SIX VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING TIPS FOR PHYSICIAN RECRUITERS

By Jen Hunter

From CompHealth.com

The disruptive nature of COVID-19 has forced healthcare facilities nationwide to be more creative in their hiring processes. From using iPads to conduct virtual tours to online new-hire training, healthcare facilities are having to rethink the way they approach bringing new physicians on board. Now that virtual interviews have become the norm rather than the exception, the healthcare organizations who can make their virtual experience shine will be the winners when it comes to hiring the best talent. Here are six virtual interviewing tips that can help make your interviews the best they can be.

1. Prepare and Practice with a Mock Interview

If you are new to virtual interviewing, it’s crucial to practice using the technology well before conducting your first interview — things like checking your microphone and camera, Internet speed, and even holding a mock interview for practice.

Adam Ullman, senior recruiter for physician and advanced practice practitioners at Henry Ford Health System, stresses that holding mock interviews, particularly with interviewers who aren’t the most comfortable interviewing virtually, is crucial.

“We do practice interviews with our chairs of departments and division heads,” he says. “We make sure we’ve our prepped interviewers with the technology we’re using before our virtual interviews.”

Another best practice is to have a checklist to ensure you’re prepared before every interview. Some examples include interview protocol, introductory script, questions, applications, and a scoring rubric. It’s also important for the interviewer to rehearse the introductory script and questions.

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2. Test Your Technology and Have a Backup Plan

Although there are many technology choices for holding virtual interviews — like Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, and Microsoft Teams — Ullman admits the technology still isn’t perfect. When you are relying on both the facilities’ technology as well as the interviewee’s technology to be working simultaneously, it’s hard to guarantee a smooth video interview process.

“The first thing we have them do is test and we go in assuming that we’ve done that up front, just in case there’s a technology breakdown,” Ullman says, “and if all else fails, we quickly arrange a phone call as a backup option, so having their phone number at hand is crucial.”

3. Pay Attention to Technology Failures as a Possible Red Flag

Ullman says hospital recruiters should always go into first interviews with the expectation that the interviewee may have technology issues. However, if the candidate is having repeated technology problems, it could be indicative of other, larger issues.

“Having repeated technology issues sends the message that perhaps they’re not as committed as we are,” he says. “We want to focus on candidates who show the same level of interest in us as we do with them.”

4. Invest in Quality Equipment

Ullman stresses how important it is to be equipped with the right technology to ensure your facility is prepared to hold quality virtual interviews.
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“It’s important to invest in good technology,” Ullman says. “There’ll be upfront costs, but it will be cheaper than bringing someone in, which could be a minimum of $1,500 to $3,000 for a visit. This is money you can use to invest in a quality laptop.”

In addition to a reliable laptop, Ullman says it’s important to have a microphone or a headset, and he says most of his interviewers have desktops with nice laptops or computers in their offices.

An investment in equipment must include quality software, and he says it’s important to research what software will work best for your facility. Ullman says for Henry Ford Health System, Microsoft Teams has been working well for them as a virtual interviewing platform.

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5. Pay Attention to the Background

Since face-to-face interviews are becoming a thing of the past, it’s important to present yourself — and your surroundings — as professionally as possible.

“Be sure you’re in a well-lit area with a very professional or neutral background, and dress appropriately,” Ullman says. “You should dress as if you’d be conducting a face-to-face interview, so at a minimum business casual.”

6. Streamline the Site Visit

Once you’ve identified your ideal candidate, a site visit is typically the next step. However, the pandemic and its associated safety precautions may dictate a change in the way the site visit looks.

Prior to COVID, site visits for Henry Ford Health System would typically be one to two days, consisting of the candidate meeting coworkers, getting a facility tour, having meals with fellow healthcare workers, and sometimes even going on a tour of the surrounding area and places of interest.

“We’ve condensed the site visit to one day,” Ullman says, “so we try to maximize the day they are there. We’ll include some situations that might be a little bit outside the norm — maybe a little bit of behavioral interviewing. We’re not doing a lot of dining outside, but frankly, dining with the candidate and seeing how they’re handling COVID tells us a lot.”

Whether in-person or virtual, Ullman says he prefers to keep the process “as organic as possible,” ensuring he finds the right fit for his organization.

The Time and Cost Savings of Virtual Interviews

Although many hospitals and healthcare facilities were conducting virtual interviews prior to COVID-19, it has now become the preferred way to screen and interview candidates for some.

“Virtual interviews save time, and the interview day is a bit easier to manage,” Ullman says. “Once the awkwardness of looking at somebody on the screen has worn off, the candidate becomes very comfortable because they’re in their own setting and there’s more engagement there.”

Another bonus is the cost savings.

“You’re not spending as much in the recruitment department on hosting and touring, so you can focus more on recruitment and searching and sourcing.”

There’s no predicting how long COVID-19 is going to last, but these virtual interviewing tips can help keep your hiring process running smoothly and your facility on track for a faster recovery.

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