

How to excel in a video interview

By Elissa Collier



In today's global workplace more and more employers are opting for the Skype, Live Messenger or video interview. Let's face it – it cuts down on travel expenses, saves on fuel (making it better for the environment) and provides the employer with a much quicker and easier way to find the perfect person for the position without the time-consuming face-to-face interview process.

For the interviewee, though, being interviewed in front of a camera and microphone can be daunting. But, fear not! The video interview can be used to your advantage. Here are some tips on how to prepare and ultimately excel in a Skype interview.

An interview is an interview

Whether you are being interviewed on Skype, over the phone or in person, all the general rules of a job interview apply. Research the company, read the job description thoroughly, know your resume inside out and have a few answers for common interview questions prepared. Just because you are not meeting the interviewer in the flesh doesn't mean any less preparation is involved.

Fix yourself up!

Key to a video interview is making sure you look presentable. You might feel silly sitting at home wearing a suit and talking to a computer, but it will make all the difference. Not only will the interviewer think you look great and will already be picturing you in his/her workplace, it will help you to mentally prepare and get into a professional mode of thinking.

During the interview it is highly likely that the interviewer will only be able to see your head and shoulders on the camera. With this in mind, don't neglect your bottom half. You never know, you may be required to get something from the other side of the room – so save yourself the embarrassment of revealing your Scooby Doo boxers to your prospective new boss.

Clean up your room

Your surroundings can be just as important as your personal presentation. Whether the interview is being conducted from your own home or a busy office environment, the interviewer does not want to see you sitting in front of a pile of junk. Clean up the room as you don't want anything in the background to distract the interviewer from what you have to say.

Keep the noise down

Finding a quiet place to do the interview is vital as the microphone picks up more background noise than you might think. Dogs barking, children crying, mobile phones or music are not welcome distractions when an interviewer is trying to determine whether you will be suitable for a job. Nor does it look good if you have people walking in and out of the room – if need be, make yourself a 'do not disturb' sign and stick it on the door.

Get the technology right

Five minutes before the video interview is not a good time to realise that your Internet is down, Skype isn't working, or your pet rabbit has chewed through the microphone cord. Not only does this reflect badly on your organisational skills, it will cost the interviewer precious time as they will most likely have to reschedule.

Getting the technology right is crucial as it can either make you look like a reliable computer whiz, or somebody who can't quite get the hang of it. Allow plenty of time before the interview to test all equipment.

If possible, try to Skype a friend beforehand and get them to give you some feedback. Can you see/hear them? Can they see/hear you? Is the picture clear? Is the lighting OK? Is there much background noise?

Practice makes perfect

Try recording yourself before the interview to make sure everything is working and practice answering some imaginary questions. While you might feel silly, it will help build up your confidence for the real thing. Also keep in mind that the employer is able to record the entire interview on their computer, so everything needs to run smoothly.

Lights, camera, action!

The golden rule with a Skype interview is to treat it like any other face-to-face meeting. There is a real person on the other end of the call, so treat them like one. Smiling is a big one – this makes you look positive, confident and enthusiastic about the job you are applying for.

Try to make eye contact: look straight into the camera when you are talking, as this will make the interviewer feel as if you are speaking directly to them, despite being hundreds of kilometres away.

Don't shout, but do speak loudly and clearly. Sometimes with video calls there may be a delay with the picture so a clear speaking voice is extremely important.

But most of all, relax. By the time you have done your research, know your stuff and look great, all you have to do now is work the camera, baby!

http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,46937715001_1933401,00.html