



A hiring manager's guide
to remote interviews

Introduction

Although the Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact economies across the globe, some industries are largely untouched. These companies are now turning to technology to maintain business continuity during this uncertain time.

Whilst the idea of a remote interview, for example by Skype or Zoom, may seem more relaxed on paper, in practice, the same rules and protocols apply as in any face-to-face interview. Here are our top tips for hiring managers when interviewing remotely.



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Host your own tech rehearsal

Always check your equipment in advance. You'll give a very poor first impression to candidates if you dial in at the last moment, only to discover you have faulty speakers or you've got to scramble to plug in the charger before the battery goes flat.

Similarly, not appearing to know how to turn on your camera is frustrating for the candidate – who will undoubtedly be nervous and well-prepared – and will make you come across as unprofessional and under-prepared. Charge your laptop or tablet the night before and keep the charger plugged in for the duration, just to be on the safe side. If this is your first remote interview, ask a colleague to have a dry run with you in advance.

Be mindful of what background you will have during the interview. Microsoft Teams and Zoom have the option to blur the background, and some allow you to choose a background from a range of options. Pay attention to the lighting, too. Position the camera to make sure you do not have light sources behind you since that will leave your face in shadow.

Dress to impress

On the day of the interview, dress professionally, wearing the same interview attire as you would for an in-person interview. When choosing what to wear, think of how it will show up in the video. Does it look distracting?

Even though black is slimming, neutral tones like grey, or light pastels like lilac or blue are good options. White is a bad choice because it can be too visually overwhelming.

Patterns that look great in person don't always translate well on camera. Avoid small, busy prints, which can look blurry on video. Other patterns like pinstripes and plaid are also difficult to see on video and can make your interviewee dizzy.

Be prepared and have a strategy

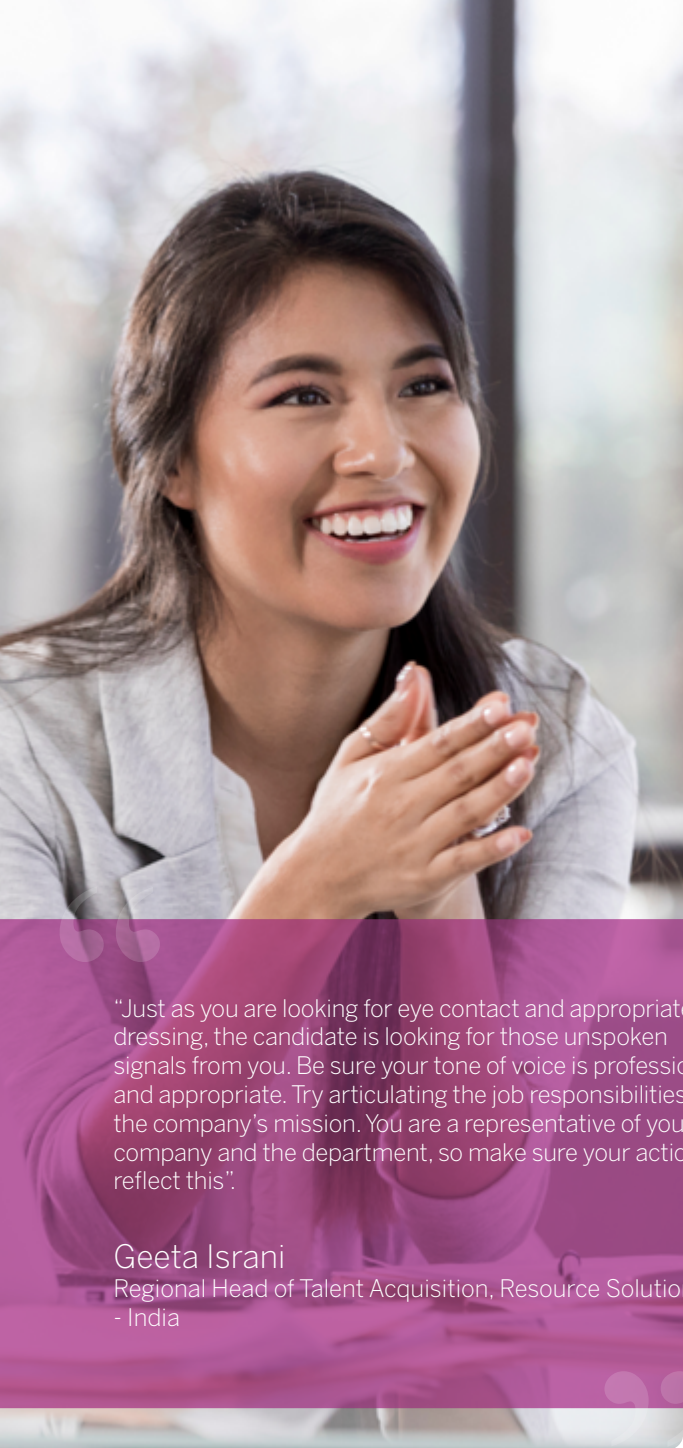
Make the most of the time you've got available. Don't use the time asking for factual things that you can find out by reading the resume. Instead, read through the resume in advance and come up with the topics you want to talk to them about. For example, does the candidate have experience or education in a different field or industry? What benefits would that have for this role?

If you feel the candidate's resume is overwhelmed by content, look at itemising which roles you're more interested in knowing about, and why they left, and make sure you ask those questions. Choose specific competency or behavioural questions that you can use for all your candidates. This way, you've got a good level of detail that can pair the individuals and how well they've answered those questions, rather than making up a question each time you talk to a different candidate.



