Dialing for Dollars: Using the Phone in Your Job Search
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★Introduction:

WHY USE THE SCARY PHONE? WHY NOT COMFY EMAIL???

Who do you know the most about—someone you’ve only emailed with, someone you’ve chatted with on the phone, or someone you’ve met in person?

Going door to door without an appointment is not all that efficient, and may make you look desperate, so therefore the phone becomes one of the most efficient and effective ways of adding personality to your candidacy. The sooner you can add the rich information conveyed by your voice and your manner of speaking to your application, the more likely it is that you’ll be able to get an interview.

This presentation emphasizes the use of old technology to get up-to-the-minute information on a company, influence decision-makers, get interviews, and follow up. Surfing around on the web, uploading resumes, and sending emails can only get you so far. Take your job search to the next level by making a more human connection with people in the know. The telephone is the simplest way to do it, if you use it effectively. And of course, most companies use phone interviews as a critical first step in screening candidates, so it pays to learn how to convey your fabulous personality through the phone so that you can make to the in-person interviews. This presentation covers exploratory and follow-up calls, voicemail, and telephone interviews, as well as productivity.

★ I. Quick Tips

1. Reach out and touch someone. Search for and target companies that are of interest to you, rather than merely chase job postings. Use the internet and your network to find a contact name. Call that person, exchange information, and start building a relationship. It ain’t gonna happen overnight, but sooner or later, you will be in the right place at the right time.

2. Don’t just make a deposit to the resume bank. When pursuing an ad, submit your resume online, but don’t stop there. Find a real person inside the company to advise you. Use LinkedIn to search people at the company, locating one or more appropriate people (by job title) to call. Then use Google or other resources to locate the company phone number.

3. The internet is a better RESEARCH TOOL than it is a communication tool. If you find a contact on LinkedIn, great, don’t use LinkedIn as your primary mode of communication. Instead, call the company and ask to speak to the person directly. Only if you can’t get through by phone should you request a LinkedIn intro.

4. Establish rapport and mutual interest with a friendly tone and a bit of name dropping. If you have a contact, association, college, or former employer in common, let them know asap.

5. Make my day. Be pleasant and perky. In your mind, right before the call, fast forward to the end of this process, the day they call to offer you the job. Add that enthusiasm to your voice and make all of your interactions delightful and memorable – realize that you can make a person’s day with the right attitude on the phone.
6. **Prep your Script** (more on this later) out a few lines of your call before you dial. Plan to ask some open-ended questions as early in the call as possible to get a positive response and to maintain the flow of the conversation. Open ended questions start with who, what, where, when, why, or how.

7. **Be Brief. Use a stopwatch.** Speak clearly and concisely, never for more than 30 seconds without checking back in with your listener. Give verbal feedback to show you understand or appreciate what they are saying, but don’t interrupt until they are done speaking.

8. **Warm up your pipes and brain cells** and refine your calling approach by doing some quick practice calls with friends, then a recruiter or two, your “C” list, then move on to your “A” and “B” list targets.

9. **Leave a voicemail every other time** you call the same contact. So call twice a week at different times, but leave a message only once a week. Make it perky and professional.

🌟 II. Create Your Script

ALWAYS prepare and rehearse your lines before you dial. Key considerations:

- Plan to ask some open-ended questions as early in the call as possible to get a positive response and to maintain the flow of the conversation.

- **If the rapport is good,** ask if you might meet for a quick coffee to discuss the industry or the company further.

- **If they don’t seem to know how to help you,** ask who else they would recommend you contact, or for their advice on how to best be considered for a position.

- **Build on the info you gain during the call.** Use the information they give you to call and meet others face-to-face as well.

- **Give positive feedback throughout the call.** Be upbeat and positive — perky, perky, perky!!!

**A possible script for reaching out to someone you know:**

“As you know, Jan, I am in the market for a new opportunity, and have decided to focus my job search on the “name the” industry. I think this is an area that I can bring great skills and enthusiasm. And of course with your great background / network, I thought of you. If you were getting started in the “name the” industry, who would you talk to? What other steps might you take?”

**Script for reaching out to a new contact – referred**

“Hi Sally, my name is John Doe. Our mutual colleague Mary Smith suggested I call you. Mary Smith said you would be a great resource for my quest to break into the “name the” industry – would you have 5 minutes right now to give me a bit of advice or should I call at another time?”

