



THE ART  
OF THE  
VIRTUAL  
INTERVIEW



# The Key Challenge of Video Interviewing

## INTRODUCTION

As an executive, you know that no two interviews are alike. No matter the medium, you're tasked with putting your best foot forward, demonstrating that you'll be invaluable to an organization and that you're unequivocally the best fit for the role. Interviewing, whether in-person or by video, can pose challenges, and just because you're still in the comfort of your own home, doesn't mean that a video interview is any easier than an in-person interview.

In this guide, we'll be discussing the key challenges of video interviewing as well as preparing for your interview, behavior to be mindful of during your interview, and more tips and advice from industry professionals.

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## READING THE ROOM

In any interview, but especially for virtual ones, you really need to control the direction of the meeting. Practicing is just as important when preparing for a virtual interview, as people are more comfortable and feel freer to provide feedback and push-back because you're not in the same room. When everyone is remote, it becomes increasingly challenging to read the body language of those interviewing you.

Reality is augmented during a virtual interview as things that would be more natural in an in-person setting, such as a pause during a conversation, can suddenly seem like a very long pause. Alternatively, if you're speaking at a quick pace, everything you're discussing is going to seem lightning speed. Pacing is very important and considering both internal and external factors is critical.

Unlike an in-person interview, the person you're meeting with likely doesn't have your resume printed out, and with working from home becoming more predominant there could be additional cause for disturbance on either end. Maintaining attention and keeping the other side engaged during the interview is key.

**HOT TIP!**

**93%** of communication is non-verbal. Even if you're not talking, you're talking. Sit straight as opposed to bent forward. This is a sign of no confidence or being frustrated.

# MAINTAINING CONTROL & COMPOSURE

When you're trying to maintain control and composure and set the pacing of the interview, there are a number of techniques experts suggest in order to come across as authentic and genuine.



## BE THOUGHTFUL

While it might seem like a no brainer to take a beat and consider your response instead of blurting out the first thing that comes to mind, showing the interviewer that you're listening to the question being asked, processing what this means through the lens of their organization, and then replying in a way that is true to yourself, your experience, and your leadership style is key.

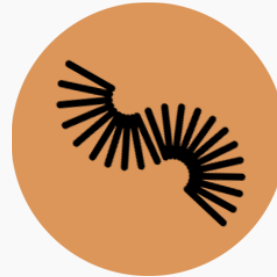
## HAVE CONVICTION

Something that you respond to has to come from the heart. Believe it or not, this makes a big difference when you're online. Avoid mumbling and speak in a way that demonstrates you're confident in your response.



## BE FLEXIBLE

While you should be prepared and have somewhat of an agenda in mind during the interview and know what it is you want to respond to, be flexible about how they want you to respond and what they're asking you to respond to. Flexibility is something that is very easy to lose when you feel like you're losing control over the situation. Being flexible also portrays a teamwork element and helps demonstrate to people that you're going to be easier to work with.



## DEMONSTRATE AUTHENTICITY

Consider how you're coming across to the interviewer. How do you provide some context behind your answers and bring in some personal examples.



## MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT

Have the interviewer engage in your experiences by how you answer their questions. Dictate the pace by mirroring the pace of the interviewer or panel themselves. For instance, if you have a slow questioner, you've got to make sure that you're thoughtful, slow to answer, but very weight heavy and driven in your responses.

Be inclusive by using peoples' names when speaking to them or answering one of their questions. A little goes a long way.



## SHOW ENTHUSIASM

This is where body language and being aware of your (virtual) surroundings is important. In person, this is commonly done by gesturing with your hands, but in a virtual capacity, you'll want this to come across on your face. It's crucial to sustain inclusiveness and draw people in.

## TELL A STORY

Everyone has a unique career journey, and much like the infamous "Elevator Pitch" or plot to any good television show, book, or movie, you should think about your own personal story line. You have a unique value proposition and ideas about what you can add to this role based on previous character development, so make sure to include your audience as they engage in your experience.





# How to Prepare for a Video Interview

*It's Hollywood time!* This is your chance to rise and shine to the occasion. Many interviews don't live up to their full potential because of valuable points lost during preparations. Think about what preparations a Hollywood star might take in terms of practice and attention to detail in order to make their performance stand out and live up to their potential. The same is true for virtual interviews.

