

## 6 ways to ruin a phone interview

Providing short answers, taking the call while driving and failing to do research are surefire ways to sabotage your shot at the job.

By Ritika Trikha | Posted: February 20, 2015



Since a phone interview is usually an employer's initial screening of a candidate, many job applicants think it isn't as important as a face-to-face conversation.

I spoke with dozens of hiring managers who said they wish more candidates treated phone interviews like in-person meetings. Too many candidates breeze through the calls in their pajamas instead of being prepared as if it were the real thing.

After all, you have to impress during the phone screening to have a chance at the job!

I asked hiring managers about the top phone interview mistakes they see. If you want to make it to the next round of interviews, make sure you avoid these mistakes:

### 1. Your voice has no enthusiasm.

Hiring managers want to hear a strong, positive voice as soon as you answer the phone.

Answering with your name ("Hello, this is Bob") can avoid initial awkwardness and help things move along. You'd be surprised how much a great start can shape the rest of the interview.

"If you aren't confident in the phone interview, the hiring manager is going to assume you aren't confident in person, so you probably won't get a second chance to make a better impression," says [Jené Kapela](#), owner of a leadership consulting firm and a hiring manager with more than 10 years of experience.

To convey confidence and enthusiasm, always be professional, energetic and positive. Smiling can help boost your tone and project your voice positively. Practice your pace.

"You want this to be the best phone call they've had all day," says Emily Ceisel, an HR practitioner and hiring manager.

### 2. You interview while driving, outside or in public.

Driving while interviewing can be extremely dangerous.

"The candidate is distracted and at times very unclear," says Gail Tolstoi-Miller, CEO at Consultnetwork, a national consulting firm, and Speednetwork, a speed networking event company for Fortune 500 companies.

This happened to [Lisa Quast](#), a former executive vice president and general manager of a Fortune 500 company. She said this about an interview with a candidate: "I could hear everything, from the traffic noise, to ambulance sirens, to the job seeker stopping at a service station and filling his car with gas," Quast says.

You might have a busy schedule, but make time to take the call in a private area with strong reception. Making it hard for the interviewer to hear you is a fast way to lose his interest.

### 3. You forget to turn off phone notifications.

"Landline is always preferable," Tolstoi-Miller says. It removes all risk of low reception, and offers minimal distractions.

If you have to use your cell phone, make sure you're not distracted by incoming emails, texts, Facebook notifications, Instagram hearts, etc.

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#### **4. You assume the interviewer is male.**

This is an example of why it's important to research before an interview.

Candidates often mistake Elle Kaplan, founding partner and CEO of LexION Capital Management, for Mr. Kaplan. It's off-putting, considering her firm is the only 100 percent female-owned asset management firm in the U.S. Talk about embarrassing!

"My bio and picture are on the [company] website," Kaplan says. "Doing background research before you have an interview is essential."

Avoid making such an error by researching the company thoroughly. Check out the company website, social media profiles, recent news articles and LinkedIn members to double check names and events.

#### **5. You cut answers short.**

Since you can't see the interviewer's reactions, it can be hard to gauge whether you're doing well and answering questions thoroughly.

One great way to preempt this problem is to use the STAR method.

"Explain the **S**ituation, your **T**ask, the **A**ction you took, and the **R**esult," Ceisel says. "Most often, candidates forget to share the result, which is the most important part."

It helps to have a printed list of the achievements you want to cover in the conversation.

#### **6. You're unprepared for common interview questions.**

Since phone interviews are usually a test to see if you fit the job's basic criteria, be prepared to handle such questions effortlessly.

According to Steven Raz, co-founder of Cornerstone Search Group, a national pharma recruiting firm, here are the questions you should have down pat:

- What type of position are you looking for? Why?
- Why do you want to leave your current (or previous) job?
- When can you come in for an in-person interview?
- When would you be able to start?
- Do you have two professional references?
- Do you have any questions?

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