

Reed
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**The ultimate guide
to conducting
remote interviews**



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Introduction

Interviews are a proven and well-established part of the recruitment process. They enable you to find out if a candidate is the right fit for the company, but are also an opportunity to sell your company to the interviewee.

Therefore, if you want to attract top talent to help your business grow, you need to make a great first impression. This is even more important to get right when conducting interviews remotely.

An ill-prepared interview or an inefficient process can not only mean you miss out on that great person looking for work, but could damage your company's employer brand.

Remote interviews have increased in significance since the pandemic and are now a common part of business practice.

Some of the benefits of conducting remote interviews are:

- ✓ A quicker time-to-hire
- ✓ Lack of geographical boundaries giving access to greater talent
- ✓ Reduces anxiety for candidates
- ✓ Eliminates travel expenses
- ✓ Easier to schedule
- ✓ Ability to conduct more interviews in less time

This guide will give you all the tips you need to conduct effective interviews remotely.



Preparing for the remote interview

Know what you are looking for

The first stage of the interview process is to understand exactly what skills and traits you are looking for in a professional. Review the [job description](#) and [person specification](#) and pick out some key words and phrases to look out for in the interviewee's responses. If they have done their research and prepared for the interview, they should show you how they possess these within their answers.

Understanding what you are looking for will help you keep the interview on track and steer questions in the right direction. However, always go into an interview with an open mind – you never know how someone may surprise you.



Organising the interview

Organising a remote interview may be easier than a face-to-face interview, but there are still many things to consider. Make sure you have a quiet, suitable space where you can conduct the interview and, if you are working from home, tell other members of your household that you cannot be disturbed during that time.

If you are conducting the interview from your workplace, you should still find a private place to host it rather than doing it from your desk. Book a meeting room and make sure that the room has a strong Wi-Fi connection and available plug sockets (you don't want to run out of battery halfway through the interview). You should take a copy of your interviewee's CV in with you and make sure you have this to hand during the interview to help guide any questions you have about their previous experience.

Gavin Beart, Managing Director at Reed said, "If you are conducting multiple interviews in the same day, make sure you schedule plenty of breaks in between and for at least 15 minutes either side to prepare and review before the next interview. Video calls require more focus than face-to-face conversations as our brains need to work harder to process non-verbal cues. This can drain your energy and cause fatigue, which is not ideal when conducting interviews. Try and take a walk or do something other than look at a screen between your interviews."



Preparing for the remote interview

Sending details to the interviewee

Make sure you send all the details about the remote interview to your candidate well in advance, as they will also need to ensure they have a quiet and suitable place for the interview.

When sending the date, time, and video link make sure you explain what will be expected of them at the interview.

- ✓ **Do they need to have their camera switched on?**
- ✓ **Will they have to share their screen?**
- ✓ **Do they need to download software for the video interview?**
- ✓ **What style of interview will you be conducting?**
- ✓ **Could there be multiple interview stages?**

You could go one step further and give some tips and guidance to the professionals you are interviewing on best practice for remote interviews. Here is some guidance you may want to send:

- [How to ace your video interview article](#)
- [Getting the best from your interview eBook](#)
- [How to prepare for an interview presentation article](#)
- [The path to success in phone interviews article](#)



Types of remote interviews

There are five main types of remote interviews, some of which will make up a multi-step interview process. Here is a list of their benefits, and advice on how to conduct them remotely.

- ...→ One-to-one video interview
- ...→ Telephone interview
- ...→ Video panel interview
- ...→ Competency-based interview
- ...→ Group interview



One-to-one video interview

This style of interview is the most common and often carried out by a prospective line manager. It allows for a mix of questions that look to assess a person's capabilities and personality traits.

Benefits

- ✓ Can be more relaxing for the interviewee
- ✓ Easier to make coherent, rather than flittering between different interviewers
- ✓ More convenient to plan and organise

★ How to conduct remotely

This is one of the easiest styles of interview to conduct remotely, as long as you have a quiet space. This interview can be held in the same way as you would if it was face to face, but make sure you pay extra attention to what the candidate is saying, as well as looking out for non-verbal cues, as these can easily be missed via video. Look out for facial expressions that show if the candidate is feeling anxious and use these to guide your line of questioning.

