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MAXWELL STEPHENS GUIDES

FOR CANDIDATES

How to Get a Job



A practical, step-by-step guide to understanding what you offer, finding opportunities, sharpening your CV and interviewing with confidence.

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How to Get a Job

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01
Introduction

Finding a job is rarely straightforward. Whether you are taking your first step into work, moving into something new or returning after time away, the start of a search can feel overwhelming.

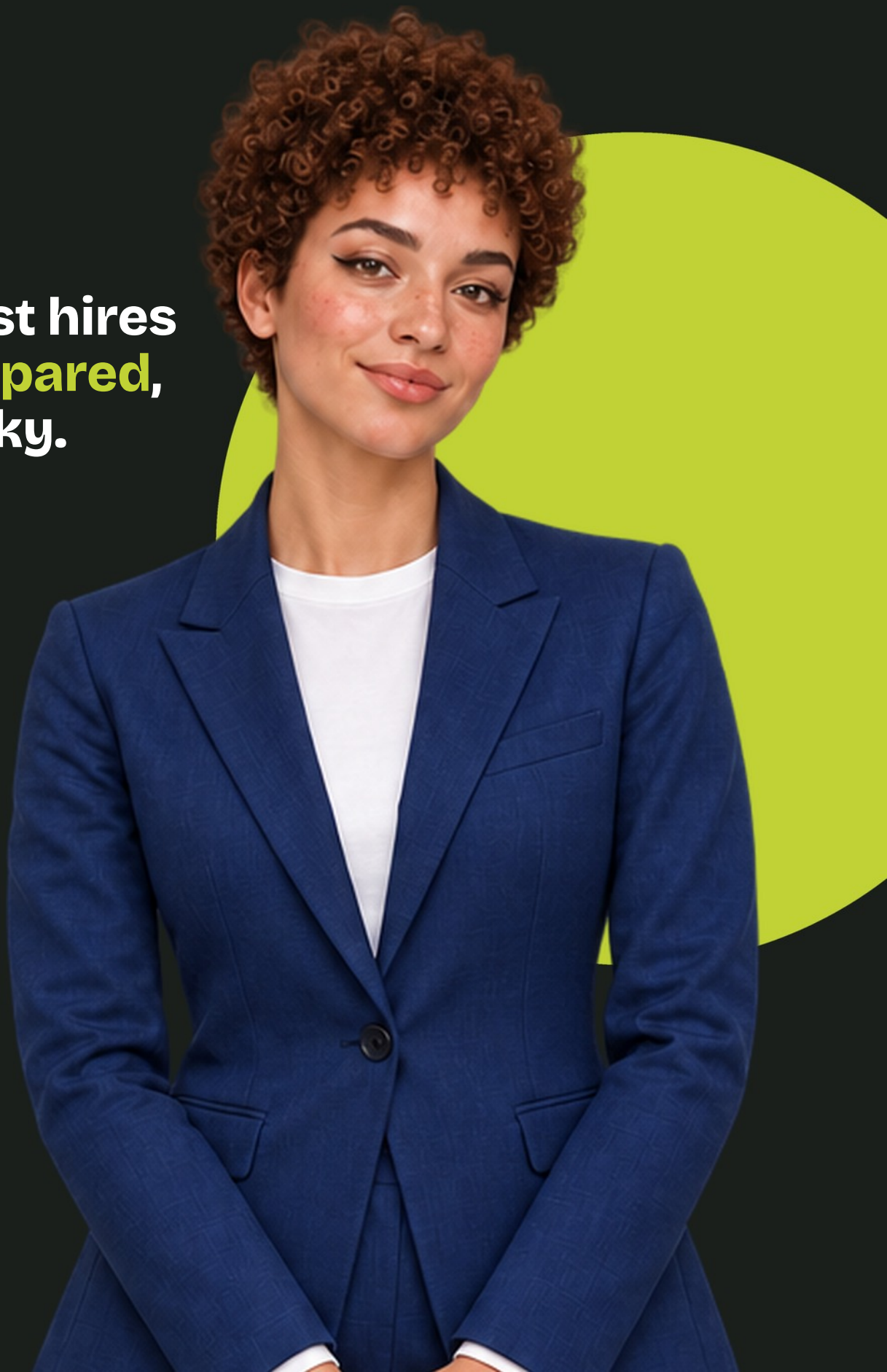
It does not need to. Like most things worth doing, getting the job you want becomes far more manageable when you break it into clear steps rather than treating it as one large, shapeless task.