“Remember to ask about your interviewee's aspirations, in two to three years, what role would they like to see themselves in? It's a great way to gain insight into what is motivating the individual and opens the way for you to highlight personal development and progression opportunities in your team”.

Adam Whitehouse
APAC Operational Learning &
Organisational Development
Manager, Resource Solutions



Be mindful of your body language

Don't become distracted by your own image on the screen. It's tempting to keep checking your own image in the corner of the screen to make sure you look right, but to the interviewee, it will feel as if you are not looking at them.

Check yourself briefly on the screen when the camera first turns on, but then turn your attention to the camera. Practise looking into the camera rather than at the screen, so you appear to make eye contact on video. If using a laptop with a camera above the screen, you will look slightly off-centre to your interviewer unless you remember to keep looking up. Lean slightly towards the camera so that the interviewer can get the best possible view of you and your facial expressions.

Show enthusiasm – but subtly. Having your hands in view show openness, and it's good to smile and show interest. But speak clearly and don't rush. It's all too easy to unintentionally interrupt someone on a video call (more so than in person), so give clear signals that you have finished speaking so your interviewer knows it is their turn to speak again. You could do this by sitting back a little from the screen as you finish, marking a decent pause, or even saying something like 'I hope that's answered your question' to signal the end of your speaking turn.

"Just as you are looking for eye contact and appropriate dressing, the candidate is looking for those unspoken signals from you. Be sure your tone of voice is professional and appropriate. Try articulating the job responsibilities and the company's mission. You are a representative of your company and the department, so make sure your actions reflect this".

Geeta Israni
Regional Head of Talent Acquisition, Resource Solutions
- India

Communicate openly

Think through what you want to communicate to the candidates, and not just about the process but also link into employer brand. Introduce yourself, give a bit of an introduction to your background or role. Create an environment where the candidate feels comfortable, discussing details about themselves. In a sense, you're reciprocating by talking through relevant topics that will engage the candidate and make them want to join your team.

Give the candidates an indication of how long the interview should take, how long the process is likely to be, how many candidates you might be looking at, how many stages there are, or if there is a test. You may also discuss what availability the candidate has so that you can look to configure the timing to match their needs.

“Have a plan going into the interview and communicate it in a way that will make your candidate feel comfortable. It is important to incorporate critical themes such as company values and expectations of the role into your plan while at the same time providing an open and honest view of the opportunity as a whole”.

Kavi Rai
APAC Head of Talent Acquisition,
Resource Solutions

Remove distractions

It's vital to choose a clear background that's free of distractions. Make sure to remove distracting items from the camera's field of view because you want the focus to be on your face and what you're saying during the interview. Avoid windows and walls full of posters. Instead, a solid wall is an ideal background.

If you have pets or small children, make sure they have someone who can watch them safely so they don't cause any disruptions. Your surroundings should match the brand that you want to portray.

Another big distraction during a remote interview is your mobile phone. Be respectful to the candidate –don't check your phone, and make sure it's on silent. You also need to switch off all the notifications on your computer.



“Be mindful that whilst you are assessing the candidate's suitability for the role and company, they are also assessing whether they would like to work for our business over another. Ensure you dedicate your full time and attention for the duration of the interview”.

Serena Pook
EMEA Head of Talent Acquisition, Resource Solutions

Give the candidate time

When interviewing remotely, it's hard to identify social cues. Pause to ensure the candidate is done with their response, before moving onto the next question.

Allow the candidate to ask questions or talk through any issues or reservations they might have. Maybe think about how we're phrasing those topics rather than asking, "do you have any questions". You can connect that with employer brands. For instance, how do you feel your current employer would differ from our business? What would you hope to get exposure to when you in this new role that you're not getting in your current role? To attract the top talent, think of connecting these questions with key selling points around the role, rather than asking the standardised, "do you have any questions" that they will hear everywhere else.

Reinforce your employer brand

In today's competitive hiring landscape, a well-defined brand will help companies stand out from other businesses that also hope to attract top talent. Your reputation as an employer can be observed as early as the interview process. If your interview process reflects and strengthens your company's brand - instead of detracting from it - you can gain a competitive edge in recruitment.

Most companies have a careers page on their website, but only a few highlight their employer brand. The voice and design of the webpage should reflect your organisation's mission and values. Highlighting top performers via articles would be a great way to demonstrate your brand, allowing job seekers to learn about featured employees' career growth and overall experience working for the company.

“Don't forget to sell your organisation during a remote interview. Share stories of how your organisation has adapted to this crisis. This is also a great way to showcase the culture, entrepreneurial spirit, and team-based spirit of the organisation and its people”.

Sally Martin
Global Head of Talent Acquisition,
Resource Solutions



Candidate experience in the expectation economy

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Technologies that can help

Sonru

Sonru is a video interview tool that has invested heavily in design, user experience, and security. Sonru offers one-way interviews and live interviews, although 99% of interviews set up are one-way. Candidates log in to read and record their answers without having to be online at the same time as the interviewer.

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) exceeds the capabilities of Skype, leading to Microsoft announcing that Skype for Business Online will retire in July 2021. MS Teams provides a great out-of-the-box video conferencing solution, providing a strong option for two-way, live video interviews.

Launchpad

Launchpad is a well-established provider of video-based assessment tools and has evolved considerably since its launch. Its core video interviewing suite includes:

- On-demand video interviewing
- Interview self-scheduling
- Live video interviewing

Interviewing without boundaries

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