

Co-op Programs Office

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There is no magic formula for success with case interviews, but you can develop a structured approach for addressing them.

Case Interviews – What Are They?

A case interview is the **analysis of a business question**. It requires you to **assess** the case/situation that has been presented, **ask questions, make assumptions**, and provide your **logical approach** to the case that will allow you to provide a relevant and detailed recommendation. With case interviews, it's not about getting the "right" answer, but instead about being able to take a logical approach to a situation. The interviewer is interested in a thought process that is both analytical and creative (what can also be referred to as "out-of-the-box" thinking). Specific knowledge about the industry can be beneficial in any interview, and can provide additional assistance in a case interview where you can apply industry knowledge to your analysis/approach. Business school students and candidates with significant business world experience receive case questions that require a deeper understanding of business models and processes.

How to Prepare

1. **Review the Company Website.** Most large consulting firms will provide sample case questions to help you prepare. Don't bother memorizing those answers – rather, focus on the *thought process* involved in deriving your recommendation.
2. **Recite Your Answers Out Loud.** Don't forget the case interview is still an ORAL interview. You are also being assessed on your ability to communicate clearly and concisely, and present information in a logical order.

You Can Expect To...

- Meet with a single interviewer or a panel of interviewers (multiple interviewers)
- Discuss and demonstrate your qualifications
- Engage in a dialogue that leads to a solution
- Be presented with cases that are based on actual projects/situations within the organization, including:
 - Industry analysis
 - Profit improvement
 - Investments
 - Market expansion
 - Pricing alternatives

During the Interview

UNDERSTAND

- Carefully **listen** and be able to **identify the issue**. If it helps, summarize the issue to the interviewer.
- Before you begin, **ask the interviewer some questions** to **gather important information** about the case, but be mindful of asking too many questions.

ANALYZE

- **Structure your thinking process** and write it down. Also, make sure to speak clearly and state your reasoning/thought process, as it demonstrates your ability to process information logically.
- **Take your time!** Consulting firms hire people who are careful in thinking about answers.
- **State your assumptions** but make sure you confirm assumptions with the interviewer.
- **Don't worry** about **exact calculations**. Interviewers are concerned with **HOW** you came up with the numbers, not **WHAT** they are.

SUMMARIZE

- Start **formulating recommendations**. If you are using a framework, make sure you use the appropriate one.
- **Provide a solution** to the case that addresses the issue presented.

Who Uses Them?

These interviews, while being most common in the consulting industry and in strategy consulting in particular, are not limited only to the consulting industry. You may encounter case interviews in other industries as well. Provided below is a sample of a firms that use case interviews.

1. [McKinsey](#)
2. [Boston Consulting Group](#)
3. [Bain & Company](#)
4. [Accenture](#)
5. [Deloitte](#)

6 Quick Steps to Analyzing a Case

- Step 1: Identify the problem
- Step 2: Gather more information
- Step 3: Analyze the problem
- Step 4: Develop Criteria
- Step 5: Formulate Options
- Step 6: Make recommendations.

What to Do

- ✓ Act calm
- ✓ Listen carefully
- ✓ Ask questions
- ✓ Take notes
- ✓ State key assumptions explicitly
- ✓ Paraphrase to validate your understanding
- ✓ Challenge, but professionally
- ✓ Stay focused
- ✓ Follow the interviewer's lead
- ✓ Keep the endgame in mind

What NOT to Do

- x Interrogate
- x Look at your watch
- x Use redundant talk
- x Detour meaninglessly into your past experiences
- x Use academic formulas if they're not valuable

Still Have Questions?

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