



When you're comfortable using the phone, you'll get a lot more interviews.

Effective use of the phone is easy. You should use it aggressively to get in touch with top executives who can help.



15 Use the phone to achieve fast results

Power your marketing with telephone dynamics.

This can be a fast way to get the right interviews, and using the phone is easier than you think. Of course, some people are totally confident in their ability to use the phone. However, 90% of all job seekers are reluctant to pick up the phone and make a "cold call."

If you're not experienced in using the phone, believe it or not, it's a mostly friendly and helpful world out there. Most executives are courteous and polite and go out of their way to project a good image of themselves and their company. The same holds true for others such as secretaries or administrative assistants.

Still, there is a certain misconception that all secretaries and assistants will always keep you from speaking with their bosses. They do screen calls, but it is part of their job to make sure that contact is made when appropriate.

Using the phone to set interviews is especially important if you are in a small or mid-sized population area... a market not generally considered to be in the country's top 100 markets. It's easy to target your best prospects, and you just need to get into action. And, don't be deterred if your first call doesn't get you in the door. If it is a company you would really like to join, just call other executives in the organization.

“ We estimate that about 12% of all job seekers really use the phone effectively. Only 5% use it to get interviews. ”

Proven telephone guidelines that work

- Get used to making one call after another. Standing will give you a power assist.
- Do your phone work in batches. You need only one success each time to sustain your morale. To warm up, use some throw away calls to get yourself started.
- Make sure you know how you will be answering your phone. List questions you may be asked and write out the answers to the difficult ones.
- Prepare a 30 second commercial of your most important selling points. Rehearse it. Tape it and critique it.
- One of the best times to reach executives is before 7:30 a.m. or after 5:30 p.m. Use their directories to go direct.
- Smile while speaking over the phone and your voice will sound more pleasant. Be friendly, enthusiastic and positive. When you encounter objections, stay friendly and cooperative.



- Project a natural, confident tone—as you would when talking with a friend. Lower your voice. Speak slowly and don't give the impression you're rushed.
- Be prepared for rejection. This is a numbers game. You can easily make 15 calls an hour.
- Be sure your phone is answered properly. No clever answering machine messages!
- The secretary doesn't know who you are or your purpose. Focus on the fact that you only want advice and information. No one has a reason to shy away from you. When speaking with the secretary, get her name and use it. Be confident, positive and polite.
- When following up, do not discuss your business other than to say the executive is expecting your call. Or use your job title to get by the secretary.
- If you begin to generate interest, do not reveal too much of your story. Remember, you want to press only for an interview.

Approaches for opening your conversations

The “good news” approach

Here you build a positive relationship based on specific “good news.” Everyone likes to have good things happen and to hear from others who are enthusiastic about their good fortune. You can be sure that your message will immediately help to build a feeling of friendliness and warmth over the phone. This kind of approach can play an important role in winning extra interviews and getting people to help you.

The “third-party” approach

If you mention the name of a third party who knows the person you’re calling, it helps to establish rapport, but it’s also helpful even when they don’t know each other. The approach is simple. It might go like this: *“Bill Regan, a partner with Ernst & Young, thought I should get in touch with you. He felt your growth not only suggests a good investment but might indicate a good employment possibility. His insights prompted me to follow up with you personally. Do you have a moment?”*

The “specific reason” approach

Anyone who has experience in getting things done can consider using this “specific reason” approach. It’s straightforward and can go like this: *“Mr. Franklin, I have a ‘specific reason’ for calling you. I know the line of business you are in and something of the processes you use. During the past 15 months, I have been able to save a company like yours approximately \$850,000. I would like to share the details with you. Does your calendar permit a meeting later this week?”*

“Perhaps you can help me” approach

If a specific opening has already been filled, someone can help you meet a hiring official in another part of the company. If the individual you contact does not have a precise fit in his department, perhaps he could help you meet a person in another division. If you are told that the person you want to speak to is out, the best response is, *“Thanks. Perhaps you can help me. When is a good time to call back?”*

Tips for handling people who screen your call

- As previously mentioned, start by using the name of the person who is the “screener.” Once a person knows he or she has been identified, their manner will become more personal.
- When asked your name, identify yourself with an organization if possible. And, remember, the more expert the screener is, the more valuable that person is likely to be, especially as an ally in your future relationships with the firm.
- If you don’t get through on your first attempt, and you can’t get a suitable time to call back, suggest a time when you will call the screener back. In all cases, don’t leave messages.
- When you call back, use the screener’s name with the receptionist. Try this procedure: *“Since he (or she) is so hard to reach, would you do me a small favor? May I call back to see if he would be interested in speaking with me for a few minutes?”* If you must leave a message, leave one of potential benefit to the person you are calling.
- Consider reversing your attempt to speak with the decision maker by asking for an internal referral to another line manager in the area in which you might want to work for the company.
- If the screener refers you to HR, get the name of the person to whom you will be speaking. Call back later for that person or request an immediate transfer to the person you are looking for.
- After a few minutes of discussion, ask two or three penetrating questions about the company’s needs. When asked difficult questions, those who don’t know the answer are more inclined to refer you to an appropriate line manager.
- After a few days, you can also call back the screener and explain that while the personnel people were helpful, they were not really able to answer the questions you had in mind.
- You may encounter the question: *“Are you looking for a job?”* The answer might be: *“Yes, I am; do you think you could help me? Though I’m employed, a friend suggested your firm to me.”*
- Or, you may encounter the comment, *“We don’t have any openings at the present time.”* The response: *“I appreciate a person who is direct; however, I have such a strong interest in the firm, I really believe that with your recent growth, I could be a great asset. Will you allow me to tell you why?”*

