

CASE INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS A CASE INTERVIEW?

The case interview is a scenario-based, problem solving activity. It is used by consulting firms, financial services firms, and other industries to evaluate the following:

Problem Solving Skills

1. How well do you narrow down a problem?
2. Do you ask pertinent questions?
3. Can you identify and extract the important issues related to the problem?

Analytical Skills

1. Can you follow a logical line of reasoning?
2. How well do you structure your answers?
3. Can you make quick calculations on your feet?

Communication Skills

1. Do you express yourself clearly?
2. Are you a good listener?
3. Can you adapt to the information you are given?
4. Can you explain and defend your ideas?
5. How well do you handle pressure?

WHAT ARE INTERVIEWERS LOOKING FOR?

The purpose is not necessarily to find the correct solution to the scenario, but for you to demonstrate the steps you would take to solve the given problem. The interviewer is assessing the rationale behind your strategy and your ability to articulate your thought process (i.e. ability to verbalize your thoughts).

THE CASE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Part One: Getting To Know You

The first portion of the interview is to find out more about you. You may be asked a variety of questions such as: Why did you choose your major; what are your strengths/weaknesses; how are your classes going? The interviewer is assessing whether you are personable and easy to talk with.

Part Two: Assessing Your Analytical Skills

Through a case problem solving exercise, whether analyzing a brainteaser, market sizing problem, or a business strategy problem, the interviewer is assessing:

- Do you listen well?
- Do you ask questions when appropriate?
- Do you think before you speak?
- What framework are you using to solve the case?
- Is your thinking pragmatic?
- Do you recognize hints that the interviewer offers to keep you on the right track?

TYPES OF CASE INTERVIEWS

Brain Teasers

These types of questions assess your creative problem solving skills. Some popular questions are:

1. Why are manhole covers round?
2. You wake up one morning and there's been a power outage. You know you have 12 black socks and 8 blue ones. How many socks do you need to pull out before you've got a match?
3. You're trying to get to Truthtown. You come to a fork in the road. One road leads to Truthtown (where everyone tells the truth), the other to Liartown (where everyone lies). At the fork is a man from one of those towns -- but which one? You get to ask him one question to discover the way. What's the question?

Business Problems

These questions begin as a description of a typical business-related issue. The interviewer provides background information and you are expected to provide a possible solution.

1. An airline finds that, while its revenues are at an all time high, the company is still operating at a loss. What is going on?
2. A company dealing with a commodity product is thinking about expanding internationally. If its labor costs are competitive with industry standards, what issues might influence its decision?
3. Estimate the demand of airplanes for a select category 10 years into the future. There are three producers and 10 airlines.

Technical Problems

These questions are common for scientific and computational related interviews. The interviewer asks you to solve a problem directly related to your major or the position for which you are interviewing. Some examples include:

1. Design a quantitative experiment for me.
2. What is the difference between an Applet and an Application?
3. What is Operator, Operand, Expression, Statement in 'C'?
4. Write a function to print the Fibonacci numbers.
5. What are two methods of retrieving SQL?
6. How would you move Mt. Everest?

Keep in mind that the interviewer is assessing your:

- analytical and problem solving skills
- knowledge in your area of study
- ability to communicate your ideas
- poise and self confidence

The best preparation for case type interviews is a great deal of practice answering questions that are typical for your intended industry. Great resources for learning more about case interviews can be found at [VAULT](#).