

Telephone Tips and Techniques



STATE OF WISCONSIN



Department of Workforce Development

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Telephone Tips and Techniques

to help you conduct an efficient, productive job search.

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If you are like many job hunters, you may feel intimidated when faced with using the telephone. “Telephone terror” can strike even the most outgoing person.

By learning to use the telephone to your advantage, you will be able to conduct more efficient, productive and inexpensive job searches.

This booklet offers suggestions on how to properly use the telephone for these job search-related purposes:

- ➔ Respond to new job listings;
- ➔ Make contact with friends, relatives, acquaintances and anyone else who may have useful information for you about finding a job;
- ➔ Gather “inside” information about companies and employers for whom you may want to work
- ➔ Set up informational (or research) interviews
- ➔ Make appointments for meetings and interviews
- ➔ Follow up after sending a cover letter and resume or after an interview





General tips for using your phone



Know what you are going to say before you make the call. Be prepared for different responses and plan your answers. Write out some sample scripts and practice them with a friend.



Schedule calls for a certain time of day. Establish a routine so you don't procrastinate.



Set a daily and weekly goal for the number of calls to make. The more calls you make, the more job opportunities you will make for yourself.



Take a break after several calls. You are doing something difficult!



Be prepared to take notes. Have a pen and paper handy.



Keep a copy of your resume by the phone when you make your calls. It will help you think of your skills and positive attributes.



Be courteous and sensitive to the person on the other end. Introduce yourself and speak in a pleasant, understandable manner. If the person you are talking with sounds rushed, ask if there is a time you can call back that is more convenient. Then be sure to follow up on the call.



Sound confident and professional. Use language that demonstrates your enthusiasm and abilities.



Keep background noise to a minimum. Radios, televisions, barking dogs and crying children are distracting to the person you are speaking to and yourself.



Unless you are responding to a newspaper ad or following up on a previous contact, most experts recommend you do not state explicitly that you are looking for a job. Call to get information, speak with the hiring authority in the department that interests you, and sell your value to the company even if there is not a specific job available.



Practice before you make your calls. This may sound silly, but keep a mirror in front of you when you talk on the phone. You will pay more attention to your image, smile more and this will carry into your voice.



Start your calling with the company/employer you are least interested in. Your telephone techniques will get better with practice, so polish your skills before you call your best employment prospects. Modify your technique if you are not getting the results you expect. Keep trying!



Leave a professional, friendly message on your answering machine. Expect that employers will be calling you!



Be prepared for "no's" and don't take them personally. You will meet them along the way in your job search — your objective is to turn a "no" into a "yes."

Responding to Announced Job Openings

State your purpose directly when you are calling in response to a new job listing. Because you are replying to an announced opening, there is no need to skirt around the fact that you are looking for a job.

Call as quickly as you can in response to a new job listing. Have a calendar handy and be ready to set a time and date for meeting the employer, either to fill out an application or for an interview.

Employers may use the telephone to prescreen applicants. Be prepared to answer briefly any questions that will get you the interview, but don't let your conversation *be* the interview. Set up a face-to-face meeting time and keep that appointment.



What you should do:

Pause now. The person on the other end will probably make a statement, ask a question or transfer the call. If you are transferred, restate your name and the purpose of your call to the person who answers.

Then go on:



Set a date to meet with the employer. Know where to go, who you will see and the exact time you need to be there.

End your conversation with something like this:



What you should say:

"Hello. My name is Andy Applicant. I'm calling in response to the job opening I saw on-line for a sales representative position with your company."

"I would like to arrange an interview for this position."

"Thank you. I look forward to meeting you."



Building your job search network

Many job openings are never advertised online or in a newspaper. As a job seeker, you have to discover these positions by asking a lot of questions. Friends, relatives and acquaintances are valuable “networking” resources

for career information, job leads, and help in your employment search. Finding the right job also takes research to locate companies/employers in your targeted career field and identify who you need to speak with.

What better way to track down information and job leads than using your phone? You can make dozens of calls in a short period of time and find out who might be hiring, which companies in your community need employees with your skills, to gather background information about employers, or to set a meeting time with a friend to critique your resume and practice interviewing.



What you should say:

“Let me know if you hear about any job openings.”

“Could you arrange for me to talk to your employer?”

“Would you take a few copies of my resume and give them to people who might be interested?”

Do you know anyone who works at ... ?”

