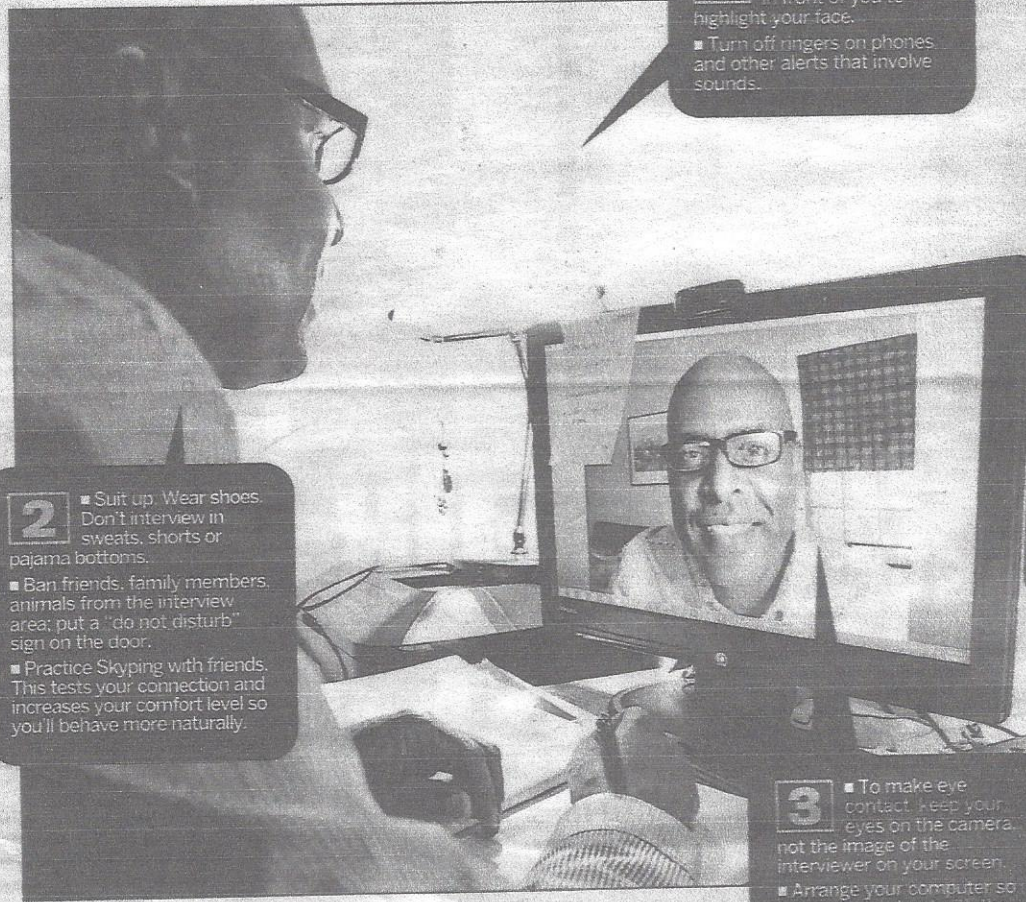


MORE INTERVIEWS GO

GETTING CAMERA-READY

Tips for job hunters



- 1** ■ Avoid back lighting. Place lighting sources in front of you to highlight your face.
- Turn off ringers on phones and other alerts that involve sounds.

- 2** ■ Suit up. Wear shoes. Don't interview in sweats, shorts or pajama bottoms.
- Ban friends, family members, animals from the interview area; put a "do not disturb" sign on the door.
- Practice Skyping with friends. This tests your connection and increases your comfort level so you'll behave more naturally.

Tips for hiring managers

- Set up a quiet, dedicated space that can accommodate a single interviewer, as well as a group.
- Work with the applicant before the interview to see if his/her tech setup is up to speed.
- Have someone on hand or on call during the interview to help with any technology glitches.
- Develop a brief orientation for the applicant, including an interview timetable, who'll be conducting the interview, what else to expect.
- Let the applicant know what to do if the connection is broken, such as providing a number to call for further directions.

- 3** ■ To make eye contact, keep your eyes on the camera, not the image of the interviewer on your screen.
- Arrange your computer so your eyes are level with the webcam. "You don't want the employer looking down on your head or worse, looking up your nostrils."

Source: Norman Trichon, Li's Staffing director of accounting and finance talent

Sources: Society for Human Resource Management, Long Island Chapter, members Liz Uzzo and Christal Colon

INTERVIEW from A39

als, especially, show a comfort level "in front of a camera and talking into a device."

Some 18 percent of job hunters and 19 percent of employers and recruiters reported they had engaged in video interviews, according to a 2013 online survey for Right Management, the career management arm of Milwaukee-based Manpower-Group. More than two-thirds of employers and recruiters said they expected video interviews to increase in the next three years. Respondents included more than 300 job hunters and 100 employers/recruiters.

Locally, in a poll of members of the Society for Human Resource Management, Long Island Chapter, 16 of the 28 respondents said they had conducted video interviews — primarily using Skype. Most of the others said they expect to give it a try in the coming year.

"There's really no reason not to use it," said Liz Uzzo, human resources vice president of Melville-based H2M architects + engineers and one of the respondents.

Uzzo said she often uses Skype for early screening of out-of-town candidates, including students on nonlocal campuses seeking entry-level positions. She expects the technique to be "very popular" in the coming year or two, with the economy shifting and recruiting on the rise.