Each stage matters, from understanding what you bring and finding the right opportunities to preparing your CV and handling interviews well. Get those stages right and you give yourself a much better chance of landing a role that genuinely suits you.

This guide walks you through the process step by step. By the end, you should be in a strong position to secure your next role, and to recognise it when it comes along.

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The best hires are prepared, not lucky.



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02

Work Out What You Actually Offer

Before you open a single job board, take a step back and work out what you bring to an employer. It sounds obvious, but it is the step most people skip, and it shapes everything that follows.

Start by writing down your skills, strengths and experience. Many people describe themselves only in terms of their current job title, which can be limiting. You may have skills that transfer well into a different type of role, or even a different career path altogether.

This is often where new opportunities come from. Once you look properly at what you are good at, you may notice roles you would normally scroll past. In some cases that leads to a move that suits you far better and brings more satisfaction over the long term.

> **LOOK BEYOND YOUR TITLE**
>
> Someone who has run the day-to-day operation of a hotel, a warehouse or a busy office has often been managing contractors, budgets, safety and service already. Describe what you did, not just what you were called.

Be Clear on Salary Early

Think about salary before you start applying. Decide what you would ideally like to earn, and also the minimum you would accept if the right opportunity came along. Being realistic is not the same as selling yourself short.

A clear range helps you search properly and keeps you open to roles that may be a very good fit overall, even if the headline figure is not the highest on offer.

Do Not Rule Yourself Out Too Quickly

One of the most common mistakes is rejecting yourself before an employer has had the chance to consider you. Job descriptions are usually written around an ideal candidate, not the only acceptable one. They give you a feel for the role, but they are not always an accurate picture of who will be hired.

If a job looks right for you but you do not tick every single box, it may still be well worth applying. Let the employer make that decision.

03
Finding the Right Job

When it comes to finding a role, most people go straight to job boards and search by keyword, skill or location. That is a sensible starting point. It shows you what is available and what employers are asking for.

It is not the only route, though, and it is not always the best one. A great many opportunities come through people rather than adverts.

Use Your Network

Networking can sound like a buzzword, but it works. Employers often trust referrals more than any other source, because a recommendation from a good employee carries real weight.

So look at your own circle. That includes friends, family, former colleagues and people you have not spoken to in a while. If any of them work somewhere that interests you, get in touch.

You do not need to overthink the message. Let them know you are looking, and ask whether there are any openings or whether they could point you in the right direction.

Even if nothing is available right now, the conversation still helps. You have made yourself known, and that can make a real difference when something does come up.

Bring Your References in Early

Most people treat references as something that happens at the end of the process. They can be useful much earlier. If you left a previous employer on good terms, it is worth reconnecting.

They may have roles available themselves. At the very least, they will know you are looking and be ready to support you properly when a reference is needed.

> *"Getting a job is often about being on the right person's radar at the right time.*

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Describe what you did, not your title.

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04
Go Beyond Job Boards

Speaking to people you know is a strong start, but it is worth widening the net further. The more people who know you are looking, the more chances you have of hearing about a role you would never have found on your own.

Use Social and Professional Networks

Social media is one of the easiest ways to reach people you do not speak to regularly. A short post on LinkedIn, or on the personal platforms you already use, can let a much wider group know you are open to new opportunities.

Do not be afraid to ask close friends and former colleagues to share it. It can feel a little awkward, but it works, and most people are happy to help.

Consider Volunteering

Volunteering is not always possible alongside a full-time job, but it can be a very effective way in. If there is an organisation or industry you are keen to join, volunteering shows genuine interest, puts you in front of the right people and helps you build trust early.

The work may not be the most exciting at first. As you prove yourself, though, you will usually be given more responsibility.

Even if it does not lead directly to a permanent role, you come away with practical experience and solid references. Either way, you are better placed than before.

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Let the employer decide. Apply anyway.



