



TELEPHONE SCRIPTS

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Using the Telephone to Make Contact with Potential Employers¹

Telephone communication plays an important role in today's work search process as it is sometimes your first point of contact with a potential employer. For this reason, it is important that you present yourself in such a way that you are perceived as being professional, courteous, and sincere.

One of the best ways to gain knowledge about an area of interest or possible job opportunity is to talk to people who know.

Using the telephone to make a positive impression is often easier said than done. As a result, many people are hesitant to pick up the phone and initiate contact with strangers (even if it could mean contact with a potential employer). You may feel uncomfortable, awkward or may be afraid you will say the wrong thing. Nonetheless, the best way to find information about an area of interest or possible job lead is to contact people directly. This approach is called a "cold call" which occurs when a work searcher approaches an employer (by phone or letter) who has not publicly announced a job opening.²

Deciding what to say before making the call will help you generate a positive response to your inquiries and increase your overall effectiveness.

The following scenarios will be reviewed and examples of possible scripts provided. Remember, these examples are only provided as a starting point! You will need to tailor them to fit your needs.



- Cold Call - Contact Information or Informational Interview
- Cold Call - Leaving a Message
- Cold Call - Screened by Staff
- Cold Call - Making direct contact
- Resume or Application Follow-up
- Calling in Response to an Advertisement or Job posting

¹ From the *Savvy Networker, Building Your Job Net for Success*, by Ron Caryl Krannich, 2001

² From www.employmentsearches.net Accessed August 2008

Telephone Scenarios and Script Examples

Cold Call - Contact Information or Informational Interview

One of the best ways to gain knowledge about an area of interest is to talk to people working in that field. Calling to arrange an informational interview will not only help you learn more about a company or type of position, but will also help you gain contacts with those who may be able to help you find a job in the future.

Remember, you will be talking with busy people and they will expect you to be as business-like as possible. While it is best to conduct an informational interview in person, be prepared to conduct some interviews over the phone. A busy schedule may not always allow for a face-to-face meeting. (See the *Informational Interview* handout for more details and a telephone script).

“The best way to get a job is never ask for a job directly; always ask for information, advice, and referrals.”

-© Ron and Caryl Krannich

Example #1:

Caller: “Good morning Ms. Smith, my name is Sandra Bullock and I am a student at TRU. I’m doing some research in the field of family law and legal services. Your position at the Legal Aid Society sounds very much like the type of work I would like to do at some point in my future. I was wondering if I could schedule a brief appointment to ask you some questions about your work and the field of family law in general. I would only need about 15-20 minutes of your time.”

Employer: “I would love to have a chance to talk to you, but unfortunately I am too busy to meet with you for the next couple of weeks.”

Caller: “Oh, I am sorry to hear that you are not available to meet with me directly. Would you happen to have a quick moment to answer a few questions over the phone right now?”

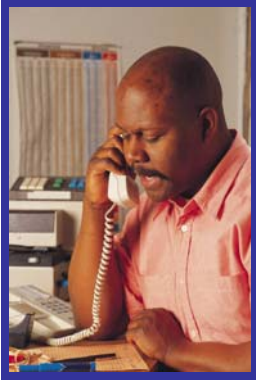
Employer: “Sure, but I only have about 10 minutes.”

Caller: “Thanks.” (Ask your most important questions)

Caller: “Well those are all the questions that I need to ask at this point. Thank you so much for your time this morning Ms. Smith. You have given me a great deal of helpful information. I hope I will have the opportunity to meet you in person some day.”

Cold Call - Leaving a Message

When making cold calls you may need to leave a message for the person you want to reach. Always leave a complete message in which you:



- State your name, the date and time that you called
- Leave your phone number
- Indicate the nature of your call
- Identify your availability during the next 24 hours for a return call
- End with an expression of gratitude.³

Remember to speak clearly - if they cannot understand your message, they will not call you back! Also, if you don't hear from them in 3 to 4 business days, take the initiative to call back.

Example #2:

Caller: *"Hello Ms. Doe, my name is Mary Smith and I am calling on Tuesday March 16th at 8:40 am. I have worked in Alberta as an early childhood educator for over 3 years now and have recently relocated to Kamloops. If your schedule allows, I would love the opportunity to meet with you within the next week or two to learn more about your organization and the positions within. Please call me back and let me know how this works for you. While I may be in and out during the day, I can be reached at (250) 222-2222. I look forward to hearing from you and thank-you for your time."*

Cold Call - Screened by Staff

When approaching professionals for information from a research point of view, they will often be happy to talk to you. In most cases, however, you will have to get through the receptionist or office administrator first. After all, it is their job to protect the boss from distractions and so they may try to redirect your call. In most cases it is best to call on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday between eight and eleven o'clock in the morning, but this can vary depending on the industry of interest. Do your research and know when the best time is for you to call.

If the person isn't in and you must leave a message, just leave your name, phone number and a brief message. Don't rely on the person to call you back, as you will probably be at the bottom of their priority list of calls for the day. Call them back, and make sure you sound confident and friendly.

³ Information taken from *The Savvy Networker, Building Your Job Net for Success*, by Ron and Caryl Krannich © 2001.

Example #3:

Caller: "Is Mrs. Smith available to speak to?"

Receptionist: "I can check for you, what is your name and what is the call regarding?"

Caller: "Tom Jones and this is a personal call," or, if you have written to the person in advance of your call, "Tom Jones, Mrs. Smith is expecting my call," or "Tom Jones, I was referred to Mrs. Smith by the Director of the Elizabeth Fry Society."

