

## **Video Interview Tips**

Here at the NFU Mutual we are making use of video interviews to allow us to continue to hire during the lockdown and we thought we should share some top tips to help you perform at your very best.

Whether you're confident in your interview technique, or this is your first time on the job market, video interviews will feel different, but they don't have to be stressful! With some practice and by following our advice, you'll be able to perform just as well as being in a face to face meeting.

### **Find a quiet, private, well-lit place, free from possible interruptions.**

A lot of us are adjusting to work from home, and I'm sure many of you will have funny examples from internal video calls or children or pets getting involved in the meetings. Whilst no doubt, we are all accepting of these things, remember that this IS an interview, so minimise the chances of this happening. Close the door of the room you are in and put a note on the outside as a reminder!

If you do find yourself with a rogue toddler, or a keen puppy, don't panic. pause, apologise and remove them from the environment. If needs be, mute the microphone and turn the camera off whilst you remove the distraction and then re-focus on the conversation.

### **Ensure your internet connection is stable.**

We aren't always in control of our internet connection. But there are a few things you can do to give yourself the best chance. If possible, have your technology hard wired into the router via an ethernet connection. It reduces the chances of your wi-fi dropping out.

If you have the capacity to stop any downloads, turn off streaming apps (Netflix, Xbox, Speakers etc) then do so. This may not be possible if they are being used to entertain Children during your interview, but they all free up bandwidth and help to give a more seamless experience.

### **Check that you can hear everyone.**

I regularly mute the speakers on my laptop. Mainly so that I don't get a "ping" everytime I get a new email, or someone connects with me on LinkedIn. I've also lost count of the number of times I've gone into a virtual meeting and can't hear anyone. I've enabled my microphone, my speakers are on and the video is working, but I can't hear the sound.

Low and behold, it's because I've muted the laptop. I've also had colleagues whose audio hasn't worked at all due to incompatibility issues so have had to revert to a phone or tablet for video calls.

Don't find this out 5 minutes before your interview is due to start!

### **Test your technology.**

This is an extension of the above point, but it is critical. You may be using a platform defined by the interviewer that you haven't used before. Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams or a proprietary piece of software. Make sure that you can log in, if possible, do a trial run with family or friends, but also make sure you have a base level of understanding.

If you need to do a presentation as part of your interview, do you know how to share your screen? Does your laptop / computer have the necessary plug-ins and are they up to date.

Do all of this ahead of time. At **LEAST** 24 hours, if not longer. If there are issues, it's much better to let your interviewer know with plenty of time to spare in case alternative arrangements need to be made.

Whilst we are talking about tech. Make sure everything is fully charged! There is nothing like a mad scramble for a charging cable to interrupt your flow.

### **Don't have awkward messages or emails pop up.**

If you are sharing your screen, make sure that you close down background applications and browsers that aren't necessary. You don't want an email to pop up on your screen from a friend or family member that wouldn't be suitable for work. You also don't want to break your train of thought.

Even if you aren't sharing your screen, it is best to remove all of those distractions. You should be focused on reading your interviewers reactions, not on reading the timings from the virtual pub quiz you might be doing later.

### **Place your phone in silent mode.**

You wouldn't have your phone on loud in a face to face interview. So don't in a virtual interview either. It's the one thing that is unforgivable in my opinion. Put it on silent, or better still, turn it off or leave it in another room altogether.

Having it set to vibrate is just as bad. It's an equal distraction to the phone ringing.

If you absolutely need to be contactable, then leave the phone with a partner or friend so that they can screen your message or help out in the meantime.

### **Dress professionally.**

If Pyjamas and hoodies have become your “work outfit” of choice of late, then make the effort to put on appropriate interview attire. You might not need a tie (ask the opinion of the person arranging the interview first) but you should definitely not be in a t-shirt and shorts.

First impressions really do count, so make sure you dress as well as possible. **EVEN** if you think this is a conference call that isn't using video. The information given to you could be wrong and there would be nothing worse than finding you have to be on video and you are sat in your favourite onesie.

Not least, we all feel more like we are in “interview mode” when we are dressed for the occasion.

Wear your video interview outfit during your trial run so you can get feedback from your friend or family member about how it looks on screen. Bright colours can be a distraction as can patterns.

### **Maintain good eye contact and body language.**

Maintain “eye contact” by looking directly into the camera instead of at the screen or at your own photo. This takes some practice, as our natural instinct is to look at the screen! Once you get used to this, your interviewer will feel like you are looking directly at them. Keep good posture, sitting with your back straight, feet on the ground and arms resting in a natural position.

### **Show that you are engaged with your audience.**

Nod, smile, make affirmative statements. It can be easy to switch off on video calls as you aren't in the same room as the person you are talking to. This can also apply to the people conducting the interview. By interacting in a natural way, you are more likely to keep both yourself and your audience engaged in the conversation.

Not least, they may also be busy taking notes and thinking of questions, so audible cues that you heard are a great way to help them out too.

### **Use hand gestures when appropriate.**

We all communicate with our hands, so don't feel like you must sit on yours. But **DO** think about how closely you are sat to the screen. Make sure that

the camera is set far enough back that if you are a “hand talker” you aren’t blocking off the rest of your face from the camera!

Using gestures also makes it more interesting for the interviewer and can help to demonstrate your passion for a particular subject.

### **Speak. Then Pause.**

It’s important that you can be heard clearly, so project your voice and make sure that your interviewer can hear everything you are saying. Bear in mind as well that there can be a slight delay with video chats. As such, when you speak, make sure that you leave a pause at the end of the answer so that your interviewer can lead up with any questions they may have.

Resist the temptation to jump straight in as well after they have spoken. It’s easy to talk across somebody when you aren’t face to face and it can lead to a slightly stilted conversation.

Make sure they have finished their point and then you can give them your well-structured response.

### **Have a drink to hand.**

My final and most obvious tip seems like a simple point. You would have a glass of water offered to you in an interview, so have one to hand here as well. If nothing else, taking a drink of water can buy you some thinking time whilst coming up with examples for the questions you are asked.

It is a much more natural thing to do than staring blankly at the screen whilst trying to think of your response.

By practicing and executing the above tips, you will put yourself in a fantastic position to excel in your interview! Be confident and give yourself the best chances of securing your next job.