



3.5 Tools for conducting phone calls

To help you prepare for your phone calls, we have created some tools for you. The most useful of these tools is the *elevator pitch* which can be used as a basis for your customized opening statements. Sample elevator pitches for specific sectors are included in Appendix A.

In addition, we have developed a list of interview questions that you should be familiar with before your initial phone call takes place. Remember that any of your calls could immediately lead to a full interview. Sample call questions are included in Appendix B.

3.6 Who to ask for when making a phone call

Aim towards calling the most appropriate contact in an organization. If applicable to your opportunity, you can ask for a high level executive, a director or manager. Asking for this decision-maker by name will increase your chances of getting through to him/her on the phone. Use the Internet or other research tools (as listed on page 13) to help you find the name of the person you wish to reach.

Best practices for obtaining a referral to a decision maker

If you make a phone call and are not able to reach your identified target, ask to be referred to a decision maker. The best way to do this is to ask the following questions in the order in which they are presented:

- ◆ The last time your company made a decision to partner with an international firm, how did it go about it?
- ◆ Who else would be interested in learning how Canadian companies have helped firms like yours?
- ◆ Can you suggest how we can get these people involved in a meeting?

3.7 Dealing with voicemail

There are two rules to follow when dealing with voicemail. First, never leave a voicemail message for someone who does not know you. The only time you should ever leave a voicemail for a new local contact is when you have been referred to this person. There has already been a connection established between you and your contact, so he/she has an incentive to call you back.

The second rule about voicemail is that you should use it only as a last resort. Too often, we give up as soon as the voicemail kicks in on a call, either leaving a message or simply hanging up.

In fact, when you have reached someone's voicemail, there are options you can exercise while still on that call. It all starts with hitting zero. By hitting zero, you will likely be forwarded to a receptionist, an