

Ready for Your Close-Up? Tips on Acing a Video Interview

There used to be two ways to interview for a job: in person or by phone. But more employers are now adding a third category: video interviews. Skype and other real-time video-chat services have made it easy and cost-effective for hiring managers to “meet” with job candidates regardless of geographic distance. In a recent survey by our firm, 63 percent of human resources managers said their company often conducts interviews via video. This is up from just 14 percent one year ago.

While video interviews are similar to traditional ones in many regards, there are some unique issues to consider. For example, you don’t have to worry about technical troubles or your cat making a cameo appearance when you meet interviewers face to face. Following are tips on preparing for and participating in a video interview:

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. You might find the thought of being interviewed on camera to be nerve-wracking. It’s understandable. After all, you’re seeking a job in accounting, not broadcast journalism. Calm jittery nerves and gain confidence by doing a trial run with a friend or mentor.

Review the tape. Record the mock interview to troubleshoot potential problems. Are your microphone and webcam working properly? Is the area well lit or is a shadow covering part of your face? Are there any distracting visual elements in the background? Did you maintain “eye contact” by remembering to look at the camera instead of the computer monitor? Checking these things helps ensure you present yourself with polish come showtime.

Don’t be disturbed. Unexpected interruptions can break your train of thought and derail your discussion. Guard against this by giving advance notice to family members or roommates that you’ll be doing a video interview and should not be bothered. Close windows and keep pets out of the room. In addition, turn off mobile devices, email notifications and any other piece of technology that could conceivably make a noise.

Finally, dress to impress just as you would for an on-site visit. Steer clear of bold colors and patterns that don’t show up well on video. And don’t assume you’ll only be visible from the shoulders up. More than a few jacket-clad candidates have found themselves red-faced after inadvertently shifting position or standing up to reveal jeans or workout pants.

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