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05
More Routes Into Work

Internships and Apprenticeships

If you are short on experience or trying to break into a new field, internships and apprenticeships are among the best routes available. They are not always well paid, but they open doors to organisations and roles that might otherwise be out of reach.

More importantly, they show employers that you are serious and willing to put the work in. Many organisations now use them as a way to hire, because they can see how someone works before making a longer commitment. If you perform well, that works in your favour.

Approach Employers Directly

Many people avoid this, but it can work well. If there is an organisation you would like to work for, find the right person and get in touch. That might be a hiring manager, a department head or someone in HR.

A short, well-judged call or message asking whether they are hiring, or would be open to a conversation, can go further than you expect. You are not expected to be perfect. You just need to be clear, polite and confident enough to put yourself forward.

Introduce Yourself in Person

This feels uncomfortable for most people, but when it works, it works well. Where it suits the type of role, such as a site-based or front-of-house position, take a few printed copies of your CV and go in. Ask to speak to someone relevant and introduce yourself properly.

Be friendly, natural and easy to talk to. First impressions count for more than people realise. Employers are far more likely to consider someone they can picture working alongside, even if that person is not a perfect match on paper.

- ✓ Listed my skills, strengths and experience, not just my job title
- ✓ Set an ideal salary and a realistic minimum
- ✓ Told friends, family and former colleagues that I am looking
- ✓ Reconnected with previous employers and potential referees
- ✓ Updated my professional profile and shared that I am open to opportunities
- ✓ Identified organisations I could approach directly

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Most opportunities arrive through people, not adverts.

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06
Mastering Your CV

You have found a role you like and you are ready to apply. Before you submit anything, make sure your CV is genuinely ready.

Even when you apply through an online form, your CV is still the foundation. It shapes how you present yourself and makes every application quicker and more consistent. Here is how to make sure yours does what it needs to.

1. Keep It Up to Date

Outdated details can cost you opportunities. Check that your contact information is correct and that your experience reflects where you are now, not where you were a year ago.

Your CV should give a clear, current picture of your skills and what you have done. Keep it easy to read and focused on what matters to the role.

2. Be Honest

It is never worth stretching the truth. Anything inaccurate is usually picked up later, often at the point where it does the most damage. You are far better off being clear about what you have done and being able to back it up.

3. Use the Right Language

Small adjustments make a big difference. If you are applying for different roles, adapt your wording so it reflects what each employer is looking for.

Read the job description and, where it is accurate to do so, mirror the language it uses. It makes your relevant experience easier to spot and your CV feel more relevant straight away.

4. Keep It Clean

How your CV looks matters. Use a simple layout, clear section headings and easy-to-read text, and avoid heavy styling, graphics or unusual fonts.

If someone can scan it quickly and understand it, you are on the right track.

5. Check It Properly

Mistakes stand out more than you think. Spelling and grammar errors can make an otherwise strong CV look rushed. Read it through carefully, and if you can, ask someone else to check it as well. A second pair of eyes will usually catch things you have missed.

07
Interviewing Like a Professional

Your CV has done its job and you have been invited to interview. This is usually where the nerves arrive, along with a tendency to overthink what to say and how to come across.

The key is not to panic. Most interviews are not designed to catch you out. They are there to find out who you are, how you communicate and whether you would fit well within the team.

The biggest advantage you can give yourself is preparation. Take time beforehand to understand the role, the organisation and how your experience connects to both. It will make everything feel more natural on the day.

Whether the interview is in person, by video or over the phone, the same principle applies. Go in prepared, keep things simple, and you will already be ahead of many other candidates.

Get Your Mindset Right

Many people walk into interviews thinking, “I need this job.” That mindset can show without you realising it, and it puts you on the back foot.

A better approach is to think, “I can do this job, and I can add value.” That small shift changes how you come across. You are no longer asking for something. You are showing why you are a good fit.

> *“You are not asking for a job. You are showing why you fit.*

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An honest CV is a strong CV.



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08

Preparing Your Answers

Be Ready to Talk About Yourself Properly

This is where many candidates hold back. An interview is your opportunity to show what you have done and what you are capable of. If there is something you are proud of, talk about it.

You do not need to exaggerate. Explain it clearly and take ownership of your part in it.

