



How to make sure that you avoid major fails in Skype interviews

Skype has become more popular as an interviewing tool for recruiting new employees.

It is used at all stages of the recruitment process, but is most popular as an initial screening interview, or as a follow-up to a main interview. However, it is not unheard of that Skype is used for the whole process.

As the world changes, we must learn to adapt to different situations and learn new skills.

We have put together a simple guide to avoid disaster during a Skype interview.

As a general guide, you should try and do your own risk assessment of everything that could go wrong, and reduce or negate their negative impact.

However, are a few things to consider, before either an agency consultation or more usefully a real live Skype interview with an employer.



Consider your Skype name, mood message and profile photograph

It is obvious, but if your Skype name is a little too informal or personal, perhaps you should also set up one for professional use for interviews and detailing on your CV. Keep it simple and based around your actual name.

Check, remove or change your 'mood message'. You really don't want a potential employer to see something like: "Still hung-over from last night!"

A profile photograph should also be business like, not one of you on the beers or the vino, having too much fun or looking a little worse for wear from your holiday excess!

Physical surroundings and environment

Most of this advice is just common sense, but it is amazing how often we find that common sense escapes even the most sensible of us!

Make sure you tell people in your home that you are having a Skype call; you do not want the sound of your partner shouting from the next room or your kids running riot.

Make sure that nobody is watching TV or has music blasting in earshot, resulting in the background noise being rather off-putting for all parties.

Turn off all your notification sounds on your computer, tablet and mobile, likewise your landline, and do not start reading and answering emails; however discreet you think you might be. Just shut down your email client and concentrate on the interview.

Check the physical background of your room, if it will be seen by the webcam, check the lighting too and the ambience it creates. Move anything you would rather not be seen out of the way – you know the kind of thing we're talking about! Check your bookcase, pictures, and posters, and the cleanliness of the room. Don't make a silly error that could cause embarrassment.

Preparation

As Skype interviews are still quite new, it is best to take extra time to prepare and practice.

To help you with this, we suggest you call a friend for a dry run; make sure you look into the webcam, rather than the screen, and ask your friend how you look, sound and what your general demeanour and body language is like. Listen to their feedback and fine tune or adjust your camera angle, your body posture, the background, your eye contact and hand movements, as well as your voice volume, clarity, and pacing.

It might also be advisable to record and video yourself and then critique. You will be your own biggest critic and you will improve by doing this, but please remember your opinion of watching yourself is always much worse than what others think.

Watch what you are doing when you are not speaking. Make sure you look attentive and interested in the interviewer and don't forget to smile!

Try and use a laptop or desktop if possible and plug into the mains, rather than use a mobile or tablet, it

will give you much better results. If you do have to use a tablet, make sure it is on a plinth and not handheld. Be wary of battery life.

If your built-in camera and microphone are not of the quality they should be, buy a separate microphone and webcam. Tell the retailer why you need them and take advice on the best solution. They're not very expensive.

You should still research the company, the market, and the role; think how you can help them and what their needs are, prepare questions too - just like you would do in a physical interview. So don't forget this aspect. Prepare, prepare, and prepare again.

You can have notes and reminders with you, preferably out of camera shot; you could also have them on screen – which can be quite advantageous. Please use these discreetly, though, and only if you must.

It is not only polite but also a good idea to ask if they mind if you can take notes, this might give you a discreet way to check your guide notes too.

Your interviewer will make some allowances because of the different type of interview environment, so don't get too nervous about it all, but the more comfortable and relaxed you can look, the more professional you will come across.

You are in your own space, and this should help you relax, but make sure you are in position and on-line in advance of the agreed call time, you don't want any last minute panics with your computer taking ages to fire up or connecting to the internet for the Skype connection.

Make sure you have a glass of water available, and a handkerchief!

Dress code

Attire should be professional, relevant and appropriate.

Wash and brush your hair, clean your teeth too, in other words, do exactly as you would do if you were going to a physical interview.