You should always try to make notes during the interview so you can refer to these later, but when conducting interviews remotely, you should use a pen and paper to write your notes rather than typing them out. This is because you will be unable to see the interviewee on the screen when you are typing and may miss out on those important non-verbal cues. Also, if your video platform does not have background sound reduction, the sound of typing can be distracting for your candidate.

Telephone interview

A telephone interview is a great way to filter your longlist of candidates into a shortlist and gives you a quick snapshot of their capabilities.



Benefits

- ✓ You can conduct multiple interviews with little organisation
- ✓ You can get a sense of who an interviewee is before a second interview via video
- ✓ Later interviews will be more focused as you have already ascertained the basics

★ How to conduct remotely

Telephone interviews can be conducted in the usual manner and are great for a first stage of an interview process. When you know that the second stage of the interview cannot be done face to face, you will need to ensure that you make the most of this stage and ask the right questions. Make sure that you are in a quiet place without too much background noise as this can be distracting for both you and the interviewee. You should also check that you have a strong signal before the interview, as you don't want the call to cut out or the candidate not hear you.

Unless you are recruiting for positions with a quick turnaround, a telephone interview does not provide a complete snapshot and should only really be used as the first interview in a multi-stage process. Try to also see the person face-to-face as you can learn a lot through non-verbal cues that you will miss otherwise.

Types of remote interviews

Video panel interview

This style of interview involves more than one interviewer. This can be as small as two people or as large as six or seven, depending on the seniority of the role. Each panel member would typically take it in turns to ask questions. A panel interview is most suited to a later stage in the interview process, after a prospective line manager has already conducted an initial one-to-one interview.



Benefits

- ✓ You get different perspectives, allowing you to come to a consensus
- ✓ Gives you an insight into how the interviewee will handle stakeholder relationships
- ✓ It demonstrates how a candidate might fit within the organisation's culture, as well as showing the candidate some of the people they will be working with

★ How to conduct remotely

If you and your colleagues are in the same room for the meeting you should aim to use one computer and take it in turns to appear on the camera - this will reduce reverberation and echoes that you will get when on a video call in the same room. For best results, make sure everyone on the panel - whether at home or in the office - are in their own quiet and private space.

It is essential to have a plan. Create a schedule and list of questions to send to all interviewers ahead of time and don't forget to have a practice run through. Give each person a role in the interview and designate this before the interview starts. This will create a more fluid experience throughout and minimise the risk of talking over each other.

Competency-based interview

This type of interview is also known as a structured, behavioural, or situational interview. It features situational style questions aimed to find out how a candidate has used specific skills, relevant to the role, to solve work-based problems.

Benefits

- ✓ You can see how the interviewee would approach real life work-related scenarios, removing some of the guesswork of whether the role is right for them
- ✓ You will quickly ascertain how a professional uses the skills and experience listed in their CV and cover letter

★ How to conduct remotely

Competency-based interviews work well both on the telephone and video, and which one you choose will depend on what stage of the interview process you are at. Some businesses will choose to test competencies via an initial telephone appointment prior to asking the candidate to have a second interview.

It works well to have two interviewers, as one can ask the questions, and the other can take notes. If you are doing this via video, you should still have the note-taking interviewer on camera, otherwise it may be distracting for the candidate if they see you looking off screen to someone they cannot see. It is a good idea to record the interview so you can watch it back prior to making your decision. If you do this, make sure you get permission from your interviewee before recording.

Group interview

If you are hiring for multiple roles, or if teamwork is an essential part of the position, then you may conduct an interview with multiple candidates at once. This can take the form of a normal question and answer session or be based around an activity, or scenario.

Benefits

- ✓ You can see how the candidates work with others
- ✓ Demonstrates how they deal with stressful situations and whether they show initiative
- ✓ Quick and easy way to filter out the best professional for the role
- ✓ If you are in a position to hire more than one member of staff, then this can reduce the time-to-hire

★ How to conduct remotely

This is probably one of the most challenging styles of interview to conduct remotely – but that doesn't mean it's impossible. Digital whiteboard collaboration tools are great for remote group interviews. Inform each interviewee of the nature of the interview and let them know if they need to download any software – make sure this is free to use for the interviewees.