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

If you're not used to doing things in this new, technology-friendly way, you might not consider some aspects of virtual interviewing that are easy to overlook.



### SELECT A HIGH-QUALITY CAMERA

And more importantly, make sure it's working! It's more common than you think to have camera and microphone issues. Invest in an external camera. Just because your finicky camera isn't up for the job, doesn't mean you shouldn't be.



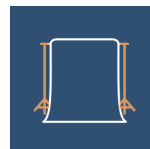
### CONSIDER THE SPEED OF YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION

At any given time during your interview, think about whether you have network doubts. If it's during peak hours, during the day, you may have a strong connection but too many people are using the connection at the same time. This could mean a pixelated picture or for your voice to drop in and out. If possible, try and have a fixed line and not a wireless connection.



### RECORD YOURSELF

Although you don't get the same feedback as you would if you were to rehearse your interview with someone in real life, you have the chance to practice and improve one step after the other. You can get the technology sorted before it's an issue and your tone of voice correct.



### CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE BACKGROUND

Having a great background can reinforce the image that you're portraying to your interviewer. Consider everything on screen as an extension of yourself and your personal brand.

HOT TIP!

While some people prefer to wear a headset while working and interviewing remotely, it might be something you want to reconsider. It may look as though you're playing video games in your basement as opposed to being a Global 500 Executive.

# SCRIPTING & STORYTELLING



Preparing content for a virtual interview is not unlike preparing for an in-person interview. Obviously, there are things we've been programmed to do before any interview that are still tried and true such as researching the company, checking out the LinkedIn profile of your interviewer, and what it is they do in their role.

Where virtual interviewing differentiates is in understanding the importance of scripting and storytelling. As we mentioned earlier, storytelling is a key way to keep your audience engaged and in keeping pace with the interview itself. To tell a story, you need a beginning, middle and end.

If an interviewer asks you, "Tell me about a time where you had to lead a team through a very difficult digital transformation," the script

is very important. Understanding that you have to walk the interviewer through your story and your journey around your example and the outcome of your example is important.

A good idea is to write out bullet points that paraphrase the meat of your journey, so you can memorize them, rehearse them repeatedly. As we mentioned earlier, this is particularly important over a virtual interview because you don't have the luxury of pausing to gather your thoughts as you work through a story—you want to get to the point as soon as possible.

Be careful about coming off as too casual about a situation for the role you're

The #1 thing people aren't aware of is their voice. The voice is the thing that connects to people through digital media. You don't get a chance to make a second first impression, so do your best to smile and have an upbeat mood and energy.

**HOT TIP!**

interviewing for. Be thoughtful about the words you use and the message that you're conveying to your audience. You don't want them to think you wouldn't be able to handle a more difficult situation in the role you're interviewing for.

Need help making your pitch, perfect?  
[Access \*The Perfect Pitch: The Executive's Guide to Selling Yourself\* here.](#)

From the Experts

## THE VIDEO INTERVIEW



**Simeon Wong**  
BlueSteps  
Career Advisor

### BE A HUMAN HIGHLIGHTER

*"Speaking from personal experiences, you may have a lot of things that you're proud of. It's like, 'My baby is the cutest in the world.' But you have to understand that to the other person that's on the other side of the call, it may not be important to them. And it's difficult to read that heart language, the body language that they show. So they might kind of disengage. You want to make sure that you err on the side of you've got three points, beginning, middle, end. And here's an example that I want to give you. Do you have any more questions? Can I answer more? Does that answer? You can clarify that, but make sure you're very concise."*



**Rainer Morita**  
BlueSteps  
Career Advisor

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE

*"Sit straight as opposed to bent forward, which is a sign of no confidence or being frustrated. Look into the camera and not onto your screen, which is a mistake that a lot of executives make."*

*And again, if you look down, that's not making the sign that you are the leader who is going to lead the organization through the next restructuring or a cost cutting exercise."*

*I find that executives are good at body language and hand gestures. They do it in business presentations. They do it in keynote speeches, but in interviews, they are struggling with it."*

# VIRTUAL INTERVIEW BEHAVIOR

## 1. ADDRESS “THE ROOM”

Even if there are people present who aren't asking questions, ensure that you're looking at them (to the best of your ability) and make sure you're attempting to address everyone. For example: “Thank you so much everybody in the room today. I appreciate your time.” Think of them as a part of your team and it reinforces the idea of inclusiveness.