Cold Call - Making Direct Contact, Inquiring about Possible Job Opportunities

Often you may hear of a job lead and wish to contact an employer directly to find out more. When talking to the employer, make sure you give them a chance to answer your questions. If they say there is nothing available, ask if you can visit and meet with them briefly so they can keep your resume on file in case something comes up. If they say no, ask them if they know of anyone who might have openings.

Example #4:

Caller: "Could I speak to the manager please?"

Manager: "Hello this is Sam."

Caller: "Hello, my name is Mary Smith. I've heard that you may be hiring food servers in the next few weeks. I'd like to come down and drop off my resume and meet with you if that's possible."

Manager: "Sure. Are you looking for part-time or full-time?"

Caller: "Part-time. When would be a good time to come by?"

Manager: "Any time outside of peak times."

Caller: "Well, I will be down today after lunch. Thank you for your time."

Resume or Application Follow-up

If you hand delivered a resume while the manager was out, or applied by fax or e-mail, it is best to follow-up to ensure that the information was received. Do this within a day or two to ensure that your resume/application was passed along to the right person. When following up, always try to speak to the person that is in charge of hiring.

Example #5:

Caller: *"Hi. Is Mr. Habbs available please?"*

Manager: *"Hello, this is Mr. Habbs."*

Caller: *"Hello Mr. Habbs. My name is Tom Hanks. I was in yesterday and I dropped off a resume to one of your staff for a foreman position with your company. I just wanted to follow-up with you to make sure you received it."*

Manager: *"Yes I did."*

Caller: *"Have you had a chance to review the resume and application at all?"*

Manager: *"Yes, but I do not have a job available at the moment."*

Caller: *You could take the opportunity to ask some questions at this point if you wish. Then finish with "Well thank-you for your time. Please keep me in mind if you hear of any opportunities for someone with my skills and interests."*

Manager: *"Sure. I will keep your resume on file."*

Caller: *"Would you be open to me checking back with you in a couple of weeks to see if things have changed?"*

Manager: *"Sure."*

Caller: *"Thanks again. Goodbye."*

Calling in Response to an Advertisement or Job Posting



Never overlook the benefit of networking for information about a specific job advertisement. By asking further questions you are able to tailor your resume and application to fit the position and address the appropriate hiring manager.

Most classified ads or vacancies will outline a specified application procedure, but unless the ad specifies “No phone calls please” most companies are open to receiving phone inquiries, which can indicate that you are interested in the position and company.⁴ Before calling, make sure you have a list of questions prepared.

Note: If the ad requests that no calls be made, be sure to follow that direction. When contacting a company for information, always attempt to speak to the person in charge of hiring for that position and then follow-up with getting the correct spelling of their name.

Example #6:

Caller: “Hi Ms. Banks. This is Terri Celest calling. I saw your ad in today’s Kamloops Daily News for an administrative assistant position. I am thinking about applying, but I need a bit more information. Do you have a moment to answer a couple of questions about the position and your company?”

Hiring Manager: “Sure.” (Responds to the questions)

Caller: “That sounds great. Thank you for your time. I will definitely submit my application. Should I address my resume to you?”

Hiring Manager: “Yes – Tara Banks.”

Caller: “Can I please confirm the correct spelling of that. Is it...”

Hiring Manager: “Yes.”

Caller: “Thanks again.”

⁴ Information taken from *The Savvy Networker, Building Your Job Net for Success*, by Ron and Caryl Krannich © 2001.

Recovering from a Call Gone Wrong

Having given you the tools to make a successful call, everything should go smoothly, right? Not necessarily. The reality of dealing with people (be it in person or over the phone) is that there are always other circumstances that may affect a successful conversation – the employer may be trying to meet a deadline, the employer may have just dealt with an unhappy customer, or you or the employer may not have had a good night's sleep. All of these factors could affect how clearly one is thinking and how prepared and patient one acts.

What is important to remember if a call does not appear to be going well, is to not get discouraged. We all have our good and bad moments and there are always ways that you can recover.

- Remain calm and polite
- Apologize for any miscommunication
- Request a more convenient time to speak with them
- If sensing awkwardness or unwillingness to co-operate, shorten the call
- Sympathize with their lack of time and ask if they can refer you to someone else
- Ask them for direction on an alternative application process
- Determine if the company is one you want to work for if the employer or other staff members act rude
- Role play to build confidence again prior to the next call!



Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- **Before making a cold call** it's a good idea to find out as much as you can about the company or occupation you are interested in from newspapers, advertisements, brochures, the Internet or from people who work there and their customers.
- **The Yellow Pages** are a good place to start when making cold calls. Businesses are listed by the type of services they provide. Keep track of who you've called and what the response was. Check out our vast selection of telephone directories from all over BC and Alberta.
- **Prepare a script and list** of questions to introduce yourself and the intentions of the call.
- **Practice your call** prior to dialling the number either by yourself or role play with a friend. Try to avoid "ah..hm"s.
- **Remove** any distractions (ie. take out chewing gum, turn off T.V.).
- **Speak clearly** and with confidence.
- **Take notes** (have a piece of paper and pen ready).
- **Refer to the research** you've already reviewed about this field or company.
- **Be respectful** of their time and be as brief as possible. Set a time limit when you first ask if they have a moment to answer your questions.
- **When appropriate, try to arrange** a face-to-face meeting. Meeting with a person at a work site gives you a better sense of what it might be like to work there.
- **Turn off call waiting**, it can be disruptive to the conversation.
- **SMILE** – It comes through over the phone. Try it and see 😊
- **Remember to follow-up** with a thank-you card or letter. (See the "Thank-you" handout for more details.)

DON'T:

- **Call** unprepared.
- **Speak** too quickly or mumble your words.
- **Be** overly aggressive or demanding.
- **Take longer** with your questions than you had agreed to or asked for.
- **Get discouraged** if some people you try to call are not willing to take the time to talk to you.