You could set a task and ask all candidates to collaborate on the whiteboard tool. However, when conducted remotely, this style of interview will require you to use excellent observational skills. If you are concerned that you may miss who has contributed what, you could record the session and watch it back afterwards. However, if you do this, make sure you inform the candidates that the session will be recorded prior to the interview and get their permission.



Software and tools

When it comes to remote interviews – the software or technology you deploy is essential to their success.

There are many tools you can use, whether you want to download a free application for less frequent use, or pay for a dedicated software if your company is likely to be a regular user.

Here is a list of some of the most popular free and paid-for tools:

Free tools



Microsoft Teams combines group chat, conference calling, and file collaboration into one piece of software. This is a great tool for video interviews, and the free version allows up to 100 people to join in meetings. It can be used on an interviewee's browser without having to download any software.



Zoom allows users to hold and attend meetings from either the app or on a browser, without the need to download. Zoom has both free and paid-for solutions, but for a basic video interview, the free option is sufficient as long as it is less than the 40 minutes time limit.



Google Hangouts is a free tool that allows you to video call and chat with your 'friends'. If you plan to use this for a video interview, make sure you send the friend request to the candidate prior to the interview, as they will need to accept the invitation. Additionally, they will have to use their email address linked to a Google account – so make sure you specify this in the meeting details.



Skype has been a well-known video calling tool since 2003 and is suitable to use for video interviews. It can be used on a browser without the need to download software.

Paid tools

webex **Webex** is a popular tool for many businesses, and while there is a free option for one user, this is typically not enough if you have multiple interviewers. Webex offer various subscriptions depending on the size of your business, so it can be a great option for SMEs. The platform also has noise reduction - which is great for minimising background noise that you cannot control.

shine **Shine** is a cloud-based video interviewing platform. It offers bespoke digital interviewing solutions for businesses, starting from £150 per month. On the platform, you can conduct live interviews, or set questions so candidates can record a video response by a deadline - this allows you to review the answers at a time that suits you.

Spark Hire provides similar options to Shine. All interviews are recorded and saved in a dashboard, with the ability to rate and comment on saved interviews. Additionally, these can be shared with other members of staff to obtain their feedback - streamlining the remote interviewing process.



How to make a great first impression

Chris Adcock, Managing Director of Reed Technology says: "You have to understand that interviews are just as much a reflection of you as it is of them. Make a good impression and ensure you have a professional set up as what they are seeing during the interview is potentially how they will engage and work with you if they are successful."

To ensure you present yourself and your organisation in the best possible manner, use the following tips.

1. Limit distractions

If you are working from home, tell everyone in the house that you are conducting an interview and cannot be disturbed - and put pets in another room. If you are conducting the interview at your workplace, make sure you have a quiet, private space to conduct the interview and that other team members know you cannot be interrupted. Claire Harvey, Managing Director at Reed says: "You need to be aware of distractions such as email notifications or quite often if you are working from home, the door might ring, so you are not creating that exclusive environment as you would be if you were face to face".

2. Wear appropriate clothing

Whether you are working from home or in the office, you will need to set an example as you are representing your company. So, dress in appropriate work attire to give the candidate a feel for your company dress code.

3. Listen

This is an obvious one, but it can be harder to concentrate when on a video call. Look directly at the camera, not at your image or the interviewee's, to show them you are listening. Pay more attention to your non-verbal communication such as smiling or nodding when they are speaking. Use hand gestures where appropriate but avoid fidgeting or letting your gaze drift away from the device too often.

4. Check lighting

To have an effective video interview, you need to be engaging, and you can't do that if the candidate can't see you. Make sure you're facing toward, not away from, a window or another light source.

How to make a great first impression

5. Wait for them to answer

Video calling can often have a slight delay, so whereas in a face-to-face scenario you can interject with questions, this is not ideal remotely and you may find yourself talking over each other. After the interviewee has answered a question, wait for a few seconds, and then speak.

6. Conduct a test run

Holding a practice run through, especially if you have multiple interviewers, is one way to mitigate complications.

Additionally, make sure you have a back-up plan. If you know you have temperamental Wi-Fi, have an ethernet cable to hand if you need to connect your laptop. It's a good idea to make sure you have their phone number in case the camera or your computer isn't working on the day. Also, don't think badly of an interviewee if they have tech issues - and don't let this sway your eventual decision.