You may have heard stories of newsreaders doing their broadcasts only dressed from the waist up, or wearing shorts or jogging bottoms, don't follow this trend!

If you did need to get up to get something during the interview or needed to reconnect or check a cable,

you really don't want your potential employer to see you in your Darth Vader boxer shorts. Even Jedi mind tricks won't help you then!

Technology problems

As with any form of technology, there is always the chance of problems. If you cannot hear the interviewer due to a poor connection, ask them to repeat the question or suggest you end the call and make a new connection. It is vital not to let the interview continue when there are sound issues; both parties could miss something important.

If you completely lose your connection during the call or there is another issue, be calm, use the free moments to take stock and have a sip of water. When resolved, call them or wait for them to call back, and explain what happened at your end.

Remember if the problem is not quickly resolvable, it might be advisable to use a phone line to call them and let them know. Sometimes how you act when things go wrong are the things that impress.

Post Interview

Thank the interviewer(s) at the end, just like you would in a traditional interview, and ask about the next stage of the recruitment process.

It is also good practice to send a thank you letter 'post-Skype' interview, and email is the preferred and recommended option for this. It is amazing how many people do not do this, make it quick and simple though. Things like this show you are professional, polite and care about the people you have meetings with – that will give them confidence, especially if the job you are going for is in Sales. So don't forget to do it. Moreover make sure you get their names and spellings correct.

Don't delay; arrange a Skype Consultation with us today!

It is our best practice, as part of our thorough appraisal process, to meet face-to-face with any new candidate on our books.

We will also try and do the same to guide and brief existing candidates before we decide to put them forward for a particular role, and during the selection process.

Due to either time constraints or convenience and location factors, it is not always possible for face-to-face meetings. However, Skype is rapidly becoming a cost-saving and greener way to discuss roles with potential candidates, quickly and still on a face-to-face basis, during the early stages of the recruitment

process.

It is a tool we are beginning to adopt and usually proves significantly more beneficial for both parties than a traditional telephone conversation and without lots of lost time, travel, and money spent on fuel, the benefits of Skype are realised by all parties.

As stated earlier, many of our clients are using Skype as part of their recruitment process, so it is important we fully embrace what Skype can offer.

At Pinnacle Consulting, we can arrange a Skype consultation with a candidate almost immediately. If you are a candidate, it allows us to help you more quickly and with added clarity and understanding. This ultimately helps us to assess your needs and aspirations in greater detail than a phone call, CV and covering email.

It also allows us to react effectively to a live recruitment situation, ensuring you don't miss out on a potentially superb career changing opportunity.



In most instances, we would still arrange to meet you physically at a later date, as this further enhances the close and long-term relationships we build with all our candidates.

It is our philosophy to help candidates develop throughout their entire career in the building and construction industry.

In addition to providing opportunities for future alternative positions, we also provide, advice on training, share industry trends, and help you progress with current employers.

A Skype interview is a very useful tool in working with our candidates, but it also has many potential pitfalls, and these could create a disadvantage for you before you even start.

If you see a job you are interested in, or would like a comprehensive consultation about your future career, contact us to arrange a Skype consultation appointment.

We will promise to be nice and understanding about using this form of communication. After all, we're still in adoption mode with it too.

However, it will become more and more common as you progress your career, so a more informal practice with us can only help prepare you to shine in a more formal Skype interview with a potential employer. It will happen, so embrace and hone your skills, starting today.



It could be the most important appointment of your career.



Further guidance

Pinnacle Consulting is a leading sales and marketing recruitment agency operating exclusively in the building products sector.

If you are an employer looking to recruit, please call us to discuss your requirements on **01480 405225** or us at email recruit@pinnacleconsulting.co.uk.

If you would like to discuss a sales or marketing career the Building Products Industry, you may wish to attend one of our PinBuild Career Development Clinics/

www.pinnacleconsulting.co.uk