



ISB  
CONSULTING  
CLUB

# THE **CONSULTING** CASEBOOK

2019

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## From the President's Desk - Hyderabad

Dear Reader,



It gives me great pleasure to present to you the consulting casebook of the class of 2019. Among other things, it provides detailed insights into how the students of the class of 2019 prepared for and cracked the case interviews at ISB.

There are a few key changes in this year's edition.

We have introduced a new section this time: sample practice cases. These have long been a staple of the casebooks produced by the top business schools in the world. We felt that coupling these with the case experiences of the cohort would provide useful learning as you prepare for the case interview.

We have done away with sections like industry primers, company primers and case competitions. Since the KM portal managed by SEAL is an excellent source for these we felt that including them here would be redundant.

Staying the same are the case frameworks and the case experiences!

We do hope this casebook would aid you in achieving the consulting job of your dreams just as the previous editions of the ISB consulting casebook aided us in achieving ours.

2018-2019 has arguably been the best year yet for ISB in terms of consulting placements. The cohort has reaffirmed the belief that ISB is indeed one of the best consulting schools in the country. We hope that this success is replicated and even surpassed by the subsequent batches.

If there is any help that you require, know that the class of 2019 would always be available.

Best wishes,

Abhijith Ganesh Sampathila

President, Consulting Club | PGP Co2019

Indian School of Business, Hyderabad Campus

## From the President's Desk - Mohali

Hello!



Congratulations on making it to ISB and making it this far. I hope you all are now accustomed to the infamous fast-paced life at ISB. It's difficult no doubt, but one step at a time though, you're good! The last year was a great one overall in terms of placements, especially for consulting. With very good conversion rates from shortlists to placement, the cohort did very well for themselves. Hope your batch can achieve the same feat or perform even better this year.

Preparing your resumes, waiting for those shortlists, and prepping for case interviews - this period of your time at ISB is perhaps the most testing and the most rewarding. While you go through this process, there are a couple of things I think might be useful to keep in mind from my own experience and from what I observed in the batch -

1. *Everyone has their own prep journey* - Start early or start late, do 40 cases or do a 100, there really is no formula to case prep and so find your own method. Figure out what works for you, because everyone really does have their own path through this and don't let the peer pressure get to you.
2. *Ask for help* - Your peers, your alums, your ex-colleagues, don't be shy and take their help. From building your resumes to the multiple reviews and revisions, right up till the end with your case prep and PI prep. There might be different sources of information, different methods of prep etc. that work for you that you may not find on your own. For example, through different case groups, you will see multiple styles of prep and this can help you understand what works best for you.

Hope this casebook helps you get that bit closer to your dream consulting job! Wishing you all the best!

Regards,

Pooja Jose

President, Consulting Club | PGP Co2019  
Indian School of Business, Mohali Campus

## Acknowledgements

This document has been prepared by the student consulting club of class of 2019 across the Hyderabad and Mohali campuses of ISB.

We'd like to thank the consulting club core teams of both the Hyderabad and Mohali campuses for their contributions to the ISB consulting casebook for the class of 2019

We would also like to thank everyone from our cohort who volunteered to document their case interview experience and share it as part of the casebook.

Thanks for all your support, without which this document would not have been possible.

# What is consulting?

Consultants help businesses solve their problems, basically.

Using a combination of data intensive analyses, thorough primary and secondary research and business intuition from experienced professionals in the industry, they understand a business and provide their recommendations. Businesses and government bring them on board when they have a problem that's too complicated or the resources needed would be too great for internal staff to resolve.

Consulting is one of the most sought-after career options at ISB. The job does seem glamorous - high paying, high status, lots of reward points etc., but it is a tough one to land. A lot of business school graduates aspire to become consultants because of the networking opportunities that it provides, along with the rich and diverse exit options that it creates.

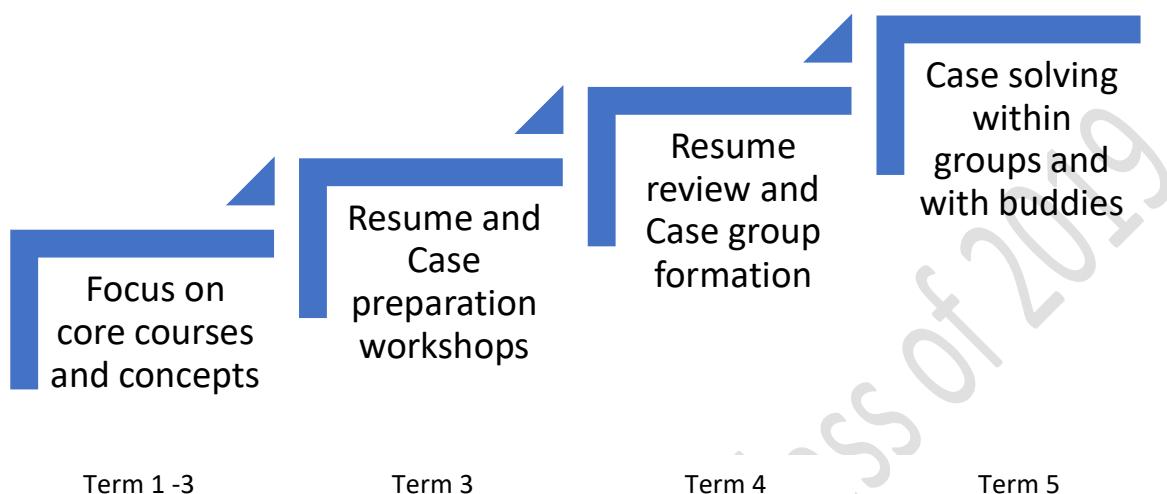
At the heart of the industry stand 5 main segments – Business Strategy Consulting, Operations Consulting, HR Consulting, Financial Advisory and Technology Consulting. While there are many types of consulting firms, we will focus on the management consulting firms (firms that focus on business strategy, operations and human resources consulting).

## Main segments in consulting and key service areas

Management Consulting				
Strategy	Operations	Human Resources	Financial Advisory	Technology
Corporate Strategy	Process Management	Organisational Change	Corporate Finance	IT Advisory
Economic Policy	Supply Chain	HR Technology	Restructuring	ERP Implementation
Mergers & Acquisitions	Procurement	Learning & Development	Actuarial Services	Data Analytics
Organisational Strategy	Finance Operations	Benefits & Rewards	Risk Management	Application Development
Functional Strategy	Outsourcing	Talent Management	Real Estate Advisory	Systems Integration
	Project Management		Forensics & Litigation	Enterprise Architecture

Once the recommendation is provided using the data-driven, research-backed methodologies, the role of the “management consultant” is over. However, the firm can still be hired for implementation services, where other consulting practices such as Technology Consulting, Financial Advisory among others get involved. Though there is a difference in initial (joining) salary between strategy and non-strategy (other) consultants, in the long run the best of both get similar compensations.

## Preparation timelines



There are two components to landing the coveted consulting job at ISB – getting a shortlist and then cracking the case interview.

For the shortlist, you'd require a top-notch resume.

For the case interview, you'd require impeccable case-solving.

Both phases can be quite competitive at ISB; with the most sought-after firms shortlisting approximately 1 out of every 8 that apply. Cracking the case interview might seem easier from an “odds” perspective (1 out of 2-4 shortlisted candidates get the offer), but requires diligent case prep.

Fortunately, a lot of help is available at hand to crack both and with discipline and focus; you, the reader, can land the consulting offer.

You'll receive help from alumni, the industry and the school to help you bring both your resume and case-solving up to speed.

We've laid out a brief timeline for your preparation.

**April – May:** Use term 1 to understand if consulting is a right fit for you. Make use of the sessions on campus, along with your own personal network with alumni and other consultants.

Focus on academics not just towards a strong CGPA but also for building up management concepts which are critical for case prep. FADM in term 1 is critical for people without business/finance experience.

**June – July:** Build on the academic foundation laid in term 1. Coursework in term 2 also is critical. CSTR, GLEC, MKDM have a lot of frameworks that come handy in case prep. Explore case competitions. While they are not directly useful for consulting placements, they offer perspective into business problems facing companies. Make a first draft of the resume in mid-July.

**August – September:** Keep up the academics. Consulting firms consider your CGPA till term 3(inclusive). Focus on resume – building in this phase. Utilize the resume reviews organized by the consulting club, keep in touch with the alumni reviewing your resume on-campus and schedule reiterations afterwards offline through mail/phone.

**September:** With phase 1 – resume building concluded, consulting firms start posting jobs on the placement portal by mid-September. They normally release the shortlist within 2 weeks of the deadline for resume submission.

**October – November:** Now's the time to start phase 2 – case solving. The most hectic time at ISB. Form case groups of up to 3 members. You can have multiple groups with staggered meeting schedules. Aim to solve 1-3 cases every day across all your groups. In addition to this, most consulting firms assign buddies to shortlisted candidates. These buddies are an absolute boon and normally provide high-quality cases (sometimes real ones they have worked on before). You should also start preparing for the personal interview (PI) segment of the interviews. Be thorough with your resume, be prepared to defend every line of it and be aware of the story/impression that your resume projects.

**The week before Day 1:** Time to prioritize the shortlists. By this time, most students with a consulting shortlist would have filled up their shortlist counters. It would be hard to interview with all companies on day 1. You can reasonably expect to interview with 3-4 companies. Thus, it's important to go into day 1 with a clear priority in your head. Day 1 would pass by in a blur and you would not have the luxury of choosing or prioritizing leisurely at that time. Having clear priority earlier would prevent you from landing in dilemmas on day 1.

**Day 1:** Stick to your priority list. As you complete interviews, get hints on how you are performing from alumni who are volunteering and incorporate feedback for subsequent interviews. It's recommended to have a friend handle your phone on day 1.

## Resume Guidelines

**Please refer to the overall guidelines to keep in mind while drafting your resumes.**

Consulting recruiters reviewing resumes primarily care about impact and excellence rather than relevant experience. This is especially so for strategy consulting.

You might hear the word “spike” thrown about a LOT at ISB. It literally just means something that would make the reader of the resume go “WOW”. It can be just about anything that would increase the likelihood of you being a rock-star professional in the eyes of the recruiter.

We can classify the “spikes” into three broad buckets as below.

### **Academics:**

**Spikes:** Including but not limited to: Brand-name of undergrad, ISB GPA, Top X% of class, rank-holder, scholarships, GMAT (if above 750), winning case competitions at ISB

Guidelines:

This section is straightforward. Just list the above spikes if present.

NOTE: Mention positions of responsibility at ISB/ case competitions in this section, under ISB.

### **Work Experience:**

**Spikes:** Including but not limited to : Brand -name of company, Fast track promotion, only 1 out of X to get an opportunity/responsibility

Guidelines:

Mention impact in monetary terms – dollar/rupee impact either in profit or savings terms.

Mention relativity: Achievement was better because the average performance is X.

### **Extra-curriculars:**

**Spikes:** Including but not limited to: Highly selective Leadership roles outside work.

National level awards in sports.

**Note:** This is not an exhaustive list. These are points we observed /gathered as traditionally considered to be spikes.

# The Case Interview

## **What are case interviews and what do firms look for?**

A case interview is nothing but a short business case/situation, which is often representative of a real-life consulting assignment (obviously, condensed to facilitate a 30-40 minute discussion) that the interviewer was a part of.

These interviews can be divided in two types – guesstimates and business problems.

Guesstimates are focused towards assessing the analytical skills of a candidate. Businesses cases used in interviews mostly do not have a predetermined answer and candidates are evaluated based on how he/she deals with the problem. Assessment is done based on how one approaches the problem and if one can reach a well-supported conclusion. Ability to prioritize issues and exercising judgment based on the business context is crucial to the process.

The interviewer is looking to test a few things during a case interview – your ability to think in a structured manner, analytical skills and creativity, test of skills learnt in the MBA, test your pre-ISB work experience and ability to handle ambiguity among other things.