**Script for a follow-up to resume submission**

You sent a resume to this company a few days ago. You want to know the status of your application and set up an interview.

If they indicated they did, say, ‘thanks so much, what a relief. Can you give me any initial feedback on my qualifications, or say more about your hiring process at the moment?”

Thank you so much, I really appreciate your taking the time to look that up for me, and look forward to hearing more from you!

Be clear and concise with your request “Hey Sally Sue, I just wanted to follow up with you to be sure that that resume and cover letter I sent to you on Thursday made it to you safely. My email / internet has been acting up and I just wanted to be sure you received it. You know how email is...”
Have a Plan for GATEKEEPERS – Ugh, I hate that word. That and HEADHUNTERS. You know who I’m talking about – the front desk admin, the executive assistant, the HR coordinator. Whoever it is, speak warmly to them, but don’t give them an excuse not to put you through.

“Hi Ms. Gatekeeper, my name is Sally Sue, calling for Mary Smith.”
Gatekeeper: “May I tell her what this is regarding?”
You: “It’s just a quick follow up to an earlier communication.”
Gatekeeper: “Can you tell me what this is regarding?”
You: “Oh I’m sorry, I’m not at liberty to say. Is Mary available or will you be putting me through to voicemail?”

LEVERAGING A HIGHER POWER
Another approach to getting past the gatekeeper and for quickly building rapport with your target is mentioning Associations and/or Articles / Trade Publications that relate to your target.

Example:
“Hi Mr. Gatekeeper, my name is Joe Schmoe calling for Sam Smith.”
Gatekeeper: “Can I tell him what this call is regarding?”
You: “Of course. It’s regarding the Colorado Renewable Energy Society”
Gatekeeper: “Okay! Hold on one moment, please...”

Using recent press articles to get past the Gatekeeper
Gatekeeper: “Can I tell him what this is regarding?”
You: “Oh yes – It’s regarding the new wind farm project in Erie”

If all else fails, throw yourself on the mercy of the gatekeeper and ask “If you were hoping to be seen as a strong candidate by XYZ company, what steps would you take?”

III. Voicemail
They Never Ever Ever EVER Answer the Phone
If you don’t get an answer the first time you call that week, don’t leave a message and try again a day or two later. If you get voicemail the second time, leave a message.

Messages should not be so brief that they’re creepy or mysterious, nor should they be not long, whiny, or rambling, or with any discernable negativity. Think PERKY.

“Hi Jane, this is Simone Vowel (said deliberately). My number is 303-424-1700 (said slowly, not like you’re so proud that you can rattle it off in one second).

I am calling to follow up my email - I would love get your feedback on it.

Hope your day is going well. Again, my name is Simone Vowel, and the number 303-424-1700. I know you’re busy, so I’ll follow up with you in a few days.”

On a second call to the same person, you might add in your email address too. Say “In case it’s easier for you to reach out via email, my email address is Simone Dot Vowel at comcast dot net. Spelled out that’s s-i-m-o-n-e-period - v-o-w-e-l- at comcast dot net.

NEVER act as if you’re annoyed that they’re not calling you back. No one owes you a return phone call.
IV. Productivity

Line ‘Em Up, Knock ‘Em Down

Have a block of 10+ people you want to call per “session.” Try to smile and dial for about an hour, then take a break (have a cup of tea away from phone and computer, go for a quick walk around the block and get air into your lungs, and of course, check your skin to detect early signs of spontaneously combustion caused by mean people on the phone.)

Set Daily Goals

Try to set up two meetings during each day of phone outreach. Or at least hear the word no several dozen times.

Develop a Pipeline of Opportunity (this was covered in the LEADS workshop but here’s a quick reminder) Start with people you know: relatives, friends, professional contacts, Business directories, including the Yellow Pages, can be highly efficient and if you warm it up with some LinkedIn Research, highly effective.

