

Interviews on demand: A case study of the implementation of asynchronous video interviews

By Edwin Torres, Amy M. Gregory and Cynthia Mejia

Learning Objectives of the Case Study

After completing the readings, watching the assigned videos, and working through the discussion questions, assignments, and assessments of this case study, students should be able to:

- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of adopting an asynchronous video interview system in a hospitality company.
- Develop strategies for interviewees to adopt in order to deliver a successful asynchronous video interview (applicant's point of view).
- Develop best practices for adoption and execution of an asynchronous video platform within a particular hospitality industry segment (organization's point of view).

Preparation

Prior to reading the case, students should view the following videos to become better acquainted with the topic of asynchronous video interviews:

- "What is a One-Way Video Interview? Presented by Spark Hire: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GC-40FmZ5zM>
- "Asynchronous Video Interviews for Recruitment from the Innovation Leader viasto": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w0QgdJ823A>
- "Async Interview (Video Interview for Jobs)": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVOzQ4l9f_8

Introduction

Advances in technology have afforded both job applicants and recruiting managers many time saving processes. For example, within the last two decades, application submission has moved from a hand-written modality to an online format. In the early years of this new technological adoption, the number of applications requiring processing was manageable. More recently, since the Great Recession in 2008, the exponential number of applications needing review necessitated a mechanized system. As job seekers flooded the markets, resume screening software became inevitable in order to process the hun-

dreds and sometimes thousands of applications for only a handful of job openings. To illustrate, in 2011 Starbucks Corporation received 7.6 million job applications for 65,000 openings (Weber, 2012).

In today's job market, organizations are utilizing the latest technological tools to increase efficiency and hire the best candidates. Web-based video interviews have emerged as a way for companies to save time and resources during the screening process. Applicants also enjoy the benefits of interviewing online, as they can schedule virtual interviews at their discretion and do not have to travel great distances, resulting in a significant savings of both time and resources.

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Video Interviews

There are two modalities for web-based interviews: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous web-based interviews are those typically conducted via Skype, or other "live" virtual platforms such as Facetime, or other proprietary software. In a synchronous interview, both parties must be present at the same time, and these formats are referred to as "two-way" interviews.

Asynchronous video interviews are also web-based, but do not require that both parties involved be online simultaneously. Asynchronous interviews are known as "one-way," or "non-live" interviews and require specialized software, usually provided by third party vendors such as Hirevue (hirevue.com), Vidrecruiter (vidrecruiter.com), SparkHire (sparkhire.com), and Interview Rocket (interviewrocket.com). This interviewing format requires that the hiring organization develop interview questions, which are sent in a text-based format to the interviewee. The software program, captured from a desktop, laptop, or mobile device web camera, records the candidates' answers to the questions. The applicant's video is then sent back to the hiring manager, who has the capability to distribute the video file to others involved in screening and hiring, making this modality very efficient for all engaged in the selection process.

Background

This case reviews the career progression of a mid-level Human Resources Manager who finds herself in a situation of needing to increase productivity and efficiency in a rapidly growing hospitality organization. With a solid foundation of organizational trends and applicant qualifications, the manager is faced with an opportunity to investigate

Edwin Torres, Amy M. Gregory and Cynthia Mejia are all affiliated with University of Central Florida.

and provide a recommendation on an interviewing trend that can revolutionize and improve interviewing efficiencies. Meet Naomi Martinez, the mid-level Human Resources Manager and subject of the case.

As the sun rises in the heart of the tourism district in Orlando, Florida, Naomi Martinez makes her way to work in one of the city's many resorts. She drives past billboards advertising the local theme parks and attractions, and wonders how her company can better compete in the race for talent amongst so many employers. Naomi is a mid-level Human Resources Manager for a large company and is faced with multiple openings and applications that she and her staff will spend a significant amount of time and effort in searching for the right people. Only a few years ago, Naomi was a young and ambitious Intern with the company as she pursued her education. Now she is responsible for forecasting the needs and availability of employees, identifying potential issues leading to turnover, and maintaining high employee satisfaction scores. With the economy on the rise, the company is growing and applications are pouring in through the company's various web postings, job portal, and search firms. Naomi wonders how the company will adapt to be able to keep up with the volume of applicants that technology is delivering.

After a few minutes of traffic, Naomi finally parks at her workplace and walks to the building alongside Jia Chen, the Senior Vice President of Human Resources. Jia tells Naomi that she would like to see her later so they can discuss new opportunities to improve the company's recruiting and selection efforts. Feeling hopeful, Naomi opens the door to the Human Resources office where there are already several candidates waiting to be interviewed. Naomi proceeds to her office and as she starts her computer, she continues to think about how to better manage the recruitment and selection processes at her company.

