Ensuring Accessible Digital Interviews

An Employer Tip Sheet

TalentWorks Tip Sheet

If you're one of the many employers adding digital interviews to your tool chest of eRecruiting technologies, you're not alone. According to a 2015 survey conducted by Korn Ferry[1] 71 percent of employers use real-time video interviewing and 50 percent use video interviews as a way to narrow the candidate pool. These new breeds of job interview—conducted over the Internet, often through videoconferencing—are attractive options due to their ease and cost-effectiveness. After all, digital interviews can be more personal than a phone interview, and more cost-effective than in-person interviews that require travel on the part of the job applicant.

Digital interviews have the potential to be a wonderfully accessible option, since the applicant can interview from surroundings already customized to their needs. There are other benefits, as well, since both the employer and job candidate can interact on a personal level and gain a better sense of one another's personality traits, communication style, confidence level, and other nonverbal cues that can be lost during phone interviews.

In spite of these advantages, there can often be accessibility-related challenges that can impact the fairness and inclusiveness of digital interviews. We've outlined them below, along with tips for making improvements.

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Digital Interview Pain Points for Users with Disabilities—and How to Fix Them

Lag Time

Lag time, which occurs when data is compressed and sent from one location to another, happens frequently during video conferencing. As a result, interview candidates must remember to allow for the delay and not step on the interviewer's lines, while interviewers must take care to not inadvertently cut the candidate off mid-sentence. But these nuances may be confusing to some individuals with cognitive or learning disabilities. Lag time can also be an issue for candidates with visual impairments since they may not be able to see and interpret cues from the interviewer.

Solutions:

- Allot plenty of time for digital interviews.
- Be mindful of how lag time impacts certain individuals.

Internet Connectivity Issues

Most of us have experienced Internet connectivity issues, where Wi-Fi service cuts in and out and requires us to strain to discern what someone is saying. Such occurrences can be particularly challenging for people with various disabilities.

Solutions:

- Be mindful of how spotty Internet service impacts certain individuals.
- Offer alternative interview methods to those who might prefer them.

Poor Lighting

If the lighting in the interviewer's location is not adequate, people with low vision may have difficulty seeing him or her.

Solution:

- Place yourself so that you face the light source and are not backlit.

Lack of Access to Broadband and Necessary Equipment

Of course, if one does not have the proper tools to videoconference, they may not be able to participate in a digital interview in the first place. And that can be a common issue for many individuals, with and without disabilities, who don't have access to a computer with a web cam or broadband service.

Solutions:

- Remember not to discriminate by penalizing a job candidate who can't interview digitally, as a technology solution may not be reasonably available on their end.
- Offer alternate interview methods and/or reasonable accommodations to those who might need them.

No Offer of Accommodations

Speaking of accommodations, you may tell applicants what the hiring process involves (e.g., an interview, timed written test, or job demonstration), and may ask applicants whether they will need a reasonable accommodation for this process. During the hiring process and before a conditional offer is made, you generally may not ask an applicant whether he or she needs a reasonable accommodation for the job. There can be exceptions, such as if the employer knows that an applicant has a disability—either because it is obvious or because the applicant has voluntarily disclosed the information—and could reasonably believe that the applicant will need a reasonable accommodation to perform specific job functions. If the applicant replies that he or she needs a reasonable accommodation, you may inquire as to what type.

Solutions:

- If the applicant indicates that he or she needs a reasonable accommodation, enter into an interactive process to determine the type of accommodation that will provide an effective and meaningful opportunity to participate in the application process and the privileges of employment.
- Allow plenty of time for the interview. Some job applicants will require additional time.
- Finally, consider using chat sessions as an accommodation on a case-by-case basis given the nature of the person's needs. This provides an interactive platform for an individual that may have issues with a digital interview. Furthermore, make sure that the chat platform and its features are accessible to users with assistive technology. This is another great opportunity to gauge your web accessibility, especially if you collect input and feedback from users.

Lack of Real-Time Captioning

Interviewees with hearing impairments may not be able to comprehend what's being asked during a digital interview without an accommodation. And for many, an optimal solution is real-time captioning, which displays text-based subtitles to translate what the interviewer is saying.

Solutions:

• When providing real-time captioning, remember the following tips:

• You'll need to identify and hire a vendor to provide the captioning service. They're easy to find on the Internet, and your web conferencing provider may be able to make a recommendation.

• Your video or web conferencing producer will need to provide the captioning vendor with dial-in information, player interface information, and details about date/time/duration of the event.

• Determine whether the captioning service has a minimum number of hours for billing purposes.

• If an unedited transcript is desired, request it upfront and determine the cost.

• Run at least one test to check for proper amplification to all speakers, ability to view captions and the presentation screen, and ability to view captions on alternate devices such as iPads.

Learn More:

• [Communicating with and about People with Disabilities](#): Suggestions from the Office of Disability Employment Policy on communicating with and about people with disabilities.

Footnotes

1. "Futurestep Executive Survey: Video Interviewing Becomes a Mainstay; Companies are Implementing New Video Recruiting Tactics," Korn Ferry; http://www.kornferry.com/press/futurestep-executive-survey-video-Intervi...

2. "Video Is Changing the Picture of Talent Management," HR Magazine, Feb. 2016; http://bit.ly/1RsuWk6