## ***How should you approach a case?***

Interviewers are necessarily looking to see you show your prowess in solving a case across four broad steps. [REMEMBER 3S -> Scope, Structure, Summarize)

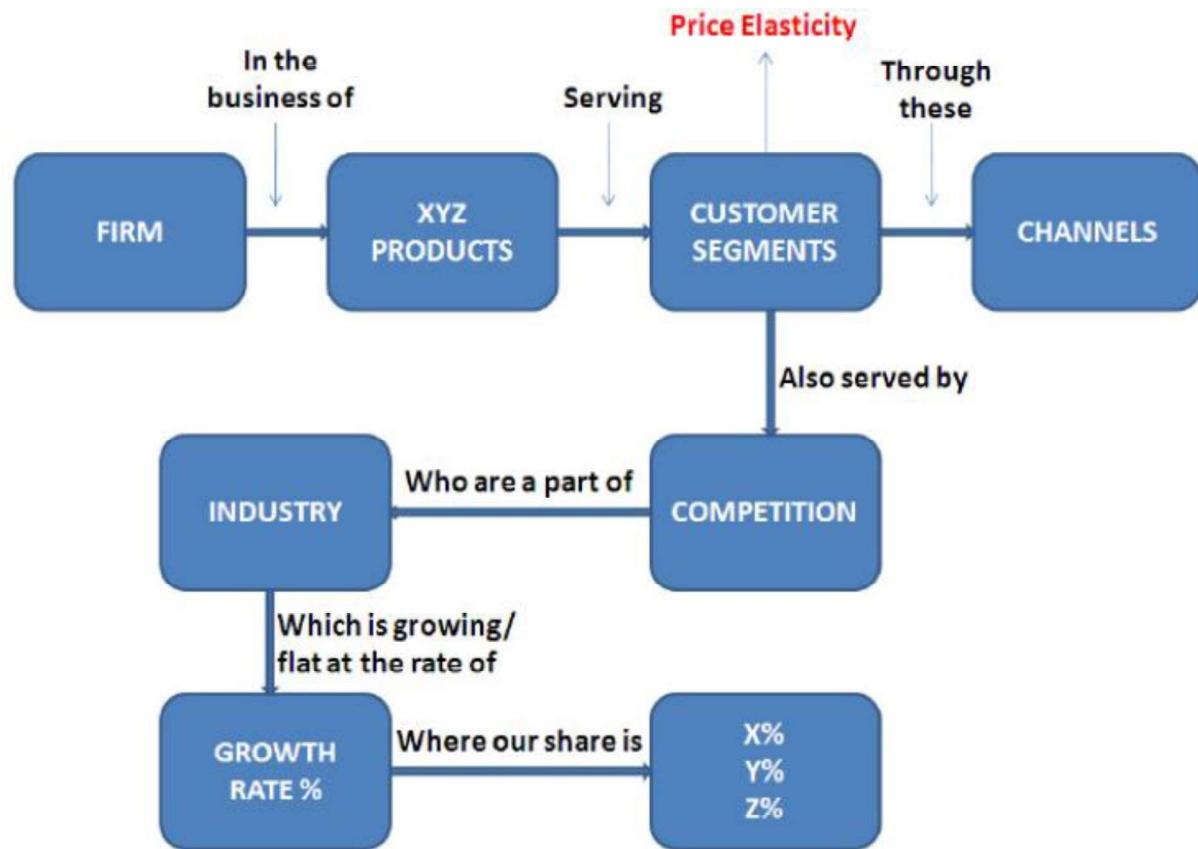
Define the Problem -> Structure the Problem -> Analyze logically to develop answer -> Synthesize the discussion

### **Define the Problem:**

- 1) Listen closely to problem definition
- 2) Take notes and ask questions to improve understanding
- 3) Synthesize the facts to confirm the problem statement (restate if necessary)
- 4) Remember that some information may be less important

### **Structure the Problem**

- 1) Organize your thoughts, structure your ideas
- 2) Describe / syndicate your approach
- 3) Break the problem into discrete pieces / issues / State / syndicate crisp assumptions (be creative)
- 4) Avoid using/naming frameworks explicitly – **VERY IMPORTANT**



#### Analyze logically to develop answer

- 1) Walk the interviewer through your thinking
- 2) Prioritize issues
- 3) State your assumptions and ask for relevant facts
- 4) State findings for your analysis
- 5) Refine your solution
- 6) Probe further if necessary

#### Synthesize the discussion

- 1) Develop overall recommendations
- 2) Discuss trade-offs
- 3) Relate back to problem statement
- 4) Suggest next steps

It's important for you to also keep track of the interviewer. While it is always advisable to display your skills across all the four steps, you might find the interviewer wants you only to focus on one of these steps. In such cases, follow the interviewer's lead. There is no hard and fast rule.

### Some Dos

- 1) Make it a dialogue; not a Q&A – Think of it as a joint problem solving session. No one is looking for industry expertise.
- 2) Bring insight; it's an intellectual discussion – Organize your thoughts and stay structured. Be creative and push for conclusions.
- 3) Communicating effectively is critical – Listen (take notes if you wish) and explain your thought process. State your assumptions.

### Some DONTs

- 1) Resist force-fitting a framework or defending impractical solutions – A framework is proxy for structured thinking, but the best frameworks are those which come naturally during the course of your thinking. Remember, there need not be a solution for the case.
- 2) Don't stop or waste time if you are stuck. It's ok to acknowledge this and ask the interviewer for help (don't make a habit out of it though!) – It's a good sign, indicating receptiveness.
- 3) Don't be hasty and jump to conclusions. Everything should be logically thought through and concluded. The interviewer will be dropping hints throughout the interview – never forget to pick them up. If you ignore hints, it will be considered an inability to be receptive.
- 4) Do not shy away from numbers. Embrace them! The calculations will be basic, write them down and avoid mental arithmetic.

### How should you practice?

- Form a good group of 3 people (you can have multiple groups meeting at different schedules)  
Let people from different backgrounds be there [or different industry or role]  
Choose wisely: Seriousness of each candidate is important
- Each person prepares 1 case and asks another, so in total the take away for the group would be 3 cases in one sitting (but a person should only count the one he/she solves towards his/her number of cases solved)
- Write the cases & the workings you do in a separate notebook
- **No. of Cases:** Many questions arise on the magical number of how many cases need to be done for cracking the dream job. Frankly, it is not the number, but the depth and breadth of cases covered. If done diligently any number around 50-60 would do.

### Breadth & Depth of the cases covered:

- Industry & Sector:** Since cases can be from any industry and any area, it is important to cover different industries to understand the industry's dynamics, problems, solutions and other aspects [This is where your peers from different industries help]. As a consultant, you would be expected to work on problems in different industries, many of which you would have no experience in. Same is expected from a case interview.
- Types of Cases:** Not just different industries, but different types of cases are also to be covered. Profitability, growth, market entry, Market Sizing, pricing, M&A, Response to Competition, new product development etc. [If constrained by time the first 5 Main types can be selected]

You can create a matrix (see below) to keep track whether you have covered everything.

Main Types of Problems	Main List of Industries									
	Banking	Manufacturing	Retail / FMCG	Pharma	Technology / IT	Non Profit	Logistics	Education	Telecom	
<i>Profitability</i>	Not Done	Weak	Good	Good	Not Done	Not Done	Good	Good	Weak	
- Rev Pb										
- Cost Pb										
<i>Pricing</i>										
<i>Market Sizing</i>										
<i>Market Entry</i>										
<i>Growth</i>										
<i>M&amp;A</i>										
<i>Competitive Response</i>										

Not all kinds of cases can be found, but make sure the main industries and main types of problems are covered [**NOTE: The above matrix is just for illustration purpose** and can be done by your group itself].

Profitability problems if covered across all industries will give you a very good overview of revenue and cost drivers of an industry and different trends in the industry!

### General Tips:

While practicing a case, the interviewer [person who prepared the case] would ask the interviewee. Let it be as formal as possible so that there would not be any jitters on the interview day. Even PI questions can be mixed with the case to be as realistic as possible.

- After everyone has solved the case, the case can be discussed as a group to see where the improvements can be made. Ask inputs from any person from the same industry [Peers or Alums etc.]
- Write down the mistakes you have done in the case and where improvements can be made. A note book just for the mistakes & insights will be a great asset before the D –day.
- **Buddies:** Many of you would be allotted buddies from different companies. Make sure you **leverage that!** The cases you do with them are truly invaluable because they are in the industry and can give you accurate feedback. Share those feedbacks and cases with your peers and vice versa.

### **What are the general resources for the preparation?**

Go through these as you start your case preparation. Both should go in parallel for effectiveness.

- Start: Case in Point by Marc Cosentino – read end-to-end as a textbook.
- **Previous years' ISB case books (must!!)**
- Cases from buddies – these are an absolute boon. We've included some of them from our batch in the "sample cases" section.
- Few self-created cases from newspapers and latest current affairs. [This was especially suggested by the alumni from Bain for our batch]. You can expect the interviewer can take that day's newspaper and frame a case then and there! Be ready for everything!
- Some of us found it a good idea to occasionally practice cases with folks preparing for product management interviews. This helps you learn a few tricks for cases that have a technology/ product/ growth edge.

Be sincere and focused! Above all, enjoy the preparation.

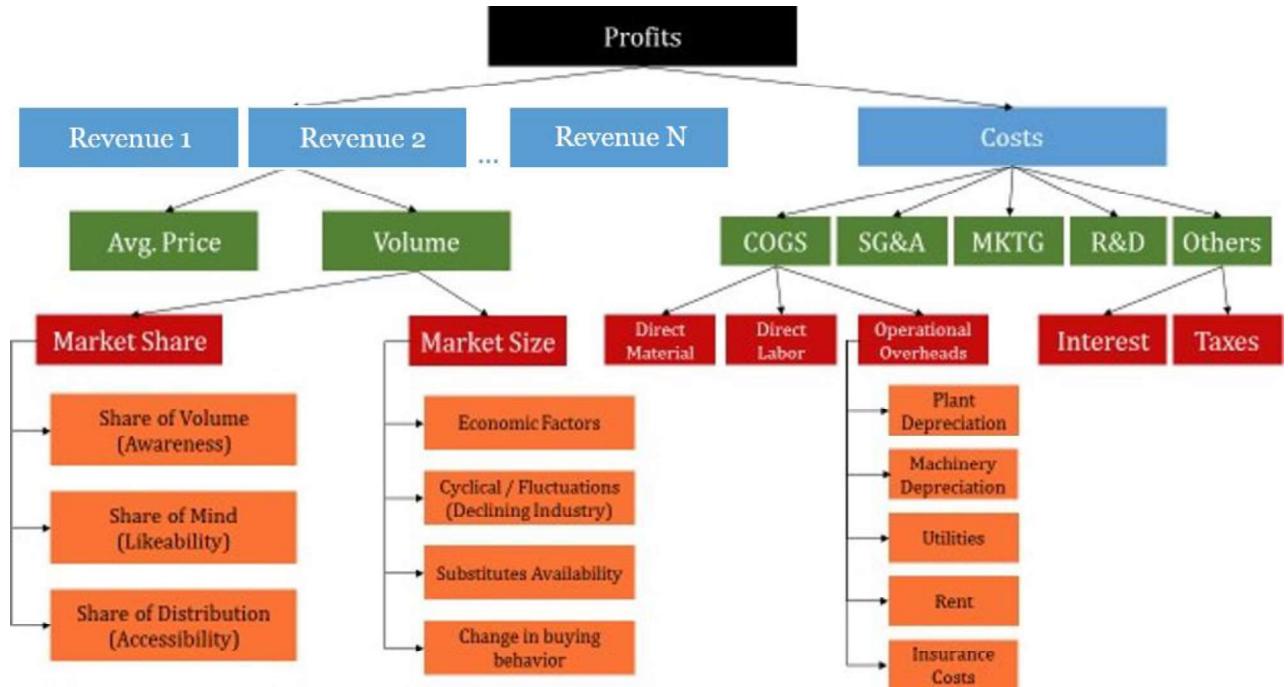
# CASE FRAMEWORKS

## How to use Case Frameworks

Frameworks can act as useful tools to structure thoughts during a case interview. Moreover, they ensure that you ask the right questions and help you reach the answer fast. By using frameworks, you will seldom miss solutions to ‘standardized’ cases such as Profitability, Market entry etc. However, interviewers enjoy asking abstract cases such as “estimate your salary as a consultant”, “you find a wallet in a cab, what would you do?” or “Your client is a mafia organization. Tell them how to increase profits”. In some cases, they might cook up a case on the spot based on your resume or on the day’s newspaper. You can’t apply standard frameworks to such cases. You are expected to relate the problem to a business situation and create your own framework on the spot.