Prepare for the Tougher Questions

Not every question will be straightforward. Look at your CV the way an interviewer would, and think about what might be picked up: gaps, short roles or changes in direction.

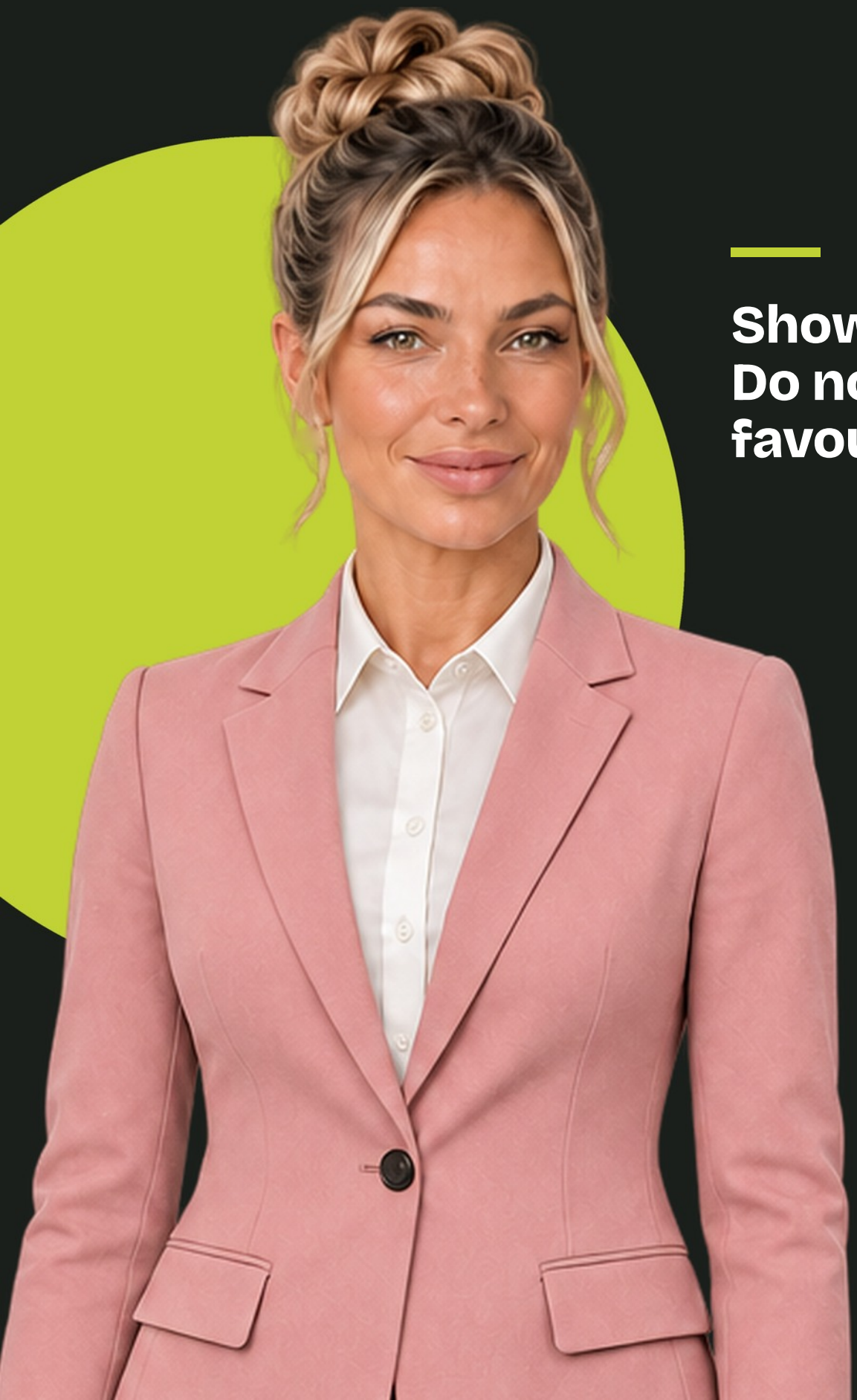
Have a clear, honest explanation ready for each. If you have prepared for those moments, you will stay calm and in control when they come up.

