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Post Covid Resources

Virtual Interviewing

Overview

During the COVID-19 lockdown virtual interviews have been vital to moving the recruitment process forward. The success of this format has demonstrated its worth and that, even after restrictions are relaxed or lifted, virtual interviewing has many benefits in both time and cost.

There can be no doubt that virtual interviewing adds layers of complexity to an already difficult process. Even traditional face to face interviews needed careful planning and structure to get the best out of them and, despite modern, technology interviewing virtually creates barriers that make it more difficult to communicate, develop rapport and “read” your counterpart. Taking the time to understand and prepare for these issues will improve your interview experience and performance.

Key Points

1. Understand and be familiar with the technology platform
2. Be aware of your surroundings to avoid distraction and present a professional image
3. Structure is key, plan a structure, communicate it at the outset and stick to it.
4. Create engagement – give a feel for the business.
5. Prepare colleagues / co-interviewers to ensure you don't overlap, repeat, interrupt or go off at tangents
6. Take time to develop rapport and develop and relationship
7. Set expectations – be clear about the process, what you expect of the candidate and what they should expect of you. Stick to it.
8. Don't dither and don't try to wait it out

Make sure that you understand and can use the system that you have chosen

This may seem obvious but it happens a lot! First impressions count and the inability to actually connect effectively, always sets a bad tone for a remote meeting. Whether you are using Zoom, Teams or Skype, make sure that you understand how it works and test it with a colleague before hand. In addition, make sure that your candidate has all of the information needed to successfully join the call. Your chosen format may not be theirs so offer them the opportunity to contact you if they are not familiar with the format.

Beware of your surroundings

Again, an obvious one but something people do forget to prepare for. Visually check with your camera that what is behind you is appropriate and ensure that the image is getting enough light so that the other person can see you clearly. Test the microphone before starting the call to ensure that you can be heard clearly.

At present, most of us are conducting meetings of this nature from our home offices so ensure that meetings will not be disturbed by other family members.

Structure is key!

Face to face meetings tend to be broken up throughout the course of the process. Reception, site tours, a trip to fetch coffee or food. These natural breaks allow both parties to relax into the environment and subconsciously helps to set the tone for the meeting. Video meetings begin the minute that they connect so it is important to have a structure prepared to avoid any uncomfortable silences. Make sure that you take the time to talk through the structure of the meeting so that they understand their requirements over the course of the meeting. Additionally, taking the time to talk through the brief and company in more detail before moving into a Q&A will help the candidate to settle into the conversation.

Be prepared with the questions that you want to ask. Again, video interviews may not initially start and flow like a face to face interview, so knowing where you want to go with it from the outset will help to yield the information that you need.

Go the extra mile to create engagement

It can be very difficult for someone to get a “feel” for an employer or a sense of what the business is like and what it is like to work there from a virtual interview. There are a number of creative ways to build engagement with candidates and really sell your opportunity to them.

A simple way to give shop floor candidates a feel for your site and business is to make a short video giving an overview of the site, the layout and equipment – there’s nothing like seeing a shop floor humming with activity to give a sense of the place. For commercial or sales staff seeing their potential workspace and again an overview of production gives a flavour of the business. Lock down and social distancing changed the way all working areas looked and a cautious candidate will be reassured if they can see the safety measures put in place. In normal time links to social activities; perhaps clubs or staff events also give a sense of the company culture. These are things you normally sense when you walk through the door so make an effort to build that same engagement.

Prepare colleagues

Often, having more than one person conducting the interviews is beneficial. People focus on the process, more-so over video conferencing, so it can help to have a colleague who can observe proceedings and draw some thoughts regarding the interaction overall.

It is however imperative that your colleague/s are fully prepared for the format and questions that you will be asking in the meeting. In addition, you also need to highlight the key information points that you are looking to gain from the interview.

If your colleague decides to ask their own questions at conflicting times to yours then the flow and organisation of the meeting may be interrupted; so co-ordinate / script when each of you will speak and what areas you are going to cover. Additionally, it is important to outline the general mood that you are trying to create for the meeting to ensure that all parties are aligned.

Take the time to get to know them personally

The biggest surprise over recent weeks has been people’s ability to form genuine and positive professional relationships over the format without ever having met face to face. As in any interview, if you take the time to show a genuine interest in them as a person then they will relax and give you the best version of themselves.

Setting expectations

Again, as with any interview it is important to set clear expectations of the next steps and stick to them. If you have made the decision to conduct the full interview process remotely then outline when they will gain feedback and what the next steps will involve.

If however you feel that a face to face meeting is required in order to progress further it is important to outline that the conversation will be picked up as soon as the lifting of restrictions allow. If you feel that you have identified a candidate with real promise then make sure to keep in regular contact to see what else they have going on and to reiterate your strong interest. Be aware of the competition, if other organisations are conducting full campaigns remotely then this may result in the loss of the candidate.

Don't try to wait it out or dither

Even with the relaxing of restrictions some people are worried about recruiting in person. Waiting with unfilled vacancies is likely to damage your business and slow your recovery. Trust in your instincts and the technology to perform in the absence of face to face meetings. It is uncomfortable because it is different but the biggest recruitment success stories so far have been achieved by the individuals and organisations that have accepted the challenges, not been frozen by indecision and have formulated a plan that they are comfortable with.



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