

# 10 Tips to Prepare for an IT Job Video Interview

[CIO](#) — Video interviews, while not new, are becoming an increasingly mainstream option in IT as companies look for ways to shorten the hiring cycle and lower costs.

According to research from the Aberdeen Group, 32 percent of organizations participating in firm's talent acquisition study invested in video interviewing this year, compared to 21 percent in 2012.

More employers, recruiters and hiring managers are turning to this technology because of the time involved in finding the perfect candidate. "Everybody is out of time. Bringing somebody in for a face-to-face interview is time-consuming -- not just the interview, all the logistics of synchronizing calendars, getting settled &. By comparison, the video interview is easy and flexible. Here in NYC, just clearing the candidate for entrance into the office building requires a few minutes," says Donald Burns, a resume writer, executive career coach and strategist.

Whether you use Skype or another video platform, you need to certain both your video and your interview skills are up to the task. Don't worry, though, CIO.com has you covered. We've outlined what you need to put yourself at ease and crush that interview.

## Different Types of Video Interviews

### Asynchronous Interview

Asynchronous interviews, or one-way interviews, offer employers the ability to set up a set a series of questions in advance, either via text or video, then candidates can record responses to the questions at a time of his/her own choosing.

From an employer's perspective, this allows them to screen many more candidates than they would be able to in a traditional way -- video or otherwise. They are free to view it on their own schedule and bring the key stakeholders into the loop sooner. It helps to get the hiring managers looking at candidates faster by cutting out a phone interview or two.

That phone interview process can take one to three weeks to set up depending on the availability of the candidate, the recruiter and the hiring manger, according to Chris Young, CEO and founder of AsyncInterview, a Web-based video interviewing platform provider. "It saves on the scheduling hassles that typically take place with those early-round interviews. Many clients use this to replace that phone interview," says Young.

From the candidate's perspective, this allows them to record their interview at the most convenient time and place for them. It also allows the candidates to get feedback and move through the hiring process more quickly. However Burns says, "Sometimes the

video 'interview' is totally one-sided. A question appears on the screen, you are given a minute to think about it, then your answer is recorded -- ready or not. This method can rattle some people, with no visual or audio cues from the interviewer."

## **Two-Way Video Interviewing**

Live interviewing helps an employer remove geographical barriers when looking for potential employees and is normally used later in the interview process right before hiring managers are about to fly in their top picks as a way to justify money spent on travel.

This isn't a substitute for a face-to-face interview, according to Young. In the ideal situation an employer would fly in only their top two candidates. "It's simply a more efficient and cost-effective way to get to the final stage," Young says.

The important things to remember as a candidate, according to Young, is that although you're doing a video interview all of the prep work involved with a typical interview still applies, but there are some extra things you need to do to ensure the best possible outcome.

## **Create the Right Video Environment**

The first step is to find a suitable place and then remove and all distractions from that area. Eliminate background noise in this area. Your dog may be adorable, but you don't want him barking at a passerby as you're interviewing for you next job. Put your pet in another part of the house.

Ask the other people in your vicinity to be as quiet as possible during your interview timeframe. Get rid of any digital distractions as well, your mobile device or applications like email that could be running on your desktop or laptop PC.

Young says that if there is some disruption, don't dwell on it. "If something does go wrong, remain calm and poised under the pressure."

## **Setting the Shot**

When you interview in an employer's office you're entering their environment, but the video interview gives them a glimpse into yours. Look carefully at where you will be shooting your video and what can be seen in the background. "Be sure to check your own video playback and see how you and your surroundings look. I conduct many practice interviews via Skype video. It looks bad when your surroundings are cluttered and disorganized. I discovered this about myself: I think I'm pretty neat and organized, but my background looked cluttered. I just cleared out everything behind me, just a white wall behind me now," says Burns.

## **Check your Lighting**

Lighting is critical, so make sure your placement is optimal. One of the things that can work against you is that you may appear as a silhouette because you're sitting next to a window or there is a lot of light behind you. "Getting the light in front of you can be challenging to a lot of people," says Young.

