

# THEORY AND TECHNIQUES OF THE INTERVIEW

## 7. RECORDING INTERVIEWS

### 7.1. Video & Web Formatted Interviews

Looking for a job? Surprisingly, you may need to brush up on your on camera skills. More companies are using the video format to interview job candidates from entry level to the top ranks. Two way interviews take place in real time with both the candidate and interviewer present, while one way interviews require candidates to respond to preset questions without a live person on the other side. Video interviews cut down on costs and save time for companies, but they can also cause job candidates no end of uncomfortable moments. There are however a fair share of hiccups that have been caught on tape. In one interview, a cat jumped up and walked across the screen. In another, a candidate's wife appeared behind him with a laundry basket, asking who her husband was talking to. Research indicates that at least 1% of candidates call prospective afterwards saying they found the video interview awkward. But many other talent managers contend that the one way video format actually gives job seekers a chance to shine.

With many candidates today, employers find that there are people who've grown up using webcams and Skype are very comfortable with this. It appears that as long as interviewers explain the set up ahead of time, candidates can excel. This is good news for job seekers as video interviews become more prevalent. The Aberdeen Group, a market research firm, found 10% of companies used video as part of the hiring process in 2010, but saw that number jump to 42% for senior executives, management and entry level job functions, in its recent 2011 talent acquisition survey. While many employers conduct "real-time" live video interviews, others opt for one way, recorded sessions where software takes the place of the interviewer. Candidates click on a link and are guided through various screens, starting with a practice session. Each subsequent screen contains a different question, with about three minutes to answer each. In some cases the questions pop up as text, in others they are spoken by a hiring manager. The candidate responds into a webcam from home. If the candidate doesn't own a webcam, the video interview vendor sends them one. With some formats, the candidate gets one shot at the question. With others, they can play back their response and redo it if they're not satisfied. Once complete, the interview can be viewed by multiple managers.

Some employers often prefer a one way session for the first round of interviews, because it offers efficiency and consistency in the selection process as you hear applicants answer the same questions back to back. Indeed, some candidates actually prefer the format. Being able to do the interview at home, at any time within a two week period, can take some stress out of the equation. For example, you don't want to try to make it to an interview on time and you get stuck in traffic.

Two way interviews, which happen in real time over Skype or other services can, despite the presence of a live interviewer, make it hard to feel connected since eye contact can be tricky. But they can still can yield plenty of unexpected information. As an example, a managing director recently interviewed a CEO candidate. As the man was speaking, the interviewer spotted a woman dressed in a black maid's uniform dusting in the background. He peered into the screen and asked, "Who's that behind you over there?" It was an awkward moment, but it did not derail the interview. "If he had yelled at her to leave the room immediately, I would have said, 'Thanks a lot, we'll be in touch,'" says the interviewer. But the candidate kept his cool, politely asking the housekeeper to come back later. And he eventually landed the job. Not so savvy was a candidate interviewing for a job with another firm. Perfect on paper and adored by clients, the hiring manager assumed that the candidate was in the bag. But when she answered an important question by apparently reading her answer from notes in the corner of her screen, it changed the firm's perception of her and she failed to get the job. Still, goof ups work both ways. Managers sometimes forget they too are on camera. They might have a sloppy work space or they start checking email mid-interview. One interviewer has admitted that he once muted a video interview to answer his cell phone, forgetting the candidate could still see him. "I apologized," he says. More and more employers are using web based job video interviews to screen candidates for employment. In some cases, hiring managers will conduct screening interviews via video. In other cases, most of the interview process takes place using video.

Regarding the benefits, the use of video interviewing is growing. It started with high tech companies, but diverse employers are increasingly aware of the benefits of web based video interviewing. There is consistency as all candidates are asked the same set of questions. Questions can be specifically tailored for the job the employer is hiring for. Hiring managers have the opportunity to replay, review, and rate the interviews online, so they can compare candidates without having to remember who said what or review their notes. After hiring managers review the video interviews, they can select certain candidates for managers to review. Again, the manager can see each candidate answering the same questions, and can

compare the responses. For the employer, video interviewing can save time and hiring expenses, because there are reduced travel costs and management time. How about for you, the candidate for employment? Can video interviewing help you get the job? It can, if you prepare thoroughly. A good video interview can be as effective as an in person interview. It's important though to understand how the process works, so you can interview professionally.