- “What is his/her name?”
- “May I say you recommended that I talk with him/her?”
- “Who makes the hiring decision for ... positions?”

“What do you see as my primary skills?”

“I need to sharpen my interviewing skills. Would you be willing to do a practice interview with me?”

“Have you heard of any companies that are expanding in this area?”

“What companies produce electronic parts in this area?”

“Who is the head of your engineering department?”

“Thanks for all of the help you’ve given me during my job search. I found a job I really like.”

What you should do:



Make a list of people that may be able to help you in your job search. Add to your list as you talk to friends and relatives and get names of other possible contacts.



The more calls you make, the more job opportunities you will learn about!



Use internet searches or public library resources to identify companies in your targeted field. Call those companies to get names of people and information that can help you in your job search.

Consider an informational (or research) interview

Informational — or research — interviews are efforts you conduct to get information about a specific field of work or about a certain employer. This is most often done in the preliminary stage of your job search.

You set up the interview and ask the questions. You are not asking for a job interview when you set up an information interview — you, gathering information, making connections and narrowing your focus.

Informational interviews are especially useful if you are looking into a different career field. Speaking with people in professions you are considering can give you valuable insight into current trends and what the day-to-day job is like. You might also learn about other options you did not know existed.

There are several advantages gained from informational interviewing:

- You may meet with potential employers when you are in control of the discussion.

- You become a better job candidate because you have done your homework.
- You get first-hand information that isn't dated.
- You build your confidence for job interviews.

The first step is to identify a career field you are interested in and research which companies/employers may be able to give you useful information. Then you need to find out who has the knowledge you want. This may or may not be the person who makes hiring decisions.

You can dial the company's main line and ask for the name and number of the head of the department, or the person with the job you are targeting.

Place a call to the person's direct number and ask if he/she is free to talk for a few minutes. Explain that you are researching career options and want to talk to professionals in your targeted field to find out what the jobs are actually like.

Remember: *All* people are significant to your goal of finding the job you want. Even if you don't reach the person you had in mind, treat whomever answers the phone with courtesy and respect — a secretary may be the person who gets you the interview.

If you can schedule an informational interview, get your questions ready! For ideas on questions to ask, refer to "Informational Interviewing" (DETJ-9407-P).

Even if you cannot arrange a meeting, always send a thank you note for any help you received.



JobCenterOfWisconsin.com can simplify your résumé tasks. It lets you enter information, copy-and-paste from an existing résumé, save multiple versions of a résumé, and update your résumé information.

To start, create a Job Seeker Profile on-line. This includes a unique User Name and Password combination, and registering to use JobCenterOfWisconsin.com. Post a résumé or job application, and receive email alerts related to your search. Contact your nearest Wisconsin Job Center for details.

Example: Arranging an Informational Interview

Julie Jobseeker wants to change careers and has gone back to school to complete her degree in accounting. Now that she is nearly done with her degree, she wants to explore different possibilities in the field to find a job that really interests her.

In her research she finds that the XYZ Company has a progressive accounting department. She calls the main line and asks for the name, title and telephone number of the head of the accounting department. She learns that she needs to speak with Barbara Budget.

What you should say:

"Ms. BUDGET'S OFFICE."

"Hello. My name is Julie Jobseeker. May I speak with Ms. Budget?"

"I'M SORRY, SHE'S OUT OF THE OFFICE. MAY I TAKE A MESSAGE?"

"No, thank you. Could you tell me when a good time would be to reach her?"

"SHE'LL BE IN TOMORROW MORNING."

"Thank you, I will call back then."

"Hello, Ms. Budget. My name is Julie Jobseeker. Is this a good time for you to talk with me for a few minutes?"

"I will be completing an accounting degree this spring and want to learn more about options in the accounting field. I was given your name by Ivan Informed and know you are an expert in all areas of accounting.

"I am interested in meeting with you to discuss ways I can use my skills and what possibilities you see in this field."

What you should do:

← Julie dials her direct number and Ms. Budget's office assistant answers.

← Be sure to return the call when you say you will! You can leave a message, but you must be available to receive a call. You keep the ball in your court when you do the calling.

← Or, Julie reaches Ms. Budget on the first try.

← If not, find out when a convenient time would be and call back.

continued ...

What you should do (continued):

Listen carefully. Have a pen and paper handy to write down names and phone numbers.



