



PTC - NC

Conducting Remote Interviews:
Considerations and Best Practices

About PTC-NC

- PTC-NC provides a forum for over 150 public and private-sector professionals in personnel assessment and selection to network with other professionals and discuss the latest legal, technical, and practical issues surrounding personnel assessment and selection.
- We hold seminars featuring top professionals in the fields of human resources, management, and industrial/organizational psychology.

Upcoming Events

Planned Topics for 2020

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are withholding formal advertisement until a determination is made if these events can be held in person or modified to fit webinar format.

Job Analysis Workshop: Hands on task/KSA statement development, tips and tricks

Test Item Writing Workshop: Hands on item writing training and best practices discussion

Online Recruitment: How to identify effective tools and incorporate them into existing processes

Selecting Appropriate Assessment Tools: How to select effective tools, what to avoid, and how to plan the assessment process to maximize ROI

Classical Item Analysis in Excel/R: Overview of item analysis interpretation, and methods in both Excel and R – Basic templates and R scrips will be provided

Today's Presenters

- Jorge Avalos (Moderator), Assessment Consultation Team Manager, California DOJ
- Leyla Najmi (Presenter), Classification and Hiring Chief, California Public Utilities Commission
- Jason Underwood (Presenter), Assessment Consultant, California DOJ

Conducting Remote Interviews: Considerations and Best Practices

Webinar Goals

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to quickly adapt to new methods of doing business. Remote interviewing and hiring presents a set of unique challenges that can stretch the bandwidth of the most dedicated hiring managers and HR professionals. PTC hopes to make the transition to remote interview a little bit easier by:

1. Providing basic tools and techniques for conducting remote interviews
2. Sharing some best practices for interviewing and measuring candidate abilities
3. Addressing some common security concerns for online interviews and assessments

Conducting Remote Interviews: Considerations and Best Practices

Webinar Topics

1. Equipment, Software, & Administration
2. Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices
3. Online Interview Question Security
4. Other Assessment Types

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Interview Equipment

- Phone Interviews:
 - Reliable phone connection, conference number (if applicable)
- Video Interviews (recommended):
 - Reliable internet connection
 - Personal Computer – Many programs support mobile options (i.e., cellphones, tablets), however they are sometimes susceptible to more technical issues
 - Microphone, webcam, or mobile device with front-facing camera

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Equipment Considerations

- Many videoconference services provide a call-in number which can offer better audio quality
- Test all equipment before interviews (and instruct candidates to do so as well)
 - Some systems can have audio feedback through the microphone, so having headphones or a headset handy is a good idea
- Have a plan for:
 - Candidates who do not have the necessary equipment
 - Candidates who experience day-of technical difficulties

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Interview Software

- Video Conference: (e.g., WebEx, GoToMeeting, Zoom)
 - Most services allow candidate to connect to hosted meetings for free
- Documents
 - Adobe is a free software for candidates that can prevent editing of security forms or other documents, and can be used to collect candidate signatures.
 - Microsoft Word / Google Docs can be used if candidates need to submit written materials
- Document Hosting
 - Sensitive documents can be hosted on online platforms (e.g., Google Docs, survey platforms)
 - Documents can also be shared via share-screen features within a video conference

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Software Considerations

1. Ensure all software used will be free to candidates
2. Determine if software is supported on mobile devices
3. Test all software before interviews
 - Ensure software chosen will be feasible to administer without undue difficulty
4. Test the candidate software experience using the help of a colleague

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Administration – Pre Interview

1. Determine the number of candidates you want to interview
2. Establish your interview schedule
3. Notify candidates they have been selected for an interview
 - Either assign a time slot, or coordinate with candidate at this point
 - Have a discussion with your candidates to see if they will be able to interview remotely
4. Create unique meetings for each candidate (videoconference only)

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Administration – Pre Interview – Contacting Candidates

- Email candidates interview information
 - Use a template email containing items such as:
 - Start time
 - Expected duration
 - Instructions on how to test equipment and software in advance
 - What to expect from the process and misc. instructions
 - Their unique meeting link and call in number
 - Assessment materials, links, and/or instructions (if applicable)
- If conducting an assessment (e.g., multiple choice, writing exercise)
 - Include specific instructions, time limits, submission directions
- Have a back-up plan in place in case candidates do not have the necessary equipment or interview environment (e.g., quiet) for a remote interview.

