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# Video Job Interviews: Hiring for the Selfie Age

Robo-recruiting speeds up the hiring process, widens reach and increases number of candidates interviewed, hiring managers say



ILLUSTRATION: BRUCE MACPHERSON

By DAHLIA BAZZAZ

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21 COMMENTS

For job seekers looking to make a good first impression, a working webcam and a tidy room might be the new firm handshake.

First-round job interviews are the latest part of the hiring process to undergo digitization as companies use video interviews to cut recruiting costs and times. [Cigna Corp.](#), [Goldman Sachs Group Inc.](#) and [International Business Machines Corp.](#) are among the employers now asking some applicants to log on to a website and submit video responses to interview questions in lieu of talking with a human. The method has grown in recent years as nearly everyone has access to a

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laptop or smartphone with a front-facing camera, and companies say it is an efficient, fair and inexpensive way to process hundreds of applicants.

Salt Lake City, Utah-based HireVue Inc., which provides video interviewing software for Goldman Sachs and 600 other firms, said it hosted nearly three million video interviews last year, up from 13,000 five years ago.

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## LIGHTS, CAMERA...INTERVIEW

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Pointers for a successful video interview from recruiters and former applicants at IBM and Cigna:

- Treat video interviews like an in-person interview: dress appropriately, maintain eye contact and silence cellphones and other devices.
- Check your internet connection, camera and audio levels before starting the interview.
- Secure a quiet room, free of housemates or pets. Make sure distracting posters or art cannot be seen in the camera frame.
- For the camera-shy, resist the urge to play back responses or watch yourself record.

applicants to managers for consideration. Applicants who make the cut are typically invited to a one-on-one interview. That doesn't always mean it will be in-person, though. Varsha Paidi, a software engineer hired by IBM last year, had subsequent online interviews and eventually received her job offer via text message.

Speeding up the hiring process allows recruiters to look at more applicants than before, giving companies wider reach, said Obed Louissaint, the human-resources lead for IBM's Watson division.

Applicants, however, say that computer-guided interviews take some getting used to. Amy Hall was never the type to get nervous during job interviews, but when the 29-year-old had to complete a video interview last year for an internal job switch at Cigna-Healthspring, she recalled feeling apprehensive and camera-shy. She waited until

Most video-interviewing programs require applicants to click a link or install an app. Interviews begin with a prompt such as "Tell us about a time you had to deal with a conflict" that stays on-screen for about 30 seconds. Then, the camera turns on and the candidate has anywhere from 30 seconds to 5 minutes to respond before the next question pops up.

Human-resources staff then review the videos and pass along promising



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The Wall Street Journal news organization was not involved in the creation of this content.

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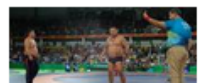
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after work hours and used a computer in the IT department. With the door closed, she clicked a link to Cigna’s video-interviewing site.

Replaying footage of her interview responses was “very uncomfortable” at first, she said. She resubmitted two responses, but ultimately found her stride and even preferred the video format because, she recalled, “you’re not trying to perform.” Last January, she got the job as a senior data analyst managing records for Medicare doctors.

Video interviews have significantly reduced travel costs for Cigna recruiters. Frank Abate, a senior recruiter there, said one of his colleagues racked up more than \$1 million annually just traveling to meet candidates. Since adopting video interviews four years ago, that colleague’s expenses are now under \$100,000.

Companies say they seek similar traits in video interviews as they do in traditional interviews. Recruiters at IBM and Cigna said they evaluate candidates based on how well the person communicates his/her thought process, whether the person answers all parts of the question—and whether he/she makes eye contact.

According to Mary Wilson, a Cigna hiring manager, Ms. Hall’s interview stood out because her responses seemed like they were addressed to an actual person, not a camera.

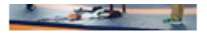
“Others tend to fidget or look away, but she looked directly into the camera and answered the questions thoughtfully and completely,” she said.

HireVue, InterviewStream, WePow and other vendors that make video-interviewing software say their programs make hiring more fair because all applicants must answer the same questions, placing substance over schmoozing and small talk.

Video interviews might also present some problems because managers cannot ask follow-up questions or engage candidates further on a point, said Carol Miaskoff, assistant legal counsel for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In letters to vendors, Ms. Miaskoff has suggested that companies assign more than one person to review individual videos to ensure hiring decisions aren’t made hastily.

Taking robo-recruiting one step further, some HireVue customers have an algorithm review the video interviews for them. Using data

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have an algorithm review the video interviews for them. Using data about the skills and attributes companies are seeking for a given role, a program called HireVue Insights scans videos for verbal and facial cues that match those skills then ranks the top 100 applicants.