Be courteous and thank the person for their time:



What you should say:

“WELL, JULIE, I’LL BE LEAVING ON VACATION FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS, BUT I WILL GIVE YOU THE NAME OF THE SUPERVISOR FOR ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE. HE HAS WORKED HERE FOR 10 YEARS AND COULD GIVE YOU SOME GOOD INSIGHT. HIS NAME IS FRANK FINANCE. WHY DON’T YOU GIVE HIM A CALL AND ARRANGE A TIME TO MEET?”

“May I tell Mr. Finance you gave me his name?”

“PLEASE DO. HIS NUMBER IS 555-6543.”

“Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to speaking with Mr. Finance. Good-bye.”

Landing the Job Interview

Your telephone can be useful in generating interviews, especially when trying for unadvertised positions or to create your own job. Your task: Convince the employer that you have a clear value to offer the company, without revealing that you are looking for a job. This may sound difficult, but with some persistence, you may find or create your ideal job.

This method of getting job interviews requires that you do research before you begin your calling. When you have a job target in mind, identify which companies employ people with your skills. Compile a list of prospects you can call. The more calls you make, the more interviews you will get!

Find out who makes the hiring decisions. To do this, place a call to a company’s main telephone number. Ask for the person you need to speak to by job title and department (i.e. manager of purchasing, supervisor of the machine shop, or vice president of engineering). Write down the correct spelling of the individual’s name, title, and direct telephone number. If you are

uncertain whom to speak with, ask for the full name, title and direct telephone of the person who makes hiring decisions for the department or position you are interested in. Then make a second call to the person with hiring authority.

Call until you reach the person who makes hiring decisions. Do not leave a message, or you will be left waiting for the phone to ring. When you get through, communicate that you have something of value to offer him/her. State that you want to meet and discuss what you can specifically do to benefit the company. Within the first minute of the conversation, say something about yourself you think is directly related to the needs of that employer. To establish credibility, use the name of a person, organization, product, system, etc., that will be familiar to the employer.

If the employer agrees to meet with you, set a date, time and place.

Bring a copy of your resume, a list of references, letters of recommendation, samples of your work and a list of questions to ask employers at this meeting. Emphasize how your skills, abilities and accomplishments would make you an excellent employee.

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Example: Landing the Job Interview

Wendy Wantajob is looking for a challenging position in the insurance industry. She has done research at the library and talked to friends and acquaintances in her community to identify which companies may have interesting career opportunities for her.

Although none of the companies Wendy has researched have openings listed in the newspaper, Wendy has started a calling campaign to set up interviews for employment possibilities. Wendy dials the main line of a company she wants to obtain an interview with.

What you should say:

"THANK YOU FOR CALLING ABC INSURANCE COMPANY. HOW MAY I HELP YOU?"

"Hello. My name is Wendy Wantajob. Could I please have the name, title and direct number of the person responsible for hiring claims processors?"

"YES, THAT WOULD BE PAULA PREMIUM, CLAIMS PROCESSING SUPERVISOR, AT 555-4567, EXTENSION 890."

"Thank you."

.....

"Hello, Ms. Premium. My name is Wendy Wantajob. I'm very interested in your company. I have five years experience in insurance claim processing with the CDE Company. In my most recent position I was responsible for data entry, word processing using Microsoft Word 6.0, alpha-numeric filing and handling telephone inquiries. I'm very dependable and an organized self-starter. When would be a good time to meet to further discuss my qualifications?"

"WELL, WENDY, OUR COMPANY IS LOOKING FOR AN EXPERIENCED CLAIMS PROCESSOR. COULD YOU COME IN NEXT WEDNESDAY AT 11 TO DISCUSS THE POSITION AND YOUR QUALIFICATIONS?"

"Yes, I'd be pleased to meet with you next Wednesday."

"JUST CHECK IN WITH THE RECEPTIONIST AT THE FRONT DESK. SHE'LL LET ME KNOW YOU'RE HERE. I LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU."

"Thank you for your time, Ms. Premium. I'll see you next week."

What you should do:



Hang up and redial the direct number.



If the employer agrees to meet with you, set a date, time and place.



Listen carefully. Write down the details of what to do, where, when.

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Landing the Job Interview: Handling objections gracefully

You undoubtedly will meet with objections — the employer may cut you off and say, “We’re not hiring right now,” or, “I’m sorry, but we’ve had budget cuts and can’t afford to add any staff.”

