The Complete Guide To Conducting Successful Remote Interviews & Securing The Best Person For Your Role
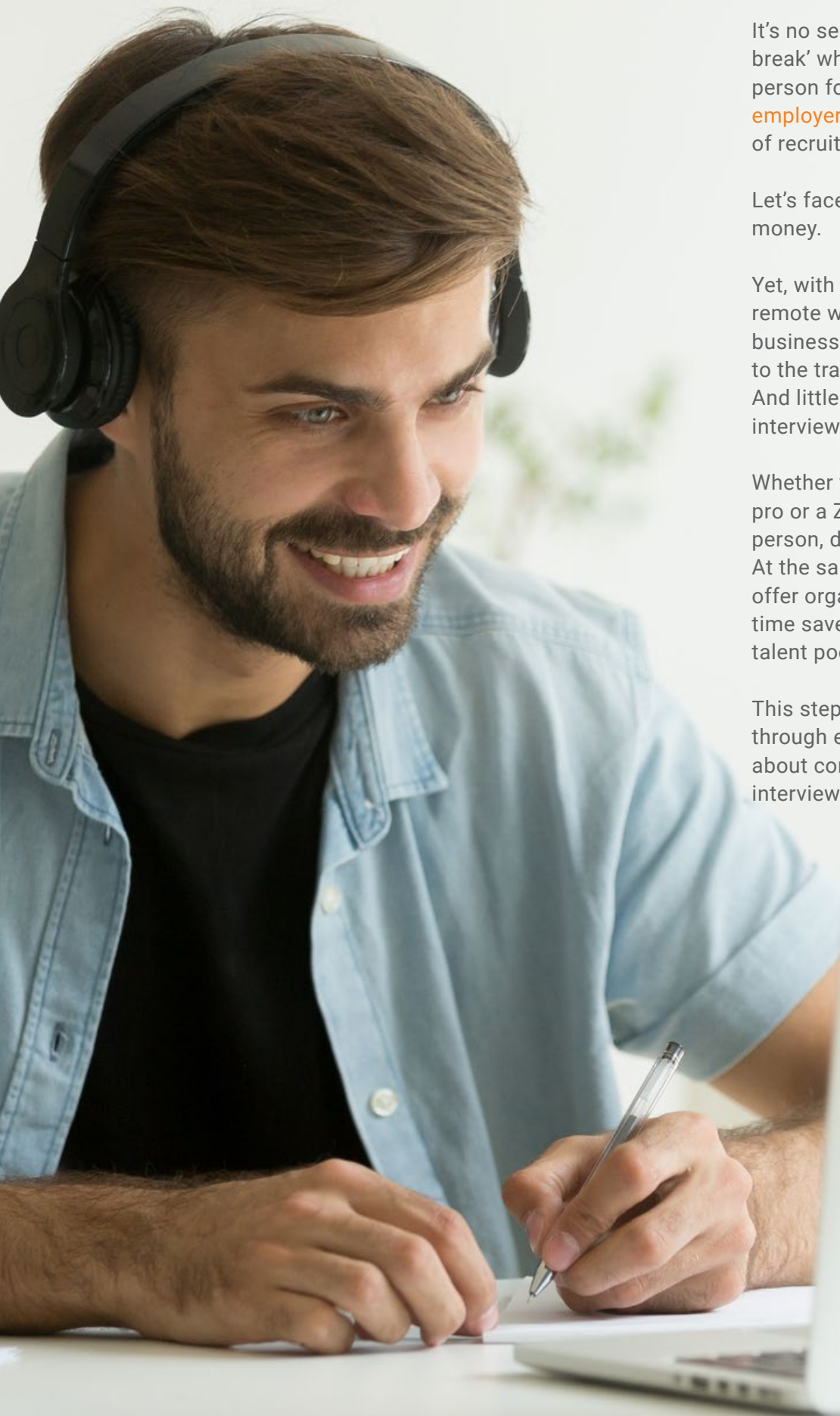
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It's no secret that interviews are 'make or break' when it comes to finding the right person for your team. In fact, 90% of employers consider the interview stage of recruitment critical for success.