The frameworks given below cover the classic cases ranging from profitability to M&A. Note that we have provided these in the standardized form in which you’ll typically see them in other case books and/or preparation material. We would encourage you to think about using these as guidelines to form your variations of the frameworks for the same case types. This is because not all aspects of a given framework are going to be relevant for the case that you get on D-Day. Use your own judgement to isolate a certain MECE component of a larger framework to quickly get to the root of the issue and solve the case. You should however, demonstrate to the interviewer that you are aware of other aspects that may be relevant to the case, which aren’t included in your framework for the sake of efficiency by calling out those aspects verbally.

# Profitability Framework



Factors Governing Market Share	Possible Reasons
Share of Voice (Awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional Spending</li> <li>• Promotional Mix           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Channels</li> <li>• Content</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promotional Efficiency           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ad \$ spend into \$ Revenue</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Share of Mind (Likeability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Products           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Usage</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Service           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales Force Behavior / Skill</li> <li>• Customer Relationship Processes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Share of Distribution (Accessibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution Partners           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade Mix</li> <li>• Inventory Management</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Does Supply match Demand?</li> </ul>

Profitability cases are the most common type of cases that you will see. The importance of the case stems from the fact that profit-making is the final goal of every business problem. It is always recommended to think on first principles when you approach a case-problem. Here we will try to run through the anatomy of a profitability case.

Breaking profitability down to its simplest components is the key in consulting cases. Dividing profitability into components such as revenue and cost can be helpful in discovering the causes of a less than favorable bottom line. It is to be noted that many a time, the interviewer will not specifically mention the type of the case. The candidate is expected to follow a sequence of logical steps by gathering information (by asking relevant questions). The structure shown above will be useful in exploring how to go about exploring the case.

### **Deconstructing the case-problem**

The profitability problem is very vast and generally comes in varied dimensions. Thus, scoping of the problem becomes very important to make a structured headway in the case. This could be done by asking a sequence of logical questions. The idea behind these questions is two-folds – a) to scope the problem, b) to gather relevant information available with the interviewer.

#### **Defining the problem (Scoping)**

Q1) What is the magnitude of loss/profit? Since when has the trend occurred?

Also, it is noteworthy to inquire if profits are declining or profitability has been affected. (These are two different things. **Profits are merely a difference of Revenues and Cost, while Profitability is a measure of profit margin.**

- Gross profit, operating profit and net profit



Blue: Gross profit

Red: Operating profit

Green: Net profit

Q2) Ask if gross margin/operating margin or net margin which is facing the decline?

Now, going ahead with the framework, we first define profits as 'Revenues – Cost'. Thus, it is a function of two drivers. We deep dive into one driver and hold on to the second one for the time being.

Q3) what is the **target** of profit / profitability? Any other **constraints** or secondary objectives (eg market share)?

Q4) is there a **timeline** that the company wants to solve the problem in?

Q5) Just to get a background of the company, I would want to know the **product mix** and **revenue streams** for the company.

Q6) Ask for data on trends of each product and ascertain the product(s) which is leading to the problem.

Q7) Is the profitability problem across the industry and trends for the product? If problem is across the industry, ask for context

- Demand
  - Macroeconomic factors
  - Changing priority of customers – change in demographics
  - Regular market disruptions
- Supply
  - Regulatory – change in policies

- o Increase in fragmentation (high supply, low demand) – leading to commoditizing the product

**Q8) Competitive landscape** – No of competitors, market share and its trend

Define and reiterate the statement: **Improve Profits in X product from A% to B% by n years.**

- The problem may lie in two areas - **revenue** and **costs**. What are the trends of revenues (up or down) and costs (up or down)?
- Depending on the response, choose which one to go in first and take buy-in of interviewer

## **Revenues**

Revenues are dependent on two factors:

### **Average Price**

Thus, if revenue side has been affected then either Average Price across the product mix has decreased (majorly due to competition or company policy).

Quantitatively, we can see that

Average Price = Price of all the products / Total number of products

Here, the advice is to stick to first principles and be aware that price of the products in the product mix and total number of products could also affect the revenues.

- Internal factors: Company tried to reduce price to increase revenues, but it backfired
  - o Increased price because costs increased
  - o Transfer pricing (may be relevant if problem is limited to a division of a company)
- External Factors
  - o Price war
  - o Other stakeholders demanding more in value chain e.g. – increased distributor margin
  - o Government regulation (price cap)
  - o Customer preference changed. Had to reduce price

## Resolution

### Product Differentiation

- Better features
- Better brand
- Better packaging

### Innovative Pricing Methods

- Loss Leader Pricing/ Captive Pricing (Razor Blade),
- Bundle Pricing

### Different methods of pricing:

- Value based Pricing (Premium Pricing & Price Skimming)
  - Aspirational value of a similar product
  - Opportunity cost of not getting the product/service
  - It is also a function of the size of the target customer segment. As larger size would allow us to charge lesser than the maximum aspirational value to penetrate the new market
- Cost plus Pricing
  - R&D Costs
  - Manufacturing/servicing/construction costs – Fixed and Variable Costs
  - Break-even costs, WACC
- Comparable (Parity) Pricing
  - Existing products with similar features => Marked Price + Mark-up
  - Existing products with superior features => Marked Price of the existing product + Value of additional feature to the customer
  - If no similar product exists, then consider => NPV of substitute product
- Bundling & Cross selling
- Consolidation: Acquire other markets players – Charge premium price, Have more units sold.

### In case Product/Service mix – volume has changed...

Identify which product's relative volume increase has led to overall revenue decrease. For that product, following parameters could be assessed –

### Product Related Problem

- Poor product quality
- Problematic product mix
- Inadequate breadth of product line
- Depth of product line
- Network effects with other products/complementary products

#### Service Related Problem

- Poor service quality
- High cost of service
- Training adequacy
- Curriculum
- Frequency of training
- Depth and Breadth

#### 2. Volume

Ascertain changes in number of units sold. The two potential reasons for a volume decline are –

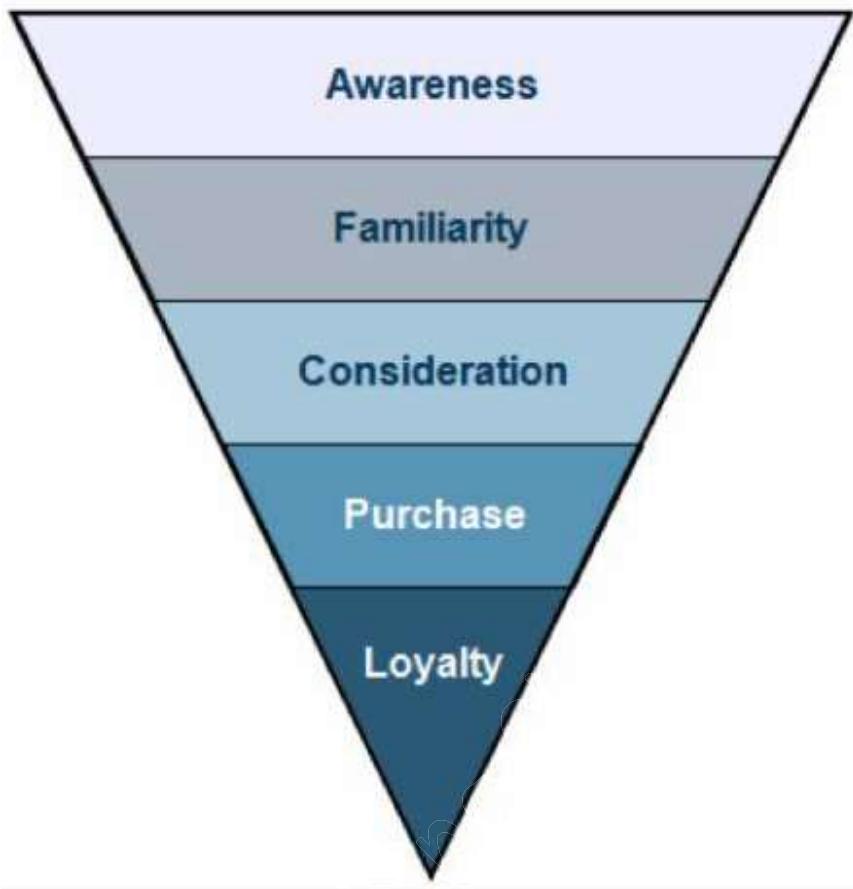
- a) Market share decline b) Market size decline

If Market share declines...

Market Share = %Aware X %Preference Buyers X %Available X % Time for adoption X %Repeat Purchase

- Price
  - o Have these increased? What is the elasticity?
- Product
  - o Share of Mind (Likeability)
    - Poor quality
      - network effect with other products
      - substitutes
      - product mix
      - better product in market
      - quality of service
    - Perception of poor quality but good product
      - check perception and preference map
        - o If problem in perceptual map, check for accuracy in positioning
  - Promotion
  - training adequacy (curriculum or frequency of training)
  - Remember – The final consumer might not always be the purchase decision maker. There might be other stakeholders involved, for whom we might need to make the product attractive.
    - o Share of Voice (Awareness) – how to increase awareness. Check for failures in each of the following stages.
    - o Promotion schemes for enabling purchase – eg financing options, discount coupons etc.

- o  $SOV * SOM * SOD = Availability * Product\ Offering\ (Likeability) * Accessibility$  One must think in terms of the purchase funnel:



- Place
- o Share of Distribution (Accessibility) – penetration, trade mix, lead time, distributor margin (agency problem), sales force (less or not trained), Skill and will of sales force

If market size declines...

- Due to issues in Demand (mature stage in PLC)
  - o Check product life cycle
  - o Demographics change
  - o Product obsolescence
  - o Usage rate gone down

#### Solution – Ansoff Matrix

<p><b>Same Product - New Market (Geographic expansion)</b></p> <p>Which geography?</p> <p>Consider risks such as attractiveness of overseas market can the firm establish competitive advantage by replicating the strategy identify the right geographies</p> <p>Price: Play with elasticity (skim vs penetration)</p>	<p><b>New Product - New Market (Diversification)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Related diversification – developed market</li> <li>❑ Unrelated diversification – developing market</li> </ul> <p>Look at synergies (asset utilization)</p>
<p><b>Same Product – Same Market (Market penetration)</b></p> <p>Capture market share: 4P, Product Mix</p> <p>Increasing the pie: New target segment (user), different application (uses), per customer Consumption (usage). This is more applicable in mature/declining phase of industry life cycle</p>	<p><b>New Product – Same Market (Product Development)</b></p> <p>Vertical integration</p> <p>New product development based on attractiveness, capability (asset utilization)</p>

- Due to issues in Supply (still in growth stage of PLC)
  - Are you the only supplier and constrained by supply?
  - Are the SKUs being offered being liked by consumer?

Change in consumer preference for another SKU

### Solution

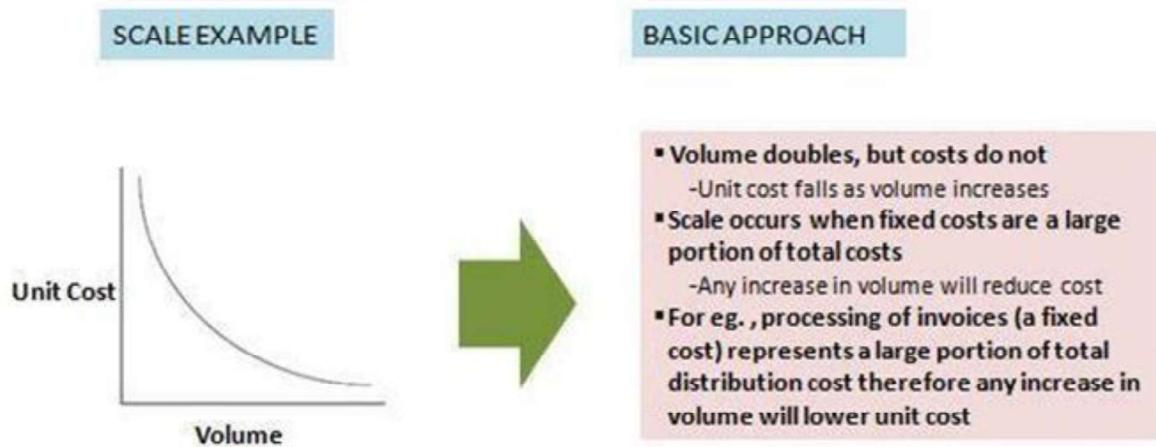
- Short term
  - Increase distributor margins
  - Target new segments
- Long term
  - Launch new SKUs

### Costs

#### 1. Fixed costs and variable costs

In a high fixed cost business there is very high temptation of price wars (Remember MADM fundas). For Fixed Costs, following considerations need be made –

- Capacity Utilization
- Increasing the scale of business/manufacturing – What causes it?