## **7.2. The Video Interview Process & Tips**

What are the basic procedures to follow when planning to utilize video interviewing? Companies can use the following outline;

- The company selects candidates for video interviews.
- Arrangements for an interview are scheduled at home with your own webcam, a company office, an offsite location with a webcam setup, or via a webcam sent to the applicant.
- A tutorial will provide instructions on the webcam and the interview.
- There will be 10 - 15 questions related to the job the company is hiring for.
- The applicant will have 30 seconds to read the question and two minutes to respond.

Additionally, here are some suggestions on how to get ready for a video interview and how to make sure your interview goes well.

- Review all the instructions. Ask for help (which is typically available online or by telephone) if you're not sure how the webcam works or if you have questions.
- Follow the directions.
- Dress appropriately in professional interview attire, just like you would for an in person interview.
- Practice. If you have a webcam, record yourself to see how you appear on camera.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the lighting.
- Look at the camera, not down at the desk or table.

It's important to remember that a video interview is a real interview, just like when you interview in an office. Your answers will be weighed and selection decisions will be made, just as they would if the interview was in person. In fact, given that the interview can be scored and reviewed, it can be even more important than a

typical first round phone or screening interview. Review more advice and suggestions on how to prepare for a video interview, so it will be positive experience and so you'll make a good impression on what could be your future employer. The internet helps make many work processes easier, and one of them is interviewing job candidates. While online interviews are still not the norm, an increasing number of companies are choosing web or video conferencing as a way of holding their first interview with job applicants. This way of interviewing is particularly useful for companies that routinely need to hire from outside the state or from other countries.

As companies usually pay for the initial expenses of a candidate going for their first interview, this cost can be saved by holding an interview online. However, when you're interviewing for a job online, there are some considerations that you need to take before getting started;

**1. Choose your web or video conferencing software carefully** - Job interviews are stressful, and you don't want to add to your candidate's worries by choosing a complicated online meeting or video conferencing tool. Unless you're interviewing for a technical position, you should assume that your applicant isn't very familiar with web conferencing technology. A good idea could be to write a brief tutorial on how to attend the web conference and send that along with the interview invitation.

**2. Make sure that you can be seen on video** - One of the great advantages of video conferencing is that it helps you feel like you're in the same room with your interviewee, regardless of where they're actually located. To put your candidates at ease, make sure that you can be seen at all times during the interview, so they don't feel like they're talking by themselves. Remember to look friendly and keep your body language professional, as you would if the interviewee was sitting right in front of you.

**3. Watch your surroundings** - This is especially true if you're interviewing from home or another remote location. Ensure that you have a neat background free of distractions. Remember that this video interview will be the candidate's first look into the company, and if your location doesn't look professional, it will give the impression that the organization itself is messy, regardless of where you are at the time of the interview.

**4. Look professional** - When interviewing online, make sure that you conform to your company's dress code. This means that if jeans aren't allowed, you shouldn't

be wearing jeans even if that won't be showing on camera. Remember that perhaps you will have to stand up to grab a document and your entire outfit will be seen. Show respect to the interviewee and the company alike by adhering to the dress code and making sure that you will look just as you would if you were interviewing from the office.

**5. If there is no video and more than one interviewer, identify yourselves before speaking** - The interviewee isn't yet familiar with your voices, so it's a good idea to introduce yourselves before speaking at least in the beginning of the interview so the interviewee knows who they're addressing. Chances are that your candidate will have done some research into their interviewers, so by ensuring that the candidate knows who's speaking, you will get answers that have been properly formulated and are specifically targeted by the job seeker.