Naomi's Path to Working in HR

After receiving her Bachelor of Sciences degree in Hospitality Management at a prominent university, Naomi Martinez pursued and was quickly offered a position with a reputable theme park and entertainment company in Orlando, Florida. Her initial position as a Recruitment Planning & Analysis Intern allowed her to see first-hand the concerns that the business had in relation to forecasting human resources needs and issues. During this yearlong internship, Naomi was responsible to develop and provide reporting, forecasting, and analysis of business issues to corporate stakeholders. These issues included potential indicators for turnover, such as employee satisfaction scores, employee productivity, sick days taken, requests for extended time off and so on. Through the ongoing maintenance of daily, weekly and monthly reports for the various departments within the division, it was Naomi's job to identify and analyze trends that could assist the internal leaders of the departments to ensure that staffing levels were adequate.

Based on her college internship, Naomi was able to secure a

position with a global lodging company in which she assisted in co-ordinating recruiting efforts for the Resort Operations division. In this role, Naomi was further involved with the more visible recruiting efforts, rather than the behind-the-scenes analytical components of staffing and recruiting. Naomi would receive position descriptions for new or open positions from hiring managers, and then had the responsibility to advertise those positions both internally and externally. The goal was to identify a sufficient number of qualified applicants for the hiring managers to interview. Through her work with human resources professionals with years of practical experience and training, Naomi quickly learned that interviews are an essential means of selection used by employers. Her managers explained to her that recruiters have applied different variations of interview formats including structured, unstructured, panel, behavioral, situational, and many others for decades. However, despite the variations, historically, face-to-face interaction have been the most common form of delivery with preliminary telephone interviews often being used as a prerequisite to the face-to-face interview.

With the internship and nearly two years of hands on experience accompanying her degree, Naomi felt fully prepared to get her career in Hospitality Human Resources off to a strong start. Fortunately for her, a global lodging company had a managerial role in their Recruiting and Human Resources department that would build on her experience and education. Unbeknownst to her at the time, this very position becomes the spring board for Naomi's career.

Naomi Investigates a New e-Recruitment Platform

Her new employer was impressed with Naomi's ability to apply her previous experience and skills to analyze and understand the company's needs and trends in candidate flow, turnover, and screening. As a manager now, Naomi could teach her direct reports to analyze the data, identify trends and make recommendations related to the company's recruiting needs. Naomi quickly taught her team how to create reporting spreadsheets to analyze trends with candidate flow, marketing tags, turnover, etc. This would prepare them to collaborate with the creative services department to organize marketing and advertising collateral for open positions. With this information, her team could manage the online job postings to increase applicant flow. This was fortunate because the economy was on the rise and hiring activities were multiplying. As a result, Naomi's new company was interested in turning to automation to expedite the screening processes.

In fact, the Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Jia Chen, had just returned from an international conference and attended a series of sessions on video-based interviewing. Upon her return, Jia called Naomi into her office. "I think I have a solution to help with our immense need for staffing". After attending the HR conference, Jia learned that some large employers were using web-based platforms to have interviewees pre-record their interview and send the recording

back to the employer. "Asynchronous video interviews" are the latest trend in e-recruitment and there were several companies willing and able to provide the platform. Jia stated that "there are advantages and disadvantages to this method, but I would like to task you with analyzing the feasibility of using these interviews". The Senior Vice President continued to explain that several vendors have developed software to help organizations conduct asynchronous video interviews and these platforms claim to assist organizations in streamlining the selection process. The potential advantages of e-selection systems include the ability to process large numbers of recruits, simplification of job analysis, acceleration of selection procedures, reduction of administrative costs, convenience for recruiters, and streamlined storage of application information. What used to take weeks to accomplish, could now be done in a matter of days; thanks to the asynchronous interviewing tools offered by HireView, Vidcruiter, SparkHire, and Interview Rocket.

Naomi was at the center of it all – learning, growing and contributing. These new tools were exciting, but they weren't without critique. Several members of the Executive Committee, including the Senior Vice President of Human Resources, were outspoken about the extent to which asynchronous video interviews could help service-based companies, theirs included, to reduce costs and time expenditures. Perhaps more importantly, the greatest concern of the hiring managers within the company was whether the use of this technology would actually assist in making better hiring decisions. It is the company's policy to arrange a task force to investigate new business opportunities or processes and present them to the Executive Committee for evaluation and approval if the initiative were to go beyond a single department or a given Senior Vice President's approved spending limit. In this case, because the Human Resources Department was considering changing the applicant screening process across all departments, it was imperative that the Executive Committee was involved in the decision making process. Given Naomi's experience and previous responsibilities, that important facet was well understood by her. It was important that the company evaluate and understand the concerns from both the perspective of the organization, as well as the individual.