Mix It Up – Do The Unexpected

- To get to the more senior decision makers, try ringing at 7:00 a.m., or 5:30 or 6 pm.
- Learn to ask for something else when you hear no. You can avoid no by asking open ended questions rather than y/n questions.
- If someone is really crappy with you on the phone, amaze them with graciousness, warmth, and compassion. Think “what if they just lost a loved one, or something like that?” And say, “Gosh, I think I must have caught you at a bad time, I’m so sorry. I hope your day gets better soon. Should I check back in a week or perhaps talk with someone else?”
- Hit *67 before you call out from a land line to block caller ID, but know that some people don’t take blocked calls, so mix it up.

Keep A Log Of Your Calls To The Company

Try to contact different folks inside the company, the bigger the company, the more folks you should contact. Here’s a template you can use to keep track.

COMPANY ________________________________ ________________________________

Contact #1: ______________________________ Title: ______________________________
Phone: __________________ (direct line?) Email: ______________________________

Contact #2: ______________________________ Title: ______________________________
Phone: __________________ (direct line?) Email: ______________________________

Contact #3: ______________________________ Title: ______________________________
Phone: __________________ (direct line?) Email: ______________________________

Call Dates & Notes: VM = Voicemail TC Conversation Follow up Date:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

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V. Phone Interviewing

This is a critical first step taken by most companies these days. Make it count! Here are some tips for interviewing well over the phone:

SOUND CHECK

- **Get thee to a land line in a sound proof booth for this important call.** Mobile phones have delays, static, and unceremonious dumps. As a recruiter, I have to say candidly that I tend to like a candidate a lot less when the call is arduous due to sound quality issues. Many others are cranky like me too. And make sure the TV, stereo, kids, dogs and cats, and anything else that make noises are locked up in a sound-proof booth somewhere. If the doorbell rings, ignore it. If the smoke alarm goes off, ignore it (kidding).

- **Take it seriously, but smile.** Approach a phone interview with the etiquette as an in person interview. **And smile** as you answer questions, so that you come across as friendly and enthusiastic.

- **Stand** – your voice will be more powerful if you’re not slumped over

- **Speak deliberately, like you’re being interviewed for posterity.** Try to match your interviewer’s pace. Try not to um or ahh or uhhhh. No need to fill all the space with sounds.

- **Of course,** don’t smoke, chew gum, or go to the bathroom. But do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth. I’m so glad I didn’t need to mention this.

ETIQUETTE

- **Make an appointment.** If they call out of the blue and want to screen you on the spot, say “I wish I could, but I’m walking into a meeting right now. Can we try for about an hour? At what number would you like me to call you?”

- **Don’t fuss** if they don’t call on time. They often don’t. If they call late and apologize, let them know how much time you have.

- **Don’t interrupt** the interviewer. Listen fully. Give feedback “That’s an excellent question!”

CONTENT OF THE CALL

- **Keep your interview agenda handy.** Keep a sheet with names and job titles of your interviewer, questions you want to ask and points you’d like to make during the interview. And of course, have a copy of your resume on hand.

- **Give and Take.** Take turns answering questions and asking your own related question. Just as with a live interview, you need to know what the company truly needs in order to do a good job of interviewing.

- **Use the person’s name from time to time** (not too much), if you feel their attention waning, or if you want to emphasize a point.

- **Repeat their question** to you if necessary to clarify / give yourself time to answer correctly.

- **Don’t rush your answer** - it’s perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts. Say, Hmm, that’s an interesting question, let me think for a second.

- **Give short, well-constructed answers** and check in to make sure you’ve answered to their satisfaction.

- **Advance to the next round.** After you thank the interviewer, ask when it might be possible to meet in person.

After the Phone Interview:

- Make a few notes about what you were asked and how you answered.
• Remember to say "thank you." Follow with a thank you note which reiterates your interest in the job.
• Follow up follow up follow up once a week until they give a definitive answer.

For Your Reading Pleasure

*Telephone Sales for Dummies; Zeller, Dirk
*Take the Cold out of Cold Calling: Web Search Secrets for the Inside Info; Richter, Sam
*Winning Telephone Tips: 30 Fast and Profitable Tips for Making the Best Use of your Phone; Timm, Paul
*Heat up your Cold Calls: How to Make Prospects Listen, Respond and Buy; Walther, George
*A Good Talk: The Story and Skill of Conversation; Menaker, Daniel
*Speak to Influence: How to Unlock the Hidden Power of Your Voice; Berkley, Susan

Stay perky, focused, and positive.
Create job search magic!