

Getting invited for an interview, is half the battle. It means they're convinced that you have the relevant experience and want to get to know you. This is your chance to convince them in person. The better prepared you are, the better your chances will be.

Clearly, the focus will be on your personality and skills. As is so often the case, **first impressions count**: how you enter the room, greet the interviewer(s), introduce yourself etc. So before you go in for the interview, think of a mantra. What impression do you want to make? Friendly, competent, open-minded, flexible? Keep returning to focusing on this mantra when you first meet people, throughout the interview etc.

You should also prepare yourself well for the four phases of the interview:

- 1.** All interviews actually begin before the formal interview: the small talk you make between reception and the interview room will give the HR manager some important insights. However, many applicants underestimate the importance of this. It's all about the human or interpersonal factor. Put your mantra into practice and prepare to answer questions about the journey there, the weather, your home town etc.
- 2.** When the formal interview starts you'll be asked to introduce yourself: you must and should prepare your answer in detail. This is not about repeating your CV: pick out some highlights and use the following framework to construct your response: I am, I can, I want to Start with your name and age, and briefly describe your current (professional) situation. Use the "I can" part to talk about those elements of your CV that are of particular relevance to the position. Remember the analysis of the position that you carried out as well as the relevant buzzwords you included in your CV. Finish by talking about your motivation. Practice in front of the mirror, and don't forget to smile.
- 3.** This will be followed by questions about your CV (biographical questions) such as why did you choose this course of study? What was your Master's thesis about? What was your area of responsibility when you worked for XYZ plc.? The situational questions, which worry most applicants, will be next. Take your time when answering and be authentic. Think about when you found yourself in situations similar to those that the job in question will entail and what you did? Be keenly aware of your strengths, successes and skills and be ready to weave them in to the conversation. Wherever possible, try to include some sort of reference to the company to which you are applying.
- 4.** You will also be asked if you have questions. You will always have questions, always; these might include such things as: What will my first month entail? Why is the job being advertised just now? How will my performance be measured? Ask about the next steps. Really take this part of the interview seriously, because this is your chance to show that you have thought about the job and prepared for the interview.

Checklist:

1. Have you prepared a short and more extended presentation of yourself and your specific skills? Could you do the whole interview in English?
2. Dress code: have you researched it and dressed accordingly?
3. Can you guarantee that you will arrive on time? Do you know how to get there?
4. Have you prepared some questions of your own?
5. Do you have all the necessary documentation: your own documents, pen, pad?
6. Have you researched your contact person, the company, the products, the industry?
7. Have you worked out your specific minimum salary requirements?
8. Are you clear about your strengths, weaknesses, successes and experience?