- Complex Product: What causes it?

- Complexity arises from additions to number of different products produced or activities managed
  - Often without increase in overall volume
  - That cannot be added at low marginal cost or minor adjustments in production/staffing
- Complexity can arise in numerous parts of cost structure –
  - Manufacturing: machine change-over and setup; increased inventory
  - Sales/distribution
  - Administration

Albeit simpler, FC and VC approach is considered limited in considering the entire set of costs related problem. Here Value Chain analysis helps us to consider all the costs in detail.



The value chain depicted above represents a manufacturing setup. However, thinking on first principles one can easily construct a value chain for any business mentioned in the case. For starters, think of Suppliers, Distributors (inbound/outbound), storage/warehouses, end-customers (VERY IMPORTANT)

#### Costs income statement wise (COGS, SG&A, Interest, Depreciation, Tax)

What is the percentage split of costs across these different processes?

- In case one particular head has highest % say 50% or more then you can ask the interviewer that you would want to look at this head to start with.
- Many a time there might not be one major head and there could be two heads with 30%-30% split. In these cases, you'll need to explore both heads and also see that the profitability decline could be partly because of one and partly because of another.

#### **Exploring each head one by one**

##### Raw Material Cost

- o Start by asking type of good (Perishable/durable)?
- o Where does Competitor source from – does it get better prices?
- o If says same price, ask about efficiency of utilization – conversion ratio/wastage/efficiency for us. If efficiency is improved => less RM lead to reduced costs
- o If the problem is higher price or higher overall procurement cost, then:
  - o Resolutions
- Specification
- Substitution (Different Raw Material)
- Cheaper material - indigenization/rationalization?
- Quantity
- Value engineering (Use lesser Raw Material)
- Per unit price
- Same Supplier
  - o Better Negotiation/Bulk Order – Can you provide something in return for a better price?
  - o Time of Sourcing (Opportunistic) – Buying when prices are low
- Alternate supplier
- o Currency Hedging – Use forwards/futures if prices are expected to rise. Also use call or put options for the variable part of future demand.
- o Standardization of Parts– ordering more of same type of good

Inbound Logistics:

- o Backward Integration
- o Do you and your competitor use the same Mode of Transportation?
- o Do you incur the same rates and same overall cost?
- o Explore Distance Travelled – could be that the rates are same but your factory is further away from the supplier base.
- o Are you ordering at the Economic Order Quantity (EOQ) – Trade off between Set up cost, holding cost and expected demand

Production/Operations:

- o Explore Labor cost and efficiency vis-a-vis competitor.
- o Inventory Cost (EOQ)
- o Overheads such as Electricity/Rent same or higher?
- o Machine Utilization: % Downtime - High?
  - Machine broken?
  - Maintenance/spare cost Power outage?
  - Labor unavailability?
  - Total availability will be a function of (% of time labor, % time machine available, % Idle time)
    - o Resolution – additional dimensions:
- Outsource
- Economies of Scale/Learning curve
- Labor cost arbitrage

Distribution/Outbound Logistics:

- o Explore same as (Inbound)
- Post Sales Cost:
  - o Installation
  - o Service or Warranty cost?
- Gross margin is same but Operating margin has reduced:
  - o Marketing & Administration – SG&A
  - o R&D cost
  - o Restructuring cost
  - o Licensing and regulatory costs

- If NOPAT is down
  - Depreciation & Amortization
  - Interest Expense
  - Tax rates – which geographies (VAT) does our company operate in?
  - Inventory Write off
  - Gains/losses or external investment

Loss due to some catastrophic event

# Market Entry Framework

To put it very simply, there are two basic considerations for market entry

- a) is it a good idea?
- b) How to enter?

We will try to put together a framework which strives to answer these two questions quite exhaustively.

## Structuring the problem

### 1) Deciding on the Goals/Objectives

- a) Strategic Intentions
- b) Economic Intentions

### 2) Evaluating whether to enter the industry or not is a function of three parameters

- a) Industry Attractiveness
- b) Financial
- c) Strategic Intentions.

The 3-parameter approach helps one to answer the two fundamental questions associated with market entry

- a) Where to invest: Value chain wise, geographically
- b) How to Invest: Mode of entry

### 1. GOALS/OBJECTIVES



### Defining the problem

#### 1. Motivation behind entry?

- a) Why pick a new industry?
- b) Why into this industry?
- c) Anything other than profits a motivation?

#### 2. Target for profitability? Timelines?

- a) Cost of capital? Target Rate of Return?
- b) Target market share?
- c) Target revenues and target profits?

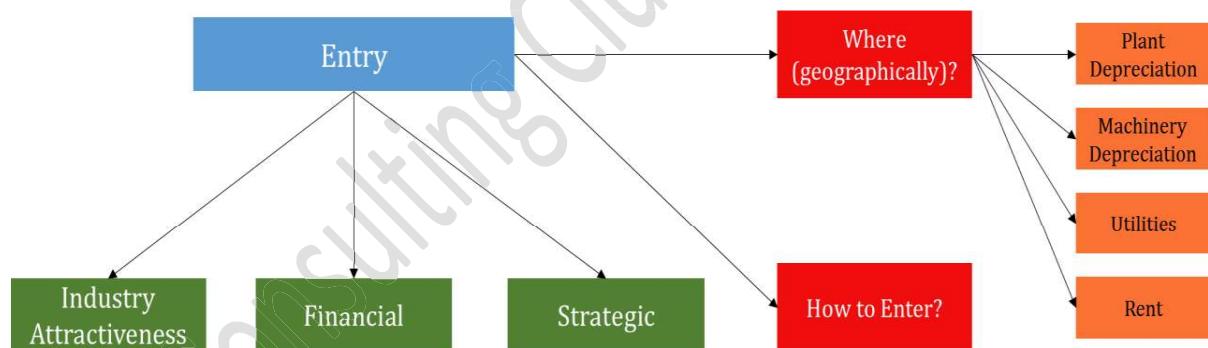
#### 3. Any constraints on investment and scope of thinking?

- a) Levels of investment
- b) Geographies of investment

#### 4. Understand the company, line of businesses and the existing business model

- a) Will help from the synergies point of view
- b) Corporate structure/Organization structure

### 2. SHOULD WE ENTER?



Evaluation Parameters	Affecting Factors
INDUSTRY ATTRACTIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Market Size</li> <li>- Growth/life cycle</li> <li>- Value Cycle: competitors, substitutes, suppliers</li> <li>- Customers – WTP, Demand-Supply, price elasticity, backward integration, switching cost, brand loyalty</li> <li>- Barriers – Regulatory, forward integration, economies of scale</li> <li>- Risks – PESTLE Analysis: External Vs Internal</li> </ul>
FINANCIAL GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quantitative analysis to evaluate on the Financial Metrics (Mentioned Below)</li> </ul>
STRATEGIC GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Organization Design/structure</li> <li>- Sustained competitive advantage: VRIO framework, Brand Equity, Market share gain, Patent/Proprietary Technologies</li> <li>- Cost-Benefit of entry: Economies of Scale, Supply Chain/Distribution Synergies, Break-even is aligned with goals, competitive advantage</li> </ul>

### Industry Attractiveness – Answering The ‘Should We Enter?’ Question

This part of the structure tries to determine how attractive the industry is? Sometimes one may be asked to evaluate/compare more than one option. At other times, you might be required to generate the options and the case opening can be vague. In such cases, the best option is to draw the value chain (with the help of the interviewer), and identify which part of the value chain the company should enter. A short-listing criterion like top decile of return and bottom decile of risk can be used.

Whenever you must make a choice, remember you need to develop a choice rule or mathematical metric of evaluation. However, the choice cannot be made entirely based on qualitative analysis and quantitative metrics need to be developed to exercise the choice.

The metrics of evaluation could be –

- Investment (Upfront, Change in Working Capital)
- ROI/IRR/Payback Period
- NPV/Profit
- EVA – Economic Value Added: NOPAT – WACC x Invested Capital
- Opportunity Cost of Investment
- Real Option
- Projected Cash flows
- Terminal Value
- Risk

A best case/worst case analysis can be performed if required.

Based on the above analysis, we can move towards evaluating the market entry case by using a **Fundamental Attractiveness Vs Relative Competitive Positioning graph**



### Fundamental Attractiveness

- Barriers to Entry
  - Government Regulation
  - High Capital Requirements
  - R&D – IP/Patent
  - High Brand Equity
  - Human Capital – High Costs
  - Economies of scale/scope
  - Switching costs – Network Effects
  - Distribution Network
- Competition
  - Consolidated/Fragmented Market
  - Market Share distribution among competitors
  - Supplier/Distributor Channel – Strength & Weakness
  - Contractual customer lock-ins define market trends
- Buyer
  - Segment Growth
  - WTP – f(demand)
  - Distributor Channel Preference (Outbound Logistics)
  - Demand-Supply Gap (Important)
  - Price Sensitivity – Ascertain whether to go for Premium Pricing or not
  - Threat of forward integration – VERY HIGH SUPPLIER POWER

- o Needs w.r.t current product mix being offered in the market
- Value Chain & Substitute products
  - o Switching cost of buyers/suppliers
  - o Threat of backward integration – Competition might acquire vendors to control its supplies of RM et al.
  - o Manufacturing Resources – Talent/Expertise availability?
  - o Availability of substitute products?
  - o Consumer Behavior evolutionary trends

**Relative Competitive Positioning** which is a function of (Financial Goals, Strategic Goals)

Also, it is prudent to assess the relative competitive gains for our client on following parameters

- Brand Equity
- Economies of Scale
- Supply chain/Distribution Synergies
- Market share gains
- Patent/Proprietary Technologies
- Organization Design/structure
- Cost-Benefit Analysis

### **Strategic Goals**

Strategically, does it make sense for the company to enter the market?

#### **Short Term (FIT):**

- Prior Experience in moving to new markets
- Synergy with existing operations
- Tactical Decision – 4Ps
- Game Theoretical perspective – Strengths/Weakness of each player
- Competition Response

#### **Long Term:**

How to build a sustainable competitive advantage?

- Create Barriers to Entry/Exit
- Create Customer Lock-ins

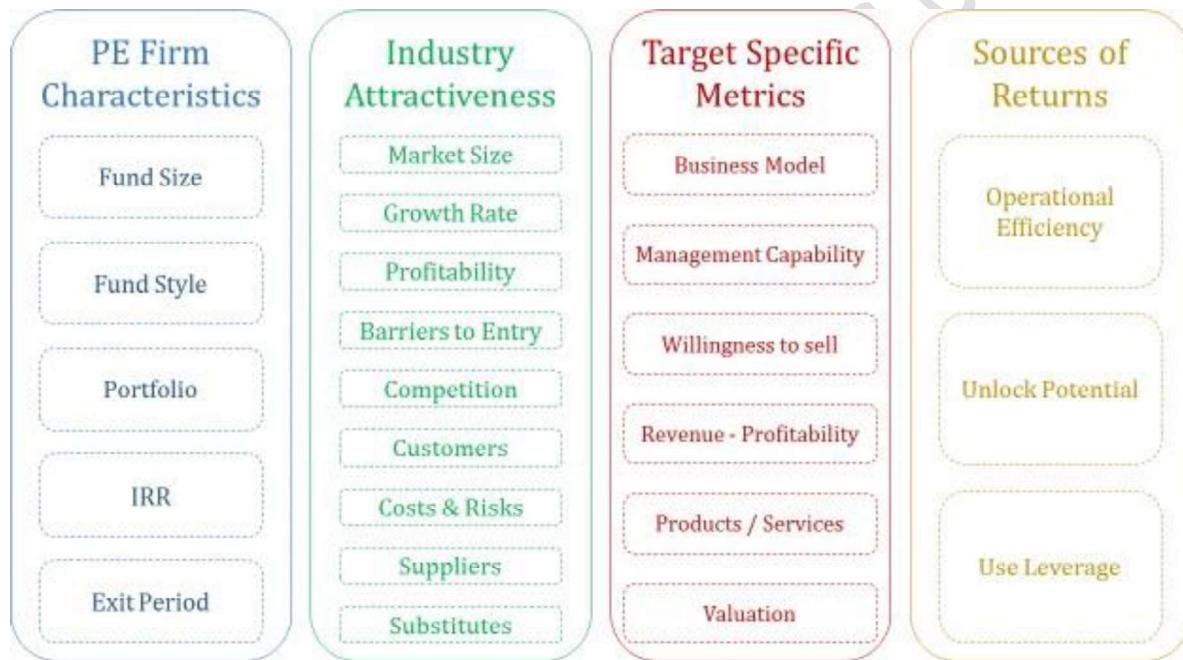
## PE Investment Framework

This section discusses investment into a business for financial gain.

