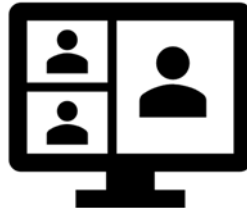


The pandemic has taught us that we can be successful doing things differently. One of these things is hiring employees through video-based virtual interviews. Although in-person interviews still have their place, using a virtual format saves time and money and allows applicants from afar to interview from the comfort of their own surroundings.

Research with students has shown that interviewees feel significant stress during both in-person and virtual interviews. However, virtual interviews were less stressful.<sup>1</sup>



### Questions, professionalism and reducing bias

You have your search team together, and you have the date set. What things should you think about before the video streaming begins? Here are some tips from research and the popular press for best practices in video interviewing—both for hiring and for jobseeking.

- Some things about a job interview do not change because it is virtual. You want to match your job description up with the best person that you can find. And to do so, you will interview multiple candidates. To objectively evaluate apples and oranges (different people), all the candidates are **asked the same questions**, and all are **evaluated using the same criteria**. Follow-up and clarification questions can be asked, but document answers and don't go too far afield so that it is an exceptional question. Generally, I would recommend staying close to asking candidates to clarify statements or re-ask portions of a question that you feel went unanswered.
- **Don't ask illegal questions.**<sup>2</sup> These include questions that inquire about family status, sex, race, age, religion, and disability status.

- I recommend **behavior-based interviewing**. Behavior-based interviewing techniques ask specific questions that relate the job description to the candidate's experiences. The candidate is asked about actual experiences, not theoretical questions. The idea behind using this technique is that past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior. There are a lot of good examples and explanations about this technique on the web, including the Society of Human Resource Management.<sup>3</sup>
- Remember, this is an **opportunity for a candidate** to get to know the staff and the job too. "getting to know you" goes both ways.
- The **conversation itself should be as professional** as it would be in the office. Provide the candidate with an agenda ahead of time, with the names and titles of people with whom they will be speaking and the times for each interview.<sup>4</sup>
- Did you know that a recent study found that students with unreliable internet or from low socioeconomic status might be judged unfairly based on connectivity issues or background décor? Or that women are questioned and interrupted more often during the interview process and face more follow-up questions than men.<sup>5</sup> Think of **ways to reduce bias** in the process. You can enhance objectivity by contacting interviewees before the interview with the following information:
  - Use of a blurred or standard virtual background will keep the background in the background. This will help even the playing field for everyone.
  - Offer a quick technology test to all interviewees. Allow them ten minutes to connect with you over the selected platform (Zoom, MS Teams, et cetera).

<sup>1</sup> Zoorob, Dani, Kara Richardson, Korina Gaishauer, Benjamin Hinkel, Hind N Moussa, James Van Hook, and Rose A Maxwell. "Do Medical Student Mental Stress and Burnout Vary with Virtual versus In-person Residency Interviews." *Future Science OA* (2021): *Future Science OA*, 2021-10-01. Web.

<sup>2</sup> [Illegal Interview Questions – Office of Career Strategy – Yale University](#) accessed November 22, 2021

<sup>3</sup> From Toolkits, *Interviewing Candidates for Employment*, SHRM website, accessed November 23, 2021.

[Interviewing Candidates for Employment \(shrm.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Malatestinic, Liz. "The Zoom Job Interview: HR Considerations for Virtual Hiring." *Indianapolis Business Journal* 41.40 (2020): 8-8A. Web.

<sup>5</sup> Otugo, Onyekachi, Al'ai Alvarez, Italo Brown, and Adaira Landry. "Bias in Recruitment: A Focus on Virtual Interviews and Holistic Review to Advance Diversity." *AEM Education and Training* 5.1 (2021): S135-139. Web

## Camera, lights, action!

Below is a quick synopsis of tips and tricks for the job candidate. Keep in mind that much of this advice is also **applicable to the interviewer** side of the camera. This is especially true in today's very competitive job market. Show respect to the person on the other side of the camera by considering your environment and preparation. Put your best foot forward!

