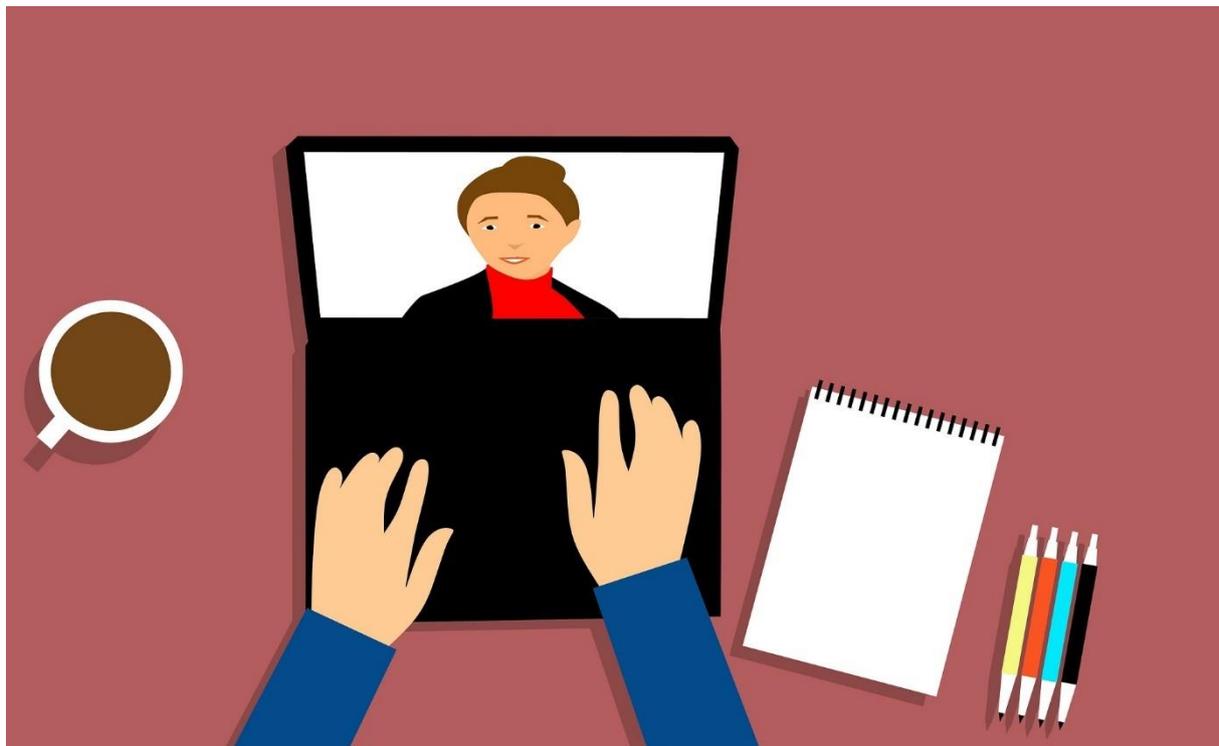


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How your next video interview is going to be a success

One of the most exciting aspects of our work here in our offices at DE BORD INTERNATIONAL is that we regularly welcome and meet fascinating people and personalities for a conversation or interview. Unfortunately, in the past couple of months we had to substantially reduce these personal encounters due to Covid-19. But, our meetings and conversations certainly didn't stop: With digital tools and technology we can very easily shift our interviews into a virtual room. And we believe that this form of conversation might be going to stick with us for a while. So how are virtual interviews different from interviews face-to-face? What do interviewer and interviewee have to pay attention to, specifically? Susanne Abplanalp, expert for business etiquette and founder of Training & Style GmbH, reveals helpful tips and tricks for a successful video interview.



Due to Covid-19 we faced and will face a lot more interviews via video call. Are there different rules – in comparison to a face-to-face meetings – on how to dress? Can one's outfit maybe even be a little more casual?

