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Both companies and students worried as hiring goes remote for coronavirus recession

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/05/31/business/companies-students-hiring-web-interview-coronavirus/>



- Oberin University fourth-year student Sakura Tabuchi, right, takes an online job interview on May 18 amid the coronavirus pandemic. | KYODO
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Job-hunting activity for next spring's graduates will enter a crucial stage Monday as companies start gearing up for the recruitment process, with many likely to adopt web-based interviews and exams in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

More applicants are receiving job offers without ever meeting their future employers or coworkers. While both students and businesses can protect each other from catching COVID-19 and reduce traveling expenses, many say they are dissatisfied because they can't get a "feel" for the other person from a distance.

"I would like a job that lets me work with people," or "I think you would fit this job, with your personality," were some of the comments made during a recent online interview between Oberin University senior Sakura Tabuchi, 22, and Kenichiro Iguchi, 40, who is in charge of human resource at Junseien, a social welfare corporation that runs nursing homes and other health facilities in Kanagawa Prefecture.

Junseien has been conducting all job interviews online since April and has offered jobs to several applicants.

Iguchi said many Junseien clients have dementia and that workers with “communicative” personalities and a “willingness to work as a team” are needed.

“It's hard to tell without meeting them,” Iguchi admitted. “However, along with an aptitude test taken in advance, spending enough time to talk to them helps us identify if they are suited for this job.”

Tabuchi's web interview lasted about an hour.

“It was good that I was able to have a long talk. The place I do my part-time job is temporarily closing, so (the online interview) helps me save some travel cost,” Tabuchi said.

The nationwide hiring schedule was traditionally set by Keidanren, the nation's biggest business lobby, but the government is overseeing it this year. Companies were advised to start job interviews and exams in June, but since the rule is only a request, many companies are ignoring it.

In late April, a survey by JAC Recruitment Co. in Tokyo showed that 42 percent of the 336 companies questioned agreed it was possible to make hiring decisions via online interviews.

Students, however, have mixed reactions about such interviews.

A 21-year-old senior in Tokyo said sitting behind a computer screen helps calm his nerves but wondered whether choosing a company without meeting any of its personnel in the flesh is the right thing to do.

“Rather than being logical, I want to display my passion, but it's hard to do so” online, said another 21-year-old student from Ibaraki Prefecture.

A major financial institution in Tokyo has announced that its selection process will begin on Monday and that hundreds will be hired only via web interviews.

If it were to conduct all interviews in person, students from all over the country would travel by bullet train or plane, putting them all at risk of infection. An official in charge of the interviews admitted it was a tough decision to make because the need for human contact during an interview is well understood. In the end, however, safety was considered paramount.

Likewise, a financial institution in the Shikoku region that hires many students from Kansai said initial interviews will be conducted online in early June, with in-person interviews considered for the second round, taking current coronavirus infection rates into account.

Job Interviews

A 21-year-old senior from Tokyo said she is scheduled to have her first interview with a major food company this month but doesn't know whether it will be in person or online.

“I can't stop stressing about it,” she confessed. “D-day is coming soon, yet it still seems very far away.”