**GUIDELINES FOR A VIDEO-CONFERENCE / TELEPHONE CONFERENCE INTERVIEW**

As our workplace becomes more remote and digital, it is not surprising that meetings and interviews are being conducted entirely online. It is important to prepare for that telephone or video conference as if it were an in-person interview. The following are some useful guidelines:

SET UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT IN ADVANCE: It is important to set up everything in advance. Ensure your connection, software, your camera and headphones are working properly. Countless numbers of interviews begin late because of technical issues and usually someone asking “Can you hear me now?” This can make you appear that you are not good with technology or that you did not give this interview the importance it deserves.

Be mindful that you are more visible in a video conference than you are in an in-person meeting. Therefore, set your camera at eye level and make sure you make eye contact with the camera rather than the image of the person to whom you are speaking or your screen. Adjust your chair.

Use either natural light, overhead or side lighting to make yourself look natural. You want to avoid having a shadow across your face and glare in your eyes. Close the blinds or shades on windows so that you can be better seen.

Let anyone around you know that you cannot be disturbed during the scheduled interview time. Keep your environment free from distractions such as crying children, barking dogs, outside lawn maintenance and persons walking behind you.

Open up the camera, clean the camera lens, check to see what is in the visible area around you and then make sure that visible area is neutral, clean and professional during your video conference. The best option is to set up a virtual background. It eliminates the unexpected open closet door or laundry basket in the background. Consider the impression your background will give to your interviewer.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS: Wear what you would to an in-person meeting to present a great first impression of yourself. Solid, neutral color are better than black or white or stripes or patterns to avoid distractions.

RUN A TEST AHEAD OF TIME: It is always a good idea to run one more test the day of the telephone or video conference and give yourself enough time to make any necessary corrections even if you have used the software before. Ensure your Wi-Fi has a strong connection and that your device is adequately charged.

It is helpful if you rehearse your answers to potential interview questions in advance and record yourself while you are speaking so that can get an idea of any changes in tone, volume or pace that need to be made. You want to appear organized, professional and focused at all times.

KNOW YOUR EQUIPMENT AND FEATURES: Learn how to use the features needed during the interview such as muting your side of the call and use that mute button unless you are speaking to eliminate unexpected background noise.

SET EXPECTATIONS IN ADVANCE: Make sure in advance that you know you have the correct time of the meeting if there are multiple time zones.

ARRIVE EARLY: It is always a good idea to arrive early into that virtual conference room or video conference room and establish online connections, proper camera angle and sound check before the meeting time. Arriving early means that you are ready and relaxed rather than beginning with an apology.

COMMUNICATE WELL: Understandably everyone is nervous when interviewing. Make sure you speak in a normal tone of voice and normal pace. Stay attentive and engaged. Refrain from speaking over someone else. Quiet or turn off all other devices around you. Be aware of your behavior because it is highly visible. This means avoiding multi-tasking such as responding to pop-up message or emails. If it is necessary for you to refer to a document, let the other person know what you are doing.

Pay attention to your body language and nervous habits as well. Remember to have good posture; sitting up straight will make you look and sound better. Avoid the tendency to lean backwards since it makes you appear not interested or distracted. Remember to smile when you are on camera. The simple gesture of smiling and greeting the person generates positive feelings. Be mindful of what your hands are doing. Do you play with a pen, shuffle papers, cross your arms, touch your face or your nose when you are nervous? It might be helpful to just place your hands on the table when you are not using them to make hand gestures.

STAY ORGANIZED DURING VIDEOCONFERENCE: Have the job description, concise information about your interviewer and the company, and some bullet points that you want to cover near you. Remove all unnecessary items from your space. Close all unnecessary programs, tabs and browsers. Turn off or silence all your other devices.

Most importantly, relax and have a great conversation.