Susanne Abplanalp: Dress the same way as if for a meeting face-to-face. And bring your outfit in harmony with your background: If there is a white wall behind you, you may best wear something in contrast, dark blue for example. You should restrain from wearing a chequered or striped shirt or blouse, as this may visually irritate. Also, wear a whole outfit including pants or skirt. If you have to

stand up during the interview to get something it would be very inconvenient to be wearing sweat pants with your white shirt or blouse.

In a personal interview at the potential new employer's offices the encounter normally starts with the reception of the interviewee (maybe even by a third person or reception desk). Through this ritual the interviewee gets to ease into the situation physically and mentally and can prepare for the upcoming interview. With a video interview this ritual disappears. What are advantages and disadvantages of that?

Advantage: There are fewer distractions which usually makes the interviewee a better listener. Also, every person usually feels more comfortable and confident in his or her own space than in an unfamiliar meeting room. But there are a few things to consider when interviewing at home. For example: Silence your phone and laptop for any incoming messages or e-mails.

Disadvantage: There is no possibility for the interviewee to see and feel the environment of the company or company's office. Other employees and the atmosphere in the office are not visible or tangible. A company's culture therefore cannot be portrayed as easily.

What should the interviewer pay attention to especially? Are there other rules for personnel managers in a videocall than in a face-to-face meeting?

Personnel managers or recruiters should be ready and punctual and not let the interviewee wait in a virtual room. Small talk at the beginning is a great way to take any nervousness away from the interviewee. This small talk also is a good opportunity to check speech quality and volume.

The interviewee should make sure he or she has a professional user name for any video or conferencing tool. If not, it should be changed.

In a face-to-face interview one also communicates and interacts strongly through body language. What is maybe different in a video interview? Are there any «traps»?

Make sure you keep eye contact, have an upright posture, and that your torso and head are visible at all times. Position yourself in front of the camera at about an arm's length away. The positioning of the camera is very important as well, it should be at eye level. Place your laptop on a box if need be.

With an iPad make sure you don't put it flat on the surface of your desk as you will only be seen at an unflattering angle from underneath. Another tip is to not look on the screen but directly into the camera.

Additionally, be aware that any inconvenient sunlight (especially from the side) might make your face less visible. Any light should be directed frontally towards you. You might help yourself with a small lamp behind your laptop at eye level. Especially favourable are lamps emitting yellow rather than blue light.

And last but not least keep in mind that there might be slight speech delay. Therefore pace yourself down and always make sure to wait until your conversation partner has finished talking.

Which devices are best to use (laptop, cell phone, headphones)? What are do's and don'ts here?

The following guidelines are important: A laptop is always better than a cell phone. The quality of camera and microphone has to be tested before any interview. The quality of data is usually better with LAN than with WLAN. And consider using a headset, as it might transfer your voice much clearer than without.

Although the conversation is in a virtual room: Both parties are located in a physical place – what is important when choosing your location at home?

Choose a neutral background with as little distraction potential as possible. Even a bookshelf might be critical, when the «wrong» books are on the shelves. It is also important to let people in your environment know you're having an interview. Other people or even pets that might come into sight are a no-go and a distraction. It might awaken sympathy at the moment, but is mostly seen as unprofessional.

Also make sure there is no mess, no laundry drying rack, or any other inappropriate things visible in the background. A virtual background is inept as well. It is much better to use a sheet, blanket, or a partition screen to cover up your background.

How do you react if any technical difficulties may arise?

Remain calm and self-confident. Apologise and reestablish the connection. If your connection fails a second time, it is probably best to arrange a new appointment.

Last but not least: Do you have any other recommendations on how to make a videocall successful?

Allow enough time before your interview, prepare yourself well, and film yourself beforehand as a test. Keep any documents you might need handy during the interview and even attach important questions on the side of your screen with a sticky note. Take notes by hand, as typing noises can be distracting. And most important: practice, practice, practice.

In my experience the three most frequent mistakes are: a bad internet connection, insufficient lighting, and an unsuitable background.