**Zoom Etiquette and Tools for Blind Job Seekers**

To be effective and successful during a virtual interview, you must have an active role in the meeting.

So, what exactly is an interview Zoom call? It is when you interview for a position using zoom. Zoom is a type of video software that many companies use to connect with others remotely. It has various tools, such as screen sharing, text, chat, video recording and muting.

Once you learn to properly use the above tools, you can use them to your advantage. Now let’s learn about some tips to succeed during a virtual interview.

Things to do to prepare for the Zoom interview:

* Consider using a laptop or desktop computer rather than a smart phone
* Charge your device.
* Update your software, especially Zoom.
* Make sure you have a good internet connection.
* Practice using zoom with a friend or coworker.
* Select a simple, professional background that won’t distract the interviewer.
* Make sure the room you use is brightly and evenly lit.
* Pick a quiet space free from interruptions by family or friends.

Things to do during the Zoom interview:

* Wear professional attire.
* Silence your phone and turn off notifications.
* Keep your screen clear of clutter.
* Do not use speech on your computer during the interview.
* Stay focused on the interviewer(s).
* Look into the camera while speaking.
* Use appropriate body language.
* Mute your speaker while the employer is speaking if necessary.
* Ask the interviewer questions as the interview progresses.
* Listen carefully to all questions before responding.
* Get the interviewer’s contact information and write it down.

Things to do immediately after the Zoom interview:

* Make notes on the interview in case they ask follow-up questions later.
* Write a letter thanking the interviewer.
* Plan for a follow-up call to the interviewer.

During an interview, everyone must have the same access to technology. Part of your preparation should be to identify what type of technology is needed, if screens will be used, and how documents need to be transferred. You must make sure your tools and processes are working and manageable before the interview.

It is a great idea to review Zoom keyboard commands before the interview so you can demonstrate proficiency using the system. Most employers will not be able to advise you on keyboard commands.

So, let’s look at the relevant Zoom Commands to provide you with a refresher:

1. If you are running JAWS 2020 you can use Alt-Windows key-S to suppress Zoom notifications. If you are running an earlier version of JAWS use JAWS key-space bar-S to invoke “Speech on Demand”. Use the same key combination to invoke full speech. On an iOS device use a three finger double tap to turn speech off. Perform a three finger double tap to re-enable speech. On a Mac you will need to unload Voice Over using CMD-F5. Even with Voice Over off you can still use keyboard commands in Zoom to mute/unmute yourself and raise/lower your hand, Voice Over just won’t speak. Use CMD-F5 to re-enable Voice Over.

2. Many meetings are muting all participants, but smaller meetings are letting people mute and unmute themselves. On Windows use Alt-A to mute/unmute. On Mac use SMD-Shift-A to mute/unmute yourself. On a dial in number use \*6 to toggle the option and on an iOS device the button is in the lower left hand corner. Double tap the button to switch the toggle.

On Windows, Mac and iOS there is a setting to always enter a meeting muted. It is not always turned on by default.

3. To raise and lower your hand: On Windows use Alt-Y. On Mac, Option-Y. On a dial in phone \*9. On an iOS device double tap on the “Participants" button in the lower right corner and scroll to the bottom. There is a button (but is not labeled as a button in the most current version) that says, “raise hand”. Double tap and it will switch to “Lower hand”.

4. To see Participants on Windows, use Alt-U. On Mac, use Command (CMD)-U. On an iOS device the button is located in the lower right hand section of the screen. You will also see a “Raise Hand” button in the “Participants” section on Mac and Windows if you forget the keyboard command.

5. Chat. On Windows press Alt-H. On Mac press CMD-Shift-H. On an iOS device find the “Participants” button to the left of the “More” button towards the lower left corner of the screen. Please note the host may have this feature disabled.

Projecting a physical presence:

Projecting a physical presence is key during an interview. As a visually impaired or blind interviewee, you may not have the ability to look the employer directly in the eye or provide a strong handshake, which is essential to make a strong first impression. However, your body language, voice and physical movement will be captured through the virtual camera. Body language means that you need to be self-aware. It shows that you are positive and energetic. Sitting up straight displays confidence. Never slouch! Facial expressions are key as well and should match what you are saying.

