

Tips for a Successful Virtual Interview

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, many employers have transitioned to virtual interviews using platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or another type of interview app. This allows employers to interview and hire qualified candidates while minimizing the risk of in-person exposure to COVID-19. When it is determined that COVID-19 is no longer a threat to the population, employers may continue to conduct virtual interviews due to the benefits of saving time and money for their organization.

Here are some valuable tips for a successful virtual interview.

BE PREPARED: Research the organization prior to the interview, be able to articulate why you want to work for the organization, and how you will be an asset to them. Review the job description and write down the skills, traits, and experience you have that are related to what they are seeking in their ideal candidate. Do an Internet search on commonly asked interview questions and spend some time and thought relating your experience and skills as to how to answer them.

CHOOSE A PROFESSIONAL USERNAME: Just like having a professional email on your resume, you also need a professional username for virtual interviews. While the username "IhateMondays" may be humorous, it will not be to a hiring manager so keep it professional!

TEST YOUR TECHNOLOGY: Once your interview is scheduled, do a test run with your computer to ensure everything is working properly. Verify that your computer's microphone, camera, and internet connection are functional. Download the required app needed for the interview and know how to use it. Do not wait until the day of the interview, do this beforehand so you can fix any issues or purchase any necessary equipment. A few hours before your interview, schedule a practice session with someone to ensure your technology is working and ready for your interview.

CREATE A DISTRACTION-FREE AREA: Choose a room that is quiet and free from distractions. Consider if the room is in an area that might be impacted by street or other outside noise. Notify people in your household that you will be interviewing and ask them not to disturb you during this time. Send them a reminder a few hours prior to the interview. Hang a sign on the front door stating, *Interview in Progress, Please Don't Ring the Doorbell, and Leave Packages at the Door.*

Turn off all notifications (email, social media, and software updates) that may show up on the computer screen during the interview and close out any other windows. Before the interview begins it is important to turn off any video filter that can transform your face into a cat, potato, or any other creature or object. This does happen, Google "cat lawyer" and "boss who turns herself into a potato". If you are using a virtual background, make sure it is appropriate for the interview. Your interview window should be full screen and that should be your only focus. Silence your cell phone but keep it nearby in case there is a problem with the audio on either end. You can use it to communicate during the interview if necessary.

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SET THE SCENE: Ensure the room you use is tidy, organized, and there are no embarrassing items in view in the background. Keep your pets out of the room during the interview and make sure they are in an area where they will not disrupt you. Check the lighting in the room and if possible, sit in front of a window, assuming there is enough daylight, the natural lighting will illuminate you. Do not sit with a window behind you as this will make you look washed out. If there is not enough lighting, then use additional lamps to create bright and even lighting.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS: Treat this as you would an in-person interview and dress professionally from head to toe. Do not assume that you will only be seen from the waist up, you never know what might occur during the interview and you do not want to be caught wearing inappropriate attire. Make sure your clothes fit well, are wrinkle-free, and that the color and pattern of your clothes look good on camera. Dressing professionally from head to toe will also help you feel more prepared and confident during the interview.

FRAMING: Make sure that you are positioned in the center of the screen. Your eyes should be approximately two-thirds level of the screen. Leave some empty space on the screen above your head so it's not too close to the top of the frame.

MAINTAIN GOOD EYE CONTACT, BODY LANGUAGE, AND CONNECT: With virtual interviews, you lose the ability to make that first impression with a handshake, so body language and eye contact are crucial. To maintain the best eye contact, look straight into the camera. If you look at the interviewer on screen, you will be seen by the interviewer as looking down at them. The best body language is to sit up straight with your shoulders square, hands on your lap, and your feet on the floor. Do not fidget or move around in your chair. With so many people being impacted by job loss through the pandemic, the candidate pool is extremely competitive so do your best to connect. Use active nonverbal listening which involves nodding your head, leaning forward, and facial expressions including smiling.

PRACTICE WITH A MOCK INTERVIEW: An ideal way to build confidence is to practice by doing a mock interview and recording it. Have someone act as an interviewer utilizing commonly asked interview questions and have them provide you feedback after the interview. Make sure to treat this as you would an actual interview including dressing professionally. Recording it allows you to review it and take note of your body language, tone, and how you respond to the questions. You can also clarify details like lighting, framing, and clothing you are wearing to ensure everything is optimal. Going through a mock interview and recording it gives you the opportunity to make improvements prior to your actual interview whether it's virtual, phone, or an in-person interview. The more you practice interviewing, the more comfortable and confident you will feel.

SEND A THANK YOU EMAIL: Always send a thank you email within 24 hours after your interview. There are several benefits to sending a thank you correspondence: standing out from other candidates since many of them do not do this, expressing appreciation for the interviewer(s) time, demonstrating your communications skills, and emphasizing why you are

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an ideal fit for the organization. This also provides an opportunity to include pertinent information you may not have mentioned in your interview.

Utilizing these tips will help you have a successful interview. You can use the downloadable checklist at the link below to ensure you've completed all the necessary steps.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EZMs8BVB76oGWEzwKEFfXd_d8vvpPFYr/view?usp=sharing

Wishing you all the best on landing your ideal job!

About the Author: Susan Davidson

Susan Davidson is a Community Service Professional with extensive experience in program management and development, community partnerships and outreach, and providing leadership to staff, volunteers, and teams. She has a passion for making a positive impact in the lives of others and has had the privilege to achieve this throughout her career and volunteer work. During her professional tenure, she has interviewed, hired, onboarded, coached, and mentored staff and volunteers from diverse backgrounds. She utilized her knowledge and experience to develop a workshop on how to interview successfully. She is a member of Woman in Leisure Services Gamma Chapter which is an organization for professional women involved in the delivery of leisure and community services in private, commercial and municipal settings. Connect with Susan via LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/susandavidson649/>