

Going virtual: How to interview and hire in a remote world






Executive summary

Seemingly overnight, the COVID-19 outbreak has sent many teams to work entirely remotely. This seismic shift means many business processes must go completely virtual, including interviewing and hiring software engineers. Karat has conducted over 60K technical interviews—all remotely—and established the following best practices on how to conduct fair, predictive, and enjoyable interviews for software engineering candidates in a remote world.

Maximizing signal in virtual interviews

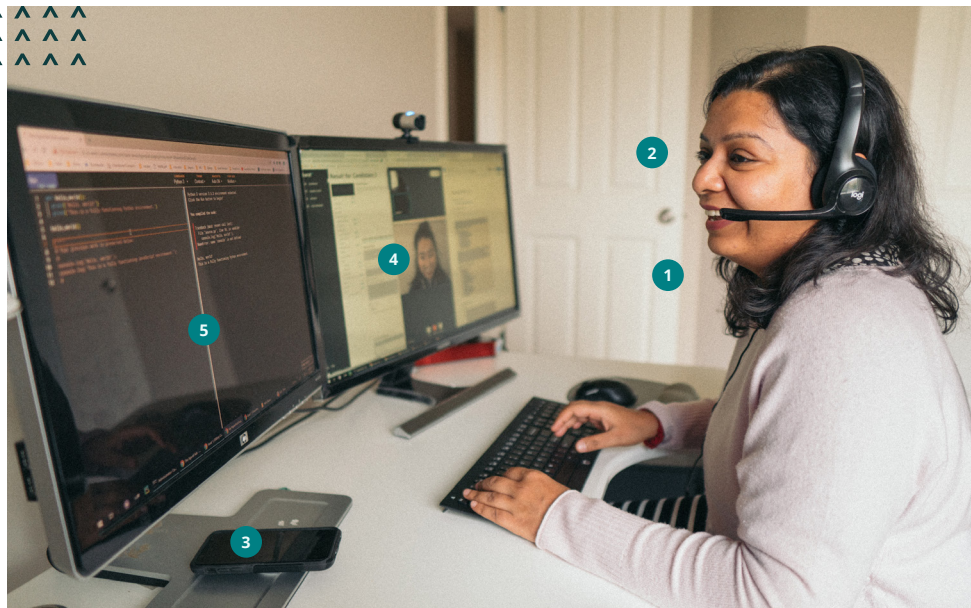
Transitioning to a virtual interview process presents an opportunity to add structure and consistency which increases signal, improves the candidate experience, and boosts visibility across the entire hiring pipeline.

A successful virtual interviewing and hiring process starts with strong interviewer accountability, clearly defined competencies, and consistent measurement. The three areas of focus are all critical to ensuring your remote interviews don't end up in a black box.

-  **Establish interviewer accountability:** Develop interviewer guidelines for interview length, content, communication, and write-ups. Support training and improvement by recording interviews and having more experienced interviewers review and provide feedback. 57% of companies that are satisfied with their engineering hires track interviewer performance —compared to just 43% of those who are not satisfied.
-  **Define and communicate competencies:** Align competencies to roles, be transparent with the candidate what competencies are required for the job, assess one competency at a time, avoid ambiguity, and share this information with all interviewers.
-  **Standardize measurement:** Use standardized scoring rubrics to create a shared vocabulary for interview write-ups. This will align your hiring bar around concrete observations that interviewers can make on each competency, increasing signal and reducing bias.

Interviewers are key to great candidate experiences

Dedicating specific engineers to interviewing creates a core group who can focus on improving signal and candidate experience. Plus, this creates shared accountability for the outcome of the hiring process. Each interviewer can gain empathy by experiencing an interview with your team as part of a mock interview process, especially if they are more tenured.



- 1 Verbal communication:** Build rapport with candidates by expressing empathy and providing verbal support. Ask if there are follow up questions, and clearly articulate what competencies are being tested.
- 2 Non-verbal communication:** Virtual body language matters! Making eye contact is just as important in a virtual interview as an in-person interview. This means looking at the camera. Remember that low or high camera angles might make it look like the candidate (or interviewer) is standing above or below the person they are speaking to.
- 3 Time zones:** Be flexible and consider your global footprint when scheduling interviews. Virtual interviewing presents an opportunity to schedule interviews on a candidate's time, potentially outside of normal business hours, which is especially critical in a world where people are working from home with children out of school. That added flexibility can be a huge boost to your employer brand.
- 4 Break up the onsite:** A typical onsite interview could take six to eight hours in a single block of time. Taking these onsites virtual means you can break it up into segments over two or three days, keeping both candidates and interviewers fresh.
- 5 IDE tooling:** Use a proper code editor—not a Google doc. Ensure that you have features like testing, auto brackets, and clarifications.

Set candidates up for virtual success

Interviewing is a stressful process. Even more so today as candidates are expected to interview virtually and may not necessarily know what to expect. Recruiting teams and hiring managers alike should support and reassure candidates with tips for good communication including audio and visual best practices.



- 1 Tech check:** Encourage both candidates and interviewers to do microphone checks before the interview. Test the microphones, reduce as much background noise as possible, and verify that the other can hear them easily. Give candidates access to your IDE in advance of the interview so they can familiarize themselves with the setup. Finally, beware of clunky keyboards or microphone placement that might pick up unexpected sounds.
- 2 Lighting:** Being able to see each other will help a great deal in picking up on body language and facial cues. Use a desk lamp or window facing you to avoid backlighting. Be mindful of glare on glasses if you wear them. Likewise, ensure the room isn't too dark.
- 3 Internet:** Candidates and interviewers should test connectivity to ensure little to no pauses. Disruptions are distracting and waste precious time. A strong internet connection keeps the conversation flowing naturally.