

Virtual Interviews

How to create and implement neuro-inclusive Virtual Interviews.



About Virtual Interviews

Virtual Interviews have become predominant in modern recruitment, blending the convenience of phone screenings with the personal touch of face-to-face meetings. This approach can be beneficial as it allows the assessment of attributes in a comfortable settings for candidates.

Benefits

The benefits may include:

- Allows candidates to interview in a familiar and supportive environment, enabling them to perform at their best.
- Supports employers to gauge a candidate's ability use video conferencing platforms effectively.
- Streamlines the process, leading to quicker decision-making.
- Supports flexibility for both interviewers and candidates.
- Removes geographical barriers, enabling access to a wider talent pool.
- Significantly lowers the expenses associated with recruitment.
- Supports the inclusion of other decision makers, regardless of working location.
- Assesses ability to use technology, as communication, problem-solving and interpersonal skills.
- Effective for roles where digital communication is essential.



Ideal for:

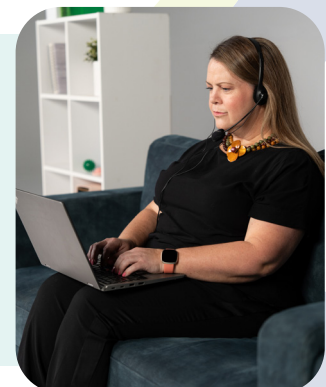
Web developers, remote support workers, and content creators.

Applicable for:

Technology, finance, and creative industries.

Example: Technology industry

In the tech industry, a software company might conduct virtual interviews for software developers. Candidates are asked to share their screen and complete coding tasks via a shared platform while demonstrating their thought processes. This method provides the interviewer with insights into the candidate's problem-solving abilities and coding proficiency while assessing their communication skills in a remote environment.



Create and implement neuro-inclusive Virtual Interviews

Considerations and solutions

There are considerations to address to ensure the assessment is neuro-inclusive. These include:

Considerations

Choosing the right platform:

Selecting an accessible and user-friendly video conferencing platform is crucial for a seamless interview experience.

Connectivity issues:

Unreliable internet connections or technical difficulties can disrupt the flow of the interview.

Reduced non-verbal cues:

Virtual interviews may limit the ability to read body language, making it harder to assess interpersonal skills.

Managing distractions:

External distractions can affect both candidates and interviewers.

Showcasing company culture:

Candidates may find it harder to get a sense of the company's culture during a virtual interview.

Solutions

Choose a easy-to-use platform with accessibility features, such as screen reader compatibility. Provide clear setup instructions and test links for candidates to ensure familiarity with the platform.

Encourage candidates to test the link in advance. Have a backup plan, such as switching to a phone call or rescheduling if issues arise.

Focus on structured questions that highlight communication and problem-solving skills. Use follow-up questions to clarify responses and encourage candidates to elaborate.

Advise candidates to choose a quiet space and use headphones. Unexpected interruptions may occur so remember to remain flexible.

Share media such as short virtual office tour or team introduction, to help candidates connect with the organisation's values and environment.

Create and implement neuro-inclusive Virtual Interviews

Virtual Interviews can offer a flexible and accommodating platform for evaluating candidates, enabling neurodivergent individuals to participate from a comfortable and familiar environment. By incorporating neuro-inclusive practices, employers can enhance Virtual Interviews, ensuring they are accessible, equitable, and supportive for all candidates while fostering an inclusive hiring process.

Pre-interview preparation

Virtual Interviews can introduce stress for candidates due to unfamiliar technology, unclear expectations, and potential sensory discomfort.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Neurodivergent awareness training

Ensure the interviewers understand common neurodivergent characteristics and how they may present in virtual settings.

Detailed interview information

Provide comprehensive details, including visuals about the interview process well in advance.

This should include:

- The interview schedule, including start and end times
- Step-by-step instructions for logging into the platform, including troubleshooting tips.
- Names, roles, and photographs of interviewer (as relevant)
- Details of the interview structure and any assessments or presentations involved.
- Necessary documents to bring
- Contact details of a support person from the organisation to answer any questions.

Share test links or sandbox environments so candidates can practice using the platform in advance.

Accommodations and adjustments

Encourage candidates to request specific accommodations, such as:

- Identifying what time of day the interview takes place
 - Turning off their camera if visual engagement is distracting
 - Additional processing time for responses
 - The ability to use alternative formats for tasks or presentations.
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Provide interview questions in advance

Provide questions in advance, unless quick thinking is being specifically evaluated.