### **7.3. The Basics of Recording Interviews**

Starting with an introduction, remember that filming an interview is more than just filming someone answering questions. It requires a good interviewer, who understands the social aspects of interviewing and can make the interviewee feel at ease. With the selection of interviewees, first find a suitable interviewee. The best interviewees are passionate and articulate when they speak. If you get bored listening to someone, chances are the audience for your film will be bored too! If it's possible to do so, have the interviewee sign an Appearance Release before you begin filming. If it's not possible, do it after the interview. An Appearance Release gives you permission to use the footage you shoot. Next, companies should decide on their questions. Generate a list of questions to ask. What information do you want viewers to learn from the person you have chosen? Try to think of open-ended questions rather than ones that produce yes or no answers. In terms of choosing the location, think about where you will conduct the interview. How can the background communicate additional information about the person you are interviewing? Also take into account the proper lighting and sound that the place will allow. Arrange to film your subject in the place you have chosen to conduct the interview.

It is also important to frame your camera angle. Position the person to achieve a shot that looks good to you. Make sure you can see the person's face.

- The conventional framing for an interview is in a medium close-up (MCU, from center of the chest to the head). Sometimes we also see them framed in

close-ups, medium shots, and wide shots. Demonstrate each shot by drawing it.

- Many people feel it is awkward or amateurish to leave too much headroom at the top of the frame. In a medium close-up, the eyes are positioned 1/3 of the way down the frame, which leaves little to no headroom. Demonstrate by drawing.
- The background you choose for an interview can make a shot more informative and is therefore very important. Try to pick a background that reinforces the content of the interview or tells us something about the subject. Try not to position the interviewee in front of a window.

When setting up for shooting;

- Find a suitable background to place the interviewee in front of. The background is your chance to make the shot more informative. It should either reinforce the content of the interview, or echo the character of the interviewee.
- Set up your camera and position the interviewee against the background. This is perhaps the most difficult part of filming interviews. Here are some tips:
  - Always make sure that the interviewee is brighter than the background. If the background is too bright, then the interviewee's face will be too dark. Here are some additional tips for avoiding too bright a background:
    - Never position the interviewee with a window (or other light source) behind him/her. If you can, try to have the interviewee facing toward the window (or light source)
    - If you are outside, film with the sun at the interviewee's back. Use the PhotoFlex to bounce light into their face. This will eliminate "Raccoon Eyes".
  - Position the Interviewee. Place the interviewee slightly off center.
  - Position the Interviewer. If the interviewee is on the right side of the image, position the interviewer on the left side of the camera. If the interviewee is on the left side of the image, position the interviewer on the right side of the camera. In either case, the interviewer should sit or stand as close to the camera as possible.
  - Tell the interviewee to always look at the interviewer, and never directly into the camera.

- The camera should be positioned at or just below eye level of the Interviewee.
- Once you are satisfied with the image, you can begin the interview.

When starting the recording, make sure your sound is clean. You are now ready to begin filming. Ask your subject if he or she is ready. Press record on the camera. It should roll for a few seconds before you begin to speak. Here are some recording tips;

- The camera operator should always start recording button before the Interviewer begins asking questions. To guarantee this, the interviewer should never start asking questions until the camera operator gives the signal.
- The camera operator should not move the camera or use the zoom while the interviewee is speaking, unless there is reason to do so. If you want to change the image size, do your adjusting while the interviewer is asking his or her next question. Some appropriate times to move the camera or zoom during an interview are:
  - If the interviewee starts becoming emotional: It is appropriate to zoom in here so we can see the interviewee's face in more detail.
  - If the interviewee moves while he/she is speaking: It is appropriate to move the camera to keep a good composition
  - If the interviewee points to something off screen: Sometimes it is appropriate to zoom out to keep the hand movements in the frame. Use your own judgment.
- Always pay close attention to the sound in the headphones. Watch out for distracting background noises. Change locations if you have to. If there is an unexpected background noise that overpowers the interviewee's response, have the interviewer ask the question again.
- Never stop recording until at least 10 seconds after the interviewee has stopped talking. You never know, they might add something important. You also need to give the editor a little bit of extra time so they have enough footage to make the cut in the right place.

When ready to conclude the interview, continue to roll at least 10 seconds after the interviewee answers the last question. When you are finished with interview, thank your subject and replay the tape for him or her.