Human evaluation can help when things go wrong mid-interview. Bruce DelMonico, the assistant dean for admissions for the Yale School of Management—which requires M.B.A. program applicants to respond to video prompts—said that unforeseen interruptions like a roommate barging in mid-interview show how applicants think on their feet.

“All is not lost,” said Mr. DelMonico. “We pay attention to how well you respond and recover.”

Write to Dahlia Bazzaz at [Dahlia.Bazzaz@wsj.com](mailto:Dahlia.Bazzaz@wsj.com)

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Darvin Boothe



I am the CEO of an IT staffing agency has been using this tool for a couple of years now. It is mostly optional for our candidates as many are still very apprehensive (some clients require now require it). We have found that those who chose to participate in a recorded video interview's chances are better that those who do not. The reason is because the video gives the candidate a chance to showcase his/her personality and communication skills where a flat resume does not. 99% of our clients will still require a face to face interview before hiring a candidate regardless. So I don't believe this is replacing the direct human interaction. It is just another tool to help create a good career match. I also believe that within then next 3-5 years video interviewing will be as common as a resume.

5 days ago



THOMAS O SULLIVAN



We're seeing a big trend in HR technology where a new wave of vendors are taking over the space with SaaS and video interviewing is no different. Many candidates enjoy the opportunity while others are still getting accustomed to it, but employers find it's one of the better technology investments due to it's



impact on reducing time-to-hire and travel expenses. We are big fans of RIVS Digital Interviews ([rivs.com](http://rivs.com)) and am happy to speak with anyone about it

5 days ago



**Bruce Saltzman**



Based on my personal experience with this. Companies tabulate the average response time until the interviewee starts answering questions; without taking into account the length and the complexity of the answer.

The recorded interviews will be an excellent source of defensive evidence, when and if the firm is ever sued for lack of affirmative-action or age discrimination.

5 days ago



**Judith Grayson**



@Bruce Saltzman what happened to pheromones. no. seriously. you know, the reason some people like you and some people don't. what about ability to interact with humans in a live setting and with co workers? if indeed there is still someone who identifies as a co worker.

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**ANDREW TABONE**



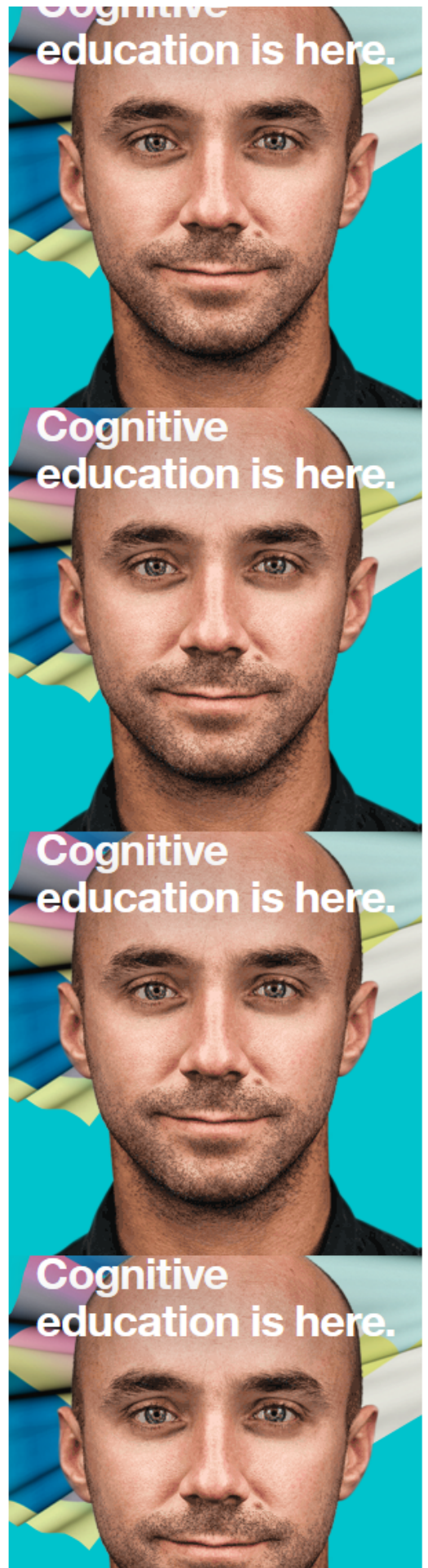
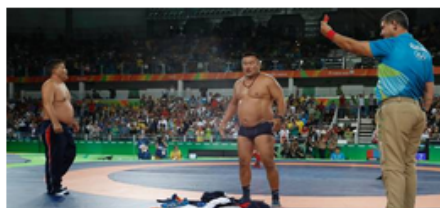
@Bruce Saltzman It's a sword that can cut both ways.

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