



WHITE PAPER

Here's Looking at You, Kid!

Crushing That Next Video-Streamed Job Interview Means Job Seekers Should Follow A Common-Sense Formula

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Employers, looking to save time (and time is money), are taking advantage of today's much-improved video streaming technology in search of top talent. Video-streamed recruiting interviews have arrived. Several surveys report, in fact, that about 60 percent of HR professionals take advantage of video interviews.

Gone are the days of shaky, unreliable video streaming. Broadband internet has changed the video interview landscape. Today's video interviews are so close to the real thing. Job applicants need to give them the same rapt attention that they place on in-person interviews.

For instance, while in the past I might have hired people in 19 out of 20 telephone interviews, just 1 of my 5 recent video interviews with candidates resulted in an offer. My clients want the best candidates to rise to the next hiring level. Yet, the same job seekers I've encountered via video interview often display a dizzying and alarming lack of awareness and video interview preparation.

From check-listing technical issues to avoiding the casual closet, video interviews require due diligence. I break it down into four key checks:

Check #1: Technology

Are your computer's camera and sound functional? There are sites (webcammictest.com is one, but there are several) offering simple, step-by-step menus to test your computer's camera and sound.

In a mobile device interview, apart from the obvious (ensuring your smartphone or tablet is charged or plugged in), borrow a back-up device if possible - just in case something goes wrong with your phone's hardware or software.

Speaking of software, if you want to practice, you can get a free video streaming account (Zoom is a good one that I've used).

Conduct video chats with friends using a variety of browsers, although established apps like Google Chrome, MS Edge or Apple's Safari should work.

Unless you are a regular bandwidth tester, try video chatting a friend to see if your connection is up to snuff. Sites like Speedtest and Speakeasy are free and easy to use for measurement.

Check #2: Eliminate Distractions

To the best of your ability, you must deep-six any and all background sounds (pets, people, potential construction noise, whatever). Nothing is more distracting than your barking dog or a roommate or friend barging in. Anyone who has worked from home (figuring that's the typical video location for job candidates) knows to expect the unexpected.

Along these lines, the local coffee shop is the last place for a video interview. It may seem sort of hip in today's world, but no interviewer wants to compete with a barista yelling out someone's name when their skinny mocha latte is ready or other coffee shop random sounds.

Check #3: Lighting, Setting, & On-Camera Considerations

Make sure your lighting is not too dark but not too revealing. And stay out of the bedroom (totally unprofessional). Be sure you know what's in the background; you don't want some strange piece of art distracting the interviewer. You do not want any distractions!

The advantage of video over a phone interview is the availability of facial expressions, the human connection; you don't want a poorly lit setting to ruin that advantage. Natural light is best; see if you find a good spot near a window. Check the lighting – not too dark, not too light! Also, position your laptop/device so that you are looking "straight at the camera". We want to see more of your face, less of your chin!

Lastly, be sure to look at the camera and make eye contact with your interviewer. Consistent eye contact is how we connect with our interviewer. I interviewed a candidate recently who struggled to maintain eye contact, looking up in the sky to answer questions. It was not a good look. Create reminders to look at the camera (place a few post-it notes as reminders).

Check #4: Dressing for Video Success... Check!

Dressing for success may no longer be as vital as for past generations, but even so, going full Mark Zuckerberg in a video interview is probably not going to get you the job.

So, dress professionally/appropriately. While you may be home on "casual weekday," someone on the other side of the camera may be biased about you looking too casual. Put it this way: Dressing well won't hurt you. Dress up a bit!

And don't forget posture. Test how you look on a video dry run with a friend sitting in as the interviewer.

That's a Wrap, Folks!

Follow these basic guidelines and you will certainly boost the odds of crushing it in your next video interview. And practice, practice, practice, until you reach a comfort zone.

Finally, take a few yoga-inspired deep breaths before it's lights, camera, action. It just might change your life. Good luck and break a leg!

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