Respond to these objections, but don’t stop at the first no. Most people will stop when they hear a no, thank the employer for his/her time and hang up. Now is when you need to sell your abilities.

Acknowledge the objection, but restate how your experience and enthusiasm would benefit the company and ask again for a meeting.

If you are unable to set up a meeting, ask if you may send a resume. Most employers will agree to this. Include a cover letter that details the specific value you would bring to that employer.

Within a week of sending your resume, call to confirm that the employer has received it. Repeat that your abilities would benefit the employer and ask again for a meeting.

*For more interviewing suggestions, read
“Keys to Successful Interviewing” (DETJ-6951-P).*

Ways to Deal with Obstacles

In your job search, you will encounter obstacles:

- A secretary may keep you from getting through to the person with whom you want to speak.
- An employer may be busy and not have time for your call.
- You may reach the person you are targeting, have a positive discussion, and then find out the company is laying off employees.
- You may leave a message and never receive a return call.

When you are hindered from reaching your goals, use your telephone techniques to bypass some of these stumbling blocks.

Before you begin your calling, make a list of objections you may meet in your job search campaign. Think about how you will respond to these objections, write down your answers, and keep that sheet of paper by the phone when you are making your calls.



Example: Ways to Deal with Obstacles

Wendy Wantajob has reached Paula Premium, asked to meet to discuss job opportunities, and now meets an objection. This is how Wendy deals with being turned down.

What you should say:

"I'M SORRY. WE HAVE NO OPENINGS RIGHT NOW."

"I understand you have no openings right now. However, my claims processing experience and my desire to work for ABC Company would make me an excellent candidate for any future opening. Could we meet to discuss future opportunities?"

"WE HAVE NO OPENINGS AND ARE NOT ANTICIPATING ANY IN THE NEAR FUTURE, SO A MEETING AT THIS TIME IS INAPPROPRIATE."

"I understand. May I send you a copy of my resume?"

"CERTAINLY."

"Thank you very much for your time, Ms. Premium."

What you should do:



You undoubtedly will meet with objections — but don't stop at the first no.



Your resume makes your name known, and sending it to the employer is a positive step.



Example: Dealing with Obstacles

In her job search campaign, Wendy Wantajob is confronted with several types of obstacles. She has thought through her responses to possible objections and is able to respond confidently to potential employers.

What you should do:

Asking for specifics reinforces your interest in the company, and may provide important information.



Positively reinforce your skills in the way they match employer needs.



Even when an employer is making cutbacks, it may be possible to arrange for an informational interview.



What you should say:

“Would it be possible to meet next week?”

“I DON’T THINK YOUR QUALIFICATIONS ARE A MATCH FOR US.”

“I see. What qualifications are you looking for?”

“WE NEED SOMEONE WITH EXPERIENCE USING THE PQR DATABASE SYSTEM.”

“I can understand your concern. However, I have worked with three other systems which I believe are similar to yours and I am confident that I am a quick learner. If you are available to meet next week, I will review manuals for this system and know I will be able to learn the system in a short time.”



ANOTHER EXAMPLE

“I’d like to meet to discuss my qualifications further.”

“WELL, WE’RE CUTTING BACK STAFF RIGHT NOW AND DON’T THINK WE ARE LOOKING TO HIRE ANYONE AT THIS TIME.”

“I understand. I wasn’t aware of the cutbacks. However, I know your company has a strong future and I know I could make a good contribution. Perhaps we could meet to consider long-term possibilities.”

Follow-up: After the interview

After an interview, it is a good idea to call and speak to the person who interviewed you. Use good judgment in deciding when to place your follow-up call. It is reasonable to call within 5-10 working days after the

interview if a specific date for a hiring decision was not established at the interview.

When you reach the person who interviewed you:

- Restate your interest in the position
- Answer any questions the interviewer may have about your qualifications
- Check on the status of the position
- Add information on qualifications overlooked in the interview

Example: Follow-up after the interview

Carl Candidate had a job interview with Paul Personnel 10 days ago. Carl has not heard from Mr. Personnel regarding the hiring decision and decides to call to ask if a decision has been made.

.....

What you should say:

"Hello, Mr. Personnel. This is Carl Candidate. I met with you on Monday, January 2 to interview for the maintenance mechanic position. I am still very interested in the position and would like to know if you have made a decision yet."

.....