Whenever asked to evaluate an investment it is essential to understand the objective first.

- **Why?** – Objective of investment: direct return from investment, incentives in the current business, synergies, etc.
- **What?** – What is the target rate of return from investment
- **When?** – Timeline of investment

Once the expectation setting is done, rationale to make an investment can be evaluated as follows:

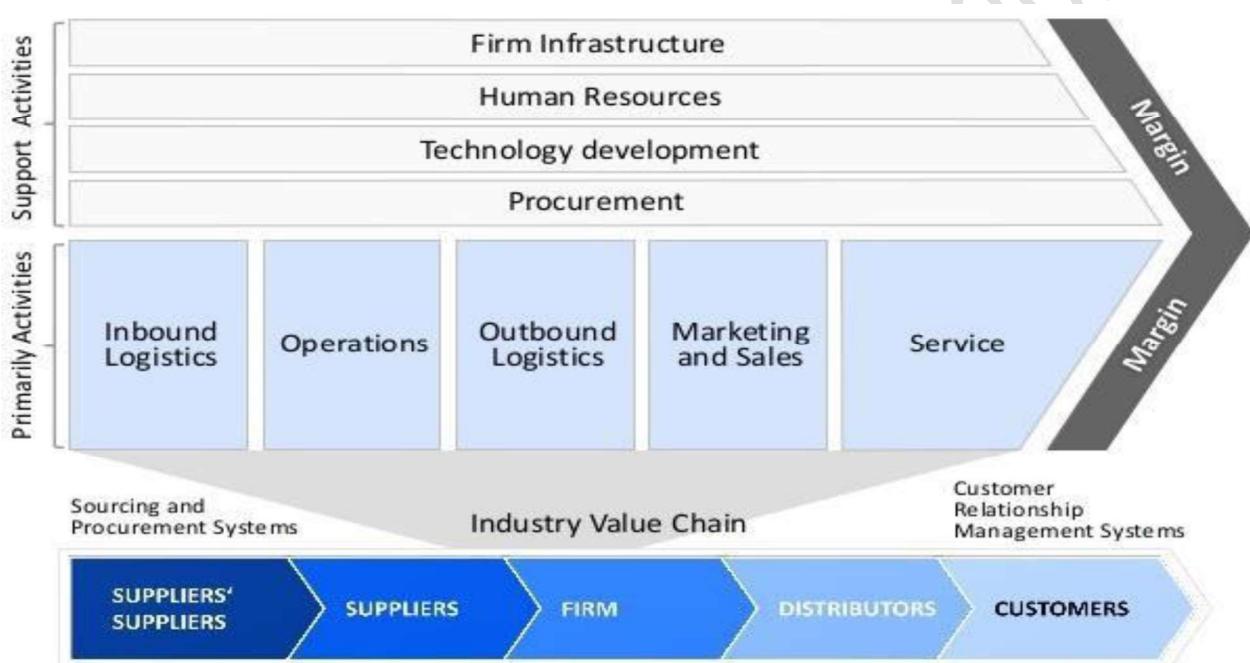


Only if the industry is attractive, target has high potential and expected return from the investment (from all sources) exceed target ROI, investment is justified.

## Value Chain Framework

Value chain analysis is an extremely useful tool to solve many business problems. The basic idea here is to understand different parts of the value chain and look for abnormalities/inefficiencies at each leg of the value chain.

A general value chain structure is as follows (some parts may not be relevant for certain industries):



A few important questions to ask under each part of the value chain will result in insights for problem solving:

### Demand Forecasting

- How volatile is demand?
  - What is the method used for high demand and high volatility raw materials?
- What are demand forecasting methods used? What is the confidence limit of the forecasts?
- What are costs of understocking vis-à-vis costs of overstocking?

Recommendations: Careful estimation of raw material quantities for high profit margin and high variability products

## Sourcing



## Warehousing

- Are warehousing costs significantly higher than the industry average?
  - o Warehouse capacity enough?
  - o Is warehouse optimally utilized?
  - o Visibility of SKUs?
  - o Automated vs Manual operations

Recommendations: Apply EOQ to reduce inventory costs, manpower rationalization, layout modifications etc.

## Manufacturing

- Benchmark all costs with industry average
  - o Direct Labour
  - o Direct Material
  - o Overheads
- Reason for higher costs?
  - o Process (process parameters, sequence of operations, utilization etc.)
  - o People (Incentives, skill, motivation etc.)
  - o Technology (obsolete, inefficient etc.)

Recommendations: Make vs buy (outsource?), Consolidate manufacturing capacity (Economies of Scale and Scope), upgrade technology, people management and training, process redesign etc.

### **Logistics**

- Benchmark with industry average
  - Price (Negotiation, LTC/ futures etc.)
  - Network optimization
  - Supplier rationalization (consolidation, alternate suppliers etc.)
  - Mode of transport
- Efficiency of transport (TAT, load factor, quantity transported per trip etc.)

### **Distribution**

- Penetration (no of distributors)
- Shelf space (% of own items vs % of other's items)

Recommendation: Look at distributor commission structure (push), discount schemes (pull), expand distributor network etc.

### **After Sales Service**

- Service time, quality and cost
- Variety of services
- Accessibility/Availability
- Benchmark with industry average

Recommendations: Improve the metric (time, cost and quality) which is most important to the customer, open more service centers, relocate centers, acquire other service centers, outsource etc.

## M&A Framework

There are two ways any M&A can generate value – 1) Value of Control 2) Value of Synergy. The actual value of how the acquirer benefits will depend upon the premium paid.

There are two types of M&A.

- Strategic:
  - Value Generated =  $(V_{at} - V_a - V_t) + (V_a - V_a')$
- Non-Strategic:
  - Value Generated =  $(V_{at} - V_a - V_t)$
- Opportunity Cost:  $(V_a - V_a')$ 
  - Competition
  - Industry

**Note:**  $V_a$  = Value of acquirer,  $V_t$  = Value of target,  $V_{at}$  = Value of combined entity,  $V_a'$  = Value of acquirer if someone else acquires the target company

### Types of Synergies



**Operational:**

- $FCF = EBIT (1-Tax) + Depreciation - Change in WC - Capex$ 
  - o  $EBIT = Revenue - Cost$   
 $Revenue = P * Delta Q + Delta P * Q + Delta P * Delta Q$ 
    - **Delta Q:** Ability to sell more
      - o Better Product
      - o Combining Strengths: Examples: Distribution network + Sales force, Access to cheap funds, better geographical reach – say more offices, Increased Management Bandwidth, Combining Sourcing capability with Distribution Reach
      - o Cross Selling: Doing this is very risky though
      - o Bundling
      - o Up Selling
    - **Delta P:** Ability to price higher
      - o Low Competition
      - o New products or better quality
      - o Increase pricing power in case of strategic acquisition

**Cost**

- COGS decrease
  - o (Dis) Economies of Scale/Scope: There can be losses as well if there are coordination problems or management bandwidth issue.
  - o IT budget streamline
  - o Pooling of technology
  - o Reduction of overhead
- SG&A reduction
  - o Remove duplication of Sales force
  - o Promotion Streamline
- R&D cost reduction
  - o Linking innovative capability
  - o Sharing technology
- Reduction in threat of Hold up cost
  - o Future Price Increase
  - o Not in time supply
  - o Not appropriate quality product
- o Depreciation Tax Shield
  - Asset write up: One time gain as assets are market up to market value on acquisition

- o Change in Working Capital
  - One time gain in case acquirer has better receivable management practice
- o Capex Investment
  - If Asset Turnover (Sales/Assets) increases, then less Capex investment required in future
- Growth
  - o Long term Growth doesn't change generally
  - o Look for opportunities that enable permanent competitive advantages
- Abnormal Growth
  - o  $G_a = ROC * Reinvestment\ Rate$ 
    - ROC can increase due to higher EBIT or higher Asset turnover
    - RR can increase due to availability of more positive NPV project
- Abnormal Growth Time Period
  - o Can increase due to erecting barriers to entry
- o Beta or systematic risk can reduce in case you combine:
  - Cyclical (Corporate Banking) + Counter Cyclical (Bankruptcy Advisory)
  - Cyclical (Luxury Business) + Non-Cyclical (Tobacco)
  - Vertical Integration sometimes reduces risk

### Financial:

- Tax Savings
  - o Tax loss carry forward from a winding business
  - o Ability to take more debt – hence more tax shield
- Bankruptcy Costs
  - o As per MM, if Bankruptcy costs exist (that is there is destruction of value) then this adds value
    - Lost Customers
    - Lost Employees
    - Lost Supplier relationships
  - o Reasons for default:
    - Cyclical business
    - Cash Flow volatility
    - Competition
    - Technological obsolescence
  - o If Bankruptcy costs exist, then savings happen due to merger

- Reduced Agency Costs
  - Debt brings discipline
- Reduced Information Asymmetry
  - Internal capital markets (use of most economical source of funds)
  - Exploit any mis-pricing in the markets

#### Analysis of FIT

- Cultural Fit
  - Are the cultures of the merging entities coherent? for e.g. both are entrepreneurial orgs
  - Are the cultures complementary? For e.g. an entrepreneurial design org and a highly organized sales org
  - Do we expect significant cultural clashes on merger? For instance formal vs. informal
- Strategic Fit
  - Are the long-term strategies of the merging firms in tune?
  - Will the merged firm evolve a new long-term strategy?
  - Costs associated with percolating new strategies through the merged org.
- Organizational Fit
  - Degree of similarity in org structures. Matrix, functional, divisional etc.
  - Management overlap and talent

#### Analysis of Risks: Use the PESTEL framework

Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal

## New Product Launch Framework

This is a very basic framework of approaching such questions in a consulting interview. However, if you are preparing for Tech companies you should refer to various other sources for an exhaustive framework.

**Step 1:** Understand the company, its objectives (Optional, if already provided by the interviewer)

**Step 2:** Understand more about the product

Value Proposition, Targeted Customers, Any substitutes, Cannibalization, Any disadvantages

**Step 3:** Ask about the Market/Product segment where the new product will be launch

Do a detailed industry analysis (Growth, size, competition, entry barrier, distribution)

**Step 4:** Do Market Sizing (Apply guesstimates funda) [Rank if multiple segments are present] Does it make financial sense to launch the product?

**Step 5:** Delve deeper -> Cost of producing/launching the product (Variable Cost, Fixed Cost etc.)

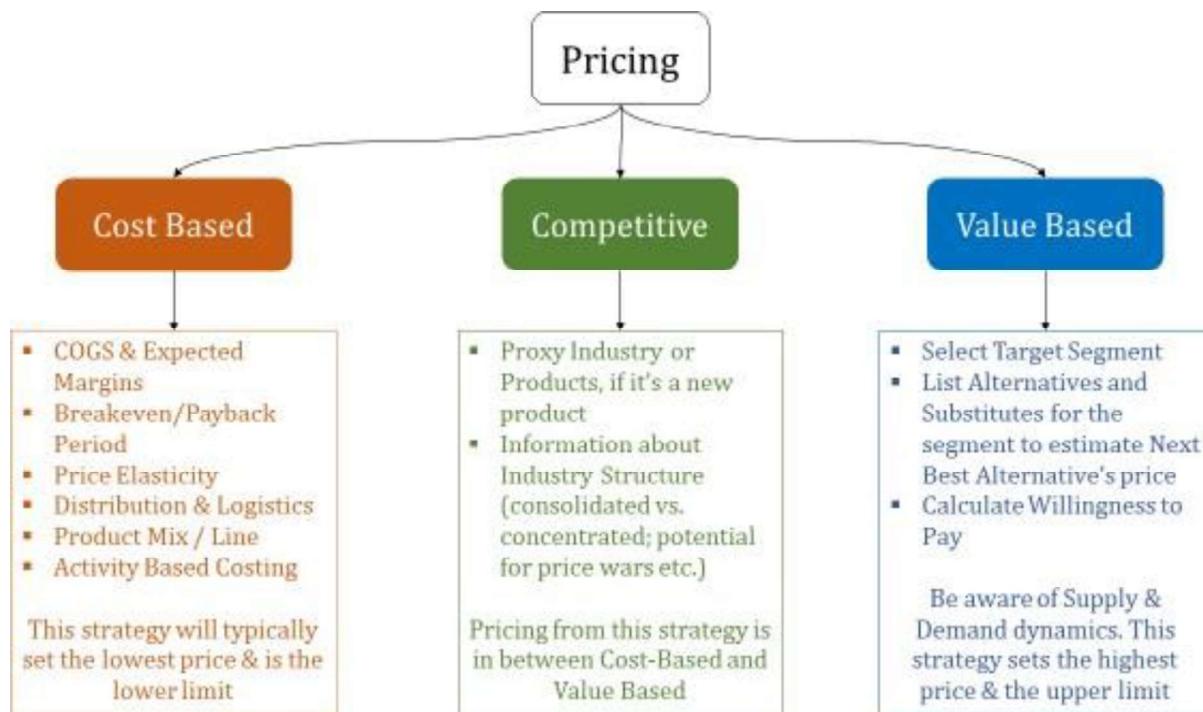
**Step 6:** Pricing of the Product (Refer to Pricing Framework in next page) Calculate break-even volume, ROI, break-even period

Now give a summary to interviewer whether numbers make sense or not and then move to strategic reasons considering strategic fit, potential risks, competitive response etc.