An autistic adult explained,

“ **“I would really appreciate if I got the interview questions prior to the interview. Sometimes I feel caught out by questions and then I just stumble... it really shakes my confidence.”** ”

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Preparing the virtual environment

The virtual setting may amplify sensory sensitivities, such as screen glare or audio interruptions, and limit the ability to read social cues.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Use accessible virtual platforms

Use platforms with accessibility features such as captions or compatibility with assistive technologies. Test features like screen sharing and breakout rooms in advance.

Sensory considerations

- Recommend neutral, uncluttered virtual backgrounds for interviewers
 - Avoid overuse of animations, bright colours, or unnecessary visual elements on the screen
 - Use high-quality audio to minimise distortion or background noise
 - A sensory friendly setting will support the candidate to feel comfortable and to do their best.
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Break spaces in scheduling

Include short breaks in longer interviews to allow candidates time to recharge and refocus.

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During the interview

Virtual Interviews can make it difficult for neurodivergent candidates to process questions quickly, interpret social cues, or feel confident in their responses.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Welcome preparation

Begin by allowing time to ensure the virtual environment is conducive to the interview. Introduce the interviewers and outline the interview flow. This provides structure and reduces uncertainty.

Interview questions

Focus on specific objectives

Use structured interviews to align discussions with key role qualifications.

Direct and clear questions

Avoid abstract or ambiguous queries, opting for straightforward questions.

For example, ask, "What professional skills do you excel at in the workplace?"

Concrete vs. open-ended questions

For example, ask, "In your last job, how did you handle challenging customers?" rather than vague ones like, "Tell me about yourself."

Focus on past experiences rather than speculative scenarios

Direct and clear information

Use straight-forward language

Be mindful of literal interpretations; avoid idiomatic language and jargon.

Avoid double-barrelled questions

When multiple questions with different responses are asked at the same time it can be confusing.

Use specific prompts to guide detailed responses

For example, ask "What steps did you take to mediate the situation?"

Focus on job-relevant criteria

Use a checklist to ensure interviewers assess candidates based on role-related skills and qualifications rather than communication style or social behaviours.

Allow processing time

Allow candidates extra time to process and respond, particularly for complex questions.

For example, after asking, "Can you describe a time when you resolved a conflict in a team?" pause to give the candidate space to formulate a thoughtful answer.

Encourage candidates to bring notes and support materials

Notes and support materials might make it easier for applicants to respond to interview questions.

Use technology that is inclusive and accessible

Ensure the tools are accessible and offer alternatives if the technology cannot be easily accessed.

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After the interview

The post-interview period can be challenging for anyone due to uncertainties about outcomes. For neurodivergent individuals, this phase can be particularly difficult, as expectations about what happens next may not be intuitively understood. Employers can support neurodivergent candidates by being explicit and direct about the next steps. Providing clear information about timelines, outcomes, and expectations can alleviate anxiety, while transparent communication and constructive feedback can foster growth and a positive candidate experience.

Neuro-inclusive strategies

Clear timeframes

Provide explicit timelines and expectations for when or if outcomes will be communicated.

Transparent feedback

Provide specific, actionable feedback, focusing on both strengths and areas for improvement.

A neurodivergent employee shared,

 **“I want to know exactly what I did well and how I can improve for next time.”**

Process evaluation

Collect feedback from candidates on their Virtual Interview experience to identify and address areas for improvement in future processes.



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Scenario

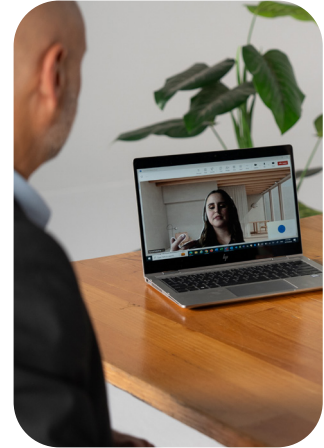
A marketing agency is hiring a digital strategist and want to ensure they use neuro-inclusive Virtual Interviews to ensure candidates skills are assessed equitably.

Actions taken

- The agency identifies what time of day suits the candidate.
- The agency provides a clear agenda outlining the interview schedule time and topics, along with a link to test the video conferencing platform in advance.
- Candidates are allowed to refer to notes or work samples and is informed they can turn off their camera if it makes them more comfortable.
- During the interview, the panel uses structured questions and avoids overlapping when speaking. They give candidates extra time to respond to scenario-based questions.
- For the skills assessment, candidates are offered the option to either screen share or describe their strategy verbally



Providing clear instructions about how to attend the virtual interview can help reduce stress.



By incorporating these neuro-inclusive practices, Virtual Interviews can provide a comfortable and accessible platform for all candidates, fostering an inclusive hiring environment while achieving recruitment goals.

Learn more and access resources

To learn more about Neuro-Inclusive recruiting and how to create and maintain neuro-inclusive workplaces, scan the QR code or visit neuroinclusiverecruiting.org.au.