Challenges of Asynchronous Video Interviews at the Individual's Level

Taking the initiative, Naomi got to work pulling together data, analyzing the trends, and reporting the information to her supervisor. First, Naomi directed her attention to the individual concerns of asynchronous video interviewing. Through online discussion boards, Internet blogs, and in conversation with individuals whom she interacted with on a daily basis, Naomi learned that asynchronous interviews could provide many benefits to job applicants. Individuals who had participated in video interviewing felt that companies who used these techniques were innovative and forward-thinking, that video interviewing saved time and was convenient for the applicant; it did not interrupt existing

work nor home schedules. On the other hand, Naomi identified that some candidates reported not having adequate access to a computer or to the Internet, or they were simply uncomfortable with the potential technical issues due to connectivity or lack of familiarity with technology. In addition, with the proliferation of smart devices such as cell phones and tablets, Naomi understood that job candidates might prefer these mobile devices when recording a video interview rather than using a laptop or desktop. Lastly, though some individuals were very comfortable being recorded, others reported negative perceptions related to trust in video interviewing because of an impersonal feeling, a lack of real-time feedback, and a sense of not being able to portray oneself in a realistic manner.

Challenges of Asynchronous Video Interviews at the Organizational Level

It's been a few days since Naomi started her research on asynchronous video interviews. She has discovered that there are multiple vendors offering software to facilitate the process. The decision started becoming more complex, as she realized that each software has different functionality, costs, and support services. As part of her efforts she attends a meeting of a professional organization where she talks to Erasmus, a Director of Human Resources for a large retailer based out of Orlando. After some conversation, Naomi discovers that Erasmus and his team are experienced at conducting asynchronous video interviews. Naomi invites Erasmus for a cup of coffee to continue the conversation where they can sit and she can take notes. "The system has made us more efficient, but I fear we might have lost the personal touch" exclaimed Erasmus, as he began drinking his cappuccino. The senior HR Director explained that the process has enabled some people of his team to double the amount of interviews they can conduct in a single day. Furthermore, the system allows for consistency by asking the same questions of all the respondents. Nevertheless, Erasmus cautioned Naomi that there were applicants, especially those of older generations, which were not totally comfortable with the technology. Furthermore, he noticed that some of his Recruiters tended to make quicker judgements concerning the applicant's ability as well as to place greater emphasis on aesthetics. With so many factors to consider, Naomi knows that she must continue her research and analysis in order to decide what the best decision is for her company.

From an organizational perspective, there were additional issues to consider. Legal professionals identified the possibility for legal action, predominantly due to video's transparency of an applicant's class, race, nationality, or potential disability. In addition, they caution that a recruiter's pre-interview evaluation of a candidate could be self-fulfilling. Merely by viewing the first few seconds of a video, an interviewer could make his or her decision prior to the full interview, or to the candidate being given an opportunity for a face-to-face interview. Vocal cues such as pitch variability, speech rate, pauses, and amplitude, as

well as visual cues such as smiling, hand movements, and physical attractiveness could positively impact the interviewer's evaluation. This could create a bias from the interviewer's perspective. In addition to interviewer bias, there could be the possibility of interviewees actively managing their image during the selection process, a phenomenon known as impression management. Particularly in uncomfortable situations, individuals might be more likely to employ impression management tactics. Not only could employment interviews increase the probability of these tactics, but also video recording could potentially exacerbate this tendency.

Recognizing these concerns, Naomi still believed that the efficiencies her company could gain would outweigh the negatives. Moreover, by incorporating best practices when utilizing asynchronous video interviews, including disclosures to the applicants, inviting multiple decision makers in the applicant evaluation, and educating both internal personnel as well as potential candidates, Naomi believed that the asynchronous video techniques should at least be tested. This was it, her big break and she was eager to take the opportunity and help the company automate and expedite their recruiting efforts.

