



5. Phone Interviewing



Benefits & Weaknesses of Phone Interviews

Phone interviews are fairly standard practice in high demand careers. Often there are dozens of resumes that are "roughly" qualified for the job, and to narrow them down quickly, a hiring manager goes through a huge list of applicants and tries to figure out which of those candidates is worth an interview.

Usually phone interviews have set questions and are briefer than standard in-person interviews. It's not about getting to know the applicant, so much as it is about finding reasons that you should not call an applicant in. Unlike in-person interviews, you're not trying to figure out who to hire – rather, you're trying to figure out who not to.

Phone Interviews and Applicant Experience

It's for this reason that most applicants dread phone interviews. They are arguably harder to master than in person interviews because one mistake can spoil the entire 15 minute phone call. Yet because most employers love them, they still remain a popular part of today's hiring environment.

How Valuable Are Phone Interviews?

Every type of interview has its benefits and weaknesses. Even in-person interviews are imperfect for employers, and while they are a necessary part of the hiring environment, often recognizing these flaws and setbacks is important.

With that in mind, the following are the benefits and weaknesses of phone interviews. Each one is subject to some debate, but hopefully they will give you a starting point to recognize some of the problems that may occur during the hiring process.

Benefits of Phone Interviews

- [Taking a Chance](#)

The greatest benefit to using phone interviews is the ability to take a chance on those that may not have the strongest resumes or CVs, but still seem like they have promise. Not every great employee is going to have the strongest resume.

By calling those that hint at the level of competency you're looking for, you can effectively ensure that you're able to narrow down the list to those you truly want, rather than just those with the strongest CVs. It's an opportunity to really make sure that you know who is applying to your jobs, to find out if there is someone that may be undervalued.

- [The Basics](#)

Phone interviews also give you an opportunity to ask the basic questions so that you don't have to deal with them at the actual interview. Often much of an in-person interview is wasted on boring questions that you simply want to know, but only play a marginal role in getting to know the candidate. Phone interviews get that out of the way so you can focus on the more important discussions.

- [The Follow Ups](#)

Of course, those basic questions also give you the opportunity to come up with better questions for an in-person interview. The more you learn about the applicant in advance, the more you can ask them questions that address the doubts that you have.

- [Grace Under Pressure](#)

Earlier we mentioned that phone interviews can be difficult for the applicant. Sometimes this can be a problem (we'll go over this in "weaknesses"). But sometimes this can be an advantage too. On a phone interview, people tend to be very nervous, very pressured, and also very distracted. Applicants that can handle

Continued...

Calculating a Competitive Salary

this may genuinely be some great applicants. Applicants that cannot may be showing a negative quality that needs fixing.

Weaknesses of Phone Interviews

Of course, phone interviews do have some glaring weaknesses. These include:

- **Small Sample**

The fewer the questions you ask and the shorter the discussion, the less you really learn. Imagine you call someone at home, and their child is making noise, and they are a bit distracted. If they answer just one question poorly because of this distraction, there's a good chance you're going to discount them, possibly unfairly.

Less information is always worse for making decisions, and unfortunately the very nature of phone interviews tends to allow for less information.

- **Recency Effect**

Another issue is the recency effect. Phone interviews are usually completed one at a time all in a row. Unfortunately, human beings have a very strong tendency to compare, especially when something happens too recently.

At phone interviews, it is very common to overrate and underrate candidates that compared differently to the one before them. An average candidate after a terrible one sounds amazing, while a good applicant after a great one sounds terrible. We all think that we can be objective, but studies have shown that that's not true. It's hard not to compare, and in phone interviews it's especially hard to control unfair comparisons.

- **Biases**

Similarly, phone interviews are about turning down applicants, not finding great ones. So many people tend to focus on the negatives while ignoring positives. That can cause you to over-focus on a single mistake in a way that causes you to dislike a great applicant.

- **Different Type of Pressure/Distraction**
Being around the home does make it harder to focus. People feel that they need to see what someone else is saying, and there are often noises that occur around the home that make it harder to hear questions and think, especially while on the phone. You may also have caught them at an inopportune moment.

Combining this with the level of pressure that people experience when they're on a phone interview and it's easy to see where an otherwise good applicant could fail.

Using Phone Interviews

Despite those caveats, there aren't always great alternatives to phone interviews, which is why they remain such an important part of modern day hiring tactics. But they actually have several problems, and knowing these problems in advance of completing any time of interview may help you avoid succumbing to them.

"By using Recruit Shop I was able to review the best applicants without wasting my time on those that weren't really serious about applying for the position. Your company was very easy to deal with, responsive and professional."

Sharon Nann, The Deaf Society



Recruit Shop

choose to save

Discuss your recruitment news with one of our consultants by contacting Recruit Shop today...

1300 411 740

info@recruitshop.com.au

www.recruitshop.com.au

Recruit Shop Pty Ltd.

PO Box 824, North Sydney NSW 2059

ABN: 39 911 832 202