Tips for A Successful Video Interview

Without proper preparation and practice, the virtual job interview can go south for even the most qualified applicant. Here are 10 steps to ace the nuances of the video conferencing environment so you can concentrate on showing why you are the best candidate.

1. Set the stage. A first impression is made in the first 7 seconds of a meeting. Before you turn on your video, ensure you have done everything possible to show up as your brilliant and authentic self. Choose a pleasant, uncluttered space in your house or office where the background frames you nicely and speaks to who you are. Add a touch of color with a plant or cut flowers. Books, diplomas, awards, and artifacts that speak to your expertise are nice when used sparingly. A framed family photo hints at your private life.

2. Learn how to work the video platform. You may be a wizard on Zoom. But what if the interview is on MS Teams? Cisco WebEx? You may run into problems if you do not practice. The user controls are not the same and you may run into snags with connections, camera, and audio settings.

3. Calibrate your lighting. That means a light source facing you, not behind you. Use LEDs not fluorescents which cast nasty shadows. Play with soft fill lights from each side of your face for an even glow. In daytime, find the best natural light sources, but do not sit with a window at your back, instead face it.

4. Find a flattering angle. Place the webcam lens at eye level or slightly above. Looking down is not only unbecoming to just about anybody but a supermodel, but the webcam lens will show parts of your ceiling, air vents and random fixtures which detract from your image. If you are using a laptop, place it on books or boxes until you achieve the right height.

5. Look at the camera. Avoid looking at the screen.   Tape an image of eyes or a loved one behind the lens to draw your gaze. If you wear glasses, lessen the glare by placing the angle of the light slightly above your head.

6. Check your sound. Whether you use the integrated webcam microphone, a headset, earbuds, or podcast mic, do a sound check before connecting. Audio problems are a common time waster. Rooms with high ceilings create echoes. Avoid background noise makers such as air conditioners, fans, and clocks.

7. Use virtual backgrounds with caution. If you are doing a video conference while sitting on your bed with your dog, you may benefit from a virtual background more suited to your business. But note that unless you use a green screen, your image may pixilate and meld with the background scene with unwanted results. Keep it simple and clean. The focus should be on you, not your background.

8. Dress as you would for an interview in person. When you dress the part, your mindset follows. Dress from top to bottom as you would for an interview in real life. This will affect your presence on the screen in ways you cannot imagine. Pick colors that complement your skin tone and emit visual cues. Red, orange, and cobalt blue are high energy colors that denote confidence. Avoid busy patterns and floral prints.

9. Wear makeup. That is right. Even men should apply translucent powder to blot greasy skin (no one will know). Generally, women benefit from a touch of color on cheeks and lips. Keep a mirror nearby to check on your face and hair before connecting.

10. Watch your body language. You are on screen for the duration of the video call, so your gestures, hand movements and posture will be on view and speak volumes. Frame your shot so you can use your hands to gesture when appropriate. But remember that slow internet connections can distort and blur quick movements.

Keep in mind that most professional business video calls can be achieved with the equipment you already have on hand. The key is to know how to use what you have.

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