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Administration – Day Of

If conducting back-to-back interviews:

- Designate someone to answer candidate questions if the interviewer(s) cannot be reached
- Build flex time into the interview schedule to accommodate technical difficulties
- If sending candidates information right before an interview, consider using features like “delayed delivery” in Microsoft Outlook to automate your emails

Plan for the unknown!

- Candidates never fail to come through with new and unforeseen technical challenges or other difficulties
- Set your limits on how accommodating you will be in the process
- Take care not to disadvantage candidates with less access to technology, internet, or other resources

Equipment, Software, & Administration

Administration – Day Of

Interview Panels:

- Interview panel members can connect individually or as a group, however connecting individually increases the likelihood of technical difficulties
- Space considerations (e.g., social distancing measures) can dictate what method is feasible
- If connecting individually, be sure to clearly define each persons role to avoid confusing the candidate
- Make sure all interviewers are on the same page and familiar with the administration plan. “Learning as you go” can significantly disadvantage candidates earlier on in the process.

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

Preparing the Interview

- Many best practices for remain the same for remote interviews:
 - Consider your candidate pool when planning interview length or other characteristics
 - Do research on the types of interview others are using for your position
 - Craft job-related interview skills that evaluate core skills
 - The typical phone interview is around 30 minutes, so plan for 5-10 questions
- Create a system for assigning candidates scores, such as a rating scale
 - Take time to consider what a candidate could say to demonstrate that they are “Well Qualified” and how their response might differ from someone “Minimally Qualified” and “Not Qualified”.
- Ask the same questions in the same order for every candidate
 - Ensure equal opportunity for every candidate for follow-up questions
 - Avoid leading candidates towards a better answer

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

The Videoconference Interview

- In the absence of a true face-to-face connection, a video interview is the best option to get to know your candidates
- Up to 55% of human communication is expressions, body language, and other physical cues
 - The video component not only helps you communicate better with your candidate, but offers them increased knowledge about who they will be working for, and can improve your chances of bring on your top talent
- Candidate anxiety can result from the novelty of a video conference, however simple steps can help mitigate it:
 - Clearly communicate start times, administration logistics, and what to expect in the interview
 - Make sure you have rehearsed your process to avoid glitches or trip-ups that could throw the candidate off
 - Join the call/conference before the candidate and greet them with a smile

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

The Videoconference Interview

- Despite having video, it is still challenging to pick up on subtle cues about candidate anxiety, so it is especially important to take proactive measures
 - Start the interview with planned small talk or unscored starter questions to build their comfort and confidence; leave the trickier questions for the end
 - At the start of the interview, offer candidates the opportunity to return to any question at the end of the interview
 - Most of us have experienced a time where you think of the perfect answer two minutes too late, which can throw a candidate off for the rest of the interview
 - Ensure all questions are read slowly, accurately, and clearly
 - Practicing with a friend or colleague beforehand is a great idea!

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

Preparing Your Interview Environment

- The physical environment you select can have a large impact, if possible try to:
 - Find a place where you won't be disturbed
 - Communicate your availability with colleagues and turn off device notifications
 - Dress the same way as you would for an in-person interview, as appropriate for your industry
 - Have a neutral background for videoconferences without any potentially distracting noises or activity
 - Double check what may or may not be visible to the candidate in your background
- First impressions matter. Not only is the interview your first impression of them, it is their first impression of you and your organization. A good first impression can tip the scales towards your top candidate accepting an eventual job offer.

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

Preparing Yourself

- Try to conduct the interview in a similar manner to in-person, where possible.
 - Practice anything you will be doing beforehand
 - The key to your interviewee being comfortable is being comfortable yourself
 - Candidates will key in on any nervousness or abnormal behavior, such as being overly nice
- Set up your screen in a position where you can naturally look at camera straight on, so it appears you are looking at the candidate.
 - Even looking a slightly different direction than the camera can be extremely distracting for the candidate
- Interviews are stressful for candidates in the best of times. It is important to be flexible and accommodating when possible.