**Step 7:** Strategic Fit

- Existing Product line
- Resources/Capabilities
- Distribution
- Risks
  - Competitive Response
  - Implementation related
  - Future economic outlook
  - Technology changes in future

# Pricing Framework



Tip: Many Pricing cases also turn out to be masked 'market demand estimation' cases.

## Defining the problem

- Identify if it's a bidding, auction or a straightforward pricing problem
- Get a clear picture of the product and the target customer segment
  - Single product or product line?
  - Commodity or differentiated product? Identity what value the client is adding to the customers?
  - Is the product Luxury or Necessity? Is the product patented? Is it imitable easily?
- Get a clear picture of the firm and their objective with this product
  - First time entrant? Does the firm want to grow the market share or Top-line?
  - Does the firm want to push the competitor out? Does the firm want to play price war?

## Structuring the Case

- The framework to solve pricing problems is relatively easy one

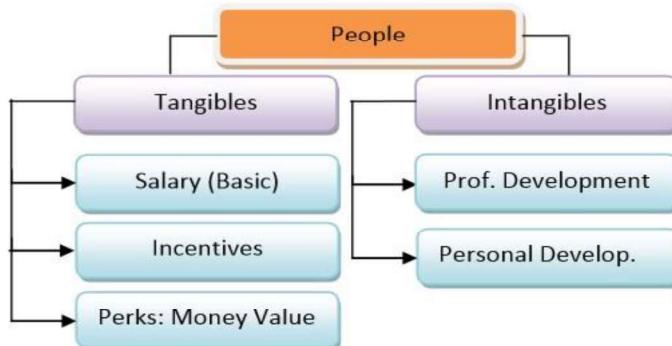
- o Once the framework is laid, start getting in-depth in each bucket (Cost, Competitive and Value based)
- o Establish the border constraints (e.g. policies & regulations etc.)
- o Once you calculate the lower and upper ends of the pricing, offer a rational explanation which price range you would choose
- o Price lower than Value based pricing and above Cost based pricing calculations.  
Reason: Customer switching costs, fluctuations in WTP etc.

**General Tips:**

- Many pricing problems are masked ‘market size’ estimation problems. When the conversation goes in that direction, ensure you specify that you’d calculate the market size before pricing the product
- There’s no single price – Always offer a price range. Mentioning the sensitivity metrics in calculations would fetch additional brownie points.
- Think about competitive reaction in the market
- Topics like bundling and other innovative prices (discount scheme etc.) will fetch brownie points

# People – Process – Technology

**People:**



- **Professional Development**
  - Growth
  - Research opportunities
  - Learning and training facility
  - IP (Doctors, Engineers and IT guys may need this)
- **Personal Development**
  - Status within the company
  - Brand of the workplace
  - Culture
  - Work life balance

**Process:**

The following are the first few steps:



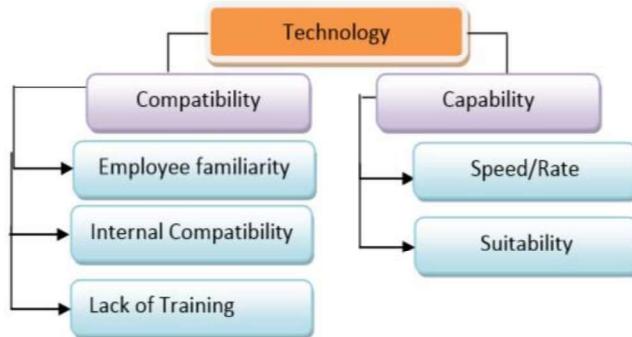
After identification of the Bottleneck, explore the following for improvement:

- Utilization improvement
  - Reduce idle time - Scheduling (*Trucks to port case*)
  - Batching /De-batching (*Grouping examples from factory examples in operations class*)
  - Setup time/Run Time (*Complete solution will depend on combination of the two*)
- Re-Design
  - Process improvement
  - Capacity Expansion (units of flow rate)
    - Reduce time
    - Add additional machines
$$\text{Capacity} = \frac{X}{\text{Setup time} + \text{Run time} * X}$$

$$= \frac{1}{\frac{\text{Setup Time}}{X} + \text{Run Time}}$$
  - As X increases, Flow Time increases (bad) and capacity increases (good)

- As X decreases, Flow Time decreases (good) and capacity decreases (bad)

**Technology & Infrastructure:**

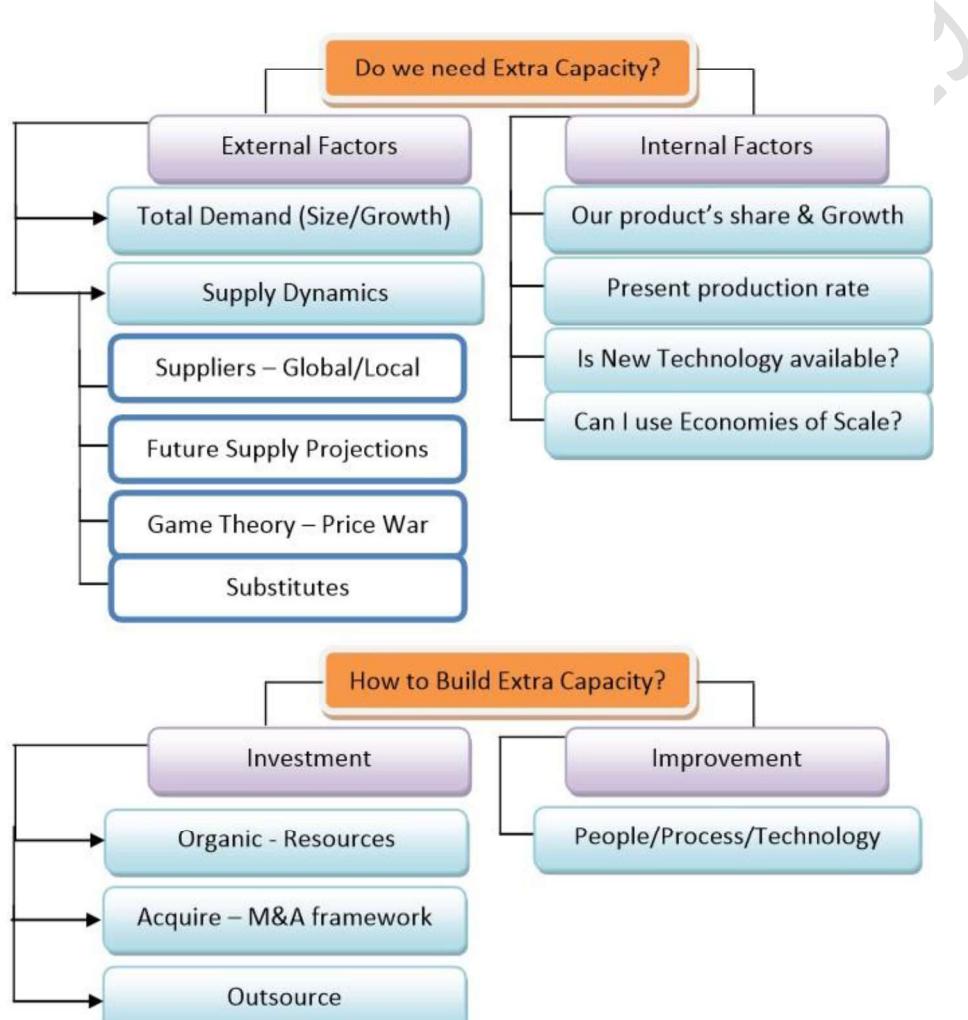


Sometimes it may not be clear where the issue is then use: (this is good from understanding how the business runs)

- 1) Man
- 2) Machine
- 3) Method
- 4) Materials
- 5) Measurement
- 6) Mother Nature (Environment)

# Capacity expansion framework

Do we need extra capacity?



## Crucial Points:

- Matrix of evaluation is in Market Entry Case – Keep in consideration the Investment/Payback Period evaluation
- Reducing or increasing capacity will affect the market clearing price – thereby the profitability

# Growth Strategy Framework

## Beginning:

**Current Business:** What is the context (customer/product/geography segments) in which you are presently operating in and what is the current position of your firm? Lifecycle of the Industry?

**Ambition:** What level you want to grow?

- If you want to surpass the Market growth rate that means you want to eat away in other people's market share.
- What are the options you are looking for: Think about the ansoff matrix – to understand the growth from – for scoping the problem

## Structuring:

To understand growth we need to look at overall demand and supply dynamics of my product. There could be a scope of improvement on either side.

- "Demand side": Market is contracting or demand for my product is falling.
- "Supply side": Demand is there but I am not able to supply enough.
  - This can lead to both lost sales and lost customers

## Strategic Options:

- Improving the profitable or promising part of the business.
- If nothing looks promising then you can consider
  - Spin off: Creating part of the business as a separate business
  - Divesture: Reduction or sale of assets
  - Acquisition: Get yourself acquired by a competitor/sister company or potential entrants

Understand how the business works in **each segment of customer**:

- Understand the value chain and decision making process for the customer?
- What part of the value chain am I catering to?
- **Say:** This particular player is the market leader – let's try to understand what is it that he is doing different?
- Comparison with the competitor

ISB

- Offering: Complete value prop in terms of
  - EVC, Service, warranty etc.
  - Commodity or Differentiated
  - Has the competitor erected any BTE: Brand/Network effect/Switching costs
- Price: Why has the competition got it lower?
  - Cost Structure
  - Economies of scale
- Promotion: Sales Force or Marketing expenditure - Efficiency and Total Expenditure
- Distribution Network: Also understand who are the stakeholders and any particular reason why they prefer the other product over ours.

**Analysis:**

As we know it can be of two parts – Volume and Price.

- Volume:
  - **Note:** When we talk about penetration for same product/same market then think from two perspectives:
    - You can increase the market share
    - Increase the market size itself.
  - Also think about can you increase volume by better utilization of existing capacity – hospital
  - Think of 2/2 matrix for volume increase say penetration or market development
- Price you have to go to the profitability framework to understand the customer segment contributions and whether they can sell at a higher price or sell more of the costlier product.
- Penetration: More Users/More Usage
- Product development: Innovate/Improvise
- New channels?
- New Geographies?
- Maintain Customer Loyalty
- Convert customers who are using alternatives or substitutes
- New competitive arenas - vertical integration

## Guesstimates

Do not neglect this section and be thoroughly prepared with the same. A guess estimate can be asked in multiple ways, even while solving a normal profitability case. Once you have completed the guess- estimate then try to include the following to make your analysis much richer –

- a. **Verification of data** – Identify a few sources from where you can get the right numbers to further refine your estimate.
- b. **Sensitivity Analysis** – Conduct a basic sensitivity analysis and identify the most critical assumptions you made.

Such an extended analysis shows that you have thought through all the assumptions made and are not arbitrarily using any number to estimate. Although the numbers do not matter here but having a basic sense of the numbers used, knowledge of conversion scales and identifying the potential areas of over/under estimating helps a lot.

