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Pick up the Phone and Get Yourself Hired

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Many of us in the financial community find talking on the telephone to be a difficult task because, among other reasons, we accomplish most of our work in written form. When we present our work to a boss or our peers, it usually is in a face-to-face environment where we set the agenda. In other words, we know the topics and the typical questions that will be asked, and we are prepared for them.

It is for this reason that telephone interviews can be challenging for us. If you think about the communications aspects of a telephone interview, there are several difficulties to overcome. The most important one is that no matter how effectively you feel you are communicating, you receive no visual feedback during a phone conversation. Also, many of the phones in use today mimic talking into a CB radio. If one person is talking, the other person can't and this impedes the natural flow of communication. This is especially true if you are on a speaker or cellular phone.

Generally, I would recommend trying to get out of having the interview over the phone. Make up whatever excuses you can and try to get an "in-person" appointment. However, if you get stuck with a phone interview, here are a few tips to improve your hiring chances:

- *Visualize the person on the other end of the phone.* Use your imagination and draw a mental picture of the person receiving the information.
- *Use a mirror so you can see your own expressions while you are talking.* Don't be afraid to use hand gestures and be animated. Even though the person on the other end of the phone can't see you, the feeling will come through.
- *Stand up.* It is amazing how much more dynamic you will sound if you stand up and walk around the room.

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We don't live in a perfect world, so you often have to make the best of a bad situation and take a phone interview. Practice the techniques conveyed above during all of your telephone communications, not only the ones that could affect your career. In the end, you will find out that like most things in life, practice makes perfect. ●