2020 Fall Recruiting Guide

Helpful tips to put your best foot forward in virtual networking and communicate effectively in online recruitment events
This Virtual Recruiting Guide shares best practices for virtual networking events—including company presentations, coffee chats, or interviews. The guide will walk you through how to prepare for events, how to make the most of each event, and other etiquette tips for online events.
Set Yourself Up for Success

Take the time before each event to check the following:

**Strength of the Internet Connection** – The bandwidth required for different virtual events is likely different. Check your internet and system capabilities to handle the requirements before each event. Perform the check at least a day in advance, giving you enough time to update the system or move to a location with better internet connectivity for the actual event.

**Audio and Video Equipment** – Make sure the mic, speaker, and camera work well and that you are audible, as are other speakers in the event. Turn the devices on at least 15 minutes before the meeting and perform an audio and video test. If you have access to a headphone or external mic and speaker, these will help ensure optimal audio quality.

**Logging In and Display Name** – If the virtual platform you are using gives you the option to upload a headshot, upload a professional one, like what you would use on LinkedIn. Always display your full name as your default settings in platforms such as Zoom for which you have MIT Sloan login credentials. If logging in with meeting-specific credentials, sign up with a professional display photo and your name. In larger group meetings, you may have the option to add “MIT Sloan” after your name. This addition will allow the host and audience to know what school you represent.

**Screen Sharing and Tabs** – Close extra programs and tabs to reduce distractions and make it easier to share your screen or use a virtual whiteboard. Doing so will increase the functionality of the platform and will also ensure your recruiters do not see anything you don’t intend for them to see.
Get Ready to Make a Great Impression

Virtual events put a new focus on you and your environment. Help company representatives remember you for the right reasons. The simplest ways to make a good impression include:

**Business Dress** – Wear business formal or business casual clothes, as appropriate for each event. For CDO-organized recruiting events, the dress code will be specified in Career Central. Dress up completely, in case you need to stand up for any reason. Avoid t-shirts, jeans, and overly casual attire.

**Professional Appearance** – Treat the virtual event just as you would an in-person meeting and be as professional in your appearance. Choose colors that contrast with the background, so they do not blend in. Solid colors generally work best, especially if you are using a virtual background.

**Background/Environment** – If you are not using a virtual background, position your camera so that your environment looks professional. Avoid having clutter or a bed in the background. Try to choose a space that is not backlit, as this will interfere with your camera and video quality.

If you are using a virtual background, choose an unobtrusive, professional one. Unless the meeting organizers have indicated so, do not experiment with ‘fun’ backgrounds. For example, if Google hosts a virtual event, you could use the background to creatively display your ‘Googleyness’ but in other circumstances a plain background or one with the school name is best.

**MIT Sloan Zoom backgrounds:**
- [MIT Sloan Background Generator](#)
- [Office of Communications Zoom Backgrounds](#)

**Lighting**
- A soft light positioned in front of you will be most flattering and natural.
- Avoid sitting with your back to a bright window or with a bright light directly above you – this will wash out your video or make you difficult to see.
- Time of day may impact the lighting in your space; be prepared to adjust.
Manage Your Surroundings

You need to be comfortable and more importantly undisturbed, during the duration of the event.

Dedicate your workspace for only your work. Have a specified part of your room set aside for work and keep only items related to your work in the space.

Take measures to reduce distractions on your desktop and in the nearby space:

- Close windows and doors to minimize noise.
- Notify people living with you to not disturb you during the event.
- Turn off notifications on your laptop, your phone, or any other devices.
- Put your pets in another room, if possible, to minimize distractions.

Have a writing pad or other note-taking method handy, so you do not have to interrupt your participation in the event to make note of important information or deadlines.
Know Your Audience:
Research Companies, Recruiters and Alumni

- Research the company and the company representatives before the meeting, if possible, to facilitate conversation.
- Check LinkedIn profiles and learn about the company and any posted opportunities.
- Speak with alums or career advisors/coaches to gather as much information as possible. Prepare a few questions you would like to ask during the event.

One advantage of a virtual event is that you can keep your notes nearby and reference them when you need them. Position them near the monitor or camera, so they are not visible to the other participants, but you can refer to them without looking down.

Research Companies, Recruiters, Alumni:
- Career Central
- MIT Sloan Alumni Network on LinkedIn
- Company website
Engaging in Virtual Events: Making Connections

Recruiters understand the limitations of virtual networking and engagement; at the same time, they expect you to follow certain basic etiquette and make the effort to connect with them.

Sign In Early – A good way to connect is to log in a couple of minutes before the event time. You will be one of the first people in, when the host lets participants in and may be able to make polite conversation with the recruiters. This is a good ‘informal’ way to make an impression. Remember that once you log in, it is “go time”. Be certain you are ready before you click enter.

Make Eye Contact – Eye contact in a virtual setting means looking into the camera during an interview, coffee chat or presentation, and not the individual images or other thumbnails while you speak. If you have dual monitors, make sure you are looking into your camera so participants can see your eyes and face, and not the side of your face. Comfortably speaking into the camera is a great skill to practice before high-pressure interactions like an interview.

Speak Up – To build rapport with the recruiters, it is important they see your name and face. Find multiple ways to engage and do not be afraid to speak up – ask questions and participate in chats or polls. At the same time, follow the rules of engagement. For example, if the company representatives state at the beginning of the presentation that they will take questions after their presentation, do not interrupt them during the presentation with your questions.

Support Your Classmates – Be mindful of your peers in the presentation and allow others to participate. In addition to engaging, being respectful of your peers makes a great impression on recruiters, too.

Plan Your Communication – Communicating in a virtual setting can be more challenging, as there are fewer non-verbal cues. Humor, for example, might not translate as well. Be thoughtful about your choice of words and the length and timing of your engagement.

Keep the Camera On – When a recruiter is making a presentation, they look for visual cues that you are following along. Nod, smile, and when prompted, engage and respond. Active listening is even more important in virtual events. Remember to pay attention, show excitement, and respect the speakers as well as the audience. Keeping the camera on, especially in early presentations, is also important because it allows the recruiter to connect a name with a face. This enables the relationship to continue through all company events and during the interview. The “gallery” view can also help you connect with your peers in the audience.
Helpful Virtual Event Norms

Mute Your Microphone
Remember to always mute yourself when entering a virtual session, and when you are not speaking during a session. This reduces background noise for all participants.

Avoid Food & Beverages
Avoid eating and drinking during a virtual event. Having a sip of water is acceptable—have a glass of water or a coffee mug near you. If you must eat during a session, or have been told it’s appropriate to do so, be sure to mute your speaker to reduce noise.

Use Chat Cautiously
When using the “private chat” function on a platform, confirm that the feature truly is private. Verify the private chat is on before sending out a chat or private comment. Avoid using the chat feature to make inappropriate remarks that may distract you or your friends from the presentation.

Lessen Distractions
Avoid getting up and moving while your camera is on. If you must move, and you’re able to do so, turn off your camera for a moment until you are settled again.

Questions?
Email us at askcdo@mit.edu