The Case Interview

Why Employers Use Them

To measure how well you identify, structure and think through problems To test your ability to listen, gather information and communicate conclusions To test your level of resourcefulness and ability to “think on your feet”

What They Are

The case interview consists of one or more word problems based upon “real-life” situations. In each case question, you are asked to analyze a problem, identify key issues and discuss the steps you would take to address the situation. Questions can range from the most simple to the highly complex. No matter what type of questions you are asked, preparation is key to your success.

How to Approach a Case Question

Listen carefully to the question. Jot down points to help you think through the problem. Make sure you clarify any points that are unclear.

Assess whether you have all the information you need. If not, ask the interviewer about any missing information. The interviewer may intentionally leave out some key points to test you.

Remain calm; take time to think through your answer.

Begin by defining issues and potential solutions— not answers. Employers are more interested in how you approach the problem rather than one right answer in the case. Construct questions that you will use to test the potential solutions.

Develop an appropriate framework for structuring your answer. Then, explain your plan for delivering the answer. Don’t assume the interviewer will know where you’re going. Begin with the most important points first. Then, follow your framework until all points are covered.

Summarize your answer by reviewing how you approached the problem and the action that should be taken from that point forward.

Several Categories of Questioning

1. Marketing — Assesses how comfortable you are with numbers; tells how well you compile data and logically proceed; shows how resourceful you are.
   Example: You are contacted by T&K Pizza to help them develop a plan for
entering the home delivery market in a community where K&J Pizza has the dominant position. As lead consultant to T&K, what would you do?

2. Business Operations— Reveals your understanding of basic business operations; tests your level of intuition; tells how well you generate viable solutions to real world issues. Example: Becca Corporation is experiencing a labor shortage, particularly in their production line. The unemployment rate is less than 2% and competing employers pay an average of $2 more per hour. What staffing strategy will enable Becca Corporation to alleviate the shortage and fulfill production commitments?

3. Business Strategy — Tells if you can identify strategic issues; identifies how well you develop recommendations for action; predicts your ability to analyze core business issues. Example: Vallejo Airline is considering the acquisition of a smaller airline. We’ve been asked to determine the long-term attractiveness of the acquisition. How will you approach the project?

4. Logic — Tests your creativity; assesses how well you handle a challenge. Example: How could you estimate the weight of the carpet in this room?

How You Will Be Evaluated

How do you analyze the problem?
How well you focus on the key issues?
How you ask for additional details?
How you identify information that will allow you to solve the problem?
How well you organize your thoughts?
How you present the information?