

Five Tips for a Successful Consulting Interview

Follow this advice to better prepare for your consulting interview.

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Even in a strong job market, positions in consulting remain highly competitive. Each year thousands of undergrad and MBA candidates interview on campuses around the country, and only a small percentage receive offers. The chosen few attribute much of their success to these commonsense tips:

1. Be creative

One of the biggest mistakes a candidate can make is to force-fit a prepared answer to a case question, says Amy Glass, national associate manager for the Boston Consulting Group. Cathy Baker, vice-president of worldwide recruiting at Mercer Management Consulting, agrees. “[Students] rely too much on frameworks and textbook answers.” When presented with the case, take a deep breath and think about the business challenge before you. Use your own ideas and words, rather than industry jargon, to work through the problem. You can practice in advance by developing several plausible answers to the same sample case question.

2. Show sincere enthusiasm

People choose consulting for a variety of reasons, but if a genuine passion for the work isn’t one of yours, prepare to be rejected. Interviewers are most impressed with candidates whose interest is “shown, not told,” says Glass. Don’t get caught merely reciting pat answers. While you should prepare for the interview by reviewing how your experiences and personal traits relate to your career goals, your answers should be driven by intellectual curiosity and energy, not by a rigid focus on impressing the interviewer.

3. Project confidence and professionalism

Consulting involves quite a bit of client contact, and you must convince the interviewer that you can easily handle clients. You should come across as poised, knowledgeable, and responsive. Before your interview, practice answering common behavioral questions with a friend to be sure you’re communicating effectively and with self-assurance. Better yet, use your network of contacts in the industry to conduct informational interviews in advance, which will increase your knowledge base and overall confidence.

4. Demonstrate your analytical skills

Both Baker and Glass cite logic and analytical skills as two of the most important candidate characteristics. Your best chance to show off your analytical skills is during the case, so be sure to practice the various types of consulting cases ahead of time.

Also try your hand at market-sizing problems, business operations problems, business strategy problems, and brainteasers. Check out WetFeet.com’s [Ace Your Case Insider Guide](#) for more detailed advice.

5. Ask intelligent questions

Strong questions require advance research. Know what distinguishes the firm from its competitors, and use the interview to learn more about the people, the culture, and the business. Also, don’t forget to ask questions during the case.

Relevant, focused questions show the interviewer that you are willing to dig beyond the surface of a business problem. “The interview process is a give-and-take,” says Glass. “Show that you can ask good questions, because you are going to have to ask clients good questions.”