Guesstimate problems can be solved through three methods (with certain other variations):

- 1). Top Down Method
- 2). Bottom Up Method
- 3). Employing a proxy

Tips:

- 1). When you receive a guesstimate question, please make sure you scope it down so that applying a method becomes easy
- 2). Use simple numbers and round off intelligently to avoid getting stuck
- 3). Write the guiding formula you are going to use and explain it to the interviewer so that while you are performing the guesstimate, he follows you.
- 4). Whenever you make an assumption, please take the buy in of the interviewer
- 5). Whenever you make an assumption, please make sure that the actual no. can be found out through a public information source, so even if your assumed no. is not correct, it can be correct. Be sure to state the same.
- 6). Try and be MECE (Mutually Exclusive Collectively Exhaustive) in each step

### **Example 1: Estimate the no. of auto rickshaws in Delhi**

Whenever you encounter such problem, please be sure to ask the interviewer whether he wants you to solve the problem from supply side or demand side.

From Demand Side

You go about determining the actual demand of auto rickshaws. The steps followed could be as under:

- 1). Formula: **No. of auto rickshaws = (Total No. of Auto Passenger Trips to be travelled per day in Delhi)/ (No. of Trips/Auto/day) \* (No. of Passengers/Trip) \* Utilization factor**
- 2). Now to calculate Auto passenger miles, we would divide the trips into trips made for regular usage (done by professionals) and occasional trips, and use top down method to calculate each
- 3). We would first figure out trips done for professional usage by figuring out how many people use auto rickshaws for professional usage daily, using filters such as income.

### **Top down Method**

Population of Delhi = 1.2 Crores

% Working (say 1 per household) =  $1.2/4 = 30$  lacs

Auto Fare per day = Total kms \* km rate =  $20*15 = \text{Rs. } 300$  Total monthly expense =  $300*30 = 9000$

Assumption (A person can at max spend 10% of his income on auto rickshaw) = 90000 Rs per month should be his income)

% people in urban Delhi in that income bracket (10%) = 3 lacs

% People who use auto = 1-% people who use own vehicle-%people who use metro = 40%

No. people who would use auto on a regular basis for professional usage =  $3 \text{ lacs} * 0.40\% = 1.2$  lacs Hence no. of passenger trips from professional usage =  $1.2 * 2 \text{ trips/day} = 2.4$  lacs auto passenger trips Similarly, we can find out for occasional usage (we can also employ 80:20 rule as well, saying majority of trips are for professional usage, lets add 20% to account for remaining trips, but such justifications should be backed well with data)

On no. of trips an auto makes, you can use the following formula

= (Average speed of an auto) \* No. of operating hours \* (Idle time) / Average distance per trip and verify this no. by using your judgment whether it looks practical or not

You can similarly find out, the other terms in the main formula and figure out the number.

### **From Supply Side**

- 1). To verify this, you can employ supply side through following formula  
= (Average Total No. of autos sold in Delhi/year) \* (Average life of an auto)
- 2). You can find out the first term by looking up the sales numbers of all the major auto players for past few years (In the interview you would have to assume or ask) and average life of an auto also is a similar information

### **Example 2: Estimate the two-wheeler market in India**

Please make sure you ask whether the market has to be estimated in no. of units or you can again approach this problem from supply side and demand side. You need to clarify the same with the interviewer.

### Demand Side

1). We would divide the demand into: New Demand (new users) and Replacement Demand (Existing Users)

Replacement Demand = (Total No. of Two Wheelers Currently in India)/ (average replacement period)

New Demand = (Population segment Growth Rate) \* Total no. of two wheelers currently in the country

2). Two wheelers can be of two kinds: Domestic (owned for personal usage) and Professional (owned by professional agencies such as dominos, police, postman)

3). To estimate for personal usage, we would employ top down method

4). Start with population of India, 1.2 Billion

5). Urban (30%) and Rural (70%), which implies 0.36 Billion Urban and 0.84 Billion Rural

6). No. of Urban Households  $0.36/4 = 90$  Million

No. of Rural Households  $= 0.84/6 = 140$  Million

7). Now we need to figure out how many can afford a two wheeler and remove the elite population that only owns four wheelers. Hence, we shall have to find out the income level and figure out the number of two wheelers in households hence.

8). Let's say that no. comes out to be 30 Million

Now, based on the current no. we can find out the expected replacement demand  
Replacement Demand (Domestic)  $= 30/4 = 7.5$  Million

New Demand  $= 30 * 2\%$  (growth rate of eligible population segment)  $= 0.6$  Million

Hence total domestic market  $= 7.5 + 0.6 = 8.1$  million/year

9). To calculate Professional Demand, we can use proxy and bottom up combination So, first assumption is professional usage is primarily urban

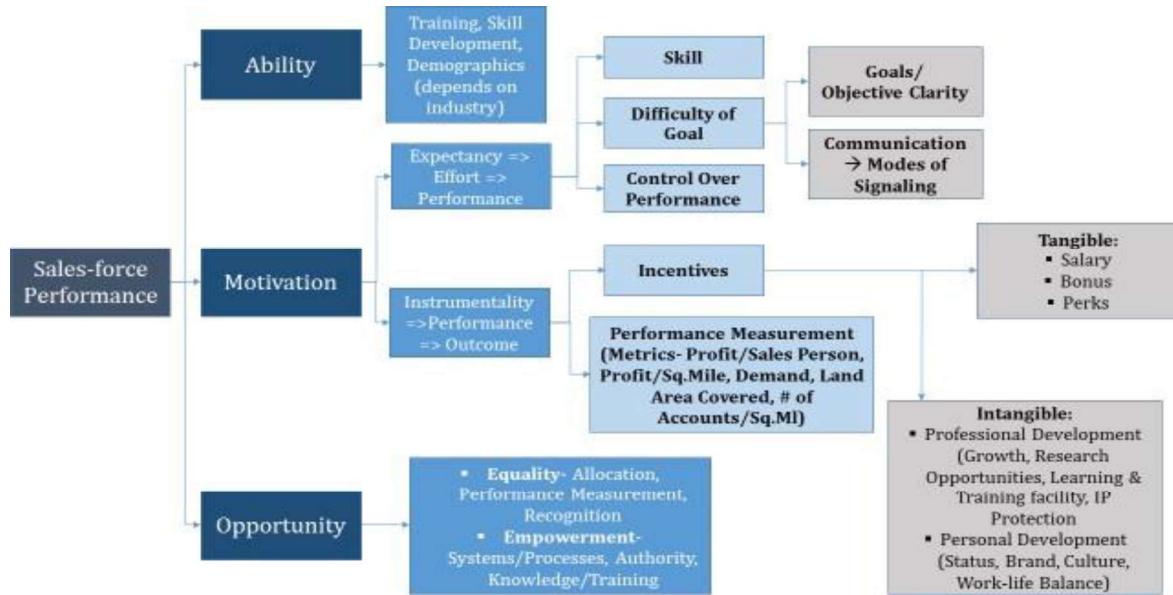
Then take a city and categorize various types of uses (bottom up approach):

- Police
- Delivery/Logistics
- Postal Services
- Others

Estimate each of these and come with a number Then employ proxy method as under

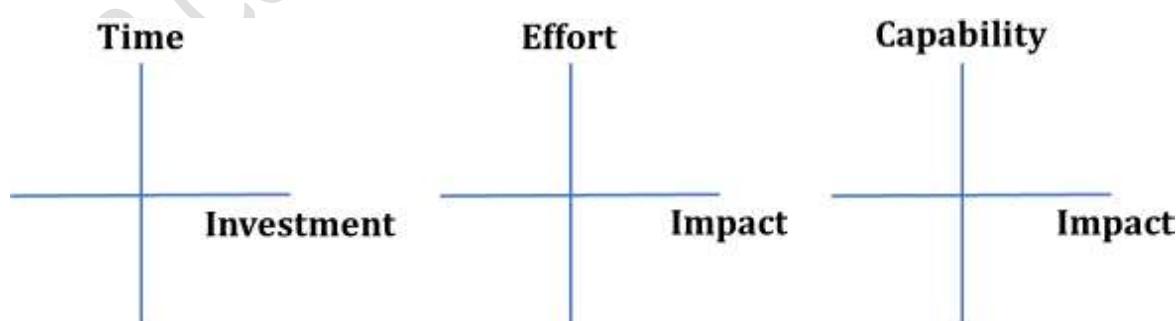
Total Professional usage  $= (\text{No. of vehicles in the city}) * \text{Urban population in the country} / (\text{Population of the city}) * \text{Correction factor}$

# Salesforce Effectiveness Framework



## Other Types of Cases

- Game theory, auctioning (Revise Economics)
- Abstract Ones (Open ended cases such as 'Swatch Bharath', Political Campaign etc.)
  - Always Scope, Structure, Summarize
  - Try to create a flow of process and then analyze each piece
  - When providing solution again follow the same structure and flow
  - This will ensure that even in abstract cases the thought process is structure.
- Prioritization Matrix (2 by 2's): Can be used to evaluate any project/R&D activity. There are number of ways to do the same a few are outlined below –



# SAMPLE CASES

## Sample Cases for Practice

This is a new section that we have added to the ISB casebook this year.

It primarily consists of transcripts of cases that students of ISB Co19 practiced during the case prep months of October and November. Each of these cases includes the case discussion itself as it transpired, in addition to buddy feedback, which includes what went well in the case along with scope for improvement.

These cases have been picked from varying points of time in our cohort's preparation and thus, you can see varying levels of polish and expertise in each of the buddy cases.

It also includes useful cases sourced from earlier ISB casebooks and other sources.

The cases that are included here have been chosen for unique insights that each one provides and not necessarily as examples for the various frameworks that exist. Thus, they have not been ordered according to frameworks.

-Abhijith

## Car-loan provider with decreasing market share

**Case Source:** ISB alumnus buddy case

**Problem:** Our client is a provider of car-loans and has experienced falling market share, help them.

### **Scoping:**

In what terms is market share defined? - *In revenue*

Are car-loans our sole source of revenue? - Yes

Since when have we observed the issue? - *Past 6 months*

Let's talk about our client, where are they based out of? - *operations pan India, the issue seen across India.*

How's the competition? - *About 10-15 players, each with roughly equal market share*

How are our loan product offerings compared to competitors? - *Identical, no change made.*

### **Analysis:**

Since selling car-loans is our sole source of revenue, would it be fair to assume the following?

**Revenue = Average returns per loan \* Number of loans disbursed**

- *Yes, this seems accurate, we haven't seen any change in the returns per loan. Number of loans have reduced.*

**Number of loans = Number of outlets \* number of salesmen per outlet \* loans per salesman**

- *The number of loans disbursed per salesman has gone down.*

Since our product offering (price and product from the 4Ps, not to be mentioned explicitly in an interview) is identical to competition, I'll now look at some possible factors that could have led to this:

- 1) Change in promotions and advertisement strategy
- 2) Change in accessibility/ distribution channel
  - *No change in advertisement strategy*

Low performance from our salesforce could depend on two things: ability and motivation (skill and will)

Let me first look at ability – which would include physical ability/wellness; mental wellness and skill. – *Nothing of note in their wellness.*

In skill, either their training and selling techniques could have been obsolete, or the mix of the salespeople would have changed due to attrition.

- *We have faced a lot of attrition since the past 7-8 months*

Any HR policy that was changed in this timeframe?

- We tweaked our compensation structure. Here is how the compensation structure compares, assuming average of 10 loans sold.

AVERAGE COMPENSATION	Competitor	Us
Fixed	5000	15000
Bonus per loan disbursed	1500	1000
Total Average per month	20000	25000

We are paying more on average. -*Exactly! So why would they leave?*

We pay more **on average**. A few salesmen would end up getting less. If a salesman sells a lot of loans, he'll end up less at our place than a competitor.

- Yes, you are right. It looks like our star salesmen are leaving. At what point of sales would they start leaving?

$$5k + 1.5k(x) = 15k + 1k(x)$$

$$0.5k(x) = 10k$$

$$X = 20$$

A salesman who sells more than 20 loans per month would switch to competitors.

This would compound our problem. Not only are our star salesmen leaving but the poor and mediocre salesmen would move into our firm.

- Great, can you synthesize the case?

**Synthesis:** The car-loan provider must adopt a compensation structure with a higher component of variable pay to incentivize and retain star salesmen. This would reduce attrition of high-performers and thus drive up loans disbursed and consequently, revenue and market share.

#### FEEDBACK FROM THE BUDDY

**What went well:** - You came to the crux of the issue quickly and in a structured manner. I also liked how you didn't restrict the recommendation to changing the compensation structure.

