**Making the most of virtual opportunities Model Answer**

Please note that the purpose of the model answer is to provide you with best practice guidance. It has also been created to help you review your own answer and consider extra details, so it has been written in more detail than was expected from you. This should help you to expand on your answer and give you some key things to consider. Things to reflect on whilst reading this model answer are: Did you include all the main points? Do you now have the confidence to write a strategy like this for your own virtual meeting? Are there any areas where you would benefit from doing some extra research? All these questions will help you to format your own strategy – you could even create a template to complete for each ‘first impression virtual meeting’ that you could complete each time as part of your preparation.

Please read the following scenario, then create your own strategy to maximise the opportunity by answering the points below.

**Scenario**

You have just received an email inviting you to an interview for an Internship opportunity. The meeting is being held virtually using Zoom and you have been provided a link to the call and the time and date. There is no other information included in the email apart from the names of the people that will be interviewing you.

This is an internship at your dream company, and you are feeling a bit nervous about it. You’ve been using Zoom to keep in contact with your friends and family, but you’ve never used it for a business meeting before.

You want to make the best first impression possible, as you know that many people will have applied for this internship opportunity and you want to do your best to get it. You are feeling the pressure of making the right first impression.

1. What can you do to prepare for the interview?

* Review what your online presence says about you
* Check that your LinkedIn profile is up to date (or create one)
* Research what the company stands for – what are their mission, vision and values?
* Find out some interesting facts about the company – have they been in any good news stories recently… or faced any specific challenges?
* Find out as much about the culture of the company as you can – what type of people are they looking for to fit their culture?
* Read about their internship programme – stories from past interns, what to expect from the programme, why they value it.
* See what you can find out about the people interviewing you (have a look on LinkedIn and do a Google search of their names).
* Make a note of some good questions you can ask to show your enthusiasm and interest.
* Think about where you will physically be for the interview (always assume a virtual interview/ interaction will use video even if they don’t state it) – what does the background they will see say about you?
* Think about what to wear to create the best first impression to represent your personal brand.
* Play around with and explore Zoom to be confident with it; be sure to think of this as a business opportunity and not a social chat.
* Think about examples of great work you’ve done that would be good to share to demonstrate your experience (even have links to any research available that may be useful to share)
* Think about the types of questions you may be asked.

This may seem like a long list to consider, but if you were going to their office for an interview/interaction you would fully prepare (even including the journey and how long it will take). There is no difference in terms of preparation for a virtual interview/ important interaction, as you want to make sure you have every opportunity to ‘shine’ and really stand out.

Seeing what you can find out about the people who are interviewing you will allow you to potentially find some common ground ahead of time. Have a look at their LinkedIn profile and see what types of posts they are sharing. Take some time to read what they are sharing, as you may be able to refer to this/ similar themes, and it will show a personal interest in them and their areas of interest and expertise. You could also send a ‘connection request’ if you wish (ideally with a personalised note) – but don’t be disheartened if they don’t accept it before the interview.

Remember, you only get one chance to make a first impression, so taking time to fully prepare will be time very well spent. You want to show that you really understand the company and what they do and stand for, as this can then link to why you applied and why you really want to have an internship with them. This will help you to show interest and enthusiasm.

If you aren’t sure about how to prepare for the types of questions they may ask, then have a Google and see what you can find. Here is a good article to start you off: <https://www.internships.com/career-advice/interview/faq>

Also, take time to think about your personal brand (see previous task) so you can fully reflect and demonstrate it at this interview.

Good luck!

2. What do you need to consider during the interview?

* Be on time! Make sure you are logged in to the Zoom meeting a few minutes ahead of time.
* Have all your notes ready with you (and a glass of water in case you get a dry mouth).
* Look to find a common interest early on when talking to them, as this will help you build rapport quickly.
* Engage fully in the interview and be engaging to interact with and listen to.
* Try to exceed their expectations where possible – what can you do to stand out from everyone else? It could be that you talk about a report that you then offer to share with them (perhaps put a link in the chat box so they have it straight away or email it as part of your follow up (see next answer).
* Be enthusiastic and confident during the interview.
* Make every effort to be positive (even if you don’t feel it inside).
* Pay attention at all time and don’t allow yourself to get distracted.
* Make eye contact (the ‘eye’ is the camera) throughout.
* Ask questions to show interests (and also if you need a question clarifying).
* Demonstrate a sense of humour and allow your personality to shine.
* Think about your body language and how you are ‘presenting’ yourself
  + Dress for success
  + Give a genuine smile
  + Uncross your arms
  + Lower your vocal pitch
  + Sit up straight
  + Slow down your gestures
  + Reduce nervous behaviour

All of the above points will help you to really maximise this virtual opportunity and create the best first impression possible. It may seem like a lot to think about, whilst you are trying to answer interview questions – so you could make a list of the top actions that you personally need to consider and stick it to the side of your laptop, or in front of you, during the interview.

Some of these things can also be practiced before the interview – you could try and practice them with friends or family on your next Zoom call (or schedule one to practice them). The more you do these behaviours, the more natural they become.

Remember that nerves are perfectly normal, but you do need to control them. You may want to do some extra research on controlling your nerves if you think this will be an area to focus on. Here is a good article to get you started: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/12-different-ways-to-calm-your-interview-nerves-because-youve-got-this>

3. What can you do to follow up the interview?

* Send a tailored thanks-you note
* If handwriting the note, get it in the post the same day
* Check back in if you haven’t heard anything within 14 days
* Space out your ‘check-in’ if you don’t get through/get a response straight away

By planning to do all these steps, you will stay fresh in their mind and show that you are keen to progress with them. The thank-you note is really important and is shows a lot about your character and even links back to your ‘personal brand’ as it demonstrates who you are and how you work. Make sure that it is a genuine thank you and is very personal to the experience you received – don’t just thank them for the time during the interview – think about how organised they were before hand (what did they send you and how did it help) and also make it personal to the actual interview (did they offer any great ideas or suggestions, what else can you pick out to make it really personal).

This is your chance to complete that ‘first impression’ by leaving a real lasting impression. Think about the following questions to help you:

* How do you want to be remembered?
* How does this link to your personal brand?
* Is there anything specific that you connected on during the interview that you could mention?
* Were they really impressed by one of your experiences? Could you make a reference to it (e.g. Give a bit more detail in a brief and conversational way or say that you were pleased they liked your example and how much fun you had doing it)?

When you write your email, also consider best practice for communicating this way. Make sure it is concise, you are using clear words and you are ‘getting to the point’. This will all help to get your message across in the most professional way and leave you being remembered in the right way – so you will have made the right first impression and a great lasting impression!