Guidance for Interviews by Video Conference

Preparing for your Video Call

Given the recent changes to working practices as a result of COVID-19 and the more general trend toward remote working, it is now likely that most – if not all – of your interviews will be conducted by video call. When preparing for an interview it is important to consider the practicalities of video calling and your environment as giving the wrong impression is now easier than ever.

55 percent of communication is nonverbal, and a further 38 percent is conveyed through tone of voice; your words only amount to seven percent. In short, the way you present yourself is extremely important, even in a video interview.

Once a meeting starts, try to avoid changing anything mid-call – be this lighting, camera angle, hairstyle – as this will be distracting. The guide below helps you to get set up so when you are on your call, the only thing you need to focus on is what you want to say.

Lighting

It is best to start with lighting as that may dictate where you are sitting. An ideal set up would be with your computer in front of a window. Make sure that light is hitting your face straight-on (not coming from behind you). If natural lighting isn't possible, try to use three soft light sources: two behind your web cam (one on the left, one on the right) and one right behind you.

Master eye contact

We are innately conditioned to show attention to people by looking them in the eye when they speak, and to nod and smile. This is never more important than when on a video call. Remember that when you make eye contact during a video conference, it should be with your web camera – NOT the person's face on your computer! Raise your camera to eye level. Use a set of books, a stool, or a higher table to make sure your camera is at the same level as your eyes.

Dress code

Dress as you would in the office and in line with your working culture. A video interview should be no different to an in-person interview. What you wear may show up differently on video, so consider avoiding brightly coloured/stripped clothing or large pieces of jewellery that can be distracting. Even if only your face and shoulders are in the frame, you never know if you will need to stand up for some reason so dress well from head to toe.

Surrounding environment

Consider the message your background sends: try to keep it neat, simple and tidy. Things should be clean and organised behind you, and not a distraction to the caller. Similarly, your desk should be clean and tidy allowing you to focus fully on the call. However, a bare empty room can create a tinny sound to the audio, so a furnished room is better.

Avoid distractions

Try to find a quiet and private space where you are unlikely to be interrupted, ensure that your internet connection is stable (at least 1 megabits per second), that other phone or computer notifications are on silent and that all other applications, browsers and downloads are switched off on your computer. Once on the call, you might find it easier hiding your video preview from yourself so as not to get distracted by your appearance.

Test, and have a backup plan

Test your setup to prepare. Most video call providers have an option for previewing your video before the call starts, but you can also use the camera function on your computer. However, no matter how many times you test your video interview software, problems can still occur. If video or audio functions aren't working, internet access becomes unstable or surroundings are no longer conducive to an interview, have a failsafe in place. Whether you default to a phone call or switch to an alternative meeting provider, ensure you have an alternative communication method. It may be useful to have a couple of alternative video calling apps on your phone in case your computer crashes.