Your voice also needs to reflect a positive attitude. Make sure that you speak clearly, confidently and loudly enough so others will hear you. But do not speak too loudly. Be comfortable speaking and do not ramble. Choose your words wisely and do not answer a question if you don’t understand it. Always ask for clarification before answering.

Relax and let your personality come through. Employers are interested in you as a person, not just in the skills you possess. Find things in common with them. Laugh at their jokes. Work to define your presence and ultimately have them want to listen to you. Maintaining a professional but human appearance is the objective and getting a second interview or the job is the goal. Think of yourself as a TV star, because you are, in fact, on TV.

Effective Communication:

Effective communication requires more than just confidence and controlling your body language. It requires more of what you want to get across and how you want your audience to receive it.

Ask yourself the following questions and answer them before the Zoom interview:

* Do I have a vision?
* Can I be sharp and to the point when I speak?
* Am I able to be honest?
* How can I connect with the individual or audience?

After that, consider the following:

* You must develop what you are going to say and how you say it.
* You must be able to deliver the message concisely,
* Getting lost in your words will diminish the message.
* You must demonstrate credibility and show that you are fully engaged.
* In other words, you must practice for the interview.

The five C’s to communicate a lasting presence are:

* Clarity
* Connection
* Conciseness
* Credibility and candor
* Composure

Now that we’ve talked about a physical presence and effective communication, let’s look at interviewing styles:

You should understand what type of interviewing style to prepare for. What the employer wants to assess will determine the type of interviewing style. Here are a few:

A: Behavioral Based Interview:

This style is used to assess how you handle specific employment-related situations in your previous job, which will help them evaluate your future performance. Essentially, you are asked to describe in detail how you have dealt with a certain situation in the past that is like the ones you will be encountering in the position you are applying for.

Sample questions:

* Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict on the job. How did you handle that?
* Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. How did you handle that?

B: Case Interview:

During a case interview, you will be given a situation and asked how you would manage that specific situation or solve a business problem.

This interviewing style is used to assess candidates’ skills for management consulting positions. Typically, this interviewing style is related to a business scenario that you are going to encounter when working for the company. This is to gain insight on a structured approach.

[Need to provide sample questions here.]

C: Stress Interview:

This style is to see how well you respond to stress and extreme pressures while at work.

Sample questions:

* What did you do wrong in your last job?
* How do you think this interview is going?
* How would you deal with a co-worker you caught stealing?

The best way to handle these types of questions is to remain calm and answer them directly. It is okay to ask for clarification or request more details.

D: Competency Based Interviews:

This interviewing style is designed to assess soft skills and personal competencies.

You are assessed against them based on the position you are interviewing for. Typical skills ones are:

* Communication
* Decisiveness
* Leadership
* Teamwork

Sample questions:

* Which job change would you personally find most difficult to make?
* Tell us about a situation where your communication skills made a real difference?
* In what ways do you think writing a report differs from preparing an oral presentation?

E: Group Interview:

This is an interviewing style where multiple candidates are being interviewed at the same time. The company is hiring for more than one position.

Sample questions:

* Why do you want to work for our company?
* In five minutes explain something that is complicated that you do well.
* Describe a mistake at your last job and how you resolved it?
* How would a colleague describe you?

[I have never used or experienced this kind of interview. Much more common is one in which multiple persons ask one question each. It is very stressful. I cannot advise you on how the kind of interview you describe would be done. – DD]

Finally, you want to ensure that your virtual interview runs smoothly without any problems. So take time to research, prepare and practice interviewing, zoom commands and the do’s and don’ts of effective communication and interviewing. Do not forget to request an email address to send a letter of appreciation for the interview. Ask questions; but write them down first so that they are clear and articulate. Be authentic, composed and relaxed. Do not forget to check off the above zoom tips prior to the interview. Most important, good luck!