



### PRESCREENING STRATEGIES

Before you are granted a formal interview, you will most likely be prescreened as a prospective candidate. Companies use many prescreening strategies, and some may be quite extensive. Be prepared for a simple telephone screen to a more in-depth process which may include video-conference interviews, personality tests, and background checks.

If you have fully utilized the strategies recommended, you have presented an optimized resume and cover letter to effectively demonstrate your value as a qualified candidate and you have submitted your application as soon as it was posted. The first communication from the hiring company will most likely be a telephone conversation with a human resources representative or a recruiter.



### Telephone Prescreen Interviews:

Although taking and making phone calls is commonplace part of most lives, in a job search these calls take on a special significance. The impression you make over the telephone during your job search, may determine whether or not you secure a face-to-face meeting. While presenting yourself in person, you can rely on your gestures, facial expressions, and personal presentation to validate your strengths. Over the phone, you lose the element of personal presence, so your words and your tone of voice become critical to your success. Below are some tips and strategies to use during networking, pre-employment screenings, or telephone-based interviews.

- Engage in telephone conversations from a location where radio, television, or other members of the household will not distract you or be heard in the background.
- Turn off call waiting if possible, to eliminate distracting background noises which may side track your thoughts and conversation.
- Keep a mirror in front of you when talking on the phone. This may seem strange, but it can make a dramatic difference in helping your tone of voice. Say “hello” with a frown and “hello” with a smile – can you hear the difference in the tone of your voice? You can use the mirror to monitor your facial expression while on the phone.
- Stand up while speaking and feel free to walk around the room if you want to convey energy.
- Watch your voice pitch, (not too high or too low), and your volume, (don’t whisper or scream into the phone). Try recording yourself to learn how others hear you.
- Have your infomercial script, your resume, and a list of prepared questions in front of you.
- Have a pen, pencil, and writing pad available.
- Allow the interviewer to set the pace of the call and control the conversation.
- Convey your sincere interest in the position and ask probing questions about their desired qualifications so that you can speak directly about how you meet their needs.
- End the conversation by asking for specifics about next steps and let them know you want to proceed in the process.

## **Video Conference Prescreen Interviews:**

In most respects, an interview conducted by video conference is not much different from a face-to-face interview. You should still prepare for the interview in the same manner, expect the same type of questions, and be dressed the same from head to toe. However, there are a few tips and strategies that will ensure a successful online meeting:

- Set up your interview space in an uncluttered area. This is especially important if you are having your interview in your home office. Clear your desk and get rid of distractions on the desk as well as the surrounding area. You want the focus to be strictly on you during the interview. As a test, view your own image on the web cam prior to the meeting and remove any distractions.
- Conduct your interview in a well-lit area. You may even place a bright lamp just behind your computer to add additional light directly in front of your face. Primary lights above your face can often cause shadows. Do not sit with a window directly behind you. Light behind you can be a distraction.
- Test your sound and voice quality prior to the interview. The best sound quality is typically through a microphone and earphones (hidden). If you use the speaker system on your computer, it may cause feedback, which can be very distracting during an interview.
- Wear your full interview suit from head to toe.
- Have your resume, notes, and questions on hand.
- Have a pad of paper and a pen on your desk to take notes.
- Silence any phones. Remove or diffuse any potential distracting noises (pets, children, outside noises)
- Shut down all computers running on your desktop with the exception of the necessary programs that run the video conferencing system. This will eliminate distractions and will add more bandwidth to allow a free-flowing conversation. Hopefully, you will be using a high-speed cable connection.
- When you are engaged in conversation, look directly into the web cam. If you are looking at your own image or that of the interviewer, you will seem to be looking at a different direction from the person you are conversing with. Allow for conversational pauses to minimize the download time for each person to make a statement.

## **Other Prescreening Tools:**

In order to eliminate risk, many employers opt to use personality tests and background checks to further screen potential candidates. This is perfectly legal and allows an employer to obtain a glimpse of your personality, style, and background to better measure your fit within the organization. The weight that the additional prescreening tools bear on your candidacy varies from company to company. The best approach is to be honest, forthcoming, and consistent with your responses as you move through the process.