> **How should I answer "Tell me about yourself"?**
>
> This question comes up in almost every interview. Focus on where you are now, what you have done and where you are heading, rather than your full life story. Aim for a minute or two: short, clear and easy to follow.

> **What should I say when I am asked about weaknesses?**
>
> No one expects you to be perfect. Choose something real and explain what you are doing to improve it. An honest answer with evidence of progress comes across far better than trying to dodge the question.

> **REHEARSE OUT LOUD**
>
> Say your key answers out loud before the day, not just in your head. It is the quickest way to find where you ramble and where you need a better example.

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Show value. Do not ask for favours.

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09

Showing Employers What They Need

Know the Skills Employers Care About

Most roles come down to a few core capabilities, whatever the job title. Be ready to show strength in each of these:

- **Problem solving:** how you approach issues and handle difficult situations.
- **Digital confidence:** being comfortable with IT, systems and the tools the role relies on.
- **Communication:** speaking and writing clearly, to colleagues, customers and suppliers.

If you can demonstrate these convincingly, you are already meeting much of what an employer is looking for.

Think in Examples

You will be asked situational questions, so prepare real examples in advance. If the question is "What would you do?", link your answer to something you have done before. If it is "Tell me about a time when…", focus on what you did and what the outcome was.

1. Set out the situation briefly.
2. Explain what you were responsible for.
3. Describe the action you personally took.
4. Finish with the result, and what you learned.

Keep your answers structured and do not rush them. A short pause to gather your thoughts is far better than a hurried, unclear answer.

Do Proper Research

You will almost always be asked what you know about the organisation. Go further than a quick look at the website. Understand what they do, how they operate, who their customers are and anything notable that has happened recently.

Small details show genuine interest and can help you stand out.

