

SPELMAN JOHNSON'S

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE



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VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

Video conferencing with multiple participants, across multiple remote locations, will be essential to moving searches forward during the COVID-19 pandemic. The dynamics of these video conversations are significantly different than the more traditional video interviews in which committee members are all in the same room. The following guidelines are necessary to ensure successful interactions between the candidates and stakeholders. It is important to remember that the organization is represented in all interactions with candidates and putting the best foot forward is part of selling the opportunity to highly-qualified candidates.



Personal Appearance

- All participants are advised to dress appropriately for remote video interviews.
- Communicate respect for the process by wearing professional attire even if you are sitting at your kitchen table.
- Plaids, stripes, and clothing with a large pattern do not translate well on video.
- Multiple jewelry pieces that clatter are distracting.
- Maintain the same grooming you would use if you were at work.



Setting

- If possible sit at a table or desk with a sturdy chair. A sofa or soft chair may make you appear to be too relaxed or as if you are not taking the process seriously.
- Limit distractions such as cell phones and background sounds (kitchen pots, laundry, vacuums, pets, alarms, family members).
- Check the lighting. Light the front of your face so candidates are able to read your expressions. Back lighting will make you appear dark on the screen. Generally, being close to a window is not helpful as the light will wash out your face on the screen.



Setting

- Sit an appropriate distance from the camera and set the camera at eye-level. Other participants should see your head and shoulders, not your entire body nor an uncomfortably close view of your face. The camera view should not distract others from your contribution to the interview or meeting. Again, it is important for the candidate to be able to read your expressions and non-verbal responses.
- Pay attention to what is in the background. No need to show the other participants your dirty laundry! Try to sit with your back to a wall or a static surface to minimize distractions. It helps to have photos, plants, books, etc., behind you to create a more professional image.
- Consider providing your staff with a logo background graphic or photos of campus to use as backgrounds.



Setting

- Do not have empty water bottles, wrappers, food containers, etc., on your table or desk that are visible.
- Test your camera, lighting, clothing, and background view prior to going live.
- Remind interviewers to look into the camera especially if they are working from a multiple screen setup.
- Listen closely, take good notes, and pay attention to your computer screen. Avoid excessive movement. It is obvious to others if you are checking your cell phone during the interview! Give the same level of attention to the process as you would if you were sitting in a conference room with the candidate.



Interview Management

- Utilize waiting rooms or password protection to ensure that only authorized participants are admitted to the interview, and that participants do not enter a meeting before you are ready.
- Ensure that participants use their full names when they log-in to the conversation. The names will be visible to candidates; do not use nicknames or cryptic usernames.
- If candidates are conducting a presentation/open forum, consider allowing them to pre-record their presentation then answer questions “live” after the presentation is shown to participants. Pre-recording eliminates potential technical issues and reduces anxiety for candidates.



Interview Management

- Forums should always be invitation-only and participants should not be provided with access information until they confirm their attendance. Remind them not to share access information or passwords.
- Require participants to RSVP for all sessions so candidates can receive accurate lists of participants (including their role) prior to the interviews.
- It is absolutely essential to have a moderator to manage video conversations! The moderator should initiate the meeting and control the flow throughout. Many software systems provide additional control to the moderator or meeting leader, including the ability to mute and unmute participants.



Interview Management

- Participants should be welcomed by the moderator as they join the meeting, everyone is muted until the meeting gets underway. It is very distracting to join a meeting when small talk is underway between those who have already connected.
- The moderator should review the “rules of the road” with all participants and ensure that everyone is prepared to start.
- All participants should be muted throughout the interview unless they are speaking.
- No one should speak until they are recognized by the moderator.
- If you have an established set of questions the moderator can ask all the questions or call on the committee member to whom the question has been assigned.



Interview Management

- If there are not pre-determined questions then participants must “raise their hand” and be recognized by the moderator prior to speaking. Use the “chat” feature within your conferencing software or develop a similar protocol prior to the interview. Do not use chat for other purposes during the interview; conversations will be visible to the candidate. Be aware that private chat exchanges during a recorded meeting are saved in Zoom and some other applications.
- Provide an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions. The moderator should be prepared to manage the flow among those participants who respond to the candidate’s questions.



Impressions

- Schedule a test of your system with each of the candidates prior to their first interview. Hold the test far enough in advance to address any issues that may arise.
- The interview is not an opportunity to air personal grievances or to discuss very specific organizational issues.
- Start the interviews on time, all participants should be signed in prior to the appointed time. Sign in early—leave plenty of time to deal with any technical issues that may arise.
- Develop a schedule that ensures candidates have breaks between interviews. No one wants to sit in front of a video screen for eight hours in one day! Consider scheduling alternatives that may not be available if candidates are visiting in person e.g., allowing stakeholder groups to meet with all the candidates on the same day.



Impressions

- Anticipate that there will be technical glitches—be patient, most issues are easily resolved.
- Have a backup plan. If the candidate for some reason does not have a stable video platform or if you are unable to make the connection with the candidate pick up the phone and conduct the interview via telephone.
- Remember, even with video the tone and cadence of your speech matters—slow down, enunciate, and speak up.

For additional resources and information about our search services, please visit our website at www.spelmanjohnson.com or email us at info@spelmanjohnson.com