Let's face it—bad hires cost time and money.

Yet, with the rapid transition to remote working (thanks to COVID-19), businesses have had little time to adapt to the transformed hiring environment. And little time to adjust to remote interviews.

Whether you're a video conferencing pro or a Zoom newbie—what works in person, doesn't always translate online. At the same time, remote interviews offer organisations lots of benefits from time saved to the availability of a wider talent pool to get the best talent.

This step-by-step guide will walk you through everything you need to know about conducting a successful remote interview.

Remote Interviews—

The Good, The Bad And The Ugly

Video interviews are hardly new, but admittedly it's hard to successfully replicate the face-to-face experience. The downside of a poorly organised remote interview is a chaotic, impersonal and awkward experience for everyone. We've all been there when Zoom or Skype cuts out and everyone starts shouting 'are you still there?'—bearable when talking with colleagues, but incredibly frustrating with a candidate.

On the flip side, remote interviews are faster and cheaper. For instance, you can interview hundreds of candidates at a fraction of the price as you avoid paying for expensive overheads.

Another benefit is that the remote interview offers a more standardised approach resulting in a more even playing field. This is because you can attract a wider and more diverse pool of candidates. In addition, the online space discourages decisions based on gut-instinct or first impressions which we know are vulnerable to bias.

When preparing your remote interview process, there's a heap of factors to consider—from identifying the right technology, to designing questions and scheduling, to understanding how to communicate your company culture effectively.

If you want to learn how to create a stellar remote interview, read on.

STEP 1: Preparation Is Everything

In other words, don't try to wing-it. Being organised beforehand can make the difference between delivering a killer interview experience or a mic-drop hire-fail.

Here's a quick checklist:

- Review and update the job description—is it still relevant? Does it need amending to reflect a new work-from-home policy?

- Decide how many candidates you want to interview and how much time you can allocate to the hiring process.

- Review all of your candidate's application materials, e.g. cover letters, resumes. Check online profiles for added information like hobbies. Are there any gaps in work history or red flags?

STEP 2: Script Interview Questions

Now that you've outlined the role you're recruiting for and researched your prospective candidates, it's time to design your interview questions. Agree what topics you want to cover, then draft and refine your questions, checking you haven't missed anything.

Consider what new questions you may need to ask.

Here's a list of example questions you can modify:

- How do you structure your work schedule and stay focused and motivated at home?
- What is one thing you struggle with working remotely?
- How do you keep your team engaged, connected and collaborative under remote conditions?
- Give me an example of a time you had to work collaboratively to deliver on a distributed/remote project team?
- Describe your ideal workspace. What are your top must-haves?
- What are the main challenges when you bring work home with you?
- What strategies do you employ to ensure a healthy work-life balance?

It's also more important now, than ever, to ask icebreaker questions to get your candidate comfortable with you and your interview style. For an in-person interview, you may ask the candidate how their commute was, or chat about the weather. In a remote interview, you could ask them how they're doing with the remote lifestyle, or how they're keeping active during the work day.

STEP 3: Make Your Candidate Feel Comfortable

Similar to face-to-face interviews, how you welcome your candidate to the interview experience communicates volumes about your company and team culture.

On the practical side, your candidate should know who is calling them, what platform you're using, and the names and titles of anyone joining the interview.

Here's a checklist:

- Allow time for a virtual 'meet-and-greet' prior to the interview beginning.

- Make the candidate feel comfortable by conducting a prep call with the hiring manager using the same software as what will be used for the interview.

- Over-communicate the logistics, so your candidate is well aware of the interview process.

- Include a 2 minute breather during the interview where possible to give the candidate a chance to have some water or a toilet break.