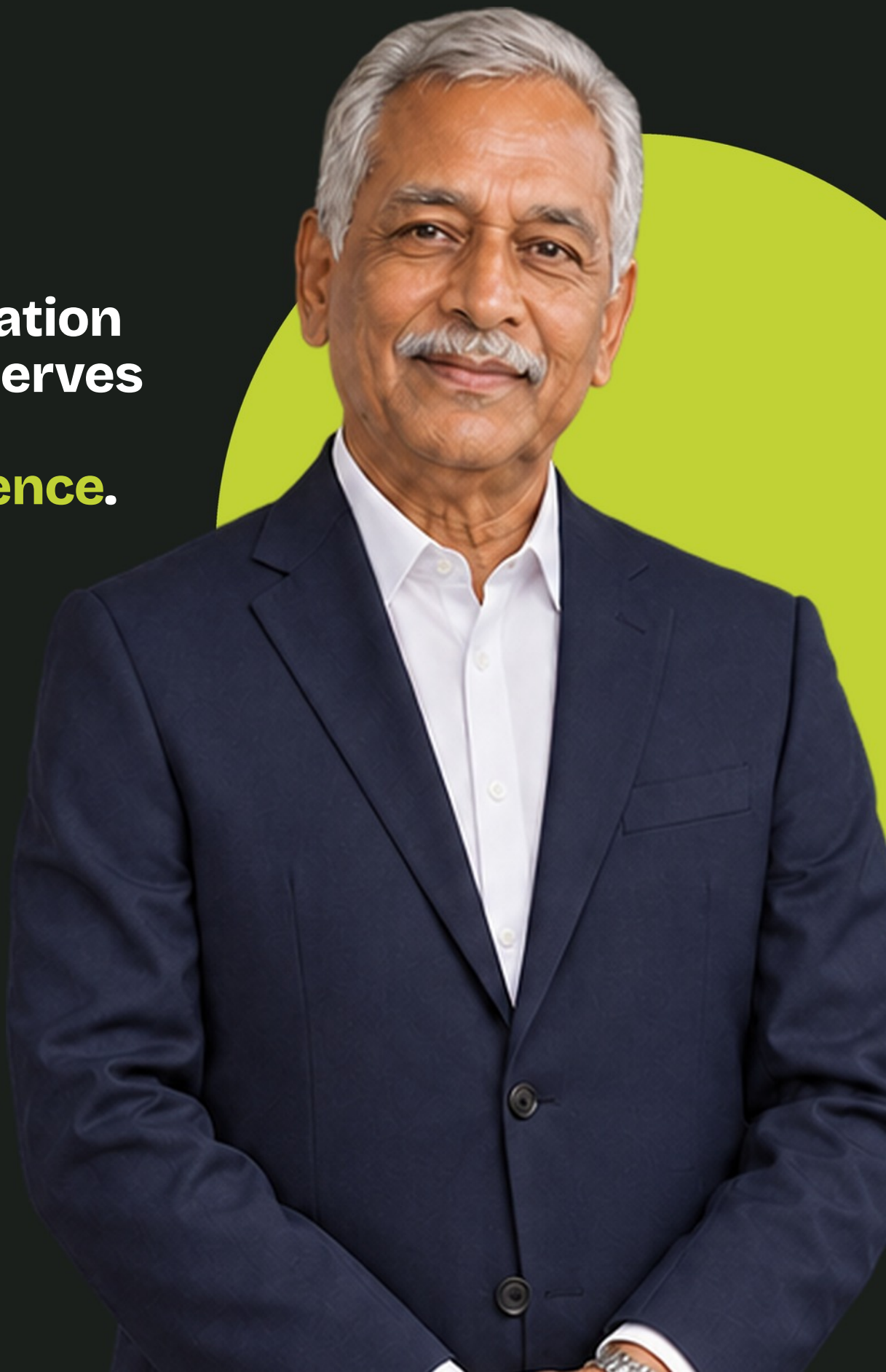
Ask Good Questions

Always have a few questions ready. They show interest, and they help you judge whether the role is right for you too.

If you meet other people during the process, whether at reception, on a site tour or over a coffee, treat every conversation as part of the interview. First impressions count with everyone, not just the hiring manager.

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Preparation turns nerves into confidence.



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10
Final Thoughts

Getting a job is not about being perfect. It is about being prepared, putting yourself in the right places and showing clearly what you can offer.

If you stay consistent, keep improving and do the basics well, you give yourself a strong chance. And when the right opportunity comes along, you will be ready for it.

If you work in facilities management, estates or the workplace, our consultants are always happy to talk through your next move. Call us on 0207 118 4848, email info@maxwellstephens.com or visit maxwellstephens.com.

THE EVIDENCE

What the Data Says

What UK data shows about today's job market for candidates.

84%

84% of UK workers say they're open to a new opportunity, the highest Totaljobs has recorded.

Source: Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026

66%

66% of UK workers are passively open to moving (not applying but willing for the right offer); only 18% are active jobseekers.

Source: Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026

77%

77% of UK candidates say it's harder to get an interview than a year ago.

Source: Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026

66%

Two in three (66%) UK candidates don't hear back beyond an automated acknowledgement when they apply.

Source: Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026

92%

92% of the 497 FM vacancies Maxwell Stephens advertised from 2023 to 2026 showed a salary figure, giving candidates pay clarity up front.

Source: Maxwell Stephens analysis of 497 advertised vacancies, May 2023 – September 2026

Sources were checked in September 2026. Select a source to open the original research. Maxwell Stephens figures are drawn from our own published vacancies and placement records.

CASE STUDY

See It in Practice

Facilities Supervisor Recruitment for CBS Outdoor

CBS Outdoor asked Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Facilities Supervisor to help oversee offices and warehouses across the UK and Ireland, which made multi-site experience essential. The search targeted facilities professionals with proven experience across multi-site environments, including offices and warehouses. We placed a candidate with more than three years' experience as a multi-site Assistant Facilities Manager, whose practical background matched the brief closely. That experience gave them a strong foundation for the step up and allowed them to contribute from the outset.

It shows how clearly evidenced experience, rather than a matching job title, is what earns a candidate the step up.

Read the full case study · **Browse all case studies**

FROM THE BLOG

Related Reading

- How to Write the Perfect CV: A Complete Guide to Standing Out
- Interview Preparation for Facilities Management Candidates
- Breaking Out of the Comfort Zone: Networking for Introverts

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Continue Reading

- **The Facilities Management Interview Guide**
- **Facilities Management Career Guide**
- **Facilities Management Salary Guide UK 2026**

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