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

What is Measurement Error?

- Measurement error is anything that affects a candidate's response that is not related to their ability to do the job
- Error can result from the interviewer, the interview environment, or the candidate themselves
- High levels of error can result in several potential problems:
 - Non-ideal candidate experiences, reduced impressions of validity and fairness of the interview process
 - Reduced confidence in selecting the best candidate
 - Passing over the most qualified candidate for someone less qualified

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

Mitigating Measurement Error

- There is no “Error Detection Meter”, however, several simple steps can mitigate error risk
- Adhere to best practices for interviewing, especially when remote interviewing
 - Simply following best practices we have already discussed will significantly reduce your risk of error
 - Ensure that all candidates are treated equally in each state of the process
- Some common sources of environmental measurement error:
 - Unexpected technical problems, interruptions, slip-ups when reading interview questions
 - Distracting or unprofessional interview environment (especially when teleworking!)
 - Candidate anxiety, potentially amplified by the novelty of the situation

Standardizing Administration, Fairness, & Best Practices

Mitigating Measurement Error

Some common sources of rater (interviewer) error:

1. Severity – Tendency to only accept perfection
2. Leniency – Tendency to give the benefit of the doubt
3. Central Tendency – Tendency to view everyone as “average”
4. Halo – Tendency for a particularly noteworthy candidate to affect how the next candidate is perceived
5. Similarity – Tendency to view similar people more favorably
6. Contrast – Tendency to compare candidates relative to others
7. Negative Weighting – Tendency to put more weight on poor responses than strong responses
8. Expectation – Tendency for prior knowledge to influence how the candidate is perceived (i.e., internal candidates)
9. Change in Standards – Tendency for standards to change based on growing knowledge of the candidate pool as the interviews progress

Interview Question & Assessment Security

Candidate Cheating

- Cheating is always a risk when assessing candidates, even with in-person interviews
- Here are some common ways candidate's might cheat
 - Lying – Questions asking about experience are especially vulnerable, try hypothetical or behavioral questions instead
 - Faking Good – Related to lying, however not to the same degree and can be subconscious
 - Questions with socially desirable answers are especially prone
 - Prior knowledge – candidates can try to gain early access to your interview questions
 - This is usually accompanied by a security breach, either internally, or from candidates memorizing or copying interview questions to share with friends, or post online and sell for profit
 - Impersonation – This involves having someone else submit a writing sample, take a test, or even interview for you
 - Highlights the importance of the video interview
- The takeaway:
 - Candidates will find a way to cheat if they really want to, however, basic steps can be taken to make it harder to cheat, and eliminate openings for opportunistic cheating

Interview Question & Assessment Security

Interview Security

When conducting remote interviews, it is especially important to consider:

- Is the person interviewing the person who applied (if using audio only)?
 - Is the candidate cheating by searching for or soliciting leaked interview questions?
 - Does the candidate have someone present with them who could be writing out answers out of view of the camera?
 - Will the candidate distribute your interview questions to others, or post them online?
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- These types of cheating can be difficult or impossible to detect, making remote interviews less than ideal from a security perspective. However, some simple steps can help to greatly improve security.

Interview Question & Assessment Security

Interview Security – Best Practices

- Prior to sending the interview questions, have candidates sign a security form.
 - To return it, the candidate can either respond with their agreement (through email) or sign it and take a picture of the signed form. Instructions can also be worded such that participating in the interview constitutes their agreement.
- When communicating with candidates, be clear that cheating or violating security requirements will not be tolerated
- Ask situational, behavioral, or specific experience questions instead of knowledge-based questions
 - Process or knowledge-based questions can be easily researched online
 - Direct candidates demonstrate their first-hand experience by providing specifics and details
- Tell candidates that experience and qualifications will be verified later in the process
 - Simply believing that claims will be verified can mitigate cheating and lying, even if they are not actually checked