## 2. NAME NAMES

Include the names of people who are in the room. It'll help them to stay engaged. When you come in and lead the interview, you're going to draw from everybody's strengths and comments.

## 3. BE INTERNALLY CONSISTENT

If there's one mistake you want to avoid at any cost, it's contradicting yourself.

## 4. BE AWARE OF TEAM DYNAMICS

It's important to know who is decision-making, who seems to be deferring to someone else, and any other dynamics within the interview you can be aware of.



## 5. MIRRORING

Unsurprisingly enough, there's a degree of psychology you can use to your advantage in a virtual interview. When police negotiate with someone who's holding a hostage, they simply repeat some of the words that the person is saying, because it denotes relevancy. While you're being invited to be here and not a hostage (we hope), you're here to prove your relevancy to the role and the organization.

## 6. KEEPING PACE

It's okay to go at the speed of the person interviewing you. It's important because different people in the room may have different speeds of thought processing.

## 7. BE A FACILITATOR

If you're being interviewed by more than one person, they might start to talk to each other about a project or something that's happened within the office. At this point you'll want to switch gears and become a facilitator.

# Ask the Experts



**Simeon Wong**  
BlueSteps  
Career Advisor

What should I wear?  
Should I dress the part of  
a “normal” interview?

*“I think dress the part. If it’s going to be a senior leadership role, there’s various schools of thought. My personal approach is that I don’t wear ties unless it’s say financial services*

*or traditionally more dressed up kind of a place. But simply because as a consultant, when I was working in management consulting, the business meetings that I was in were more of a business casual. Which is sort of the sport jacket and the dress shirt. I’m neutral on that. Wear a tie, or the female equivalent, if you feel comfortable. If it makes you confident, go ahead.”*



**Kathy Simmons**  
BlueSteps  
Career Advisor

How important is your  
background and where  
can I get an appropriate  
one?

*“I’m a big fan of Zoom and you have the ability to use a green screen and lots of different background options. And some of them actually come with*

*Zoom. I once had an interview with someone where they were lying on the bed in their bedroom, and it really didn’t go well. Having something a little more professional is probably helpful, you can buy the royalty-free pictures online and lots of different varieties of offices and places.”*



**Rainer Morita**  
BlueSteps  
Career Advisor

How do you balance  
confidence without  
coming across as arrogant?  
Underselling yourself vs being  
too self-deprecating?

*“My experience is that most executives or executive candidates tend to be too cautious. They tend to be not willing enough to run the risk, and my advice would be, be*

*more aggressive. And the reason is, these days, in order to overcome the hiring procrastination, you simply need to break with the status quo. You simply can’t deliver just 5% or 10% and consider this to be it. And well, confidence and having an aggressive pitch is the way to go. And you need to ask yourself before the interview to what extent, to what level are you taking it.”*



Final Tips

## BE CONSISTENT IN YOUR PERSONA

Your internal convictions and your passion about what you want to do need to drive what’s on your resume and the resume needs to drive what’s in your interview. The lineage of who you are needs to be very much aligned. Your value proposition is very important as well as how you storyline your value proposition. What value do you add to the company? Due to the nature of a virtual interview, you’ve got only one shot at this so you should have a story that starts with your conviction all the way to the interview and perhaps even carries over to LinkedIn. They need to understand what you’re about before you have your interview, because that will facilitate that awkwardness of being virtual.

Based on your LinkedIn and resume, they’ll have a glimpse as to what you’ve done in the past, what you want to do in the future, and how you will fit into the company. Since you don’t have that opportunity of that

interaction to engage with someone in real life, be very clear about your value proposition and find a way to make sure that you’re consistently communicating this during the interview—that’s going to be key.

## FOCUS ON YOUR VALUE

Radically focus on your value. The time is limited, and you don’t have a chance for long explanations and long introductions. Come to the table, present your ideas, state what your value is and how you make a difference in this organization versus other executives. And bear in mind that companies have hundreds of great candidates available and lined up from the outside. Make sure that in short interviews, you deliver a stellar performance and convey the image of a superstar. If that’s not the case, you are likely to remain in the crowd of the many great applicants, but not the one that the company is hiring.

Is your LinkedIn Profile optimized? [Access \*The Executive’s Guide to LinkedIn\* here](#)

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