



VIRTUAL RECRUITMENT

Top Tips for Candidates

INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Solace have been in regular contact with our Local Government colleagues, discussing the challenges and opportunities of recruitment during unprecedented times such as these.

This is new territory for everyone and what is clear to us is that there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

Views and expectations on etiquette, preparation, engagement and technology vary greatly from one individual, and one organisation, to the next. We also need to remember that not everyone is naturally comfortable in front of a camera.

With the use of technology being a cornerstone of the 'new normal', a key success factor is ensuring that both interviewee and interviewer are as comfortable as possible in the virtual format, so that candidate performance is not affected by the change of circumstance.

Our overarching advice therefore is to plan, test and communicate, being clear in your expectations throughout.

The following guide includes some thoughts and considerations we have developed with the sector. They may not all apply in all instances, but we hope that they will provide a useful starting point when considering recruitment in an environment where the norms of yesterday no longer apply.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VIRTUAL FORMAT

- You can have notes or prompts on your desk as they'll be out of shot - so why not?

GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME

- You're at home so you might be more relaxed - which is a good thing, but perhaps leave the room and come back in at the allotted time to get into 'interview mode.'

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

- If you're new to virtual interviews don't be afraid to tell the panel this, so that you can discuss the format and make sure you're clear on their requirements before starting.

THE LOOK MATTERS

- Dress appropriately
- Avoid wearing a white shirt or top - it makes contrast really hard and you want the interviewer/panel to see your expressions.
- Good lighting can help to ensure facial expressions are captured.
- Ensure you are in a quiet environment.
- If possible, try to find a neutral background.
- If you're unable to find a neutral background, use the background blur feature (most video-conferencing platforms have this feature) to avoid subconscious bias.
- For laptops and tablets try to position the camera at eye level or slightly above - you're not doing any typing so try a couple of boxes. You can also position the camera further away than you normally would to work so you're not just a floating head!

THE TECHNOLOGY PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Don't let technology obscure your interviewer's perception of your preparation. Ensure you're aware of the platform your interview is taking place on and practice using its functionality with a friend or family member prior to the interview. Functions like the sharing documents facility (when giving a presentation) can be tricky, especially when navigating between slides and documents.

"Don't attempt to conduct or do an online interview without practicing. It's not hard to hold an online dummy-interview with a friend to become familiar with the system provided. Use the same software package as the real interview to become familiar with the tools."

CONSIDERATIONS

- It can take several minutes for everyone to establish a reliable connection; it's not uncommon for people to have to logoff and login more than once to get a clear signal. This can take time, so allow plenty of time for the whole process.
- Consider using a headset, this will block out any unwanted background noise and help to ensure your voice is delivered clearly.
- If you're listening to a panelist, mute your microphone, this will help in managing the sound in the virtual space.
- There can be a lag between sound and vision; sometimes barely perceptible, sometimes significant. For instance lips and words may not synchronise, and sometimes a time lag between both parties can mean that the flow of conversation becomes disjointed.

STAY FOCUSED, STAY CALM

- Stay on track, concise in your answers and keep to time.
 - Non-verbal cues may be more difficult to pick up in a virtual setting.
 - Consider discussing this problem at the beginning of the interview and ask for the interviewers help in keeping you on subject and to time.
 - You might agree verbal reminders about time-keeping or encourage the panel to feedback visually.
- Your camera is your interviewer, maintain eye contact.
 - It can be tempting to look at your interviewer and not at your camera. This will take a little practice to get the balance right.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

If you've found this guide helpful, please feel free to share it with friends, family, and colleagues.

For more advice and information on communicating with impact in a virtual environment, [click here](#) to watch our video series with communication specialists, TMG Training and Circling Squares.

The whole team at Solace are available to help support you, so if you do have any questions please feel free to give us a call on 0207 976 3311 or email jessica.mullinger@solace.org.uk.