

## TOP TIPS FOR VIDEO INTERVIEWS DURING COVID-19

Given the current requirement to socially distance it is highly likely that your next interview will be performed using video technology. Video Interviews are necessary for employers to continue with recruitment. Of course, video interviews were already used by some of the big employers for initial screening interviews even before the Covid-19 pandemic. While social distancing measures are in place, these companies will most likely be conducting the latter stages of their interview process online too.

Before we get into the tips on how to perform your best at video interviews, it might be helpful to explain the two different types. Each of these have very different formats and will therefore give you very different experiences.

Once notified by an employer that you have a video interview, you will need to understand which type you are being called for:

### **Live Video Interview**

This is as the name suggests a real-time interview with a video connection using software such as Skype, Google Hangouts, MS Teams, Zoom etc.

### **Pre-recorded/Automated Video Interview**

This is much less personal than the live interview as you won't be speaking to a real person. You will record your answers on video to a time limit once presented to you by way of a pre-recording or written questions on the screen. Generally speaking, once you have started a recorded video interview you cannot rewind or review your answers. You also need to be prepared to feel under time pressure as you will be given a set amount of thinking time and a set amount of time to record your answer. There will be a timer on screen for you to manage this.

There are a number of companies that can provide the required software to companies to enable them to do automated/pre-recorded interviews. These include Sonru, SparkHire, InterviewStream etc.

### **Prepare:**

The same type and degree of preparation needs to go into a video interview as a normal face to face interview. Research the organisation and their interview process in detail. Check the 'About' page on their website to find information about organisational size, locations, what products and services they offer etc. LinkedIn organisation pages also have a lot of information. Google the organisation for recent news, announcements, developments and press releases. Don't forget to research competitors and recent changes in the sector in case you are asked for knowledge of the sector. Analyse the Job Description in detail and Check out the LinkedIn profiles of staff currently in the role. Practise answers to anticipated questions as much as you can.

Of course, there are also some distinct nuances to consider with video interviews. Once you are aware of the type of video interview you will be doing, you then need to consider all or some of the following:

**Plan a quiet distraction free area:**

- Make sure the room is tidy and use a professional background free from clutter i.e clean and simple so that the interviewer(s) can focus on you
- Ensure all your other devices are on silent including any software notifications
- Advise all those in your immediate surroundings that you are about to do an interview so as to avoid any disturbances

**Lighting:**

- Avoid overhead lighting and sitting with a window behind you as they can cast dark shadows on video which will make you very hard to see or may not have you looking at your best
- Do a trial run a few days previously at the same time as the interview will happen to check whether the lighting works for you.
- Consider using a side lamp or lighting from below if necessary

**Dress appropriately:**

- Dress as you would for a similar face to face interview in order to give a professional first impression
- Understand the expected attire for the role you are interviewing for and dress accordingly
- Dressing formally will actually make you feel more confident and assertive, Even your body language will change.
- Consider how your clothes will look on screen – avoid white colours, stripes, crazy designs and busy patterns instead opting for a block colour.

**Mind your body language:**

- Act confidently - Sit up tall, nod and make good eye contact, listen and show enthusiasm, Be positive
- Avoid slouching and moving around too much as this will distract the interviewer(s)
- Smile, smile, smile – there is no expectation that you will be perfect and so don't be concerned if you make a mistake. The interviewer will want to see your personality shine through on the day and meet the real you.
- If recording your answers try to imagine you are speaking to a real person
- Be careful not to rush your answers as this has a tendency to happen when you are nervous
- Speak clearly and be careful not to interrupt as this can happen quite easily with the delay in transmission. Remember to project your voice and pause.

**Get technical:**

- Test your equipment i.e device you intend using, internet connection, bandwidth required by the software, camera, microphone and any software that you've been asked to use as soon as you can. You might also want to use headphones to block noise
- Familiarise yourself with the software – research it online and practise using it as much as you can
- Make sure any software usernames are professional e.g your Skype name etc
- On the day of the interview ensure everything is fully charged or plugged in as you don't want the battery to run down
- Ensure there are no other programs running in the background as these could impact on connectivity speed on your device
- Don't leave your video interview to the last minute. Allow time for any unexpected hiccups. Switch everything on at least an hour before the interview and sign in to any necessary software

**Practise:**

- Do as many practise interviews as you can with the technology you intend using and keep reviewing them for improvements. Look out for your tone of voice, body language, habits and mannerisms that you find aren't helping your performance. Check that you are speaking clearly and loudly enough.
- In the case of a live video interview ask a friend or family member to be your interviewer and record it. Ask for their feedback on the recording too.
- Practise interviews are provided for with most pre-recorded software applications and so ensure you not only do these but that you also practise recording outside of the application technology too for example on your mobile. The more practise runs you can do the more familiar and comfortable you will become with the process and the better you will perform on the day.
- Ensure you are making eye contact with the interviewer(s). This is really important. Use books if necessary to elevate and adjust the camera positioning until you have it just right. Try not to stare and just act normally as if the interviewer is there in front of you. The camera needs to be at eye level and you need to be looking into it rather than at the screen. There is a natural tendency to look at yourself on the screen and so you need to be mindful to avoid this. Put a reminder note beside your camera if this helps.

**Review in detail the information provided on the employer's software (in the case of an automated/pre-recorded video interview ):**

- There tends to be a lot of helpful information in the invitation email and on the candidate homepage of the software that is being used
- This information has been provided by the employer to help you perform your best video interview and so review these details carefully taking note of the deadline for completion
- Watch any videos that have been provided as these can provide useful insights into the company culture and may also provide advice, hints, tips and encouragement
- If documents have been attached e.g information on the organisation or further instructions make sure to read these in detail
- Hints and tips will be provided by the practise software to help you and so make sure you look at them and take on board any feedback
- Use the thinking time you are given between questions to plan your responses. Make sure to have a pen and paper beside you so that you can note the key points you want to make
- If time has been given at the end of the interview to provide further comment use this to make positive closing statements in order to add value to your interview
- If there is a support team available to you from the video software provider familiarise yourself with their contact details in case of any issues
- If you are in any doubt about the process don't hesitate to reach out to the employer you are talking to and ask for clarification

**Relax, Breathe and take your Time!**

- Try to relax and be yourself! With some practise and the right mindset you can do this.