Case Interview Guide

What is a Case Interview?

A Case Interview is an interview often utilized by management consulting firms, investment banking companies, and other corporations in which the individual is given a business dilemma, question, or challenge particular to the company and asked to analyze the scenario, recognize key business issues, discuss how to handle problems, and assert recommendations.

The case interview assesses necessary skills, including (but not limited to): numerical and verbal reasoning, communication and presentation, business acumen and commercial awareness, analysis, problem-solving ability, ability to think quickly under pressure, business acumen, and powers of persuasion. Remember: skills assessed will differ by company, team, and position.

A case can be given verbally or written, days before or at the time of the interview. Most typically provided as a component of an in-person day-long interview, a case interview can also include behavioral style interview questions, tests, and social situations.

How to Respond When Given a Case

1. Assess the Scenario – Ask to take a few minutes to step back and think through the case. Your analysis of the problem, relevant factors, and ability to see the big picture are important. Take a breath before diving in.

2. Show Analysis and Problem-Solving – Think out loud, ask questions, and state your assumptions. Use questions and answers to determine how you will funnel the case.

3. Alternative Solutions – Find the Pros & Cons for each solution.

4. Recommended Solution – State Why and How you arrived at a particular solution.

The Process: Pay attention to [Analysis ➔ Thought Process ➔ Delivery]

Tips/Best Practices for Successful Case Interviewing

What are they looking for?

- Thought process – How did you arrive at a solution while explaining both the pros and the cons? Check-out frameworks within the resources below (and others) to help you to funnel and analyze.

- How well did you articulate your plan (delivery) – Did you look the interviewer in the eye? Did you think on your feet? Would the interviewer put you in front of a client?

- Can you do the analysis? – Math, relevant questions and quantitative information.

- Did you think creatively? – Utilize outside of the box thinking

- Do you have an understanding of the company? Customers, competitors, markets, how they differentiate themselves – do your research and be prepared!

- Did you ask thoughtful questions? This is not a template, questions should be relevant and get at important information. You may state, “May I ask you a few questions?” and know that the interviewer may not be able to answer all questions.

- Be thoughtful about sharing your process along the way. The interviewer cannot read your mind, and talking through your process is important.
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What are they looking for? (Continued)

- Did you take risks and JUMP-IN!? - If you get stuck take a drink of water, state assumptions, ask questions, and move forward. Don’t be afraid to go back a step if you lose sight.
- How well did you funnel? - Getting down to not necessarily the right answer but a thoughtful process to a solution.
- Did you meet the intangibles? - Confidence, no fear, questioning “why?” curiosity, problem-solving, accepting challenges, ability to build relationships with people.

Tips for Case Interviews: (explain all of the below out loud)

- **Trust your instincts** - Rather than focusing on getting the “right” answer, spend time making a persuasive recommendation that will achieve results for your client. The right answer is the one you can sell and back up with a story, analysis, and figures.
- **Prioritize** - Your prep time will quickly disappear, discard information that seems less important.
- **Circle the problem** - Look at the problem from multiple perspectives before deciding on a path and asserting a recommendation.
- **Be concise** - Create an outline with the important messages in a written summary (save details for the discussion).
- **Do the math** - What analytics are necessary for your recommendation? Gather the required data.
- **Be pragmatic** - Have a plan that the client can actually implement.
- **Consider both sides** - Carefully consider the strongest arguments against your own recommendation to strengthen your rationale.

When Interviewing Remember to:

- Relax and be yourself
- Listen carefully and take high-level notes (avoid writing down everything- stick to bullet points)
- Think out loud to reveal your thought process and plan to the interviewer
- One size does not fit all – pull from a variety of frameworks to incorporate specific concepts that most apply to the specific issue and industry
- Expect math and quantitative analysis
- Practice, practice, practice – consider employing sample cases and videos online for a trial run

Case Interviewing Resources

- **Stanford Alumni PowerPoint**: [http://www.olin.edu/sites/default/files/mba1caseinterviewprepslides.pdf](http://www.olin.edu/sites/default/files/mba1caseinterviewprepslides.pdf)
- **CaseInterview.com**: [http://www.caseinterview.com/](http://www.caseinterview.com/)
- **The Ohio State University Case Study Video**: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-VgpMrFlIs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-VgpMrFlIs)