Case Interview Tips

Case Interviews:

- Demonstrate your thought process, problem solving and reasoning skills, ability to prioritize and think creatively, and your reaction under pressure.
- May use complex or ambiguous problems in unfamiliar business settings to test your ability to reach well-supported conclusions based on facts.
- Allow the prospective employer to see how you apply knowledge and skills to a real-life situation.
- Can be based on an industry, company, or organization, can be real or fictional.
- May deal with business situations, everyday activities, abstract thinking, and/or calculations and estimations.
- Help candidates understand more about the company and the types of challenges and questions they may encounter on the job.
- Are common in interviews with consulting companies. Search glassdoor.com to learn more about the interview process at your targeted company.

What happens in a case interview?

- The interviewer(s) will outline a situation or provide you with a case study that includes a problem (e.g. considering how a company should react to a competitor or how to market a product to a specific company). You will be asked to formulate a plan based on this information.
- You may be left alone to work on the case, or an interviewer may stay with you to guide you through the case and/or provide additional information as you work.
- Cases are typically 25-30 minutes long.

How to succeed in a case interview:

- **Pay close attention** to the problem to make sure you understand and address the question you are being asked. If allowed, take notes.
- **Take time to organize your thoughts** and consider the problem to identify questions you have and additional information you may need.
- **Ask for specific clarifying details** and extra information strategically. Engage with the interviewer.
- **Remember that the case study is not about the answer**, it is about your process and reasoning along the way. There may not be a single correct answer.
- **Break the problem down** into a logical structure and describe your overall approach.
- **Communicate your thought process**, address the issues one at a time and focusing on the most important issues first. If you have considered alternatives and rejected them, tell the interviewer why in order to communicate your thought process.
• **Address all important issues**, not just ones most relevant to your expertise (e.g. accountants should consider customers in addition to financial aspects of the case).
• **Be comfortable performing analyses**, including basic arithmetic, working with large numbers, and making estimations.
• **Reach a conclusion** and present your recommendation by concisely summing up your process and describing actionable steps.
• **Use business judgment and common sense.**

**Common mistakes:**

• Misunderstanding the question, or answering the wrong question.
• Not identifying the most important issues.
• Not presenting a linear thought process.
• Not asking any questions and not asking for help along the way if it is needed.
• Asking too many questions (be strategic and let the interviewer know why you ask the questions that you do).
• Trying to apply an irrelevant business framework instead of using common sense.
• Failing to reach a conclusion.

**Other case interview-type questions:**

• How many iPhones were bought last year worldwide?
• How many golf balls would fit into this room?
• How many gas stations are there in the U.S.?
• Why are manholes round?

**Resources:**