

Career Guide

Video Interviews

Video interviews are becoming more and more widely used across the hiring spectrum. They allow companies to solicit large numbers of interviews from prospective candidates, and then review those interviews on their schedule and as often as needed to make determinations as to a candidate's fit for the role. They are highly efficient and reduce many areas of weakness of traditional telephone. It is for this reason we should all be prepared for making the most of these opportunities.

Where traditional telephone interviews fail:

Assessing a candidate's soft skills. Soft skills include those areas such as body language, communication styles, and thoughtfulness. Telephone screens do not allow assessments of these areas, which in most cases these are key qualifying traits of a candidate.

Up to 93% of communication is non-verbal. That leaves a lot of gaps when we are limited to the telephone.

How a candidate would respond in an actual work-related situation. By putting a candidate in a videoed "what if" situation, the interviewer can better assess how they'll actually perform on a job.

Providing a realistic picture of a candidate's personality. Telephone interviews can give us a partial picture of someone's personality, but a video does a much more accurate job.

Hidden skills often stay hidden in a traditional phone interview. Most of us have unique skills that would enhance our performance in a specific role that are not listed on a resume. These skills will often come out in a video interview, and might include: physical presence, image, facial expressions, sense of humor, confidence, etc.

Other points:

- 55% of communication is done by facial expressions
- 38% is the tone and inflection of the voice
- 7% are the actual words used

Video Interviews eliminate all these shortcomings, but they can be a little daunting. There are two types of video interviews, Interactive and Modeled.

In an **interactive interview** you will respond to questions from the interviewer either on a video feed or on the telephone. These are much more spontaneous and offer an excellent means of communicating from both sides of the interview.

A **modeled interview** will have you respond to predetermined questions provided either on a screen or other means like an email. These are done almost real time, so that the interviewee does not have time to rehearse or formulate their responses.



Preparation

Most people face video interviews entirely unprepared. They sit down, turn the computer or camera on and go. But in the competitive job market you should consider yourself the actor, the director and producer of an event that allows you to create your own storyline and better influence your future.

1. Check your technology. Make sure that your webcam is set up and working properly. Test the webcam by doing a short “screen test” and then email it to yourself AND VIEW IT to be sure all is working properly. Make sure there are no technical issues which would hinder your interview.
 - Check that both audio and video come through clearly.
 - Make sure your camera is set at eye level without an upward angle or downward angle. Upward angles are never flattering, and downward angles tend to look sinister.
 - Using the camera on a cell phone is OK so long as the phone is set on a tripod or singular device to keep it steady.
 - Even better, you can get an HD camera, microphone, mic holder and tripod online for under \$100. A good investment when you consider the implications of making a bad technology impression.
2. Prepare your surroundings. Everything in the background of your video will be seen and scrutinized as people look at your video. Unfortunately, you will be judged on the background just like you’ll be judged on your appearance. No interviews from a car, coffee shop or from your current place of employment.
 - Keep it simple, clean and uncluttered.
 - Make sure you are not in front of a window or tv. A bookcase or wall with a simple picture on it usually works quite well.
 - **DO NOT LET ANYONE ELSE INTO THE SCENE!** No people, dogs, cats or children. This interview is about you and no one else.
3. Consider your lighting. Have three lights, two in front of you (either side of the camera) and one diffused light behind (but out of view of the camera) you is good. There should be no shadows on your face, again this can make you look sinister.
4. Dress for Success. Wear what you would expect to wear to a face to face interview. After all that’s what this is. Professional business appropriate attire.
5. Always look at the camera – not the screen
 - Putting up a grease board behind the camera with your talking points can give you an advantage. Just be sure to maintain eye contact with the lens.
 - Frame your face – Adjust your camera to show you from mid-torso to just a few inches above your head.
 - Don’t fidget – It reveals nervousness, and can come across on the audio
 - Don’t lean into the lens – it makes you look aggressive
 - Don’t sit on your hands – hand gestures are important communication tools, use them!
 - Do a dress rehearsal and record it. Play it back and get other opinions



What To Say

The World is Watching - act like it. What you say in a video is obviously based on what is being asked, but you have to be thoughtful and honest in your responses. How you say things becomes much more important.

You'll need to be prepared, professional, well spoken, alert, sharply dress, everything just like you were sitting in a face-to-face interview, but this time your being recorded, and several if not dozens of people may view the interview and will be making decision about your future based on what they see and hear. This shouldn't be daunting, but it is important to consider the implications.

Take your time in composing answers. Match your response rhythm to accommodate the possibilities of a transmission delay. Use a visual nod to confirm you've heard the question, then wait a couple of seconds before you respond.

Answer with Stories

The difference between an average video interview and a memorable one is the story. A story in an interview is a verbal retelling of a work event. Look at television commercials. There's a reason they tell stories. A little boy refuses to eat his cereal, then discovers it's delicious. You now remember that the cereal is tasty. If the video was just a boy eating his cereal happily, would you remember the message as clearly?

Interview videos are unscripted but offer opportunities for you to share meaningful experiences. A good tactic is when asked a specific question give a straightforward answer (always) and then follow-up with an example of an actual event- a story, in your work history that exemplifies your answer. Obviously this shouldn't be done with more than one or two of the questions, or the interview would take too long, and you'd lose your audience. But one or two thoughtful stories will make a huge difference.

How to Finish

If your interview is a modeled interview without direct interaction with the interviewer, you'll need to close the interview with a statement along the lines of, **"I've enjoyed sharing a little about myself, and I look forward to hearing about the next step in the interview process. Thank you for your time, and I am looking forward to learning more about this position."**

If you are involved in an interactive interview, then you should follow the ABC rule. **Always Be Closing**; Summarize your qualifications and ask for the next step. Say something like, "This sounds like an interesting and exciting opportunity. With my background, I believe I could make a valuable contribution to your project. I have two questions: 1) What is the next step, 2) When would you like for me to start?"