7. Don't skip the informal

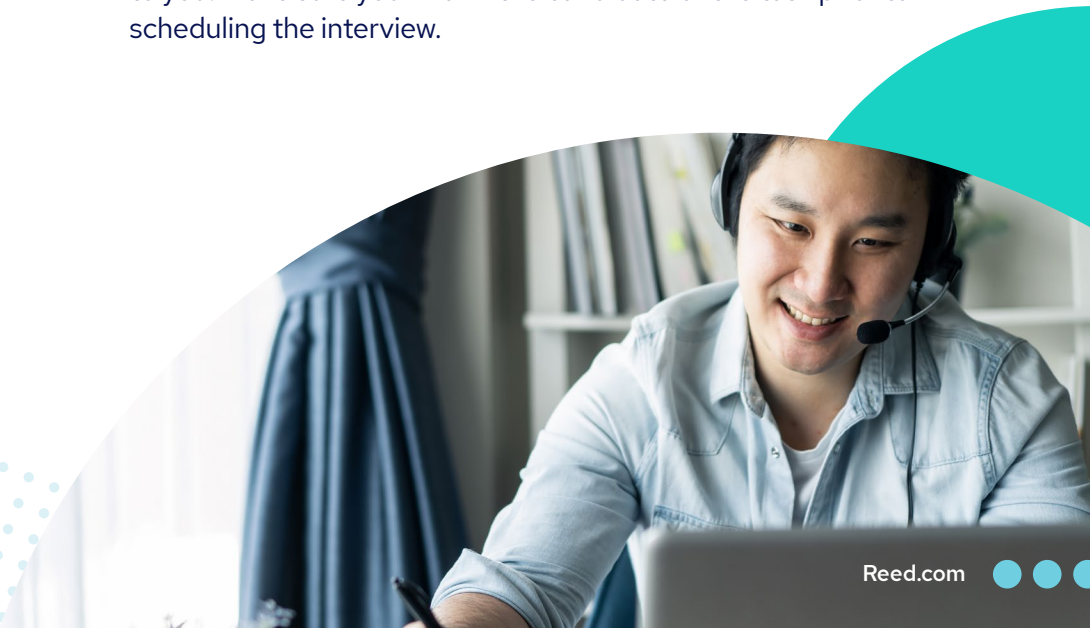
Just because you are not face to face, it doesn't mean you should ignore the informal chat that usually occurs at the start of an interview. Keep it light-hearted to make the candidate relax and feel comfortable.

8. Tell them about the company culture

One of the downsides to remote interviews is that it is harder to show and sell your company's culture, therefore you need to put an emphasis on doing this remotely. Do your best to describe the culture, but avoid just using buzzwords like 'rewarding, engaging, fulfilling' etc. Use real-life examples of how these are embedded into your company. If possible, pre-record a virtual tour and share this during the interview.

9. Hold multiple interviews if needed

If you want your interviewee to complete a task, rather than sitting in silence while they do this, set them the task and leave them for an allotted time to do it. Rejoin the call at the end of the task to talk through it there and then, or ask them to email over to you. Make sure you inform the candidate of the task prior to scheduling the interview.



Tips from our experts

Watch Chris Adcock, Managing Director of Reed Technology, Claire Harvey, Managing Director of UK Network, and Gavin Beart, Divisional Managing Director of Education share their top three tips for conducting remote interviews.



Chris Adcock,
Managing Director,
Reed Technology



Claire Harvey,
Managing Director, UK Network,
Reed



Gavin Beart,
Divisional Managing Director, Education,
Reed

Following up

Following up with the candidate after an interview is a vital (and often missed) step of the process. Whether you want to make an offer or not, you should always follow up and give prompt feedback if requested. You never know, someone that may not be right for this role could be right for another in the future. Failing to follow up could damage your reputation and lose that prospect.

It is unwise to decide during the interview itself and extend a job offer to your preferred candidate on the spot. Take time to review your interviewees' performance and if you have recorded your interviews, you could watch them back to refresh your memory. Read more about what to do if you are struggling to choose between candidates [here](#). In addition, consult with your colleagues before making your final decision.

You should tell them when they can expect to hear back with a decision, and you must let them know if there are any delays in the process – communicate this through your Reed consultant.





If you are looking for your next talented professional, or would like some more information on conducting remote interviews, [contact your local recruitment specialist today.](#)