Some openers for after you reach the right person

- Considering what is happening to the technology of our business, I know I can be very useful to you because of my training and experience in _____.
- From your annual report, I read that the company's expanding in the _____ area. That's an area where I could help, and I'd like to schedule an appointment.
- My friend _____ suggested that I make a point of contacting you. You may recall from my letter that I have experience in _____ that might be of help to you.
- With my background in _____ and the recent news about _____, I thought it would be a good idea to get in touch with you. Could you suggest a convenient time? Do you have 20 minutes before you get started some morning next week?
- Mr. _____, your company has a tremendous reputation for marketing leading products. I'd like very much to visit with you to explain how I could contribute to that reputation through my work in _____. Do you have a half hour free this Tuesday?

How you can turn rejection into an interview

Less than 1% of all job hunters ever follow up a rejection letter. Follow-up requires a special tenacity, a certain "thickness of skin," and an ability to accept rejection as a challenge. A person who has arrived at the perfect company and met with rejection should be prepared to do the following:

Find out all about the firm from every source available; call, write, visit, speak to as many people as necessary; go through third-party channels; and depart from conventional approaches. Here are three approaches that might fit your circumstance.

"Acting puzzled & helpless"

This does not call for much acting ability for many of us, because it is the way we feel when we receive those politely worded notes that give us the bad news that our services are not required. We are puzzled because we cannot understand how they can't recognize our qualities, and we are helpless to do much about it.

One way to follow up is to call and thank the sender of the letter for their reply. Then try to engage them in a frank discussion as to your failure to understand what is going on. The usual explanation is that there are no vacancies available at the present time.

However, you must not let this reply end the conversation. You must try to keep it going. What almost everyone in a job search needs is a preliminary, non-obligatory talk with a person who is qualified to explain what the company does and how it goes about meeting its employment needs.

This is what you should ask for, because as a puzzled and helpless person, you do not know what to do next! Here is how this might work.

"Mr. Jones, I got your letter this morning and it tells me that you are going to keep my resume on file against further openings. I'm a bit puzzled at that because I only sent a short note to the company suggesting a meeting to talk about what I might be able to do for you."

This must be delivered without a trace of sarcasm because that could kill your relationship. Then, keep quiet and see what the answer may be. Silence is powerful. Carrying on from here, find out how the organization goes about recruiting. People enjoy giving advice, especially when sincerely asked by someone who really needs it.

For example, you might ask... *does the company ever employ people with my disciplines and experience? Do they advertise jobs, or do they place people in the company from other sources? If so, which recruiters do they use?*

These questions are asked because you do not know the answers, not because you are trying to be “smart.” There is still enough warm feeling in even the most harassed executive for you to get some very useful information from them.

What you are seeking is specific information, such as the names of heads of departments, plans for expansion, ideas for approaching personalities, the real “stuff” that the company is made of. With that information you can then approach someone else or keep it on file for follow-up next month.

“I need your understanding”

This approach is straightforward. It’s about asking some direct questions.

Was it correct to send my letter to the president in the first place? Does the Personnel Department really handle recruitment at my level and in my discipline? It is important for me to know this, because I may well have approached the company incorrectly.

How should I go about reaching the right decision maker?

A young person should request information or assistance in reaching the right person by talking with lower levels of management. Executives should get into the upper levels by asking who handles specific responsibilities. Here’s another example:

Mary, I really need your help and I can sense that you would like to help me if you could. But what I must find out is this: how do I get to talk to Harry Smith for a few minutes at a time when he can listen to me or arrange to meet me? Charm is the watchword. Patience in building relationships, careful listening and projecting a positive attitude will all help create a warm response.

“Acting very assertive”

Mary, I was surprised to learn this morning that you had sent my letter addressed to Mr. Jones to your Personnel Department! What happened? My note simply suggested a meeting with Mr. Jones. By now it may be all over the company that I am looking for a job!

This could sound too strong if not said with a smile! If you don’t get the response you need, go on. For example... *What we ought to do is this: I need your help to recover the letter from Personnel and have Mr. Jones look at it himself. Obviously, he is the man I must see. Can we do something about that?*

Should I write to him again and mention what has happened? Perhaps I could send you a copy with a note to give it to him? Another way of using this style is to say... I must speak to Mr. Jones right away, Mary. This is serious. Someone has sent a confidential letter that I addressed to him to other people in your organization and that worries me very much. This frequently makes the breakthrough, so be ready with your telephone script for him or her.

Contrary to popular belief, anyone can learn to be powerful on the phone! So, use the phone to set interviews!

*“A little more persistence, a little more effort,
in what seems like hopeless failure may turn
to glorious success.”* — Albert Hubbard

*“Success seems to be largely a matter of
hanging on after others have let go.”* — William Feather



#15 RECAP

Add power to your marketing by using the phone

Most people never take full advantage of what the phone can mean for them.

Setting interviews is a lot easier than you think. This is especially important for people in small or mid-sized population areas... markets not generally considered to be in the top 100 markets in the United States.

Quick action steps for using the phone

Choose the principles you feel most comfortable with and role play them out loud. Make brief notations on small index cards to use as prompts when on the phone. If the wording you try doesn't work, compose something different for next time.