

Applying For A Remote Job? Here Are 4 Ways To Wow Interviewers From Afar

Ready for some good news? The latest figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate the economy is on the upswing again: By September 2020, unemployment dipped below 8%. And through August and September alone, more than 2 million nonfarm jobs were filled. Sadly, the pandemic continues to loom, with the CDC reporting record numbers of new cases daily. If you're searching for a new gig, telecommuting remains ever present. As Andrew Hunter, co-founder of the global job-search engine Adzune, noted in a Fortune article, even companies that previously sniffed at virtual staffing arrangements are diving into a "giant work-from-home experiment."

So how can you prove that you're the best candidate even if you're half a world away on Zoom? Incorporate these master-level steps into your routine to make sure your personal brand will ensure that you distinguish yourself as "the one" to your would-be employer:

1. Renovate your online presence. Make no mistake: Prospective virtual employers are still checking you out online. Google your name. Whatever comes up—including that horrible Facebook picture from college that you should definitely take down—is what employers will also see. Today, your Google results are your first impression.

Just two years ago, a CareerBuilder survey revealed that 47% of companies would drop a candidate if that person didn't show up in online results. And 20% of employers said they expected applicants to be on the internet (in a positive way). So dust off your LinkedIn profile, doing more than just updating the years and job titles.

If you have weak digital branding overall, rev it up so your authentic traits shine through on your LinkedIn page, website, and social media feed. Start by unearthing your strengths and showcasing them in your professional profile or portfolio. This will set you apart from the pack and put the spotlight on what you do well, and what's special about the way you achieve results. Include visually and contextually interesting documents, images, and videos. These could include photos of yourself doing community service, content that you've written, an infographic of your "big wins," or even a list of references or testimonials. Get creative, but stay authentic. Effective personal branding is based in what's real.

2. Improve the productivity of your work-from-home space. What happens if an interviewer asks to see your virtual working space? Are you ready to show it off with glee? Or would you scramble to make your cluttered dining room table seem appropriate?

Your telecommuting environment should be as streamlined and functional as possible. That way, you won't be distracted. First off, make sure you have the best possible internet connection (preferably wired, not Wi-Fi) for both your interview and working life. The last thing you want is a Zoom call that's stilted and wonky. Test your tech and buy a webcam if your computer's built-in camera is anything but clear. You'll feel less anxious (and more confident) every time you connect with interviewers and recruiters.

If you don't have a space devoted to working from your house, find a quiet spot. Choose a zone with great natural lighting, which will give you those feel-good vibes. Try to find an area where you can close off to the sound of arguing kids and meowing cats when you're on calls, or if that's not possible, invest

in high-quality ear buds to block out background noise. The less distracted and more inviting your home office is, the higher the likelihood you'll wow your potential employer.

3. Keep online interviews genuine—and show some vulnerability. You shouldn't enter into a virtual interview with your heart on your sleeve. At the same time, don't try to cover up your mistakes. Everyone has made them. And since the onset of Covid-19, employers are more empathetic than ever. Obviously, you'll want to talk about your high points and talents, but be honest about your missteps and what you learned from them. In fact, that's a typical interview question.

Worried that a hiring supervisor might be looking for perfection? Jettison the thought. Brit Booth, vice president of marketing at Perfect Day Foods, maintains that you don't need to act tough to get noticed. "Businesspeople are no strangers to failure, and they'll likely empathize with you," says Booth. "What you think is your downfall could actually be your point of greatest connection."

Just one word of caution: Try to end your interview on an upbeat note. Strive to show your truth, but give the interviewer the impression that you roll with the punches and rarely make the same error twice.

4. Recharge your batteries with some self-care. The term "self-care" has gotten a lot of press lately, especially as pandemic-related anxiety has combined with the stressors of job hunting. A Kaiser Family Foundation poll from July showed that more than half of respondents said their mental health had taken a hit due to Covid-19.

With this in mind, you might realize that looking for job listings online all day has left you exhausted—and perhaps with a case of burnout. Consequently, make some changes for the good of your health and well-being. For example, talk to someone who can soothe you if you're feeling overwhelmed. Remind yourself that you're not alone and that you might not feel better without help. Many counselors and therapists offer virtual sessions, opening the door for self-care from a distance.

How else can you incorporate self-care into your daily activities? Try to stick with a routine by practicing smart sleep hygiene and getting dressed each day for a casual working environment. Rather than job hunting all the time, set aside an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon for that task. In between these time blocks, run errands, go for a walk, and connect with people. When you do snag an interview, pamper yourself afterward with a quick treat (think your favorite healthy snack or extra "escapism" time with Netflix).

A growing number of jobs are being advertised each day, so make the most of planned serendipity. Be sure you're ready for the one that's perfect for you.

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