

## Tips for a Telephone Interview

### **About the Telephone Interview:**

Congratulations! You have been asked to participate in the first step in the interview process. A telephone interview is a pre-screen to determine if you will advance to the next step, which is an in-person interview. Companies often ask their pre-screeners to narrow the candidate pool through this first step, so not all who get a telephone interview will advance to an in-person interview. This is therefore an important part of the hiring process and warrants your preparation and consideration.

You will likely be asked about your experience, job moves, any gaps in your history, willingness to relocate (if required for the job), and whether your compensation expectations are within the range budgeted for the position.

### **Items to have available during the phone interview:**

- Resume
- Pen & paper for note taking
- Glass of water (very important, in case you get a frog in your throat or start coughing)

### **Dos & Don'ts:**

- Clear the room - you should have no distractions or interruptions. (If at home, make sure your pets won't be heard barking or your children crying. If at work, avoid being distracted by email - don't look at it.)
- Before you take the call, shut your eyes and take slow, deep breaths for a couple of minutes. This will clear your mind, increase your focus, and reduce nervousness.
- If possible, take the call on a landline. If the call is taking place on a cell phone, make sure you're in a location that receives consistent and clear reception (and never take a call outside due to wind and other noise).
- When you answer the call, start with your name, e.g. "This is Jane Doe" in a friendly and confident tone of voice.
- Smile - studies have shown that physically smiling makes your voice come across in a more positive, friendly way.

- Show interest and enthusiasm in the position, even if you're otherwise not actively looking for a new position.
- Stand up if you feel like you have low energy.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Don't chew gum, eat or drink (except to take a sip of water).
- Don't interrupt the interviewer - let them finish a thought or a sentence, even if you know what they're about to say.
- Maintain a professional demeanor, but be authentic, and be yourself. And don't be shy about revealing your personality!
- End the conversation on a strong and positive note by asking about next steps and conveying your interest in the position.

### **Preparation:**

- Know whether your interviewer has an H.R. or a legal background. If the former, H.R. professionals are typically not as well versed in what lawyers do on a day to day basis, especially compared to subsequent interviewers who will have a legal background, so make sure you convey in layman's terms why you are a good fit for the position, and your questions to them should be about the company or legal department in general and not regarding details of the position that a lawyer within the company can better address. Using key words in the job description is sometimes helpful when describing your experience.
- Review the company's website thoroughly so that you don't ask questions that are obviously answered on it.
- Know your audience: Review the interviewer's biography on the company website, linked in, or similar, and understand their role in the company before you visit with them.
- Have a short list of your qualifications and skills specific to the job you're interviewing for, preferably examples that illustrate your qualifications, competencies, and problem-solving abilities.
- Make a list of relevant accomplishments, in case it comes up.
- Prepare at least 3 questions for the interviewer. Broad questions about the responsibilities and goals of the job are best at this early point in the process. If you are interviewing with an HR Professional, especially, broader questions are better than, for example, detailed questions about the day to day substance of the role.

- Know your schedule in case the interviewer wants to set up an in person interview. The last thing you would want to do is succeed in the phone interview only to tell them to call you back because you are not sure when you can meet them.
- Don't bring up compensation, but know the details of your current compensation before this call. If you are asked by the interviewer about compensation, be honest and let them know what you're currently earning and leave it at that, unless your recruiter has told you that the range for the position is lower than that and you're okay with taking a cut. In that event, you should say so.

**Afterward:**

- Visit with your recruiter about whether a thank you note is appropriate in your particular situation. If it's a screening call with an HR professional (and in many other situations), it's best not to send a thank you note at this stage, but to wait until after your in-person meeting.