IF SOMEONE ELSE HAS BEEN HIRED

"Thank you very much for your time. If you have any future openings, I would like very much to be considered."

.....

IF NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN MADE

"I would like you to know that I am still very interested in the position. Do you know when you might make a decision?"

"WE SHOULD BE MAKING AN OFFER BY NEXT TUESDAY."

"Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Personnel. I will contact you again at that time if I haven't heard from you."

What you should do:

← Remind the employer of your name and interest in the position available.

← Remain courteous, and leave a positive impression for the future.

← Solicit feedback about the decision date to accommodate your planning.

← Set an expectation for your follow up. Plan to fulfill any promises made.

Follow-up: After sending your resume

Place a follow-up phone call within a week to 10 days after sending your resume to an employer.

When you reach the person who makes hiring decisions:

- Verify that your resume was received and ask if the employer has any questions about your qualifications
- Gather information about what happens next in that company's hiring procedures.

Example: Follow-up after sending your resume

Rodney Readytowork sent a resume one week ago in response to an advertisement in the newspaper for a computer programmer.



What you should do:

Hang up and re-dial the direct number.



Remind the employer of the opening, where it was listed, and the actions you have taken to date.



Reiterate your interest in the position, and solicit feedback about the present stage of the company's hiring process.



What you should say:

"Hello. May I please have the name, title and phone number of the person responsible for hiring computer programmers?"

"YES, THAT IS EMMA EMPLOYER AT 555-6543."



"Hello, Ms. Employer. My name is Rodney Readytowork. I sent you my resume one week ago for the computer programmer position advertised in the Milwaukee Post. I wanted to make sure you received my resume and wondered if you had any questions about my qualifications."

"I RECEIVED 50 RESUMES FOR THAT POSITION AND HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO READ THEM."

"I see. I am very interested in the programmer position. I have three years of experience and a degree in Computer Science. I believe I am well qualified for your computer programmer position. Can you tell me what time frame you're looking at in your hiring process?"

Smartphones: Power in your pocket

A wide majority of smartphone owners use their devices in the job search. They provide a wealth of communication power with apps for conducting job searches, telephone communication, email and text capacity, and internet access rolled into one.

Increasing numbers of agencies, corporations, governmental units and not-for-profits are embracing the emerging digital media that deliver to smartphones.

They are engaged in intense competition with other companies for customers — and talent. Here are suggestions for using smartphones in the job search:

- Expand your network. Ask if you can “friend” or connect to someone important via Facebook or LinkedIn, or follow on Twitter.
- Sign up for email alerts, and use the settings on your mobile device to receive these messages about new job opportunities.
- Take advantage of the QR code reading capabilities on your phone to learn about a company’s brand management.
- Video chat technologies such as Skype or Apple’s FaceTime might be used instead of a face-to-face interview. Practice and prepare.
- Forward calls to your mobile device when you are in an active job search to remain in touch.



QR Codes

QR (or “Quick Response”) code is a trademark name for the symbol at left. Smartphones often have apps which can “read” such a tag, and return information to the phone from internet sources. This may be in the form of a business web page, a YouTube video, business card contact information, and a variety of other outputs.

Some mobile devices have QR code readers built-in, and there are a number of free and paid apps available to read the code information.



Your Wisconsin Job Center features additional publications to guide you with your job interviews

Keys to Successful Interviewing
(DETJ-6951-P)

Hidden Elements of Interviewing
(DETJ-9484-P)

Informational Interviewing
(DETJ-9407-P)

The following publications are also available through Wisconsin Job Centers on these topics related to job search success

RESUMES and APPLICATIONS

Personal Data Record
(DETJ-4937-P)

Resume Writing — A Basic Guide
(DETJ-9433-P)

The Right Words to Use in Your Job Search
(DETJ-9463-P)

JOB SEARCH

Qualities an Employer Looks for When Hiring
(DETJ-8459-P)

Networking
(DETJ-9455-P)

Where to Look for Job Opportunities
(DETJ-9467-P)

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We invite your comments. Send an e-mail message to: jobcenterofwisconsin@dwd.wisconsin.gov

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Interviewing publications:

- Personal Data Record
- Resume Writing — A Basic Guide
- The Right Words to Use in Your Job Search
- Transferable Skills
- Employment Skills

Publications available in these topic areas:

- Job Readiness
- Resumes and Applications
- Job Search