"Your best bet is to check your own video playback and make adjustments, according to Burns. If you turn on an incandescent lamp, the whole scene might look redder. Turn on a fluorescent lamp, and you see more blue. The camera perceives light differently than the human eye," says Burns.

## **Do a Practice Shoot**

Rehearsing for your video performance, according to Burns, is an essential part of pulling off a great interview. Do video tests and then examine your footage. You'll likely find something you need to adjust. It could be your tapping foot, a stand-offish look on your face or something like lighting placement or your Metallica poster on the wall.

## **What Should You Wear**

Experts agree that you should treat this like a regular interview and wear what you would have worn to their office. Dress completely, Young has seen hiring managers ask a candidate to step back from the camera bit and if you're wearing a dickey, you may feel and look foolish.

## **Use a Quality Camera**

Many of today's laptop, tablets and smartphones come with a webcam installed and that may be fine, but make sure during the testing process. You may find that the quality isn't up to snuff.

"I used to use the webcam built into my laptop. Frequently these cameras shape you and your surroundings like a fishbowl [lens] and that does not look good at all. I bought a \$40 webcam and positioned it a few feet from the computer. Now the images look perfectly normal," says Burns.

## **Common Video Interview Mistakes**

### **Not Looking at the Camera**

On prerecorded interviews, you get so used to looking at the computer screen, your notes or the keyboard that you're not focusing on the camera. Eye contact is an important aspect of engagement.

"It's distracting when an employer is watching an interview and the candidate is constantly looking down. Remain focused and look at the webcam on your machine,"

says Young. If you find it hard to focus on a little black dot on the frame of your laptop, "try adding a sticky note that says 'look up.' That can be very helpful," says Young.

## **Turn Off Your Mobile Devices**

Turn off your smartphone or, better yet, remove it from the scene altogether. A common mistake, Young says, is that mobile devices, even in vibrate mode, can be heard clearly during the video interview. Burns agrees and says that he regularly explains to clients that using your mobile device or even having it too close is simply an unnecessary distraction that can cost you in the interview. Just turn it off and remove it from the equation.

## **Stay Relaxed and Poised**

The video interview provides a channel for "nonverbal" communication that is not available via phone interview or a document such as a resume, bio or cover letter, according to Burns. How important is this nonverbal angle?

"Dr. Albert Mehrabian, author of *Silent Messages*, conducted numerous studies on nonverbal communication and concluded the following: Seven percent of any message is conveyed via words; 38 percent via tone of voice; and 55 percent via nonverbal elements such as facial expression, hand gestures, posture and so on. Even if those numbers are approximations, they do align with common sense and everyday experience. Although the video interview is not a perfect substitute for a face-to-face meeting, it's surely the next-best substitute," says Burns.

If you're about to go through this process and you're nervous, Young says, "Relax, there aren't many differences aside from lighting and environment from a regular interview." Above all don't fidget too much. A sticky note next to your camera with something like sit up straight or relax and focus on the camera can help you get the posture you want.  
Stay Aware of the Time

Another factor in the asynchronous format is that there may be time limits on how long you can take to answer a question or set of questions. "Be wary of those time limits; you don't want to answer too quickly but you also don't want to be cut off mid-sentence," says Young.

Many employers, according to Young, will allow a certain amount of time per question and this is simply to keep the interview moving along. They don't want a candidate taking 20 minutes on a response. In his experience while they don't give the questions out in advance, they do give the time limitations so if you're unsure, ask.

## **Interview Basics**

The remainder of the video interview is much like any other interviews. Some of the major keys to success are preparation, asking the right questions and knowing your

own value. You can read more on how to prepare for the executive IT interview here but below are the bullet points.

- Arm yourself with information on the company you're interviewing with.
- If possible, find out information about who specifically you will be interviewing with.
- Think about the questions a potential employer might ask and formulate solid answers for those questions.
- Practice with and get feedback from colleagues.
- Know what your best achievements are, tie those to the company's bottom-line and know how to articulate them.
- Be in control of your body language.
- Ask the right questions.
- Close strong and follow-up.

Many IT jobs will also include a technical portion of the interview. For more advice, check out [How to Prepare for \(and Ace\) the Technical Interview](#).