarters. Dressing for the job is just as important when interviewing from home.
- Smile! Smiling is an important way to ingratiate yourself with anybody of any group. This is especially true over Skype, but it is also true on the phone. You might not think you can hear a smile, but, believe me, you can.
- We have often found that business and individual Skype accounts are not compatible. There is no real answer to this issue but make sure your Skype application is working, and your connection is solid 10 minutes before the interview. Similarly, if you have to use a cellphone, call a friend or family member before your call to make sure you have a decent connection.
- Just like you would for an in-person interview, make sure you send a thank-you letter after the interview ends. Thanking the interviewer is always incredibly important and too often overlooked with phone interviews.

I hope these suggestions serve you well. In the modern world, job hunting and interviewing are growing ever more complicated. Staying on top of technology and trends is incredibly important, but it is just as imperative that you find ways to incorporate traditional interviewing skills into the modern era. Being kind, courteous and professional can go a long way. Understand telephone interviews and Skype interviews aren't so different than in-person interviews. Prepare in the same way you would for any interview and do what you can to make yourself feel comfortable. Just like any interview, it may not always go well, but don't be so hard on yourself. I guarantee my tips will make the process that much easier.

Stephen