Of course, technology glitches can and do arise, often involving Internet speed and dropped connections. Both interviewers and job applicants should communicate about how to handle such problems.

And, then, there's a whole new element to master, particularly for job hunters. In addition to the core factors of interviewing, there's now this "set designer" aspect as well, said Gary Alan Miller, executive director at Hofstra University's career center. He's referring to the need for a "nice, neutral background" and proper laptop positioning so employers at the other end will see the most flattering image of you. That and appreciation for finding a location

ON-SCREEN



NEWSDAY/1. CONRAD WILLIAMS JR.

Gary Alan Miller, executive director of the Hofstra career center, talks with Anne Monique Conception about the dos and don'ts of video interviews. Far left, business development manager Andrew Williams was prepared when a potential employer asked for a remote interview.

that's free of background distractions, such as barking dogs or a scantily clad roommate walking within camera view.

To help students grasp some of these new basics, the Hofstra career center rolled out last fall a Web platform that allows students to, among other things, engage in video interviews.

Students and other job seekers should be wary of being too casual when using mobile devices such as smartphones during their job search. Uzzo describes an instance in which a candidate was in his car for a lunchtime video interview. At one point he got out of the vehicle, she said, and "went into McDonald's, and that was not good."

Job hunters would be wise to become comfortable with the do's and don'ts of video in-

terviewing before it's sprung on them, said Linda McLaughlin, senior consultant with the Melville office of Right Management. You want to be "ready technologically and logistically" for the moment an employer says the next step is a round of interviews with a video conference — tomorrow.

"None of this is going away anytime soon," she said.

Andrew Williams, a business development manager who hadn't had a job interview in almost 20 years, said that early last year when he was interviewing, he was notified by the Dallas-based division of a telecommunications company that he would be interviewed remotely the next day — with four 30-minute back-to-back virtual meetings.

Already comfortable with

technology and adept at using Skype and FaceTime, Williams, of Manhasset Hills, said he still studied up on the fine-tuning of elements such as lighting, volume and eye contact with the camera.

He also asked the prospective employer, which was using a Web platform he was unaccustomed to, if they could conduct a test run the evening before. "Without that," he said, "I would definitely have had some issues getting the actual interviews started on time." Williams took a job with a different employer.

The live, in-person interview isn't going away, BNL's Colon said. A virtual meeting "should not be the sole mechanism for interviewing," she said. But "hiring managers are finding it to be helpful on so many levels."

IRS: Cuts mean dip in filing help

BY STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
The Associated Press

Filing a federal tax return is about to get more complicated for millions of families because of President Barack Obama's health law. But they shouldn't expect much help from the Internal Revenue Service.

Got a question for the IRS? Good luck reaching someone by phone. The tax agency says only half of the 100 million people expected to call this year will be able to reach a person.

Callers who do get through may have to wait on hold for 30 minutes or more to talk to someone who will answer only the simplest questions.

"Taxpayers who need help are not getting it, and tax compliance is likely to suffer over the longer term if these problems are not quickly and decisively addressed," said a report last week by agency watchdog Nina E. Olson.

IRS Commissioner John Koskinen says budget cuts are forcing the agency to reduce taxpayer services and other functions. The number of audits will decline, technology upgrades will be delayed and the agency might be forced to shut down and furlough workers for two days later this year, Koskinen said.

Congress cut the IRS by \$346 million for the budget year that ends Sept. 30. Koskinen says the agency's \$10.9 billion budget is its lowest since 2008. When adjusted for inflation, the budget hasn't been this low since 1998, he said.

Having fewer enforcement agents will cost at least \$2 billion in lost tax revenue this year, he estimated.

Service problems at the IRS will also make it harder for well-intentioned taxpayers to comply with the law, said Olson, who is the National Taxpayer Advocate, an independent office within the IRS.

"Without adequate support, many taxpayers will be frustrated, some will make potentially costly mistakes, others will incur higher compliance costs when forced to seek information and assistance from tax professionals," she said.

"Still others," Olson said, "will simply give up and not

file." Olson released her annual report to Congress Wednesday, less than a week before the start of tax filing season on Tuesday. In it she raises concerns about the IRS' ability to help implement the health law.

She said the agency was unable to adequately test the accuracy of some information received from health insurance exchanges. Also, delays affected the training of IRS employees.

Olson noted that some of the issues involve other agencies. But, she added, "The IRS will certainly bear much of the public blame because many of the problems will arise in the context of return filing."

Koskinen said the IRS has increased efforts to educate tax preparers and the public about the tax implications of the health law, devoting a section of the agency's website to answering questions.

Koskinen's advice to taxpayers with questions: Don't call the IRS unless you absolutely have to.

For the first time this year, tax filers will have to report information about their health insurance during the previous year. For most people who get health coverage through work or through government programs like Medicaid, it will mean simply checking a box.

Others who got insurance through state and federal marketplaces will have to file a new form, while people who received subsidies will have to provide more detailed information. People who didn't have health insurance last year face fines unless they qualify for a waiver, which requires more paperwork.

The subsidies were based on projected incomes, so families will need to report if actual incomes were higher or lower. If higher, they might have to pay back some of the subsidy, either through a smaller tax refund or a payment.

If their incomes were lower, they might qualify for a larger tax refund.

Taxpayers who get subsidies are supposed to notify the health exchanges during the year if their incomes change or if they have some other life event that changes their eligibility.

ON THE COVER Lloyd Staffing director Norman Trichon interviews Leela Pathak.