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## Be Prepared to Perform In More Video Interviews

By Judy Rosemarin

Search firms nationwide are expected to rely more on video interviews to screen candidates due to the current reluctance or inability to use air travel. Given this, how can you be at your best in front of the cameras? Will you come across as credible or crummy? How can you get the butterflies out of your stomach?

Relax. The rules for interviewing on camera resemble those of traditional face-to-face interviews: Let the interviewer lead, listen carefully so you can connect your value to the employer's needs, ask pertinent questions, keep your answers succinct and to the point and show enthusiasm for the job.

The key difference, of course, is that the human interviewer isn't in the room. You're alone with a camera and monitor, instead of across the desk from a person, and that may feel strange. Says Alan Geller, executive vice president of Raines International, an executive-search firm in New York, "With the presence of a camera, a video interview can make you feel as if you're walking around without clothes...Once a camera is in the room, it's another pair of eyes and increased pressure to try and look good, yet feel comfortable."

And, even if you're used to participating in videoconferences, video interviews are more intense because the stakes -- your next job -- are high.

Use the following tips to come across effectively during an upcoming video interview.

### Prepare and Relax

Most people freeze in front of cameras, says **Joyce Newman, president of Newman Group**, a media-training firm in New York. To avoid this problem, "ease yourself into it, and try to make friends with the camera," she says. Giving the camera an affectionate name might help lighten the pressure. She also recommends practicing at home. Take out the camcorder that you use only on holidays and do some role-playing before going in front of the recruiter's camera.

Before any interview, you should prepare for the questions that you'll be asked. Re-examine who you are and the value you offer an employer. Be ready to discuss examples of accomplishments that illustrate what you can bring to the company.

Prior to the interview, find out how much time is scheduled and ask your recruiter or contact at the

employer for advice on how to make the best impression.

### **Consider Production Values**

Arrive early to check out the setting and get used to the new medium. Work with the technician and try different viewing angles.

A senior manufacturing executive in San Diego arrived 30 minutes early to interview via video with a firm in Pittsburgh. By looking at the monitor, he could tell the camera setup would show him at the end of a long conference table. Worried that he'd look too detached, he rearranged the camera and seat. "The impression I wanted to make was that of being more approachable and accessible," he says.

Because he had arranged a setting that helped him feel relaxed, he was able to focus on the conversation, not his appearance. You can't do that if you arrive five minutes before show time.

"Think about production values," says Peter Gray, search consultant at Futurestep, a recruiting service from executive-search firm Korn/Ferry International and The Wall Street Journal, publisher of this Web site. Try not to look down at the camera, since it's the least flattering angle. Put the camera at eye level to "give yourself a news-anchor look," Mr. Gray says. "It's all about making yourself look good on camera."

Futurestep screens candidates online and interviews qualified candidates via video in their homes. The service sends candidates an appliance about the size of an answering machine that hooks up to a telephone.

If your video interview is at home, select a room with an appropriate atmosphere. Examine the room from the camera's point of view. If there's anything inappropriate or unprofessional within the camera's range, hide it.

The purpose of any interview is to get another interview. You want to assure the recruiter that you're the right choice and he or she is safe in recommending you to the next level. Most interviewers are concerned about making the right decision. You need to help them.

### **Personal Appearance**

While some may worry about not being telegenic and looking five pounds heavier on camera, what influences your appearance most is whether you feel alert and comfortable.

Don't put on a new suit you haven't previously worn. If you aren't used to it, it might surprise you when you least expect it, says Ms. Newman. "If you've never sat down in it before, better not use it," she warns. Wear clothes that move with your body.

During the interview, glance at the monitor occasionally to check your posture. If you're slouching, sit up. If you're leaning to one side, straighten up. Entertainers often check monitors for feedback. You may be distracted because the monitor will reverse your image, so don't focus too much on yourself. Your attention should be on the camera and the interviewer.

You'll also need to add more oomph to your presentation. Cameras and television monitors have a way of sapping what would be considered normal enthusiasm in a traditional setting. Be sure to smile and use gestures, but not excessively. Gestures should underscore important information.

## The Time Factor

Time management is critical in video interviews. Most are scheduled to take about an hour. Be sure to address the interviewer's concerns as well as your own and leave time at the end for an unhurried, friendly close. Traditional interviews may begin with chitchat, but you may not have that luxury when the camera is rolling. You'll need to follow your interviewer's lead.

Another consideration is the time delay. Video interviewing can be like talking to someone overseas on the phone. A few seconds elapse between when the interviewer speaks and when you hear him or her. When the interviewer finishes speaking, stay quiet and listen to make sure he or she is truly finished. To be certain, let two seconds elapse before you reply.

"Because of the time delay, it's difficult to be spontaneous," says Mr. Geller. "You can't talk over the other person. Sounds seem to go only one way at a time, so be patient and listen. God gave us two ears and one mouth, so use them accordingly."

For most people, silence creates an inexplicable urge to talk. Don't. Running over someone else's words before they have finished implies that you think that what you have to say is more important than listening.

The upside to waiting and listening is that you can jot down notes to help you respond more effectively. Since most camera shots are from the middle of the chest up, the interviewer won't see you writing. Although you'll have to look at your notes while on screen, newscasters often refer to notes during a broadcast and this may make you seem more conscientious.

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