- **Don't be lulled into thinking** that this is an informal venue. While you may have experienced a certain decline in formality related to the day-to-day video conferencing that we all have, a job interview remains formal. Your image, bearing, and environment will have as much to do with your success as your words and body language.
- **Stay upbeat.** Use your best sincerely positive self.
- Being **empathetic, listening well, taking time** to answer questions thoughtfully—silence is not an enemy when you think how to respond to a question—are important behaviors to success.<sup>6</sup>
- **Prepare.** Search the internet for likely interview questions, and practice, practice, practice. Formulate ice-breaking statements—starting off with relative ease will build relatability with your audience and provide some comfort as you transition to the formal questions.
- **Test your internet connection.** If possible, use a wired connection from your modem/router to your computer. It may mean setting up your interview room near the router, but 25' ethernet cables are cheap compared to missing out on a job opportunity. Otherwise, get as close as reasonably possible to the wireless router. Internet speed drops precipitously as you move away from the source. Always test before the show begins!

- **Audio.** In a study that looked at audio-visual quality and hiring, interviewers rated job candidates from fluent videos as more hireable, even after being explicitly told to disregard AV quality.<sup>7</sup> Audiophiles recommend using an external lapel microphone for maximum clarity and use an earpiece to avoid feedback loops. A good headset may do the trick. Candidates who use communication technology correctly will have an advantage.

- **Visuals.** Take a good look behind you. What do you see? *Everything* in the video frame will be



part of how you are evaluated and perceived. Chaos and messiness, like piles of personal items or an unmade bed may signal a disorganized worker. Also, anything that may be interpreted as a political statement or strong

affiliation- even to your favorite sports team- tells interviewers that you may find personal advocacy much more important than teamwork in a diverse office setting.

- **Provoking images or artwork.** Mounted deer heads, dartboards, movie posters, and art may lead people to draw conclusions about you that miss the mark of who you are. Managers and future co-workers may be very sensitive to signs of aggression that could doom a potentially successful interview to the "good luck in your job search" list.<sup>8</sup> Never underestimate the subliminal power captured in the frame of your video feed.
- **Background noise.** If you're in the basement next to the washing machine (like me), don't use it. Turn off all background noise. Isolate yourself from pets. A dog howling in the background at the FedEx woman or curious cat cameos are not going to help your interview.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Herrera Greenspan. "How to Have a Successful Virtual Job Interview." Chicago Tribune (1963) [Chicago, Ill] 2021: Chicago Tribune (1963), 2021-02-21. Web.

<sup>7</sup> Fiechter, Joshua L, Caitlan Fealing, Rachel Gerrard, and Nate Kornell. "Audiovisual Quality Impacts Assessments of Job Candidates in Video Interviews: Evidence for an AV Quality Bias."

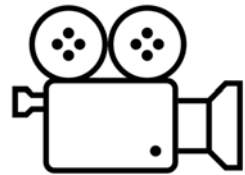
Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications 3.1 (2018): 1-5. Web.

<sup>8</sup> Levey, Richard H. "Are You Wearing Pants? Tips For Video Job Interviews." The NonProfit times 34.10 (2020): 13. Web. 9 Today, U. (2020). LinkedIn offers tips for virtual job interviews. New Orleans CityBusiness, Retrieved from <https://login.ezproxy.uvm.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.c>

- **Lighting and camera angle.** Cameras that are looking up your nose aren't complimentary. Experts generally recommend your camera at or above eye level. This means placing your laptop on a stack of books to raise it or raising your chair or standing if your camera is mounted on top of your monitor. Cold light sources are discouraged, rather using a warm light (look at rating on light bulb and go for "warm") diffusely aimed at your face will work best. Back lighting like a window will make you look like you are in a witness protection program, not a job interview.<sup>10</sup>
- For video interviewing, the rule of thumb is to be an **arm's length from your camera** and lean forward just a few inches. This, like an in-person experience, communicates interest in the person who is speaking.
- **Eye contact.** This is always a tricky one because your eye naturally strays to the person you are

talking to on the screen. You can try to move the images closer to the camera, or, better yet, just practice speaking to the camera.<sup>11</sup>

- **Body language.** Like your mother always told you, don't slouch. Also be aware of nervous energy translating into swiveling, rocking, or bobbing in your chair. Try to minimize gesturing outside of getting a point across and keep your posture open (don't fold your arms), nod appropriately to feel connected to people speaking, not like a bobblehead on a dashboard, and smile your genuine smile because of course you are friendly and approachable!<sup>12</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> Edwards, Brian T. "The Job Season Without In-Person Interviews." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 67.5 (2020): 41. Web.

<sup>11</sup> Malatestinic, Liz. "The Zoom Job Interview: HR Considerations for Virtual Hiring." *Indianapolis Business Journal* 41.40 (2020): 8-8A. Web.

<sup>12</sup> "Challenges of the Video Job Interview." *USA Today* (New York, N.Y.) 149.2903 (2020): 3. Web.