Interview Question & Assessment Security

Interview Security – Best Practices

- Offering candidates 5-10 minutes to review interview questions is desirable for most positions and can help mitigate anxiety and sources of environmental error. It can also help ensure the candidate understands the questions clearly if voice quality is an issue. However, in remote circumstance, it also presents a significant security challenge.
- Some video-conference software allows for screen sharing, where the questions can be shared if they are present on the interviewer's screen.
 - Candidates can read along with the panel during the interview.
 - A separate meeting can be set up to host the questions for a review session if administratively feasible
- Interview questions can also be hosted on a variety of online platforms, such as Google Docs, or Survey Monkey
 - While this does not prevent candidates from intentionally copying questions or taking picture, it prevents them from having a digital copy that could be inadvertently leaked

Interview Question & Assessment Security

Concluding the Interview

- Remind the candidate of security and confidentiality
- Ask the candidate to delete any copies of interview questions or other assessment materials
- Be careful not to come across as accusatory; most candidates would follow every security request by default even if they weren't asked to
- End the interview on a high note! Talking about security doesn't exactly draw in candidates, so try talking about the next steps in the process if they move forward, or field any questions the candidate might have to conclude your interview.

Other Assessment Types

Multiple-choice Test

- Use an online format, such as Survey Monkey
 - Use unique one-time-only candidate links, limited time windows, start and end time stamps
 - Questions can be presented one at a time to mitigate security risks
- Consider remote proctoring – have the candidate answer the questions while being monitored through webcam (videoconference software)
- The type of question you ask greatly influences your test security:
 - Knowledge-based questions are easy to look up, however you can reduce this opportunity by setting shorter time limits compared to in-person testing where answers cannot be found on the internet
 - Consider questions that cannot be easily researched (e.g., hypothetical, analytical, situational judgement)
 - Several advanced methods exist to mitigate cheating risk, such as unique and equated forms, item randomization and more
 - Contact a testing professional for more information on advanced techniques
- Consider using an online testing system from a vendor
 - Most vendors offer several advanced and custom features to suit your specific needs, however these services in some cases come with a hefty price tag.

Other Assessment Types

Work Sample/Performance Exercise

- Work sample exercises can be challenging to administer remotely depending on the type
 - Inbox tasks, written tasks, etc. can be administered online via survey platforms (e.g., Survey Monkey)
 - Excel exercises can be sent at designated times and submitted via email, or performed in Google Sheets
 - Have candidates prepare a presentation, or plan a meeting
 - Analyze a document, present their findings to the interviewer
 - Job tryouts, physical ability tasks, etc. are nearly impossible to administer online in most cases
- Ensure all candidates have equal time to review any materials
- Consider asking candidates to submit samples of their work in a portfolio
 - While the question of it being their real work is always present, in most cases it is better than nothing

Other Assessment Types

Writing Exercise

- Writing exercises can be hosted online using a shared document (i.e., Google Docs) or survey platform
- The same general guidelines for other assessment types apply:
 - Avoid content that can be easily researched or experience that can be faked
 - Create an analytical tasks to complete or ask for specific first-hand experiences
 - If only measuring writing mechanics, the content of the prompt isn't as important
- Use a set time window for completion to reduce risk of cheating
- Consider using remote proctoring via video conference
 - The proctor can watch the candidate write in real time by watching a shared document or through the candidate sharing their screen

PTC Membership

Value of having a PTC-NC Membership:

- Free training seminars
- Discounted workshops & conferences
- Networking Opportunities with other HR professionals

Types of Memberships:

- Organizational Membership (10 members) - \$150.00
- Regular - \$40.00
- Student - \$20.00

Join Today!: <https://ptcnc.wildapricot.org/join-us>

*PTC is run entirely by volunteers hours, all proceeds go towards infrastructure and events to benefit our members.

Q&A

Q&A Panel Members

- Leyla Najmi, Classification and Hiring Chief, California Public Utilities Commission
- Leslee Pagenkopf, Testing and Selection Manager, California DOJ
- Jim Higgins, Talent Acquisition and Data Analytics Manager, California DOJ
- Kristina Morgan, Executive and Investment Recruitment Manager, CalPERS

Q&A

Q&A Questions and Answers

The Q&A will be posted in the near future. Thank you for your patience and understanding.