



CASE INTERVIEWING GUIDE

INTERVIEWING > TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS A CASE INTERVIEW?

A case question is an interactive interviewing tool used to evaluate the multi-dimensional aspects of a candidate. Individuals are presented with information and asked to analyze, synthesize, and articulate a solution. Interviewers use case questions to see how well candidates listen, how they think, the logic behind their thoughts, and how well they can articulate their thoughts under pressure. Case interviews can also help employers to gauge self-confidence, discover the candidate's personality, and to see if problem solving genuinely intrigues them. The objective is not to determine if the interviewee got the "right answer," but rather to evaluate the process the candidate used to structure a competent approach to derive a solution.

WHO USES CASE INTERVIEWS?

Management consulting companies have used case interviews to assess talent for decades. More recently, case interviews have started to edge into industries and functions including healthcare, marketing, consumer product management, and investment banking. Individuals in these functions often have to work with the senior executives of a corporation and want to be effective leaders. This includes the ability to think on their feet, analyze problems, develop creative solutions, and be able to support their recommendations. Case interviews are one way to determine which candidates are up to the task.

What qualities are employers looking for during the interview?

- Active listening
- Articulate communication and presentation
- Logic, ability to integrate and organize data
- Analytical and problem-solving skills
- Creativity and entrepreneurial drive
- Social skills
- Confidence and poise under pressure

STYLES OF CASE INTERVIEWS

Case interviews can vary across employers. The case can be presented orally or on paper. The company and the issues addressed can be real-world examples or imaginary. While the time allotted varies, a typical business case will take 20 minutes to complete. Some of the common types of cases are:

Open-Ended Cases: The interviewer gives you only a few sentences of information, and then expects you to run with only that information and your own assumptions

Structured Cases: The interviewer gives you information, and then proceeds to guide you through the problem-solving process

Paper-Driven Cases: You are handed a "deck" of information, to review and then prepare and present a brief analysis

STAGES OF THE CASE INTERVIEW

1. Understand the Problem

- Listen to the information provided
- Take careful, organized notes
- Ask clarifying questions to verify the key issue and scope

2. Develop a Structured Approach

- Ask for a moment to collect your thoughts
- Outline your approach
- Consider a guiding business framework - but do not force it

3. Conduct Analysis

- Ask questions to validate hypotheses
- Consider industry trends
- Use feedback from the interviewer
- Perform calculations as needed

4. Summarize

- Repeat the key issue
- Provide a definitive answer to the question posted
- Make best conclusion and recommendation given the data provided

THE POWER OF PRACTICE

As with any interview process, preparation will increase levels of confidence with cases. This comfort level is especially critical in the “pressure cooker” approach of case interviewing. Alumni who have obtained offers from employers who utilize case interviews report that they practiced an average of 60 cases.

Practice Tips:

- Schedule regular time to practice a different case every week
- Identify a classmate to be a case partner, and take turns giving and answering case questions
- Participate in case competitions
- Conduct a mock case interview with a Career Coach to gather feedback on your weaker areas and
- focus your efforts on improving those skills

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Vault Guide to the Case Interview
- Case Questions (CQ) Interactive

Books

- Case in Point: Case Interview Preparation by Marc Cosentino
- Crack the Case: How to Conquer Your Case Interviews by David Ohrvall
- Case Interview Secrets: A Former McKinsey Interviewer Reveals How to Get Multiple Job Offers in Consulting by Victor Cheng