STEP 4: Get Your Interview Etiquette Right

However advanced video conferencing software is these days, by its nature it can still feel impersonal. As humans, we learn so much from body language cues and facial reactions. It's essential to agree on interview protocols with your team beforehand. At the same time, you don't want to lose the informality aspect of in-person interviews. So, it's about striking a fine balance between the two.

Here's a checklist of things to consider:

- Agree with your team who will be asking what questions. The last thing you want is people interrupting or accidentally talking over each other during the interview (which is common when you're online).

- Don't lose the small talk—you want to come across as a human rather than robotic.

- Be overly expressive—your candidate will find it hard to gauge your reaction online (smile, laugh and nod). This means ensuring your room is well-lit as they need to see your reactions and facial expressions too.

- Be human and keep a personal touch.

- Even if you're not asking questions, listen actively—don't start fiddling with your computer or looking at your phone.

- Take notes on paper, so you aren't typing while the candidate is talking.
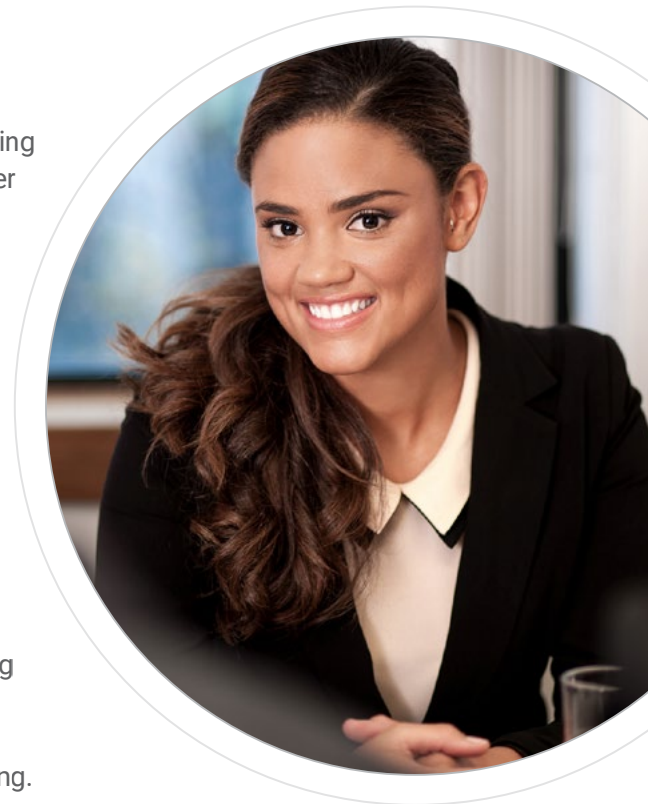
STEP 5: Finish The Interview With A Strong Close

As you would with an interview in-person, it's important to really highlight what makes this job and your company great – afterall, they're also trying to decide if you're the right fit for them. Then, explain to the candidate what the next steps are, expected follow-up timescale and lastly make sure you allow enough time for any questions.

Here's a quick checklist:

Have you outlined what happens next, e.g. how and when you'll follow up and any other key stages?

Ensure you have all their details, such as availability for second interviews if needed.

Thank them for their time.

Ask for feedback about the process, e.g. was the interview appointment clearly communicated, was the software easy to install, what aspect of the interview worked best, what would they improve.

Final Thoughts

By using this guide, you will be able to conduct a successful remote interview to ensure you are hiring the best candidate for the job! If you would like some more assistance in preparing for your remote interviews, feel free to contact the Finite team, we would love to help!

Finite IT

Finite are experts in the Australian tech sector and can help candidates understand exactly where their skills are most in demand.

For twenty years, Finite has been helping candidates find their dream tech, digital and business transformation roles.

From humble beginnings, we've grown into a broad network of specialist recruitment professionals, who can help connect you with great candidates and candidates with amazing career opportunities.

We understand that just as each job is unique, each candidate is unique. So, we focus our energy on giving candidates access to the best companies, leaders and roles that align with their individual personality, vision and goals.

Interested in finding out more? Get in contact with your local Finite IT office today.

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