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The Rise of the 1 am Job Interview

An AI interview is increasingly the first step of a hiring process. Since there's no human on the other end, candidates are scheduling them whenever—even deep into the night.



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WHEN TIM MILLARD received an email about interviewing for a media relations job in January, six months into his job hunt, he assumed he'd speak to a human. When he was instead instructed to record himself answering a series of questions on camera, he felt a familiar pang of resignation—one that had followed him throughout the job hunt.

"I figured, I have to do this if I want to be considered for the job," Millard tells WIRED. So, that evening, the Atlanta-based communications and marketing expert tidied his living room and set up his laptop. The email had left the timing for the interview open-ended, and he figured he might as well get it done as soon as possible. "What else was I going to do at 9:30 at night?"

The questions were pretty standard for the role. How would Millard pitch a story to the media? How would he cultivate relationships with local journalists? But the setup was bizarre. He sat in front of his laptop, watching as a question popped up on the screen. He had roughly half a minute to think about his response.

"Once the 30 seconds was up, 'ding!' Now you have two minutes to record your answer," Millard said. "It felt so out of this world."

Millard received an automated rejection email in March. But the experience unknowingly wedged him into a trend currently reshaping the modern job search. As automated video interviews and AI become a bigger part of the recruitment process, so do late-night interviews.

Arsham Ghahramani said that he noticed the late-night interview trend almost immediately after he cofounded and launched Ribbon, a company that makes voice-AI recruitment software. Twenty-four percent of Ribbon's AI interviews

that figure jumps to 35 percent.

“This is a genuinely new option for people,” Ghahramani says. Many parents can’t sacrifice 30 minutes until the clock strikes 10 pm. Same for employees paid hourly, or those who are tied up working their current jobs on a noisy factory floor or kitchen. “Some people are very constrained in their options of when they can interview and how they can interview.”

Ribbon isn’t the only platform charting the rise in late-night interviews. Hiring platform Greenhouse says that roughly 15 to 20 percent of candidates interviewed by its voice agent now schedule an interview at night.

Ophir Samson, who became head of Greenhouse’s voice AI division when the company acquired his startup in May, tells WIRED that he doesn’t think artificial intelligence should replace human interviews. Which is good, because applicants are currently extremely skeptical of AI interviews.

While a Greenhouse survey in May found that nearly two-thirds of job applicants have been interviewed by an AI agent, up 13 points over six months, most people aren’t particularly excited about this development. Thirty-eight percent of American candidates told Greenhouse that they had withdrawn from a hiring process rather than be interviewed by an AI. Another 12 percent said they’d drop out if an AI interview was required.

One of the major stressors for applicants is the lack of transparency on how the footage will be used. Can AI reject them outright because they fail to say a certain buzzword?

While different employers and services vary, the typical AI or automated video interview is evaluated using a rubric that varies from job to job. A welder might be asked about certain technical skills or certifications in a Ribbon interview, Ghahramani says, while a sales role might include an “enthusiasm” score. AI analyzes footage of the interview to evaluate how well the candidate fits the rubric, and assigns them a score. The score is passed along to the recruiter, along with footage of the interview—though, realistically, many of the interviews go unwatched by humans.

have otherwise been lost in the deluge of applications. He doesn't see the AI interview as a choice between human and robot, but a choice between being ghosted and improving the chance of actually speaking to a human interviewer in the next round.

"It's a shitty time to be a candidate," Samson says. "Your résumé goes into a black hole. You're competing with thousands of candidates that are all using AI to write their résumés. So, good candidates can't stand out."

That assessment seems to be in line with Millard's experience. A year after losing his job, he's still searching. The process has been so emotionally devastating that it inspired Millard to write a one-man show, *After Careful Consideration*, which debuted at the Atlanta Fringe Festival in May.

When Millard signed on for his late-night interview in January, he wasn't marveling at the convenience. He just wanted to get "this godawful thing done."

"In today's job market," Millard says, "it feels like if you are going to scream, you're going to scream into the void. And nobody is going to hear you."

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