Discussion

Naomi's task was to investigate various asynchronous web-based video platforms available on the market and how these could best be integrated into her own company's HR e-recruitment needs and culture. Fully understanding the complexity of the corporate initiative before her, Naomi drew on both her academic and industry experience to prepare a strategy for choosing the best platform. Aside from the costs associated with the purchase of the software necessary to conduct one-way video interviews on a large scale, Naomi wanted to consider other factors for adopting this new e-recruitment system. She was well aware that the system would require two levels of users: interviewees at the individual level, and interviewers (recruiting and hiring managers) at the organizational level. In an effort to extract the main issues of this corporate initiative, she targeted the factors of technology acceptance at the individual level, and aesthetics and impression management at the organizational level, as the primary drivers which could lead to the success or failure of this new eHR system.

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is based on a theory of behavioral intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). TAM states that if an individual is planning to use a technology it must be both easy to use and useful (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). There are varying degrees of what a person considers 'easy to use' and 'useful'; however in mandatory situations, where the use of a technology (a new point of sales system at work, for example) is sanctioned, all users have no other choice than to adopt the technology, lest they be terminated from their job.

In this situation, Naomi assumed that individuals invited to par-

ticipate in an online asynchronous video interview would probably utilize their laptop, desktop computer, or their smart phone or tablet when conducting the interview. What Naomi was unsure of was if potential job candidates would feel that the company mandated the use of the video interviewing software. Applying the theory of the Technology Acceptance Model, Naomi knew at the very least, that the software she would need to test must be easy to use, and be perceived as useful among the potential job candidates (i.e. the users of the technology). Considering that this form of interviewing is relatively new, Naomi identified that there would be a very small percentage of interviewees who had undergone an asynchronous video interview.

Aesthetics and Impression Management Theories

As part of the recruitment and selection process, hiring managers and job candidates conduct interviews to exchange information. In selecting the right candidate a manager can use different pieces of information including an applicant's job experience, education, and special skills such as language or software knowledge. All of these are valid criteria to determine which candidate is qualified to perform a certain job. In the various industries that comprise hospitality, customer interaction is a common thread. Since many hospitality workers are in direct contact with customers, some employers might be prone to utilize aesthetic criteria to make an employment decision. Utilizing a person's aesthetic appeal, attractiveness, or close resemblance to the firm's target market might not be politically correct and in some instances not even legal. However, the fact stands that many employers use factors other than job qualifications to make employment decisions. Warhurst et al. (2000) coined the term 'aesthetic labor', refers to the use of visual and aural stimuli through the mobilization of employees' capacities. The authors argued that aesthetic labor is a widespread issue in the hospitality industries.

Job candidates desire to obtain the position for which they're interviewing. Therefore, they will make a series of representations regarding their job qualifications and general ability to perform a task. It has been argued that during this process, candidates actively manage their image in order to portray themselves in a positive light. Leary and Kowalski (1990) defined impression management as "the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them" (p. 34). Individuals may manage their impression in a variety of different ways including exaggerating their qualifications or even making dishonest statements during an interview. Since there's pressure on the interviewer and a likely reward from the process, some individuals may more actively manage their image. This brings forth a challenge for the recruiter, as he or she tries to make an informed decision.

Discussion Questions

- How should Naomi approach the task of investigating a variety of asynchronous video interviewing software platforms for her

- organization? Provide a basic step-by-step plan of action in an outline format.
2. What steps should Naomi take to assess how user-friendly the asynchronous video software will be to prospective job candidates?
 3. How should Naomi determine if the adoption of the asynchronous video interviewing software will meet the needs of the organization?
 4. What information or benefits, beyond cost and efficiency, might the asynchronous video platforms provide that will assist the company's recruiting and selection processes?
 5. Are there any components that can be identified, utilized or tracked that can assist in reducing employee turnover or increasing job satisfaction – components that Naomi has found critical in forecasting companies' hiring needs.
 6. How can Naomi ensure that the recruiting and hiring managers will use the interviewees' videos properly, ethically, and legally?

Supplemental Readings Assigned

- Peterson, P. (2014). 10 reasons a video interview could replace a phone screen. Ere.net [Online]. Retrieved from <http://www.ere.net/2014/11/06/10-reasons-a-video-interview-could-replace-a-phone-screen/>.
- Salpeter, M. (2011). 10 tips to ace a video interview. U.S. News & World Report: Money [Online]. Retrieved from <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/12/07/10-tips-to-ace-a-video-interview>.
- Skillings, P. (2014, November 14). The ultimate guide to acing video interviews. [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://biginterview.com/blog/2014/11/video-interview.html>.
- Toldi, N. L. (2011). Job applicants favor video interviewing in the candidate-selection process. *Employment Relations Today*, 38(3), 19-27.