**Improvements:** - Do not treat the conversation as an interview where the interviewer has the answer (this became apparent when you asked me if X is the problem) but rather as a collaborative discussion between a consultant and his client.

## Client Digitization

**Case Source:** ISB alumnus buddy case

**Problem:** I'm the CEO of a large IT services firm. My long-standing clients have been bitten by the digital bug and have asked me to help them "go digital". They also complain that they can avail tech services like those that I provide, from startups at a fraction of the cost. Please help me out.

**Scoping:** Nature of clients? – *All across the globe, across all industries (retail, finance, manufacturing etc.)*

What are the services that we offer? – *IT services across the spectrum (think Infosys)*

Have your clients provided more clarity on what they mean by "go digital"? – *no, I'm hoping to gain some clarity on what it means too. I hope you can help me out here.*

I suppose they mean the latest digital buzzwords – AI/ML, chatbots, Blockchain etc.

-*Yes. They have been using the buzzwords a lot in our meetings. Let's explore them.*

### **Analysis:**

I'd like to evaluate if we can implement each of – AI/ML, chatbots and blockchain. Is there any other technology we would like to explore?

- *Let's just target one area for now, which would be the best at this time? I'd like something that can be used for as many of my clients as possible.*

Let's go ahead with something that

1. Can be used across industries
2. We have expertise/capability in

I'd like to explore each of chatbots, AI/ML and Blockchain here.

How would you rate your expertise and capability in deploying each of these?

- *Equal in all of them*

In that case, I'd suggest going with chatbots. AI/ML would need to be tailor-made for the requirements of each of the target industries which would need a lot of effort; while Blockchain would not have applications across all your client industries.

- *Sounds good. Let's go with chatbots. I currently provide call center support as part of customer support solutions to my clients.*

I'd like to go over the unit economics of a call center and compare them with those of a chatbot.

- Let's do some back-of-the-envelope calculations.

Okay, let me assume 1000 call center employees, each working in 8-hour shifts. Each call would be approximately 10 minutes, which would mean ~6 calls handled per hour. Is this a fair assumption? – *Yes, go ahead.*

That would mean  $1000 * 8 * 6$  calls handled per day = 48000 which is approx. 50000 calls.

[HINT: Always round off numbers for ease of calculation. But before doing so, please check with the interviewer]

Now, on a yearly basis, it would be  $50000 * 350$  (taking 350 instead of 365 for ease of calculation) = 1,75,00,000 or 1.75 cr.

What is the average cost and revenue per call? – *costs me Rs. 10 and revenue is Rs.15*

That translates to 17.5 cr costs annually to handle 17.5 cr calls; with approximately 26 cr. In revenue. Let's see how chatbots measure up.

You'll need to:

- 1) Pay the tech team to develop a chatbot solution (fixed cost)
  - 2) Purchase infrastructure if needed to host the chatbot (fixed cost)
  - 3) Hire a tech team to maintain the chatbots
  - 4) Rent server space if we are not going with purchasing infra
- *I have existing infrastructure to host the chatbot. 2) and 4) are not needed.*

*Developing the chatbot would cost about 1 cr. in a one-time cost. For maintenance, I'll have to hire 20 engineers and pay them 30k each per month.*

That would mean payroll expenses of 6 lakh per month and approx. 70 lakh per year.

These costs are minuscule compared to the 17.5 cr in case of the call center. Additionally, given that a chatbot can handle multiple queries in parallel, we can serve many more consumers in the same time.

Looks like chatbots are the way to go. With lower costs, even you could provide services at a competitive price.

- *I'd like to understand if there is any advantage in the offering that I could develop over the startup competitors, in addition to price.*

If not a price advantage, it has to be a product differentiation.

Let's see what a customer expects in case of customer service:

- 1) Minimize time spent in the process
- 2) Minimize complication/ number of clicks to get the solution
- 3) Get the exact solution that they were looking for

- *I don't think we can get a significant advantage in 1) and 2)*

There is a clear advantage you can gain in 3). Chatbots cannot solve all queries. For some complex situations, we would need human intervention. We can deploy a hybrid model of having some employees to augment chatbots that would handle basic queries and route complex ones.

I'd recommend a trim in call center workforce rather than replacing it entirely with a chatbot.

- *I think that is a great idea!*

Would you like me to calculate by how much the workforce should be trimmed?

- *No, that won't be necessary. Any more synergies/advantages that I can leverage?*

You could also bundle the solution with other tech offerings. You could deploy expertise developed in similar areas to build a robust solution.

- *Okay, could you tell me a plan of action*

You should:

- 1) Identify the ideal customer to run a pilot program and begin talks
  - 2) Develop chatbot and set aside server space
  - 3) Run the pilot and then downsize the call center workforce.
  - 4) Identify bundled offerings and sell them to customers.
- *Thanks, I think we can close the case here.*

#### **FEEDBACK FROM THE BUDDY**

**What went well:** -*This was a highly abstract, curveball case and I loved how you maintained composure throughout and how you tackled the case with a structured thought-process. The key is to remain calm in such a case and have a basic structure, then things fall in place and it can be solved just like any regular case.*

**Improvements:** -*You could have been more creative and substantial in your recommendations.*

## Canadian Dollar circulation in the US

**Case Source:** ISB alumnus buddy case

**Problem:** As the US government, we are concerned with the recent increase in the circulation of the Canadian Dollar (CAD) in the US economy. We'd like your help as a consultant in identifying the root cause and fixing it.

**Scoping:** Since when has the problem manifested – *Past 1 year*

What's the magnitude of the problem? – *15% of transaction value in the US is in the CAD, up from 5% last year.*

Is there any major regulatory change either in the US/Canada or a supranational body that concerns both nations? - *No*

### Analysis

I'd like to split currency circulation into

Currency circulation = number of transactions \* average amount per transaction

Have we observed an increase in both? – *No, only in number of transactions*

To isolate this further, let me break down transactions into those made by:

- 1) American citizens/businesses in American soil
- 2) Canadian citizens/businesses in American soil
- 3) Other nationalities with interests in both US and Canada

Have we observed a proportionate increase in all these 3? – *No, only in those made by American citizens*

Let's see the drivers that could have made this change in American spending behavior.

Some factors:

- 1) Relative purchasing power
- 2) Ease of availability
- 3) Acceptance

- *There has been an increase in value of the USD relative to the CAD (relative purchasing power) and there is strong speculation for a further increase.*

People hoping for an increase in value of the US Dollar. They are hoarding it. But a mere fluctuation in exchange rate can't precipitate such a big change in currency circulation.

– *That's right. We cannot do anything to tackle this behavior directly. We suspect that the businesses and shops too have a big role to play.*

In that case, let me draw out the steps how currency would circulate in this scenario. While customers would pay in CAD cash, this cannot be used by businesses as they would need to pay their suppliers and salaries in USD.



I hypothesize that there is a delay in businesses getting their CAD exchanged for USD which would lead to a relative increase in CAD circulation. Since consumers would continue paying in CAD but they are not getting exchanged for USD quick enough.

-*That's a fair hypothesis. Queues have surely increased in currency exchanges at banks. What can we do to fix this?*

Time taken would be a function of average time per teller, number of tellers per bank and the number of banks themselves.

We would either have slow processing by tellers, inadequate number of tellers per bank or inadequate banks themselves or all of these.

- *Let's just focus on the processing time by tellers.*

Let me draw out how the currency exchange process would look like.



What's the time take for the whole process and how much time does each sub-process take?

- *We don't have to get into that. Assume it's a slow and manual process. What do you recommend?*

We could digitize each step and minimize the paperwork the customer has to fill in.

Digitization of past records would help quick retrieval.

Digitization could also make the process seamless and merge processes 2 and 3.

Though this does not concern the current problem itself, we can also see if processes other than currency exchange are painfully slow and manual in our banks and can be digitized.

- *Fair enough, could you synthesize the case?*

**Synthesis:** The US govt. is concerned regarding the increased circulation of CAD in the US economy. We have found that slow processing times for currency exchange in banks has led to

slow handling of CAD payments coming in. We recommend digitizing form filling, records and retrieval, in addition to automation of transaction checks. We also suggest minimizing the documentation the customer has to fill in after further review of the process.

#### **FEEDBACK FROM THE BUDDY**

*This is a case that tests your concepts from both economics and operations.*

**What went well:** - *I liked the way you tackled the whole case with structure and you managed to enforce MECE on pretty much everything. As with all operations-based cases, it's good that you drew out the operation process, split it into the smallest components that can be isolated and went about identifying scope for improvement in each one.*

**Improvements:** - *Scoping was a bit shallow. You could have asked about the exchange rate a bit earlier in the scoping itself than finding it during case analysis.*

## Stock underperformance of an Indian conglomerate

**Case Source:** ISB case interview – class of 2010

**Problem:** He showed me a perfectly balanced portfolio of companies within an Indian conglomerate on a BCG matrix (manufacturing and steel are large cash cows, insurance and pharma are small stars) . He said that despite such a balanced portfolio the conglomerate has been losing value on the stock markets. He asked me to think through various possible reasons and solutions.

**Scoping:** Initially, I tried to understand the nature of the companies first – cash cows were firms in heavy engineering and steel, stars were insurance and pharma companies. There were no dogs. So, I concluded that it was a reasonably diversified portfolio.

The second question was about the stage in the lifecycle of these firms. He liked the question and replied that insurance and pharma are newly started and heavy engineering and steel are mature businesses. I then connected this with the fact that pharma and insurance sectors need a lot of investment initially.

The third question was regarding how this conglomerate is listed on the market – **as separate firms or as one unit**. He replied as one entity and wanted to know what implications on value this structure will have. I explained that every sector is valued differently by the market – e.g. Pharma companies have a higher P/E than that for mature sectors so may be the conglomerate **is not valued appropriately since it is listed as ONE entity**.

[NOTE: This is the crux of the case. While this candidate found it right in scoping, many people have struggled to find this even after 30 min into the case when it was given to them]

**Analysis:** Then I started talking about what could be possible reasons for the fall in the valuations. I drew BCG's Total Shareholder Returns (TRS) framework (visit BCG's website or Google for a PPT on "What drives shareholder value" ....).

As we discussed each element of the framework we concluded that insurance / pharma companies require a lot of cash for growth and therefore the conglomerate has not paid dividend for the past couple of years.

Moreover, even the mature companies are in the reinvestment phase, so cash is very scarce. Then we started talking about what could be various reasons for this structure. This discussion was a little vague and more of a dialogue. I mentioned that the new companies need a lot of resources – cash and managerial talent – which can be available economically when it is structured as ONE.

I also asked if this is a family run business and the owner has any issues with division between management and control. He liked the point and said that in some cases this can become a major issue; however here it is not relevant. Then he mentioned about how the dynamics has changed in India – earlier the firms with resources and access to Govt. licenses did well, then IT firms with capabilities and now firms like Airtel that build strong network are successful. Here, he did the talking and I just guided the discussion through citing examples.

## Palm oil company – acquisition

**Case Source:** ISB case interview – class of 2017

**Problem:** A Malaysian palm oil company wants to acquire an Indonesian palm oil company. What synergies will arise?

**Scoping:** About the company:

What steps of the palm oil value chain are the two companies involved in? (Between planting trees all the way to extracting and refining oil).

*Both companies operate plantations where they grow palm trees. Then they harvest the trees and feed the harvest into milling machines. These machines produce crude palm oil, which is their output. They then distribute this output.*

Are there any other products in their portfolio? No.

Is there any difference between the product produced by the two companies?

*There is a difference in grade (measure of quality) – the Indonesian firm produces a higher grade.*

Is the difference in grades due to choice of input (particular tree types) or available technology?

*It is a combination of both, but mostly due to the quality of harvesting and milling process.*

About the industry/market:

Who is the competition?

*Assume that these two companies together serve 70-80% of the world for palm oil and other competition is irrelevant for now.*

What about substitutes? Ignore substitutes

I presume palm oil is a commodity and therefore the firms cannot control prices?

*True. The firms have no control over palm oil prices.*

How stable have prices been lately? Fairly stable.

About customers:

Who are the customers?

*Global palm oil refineries and end users of palm oil – a diverse group of people*

Where are the customers of these two firms located? All around the globe

How much is the demand for palm oil and how stable is this demand?

*Nearly unlimited – the production is far short of the demand. The demand is stable over time.*

What constitutes success? I presume that because there are no constraints on the revenue side (stable prices, almost unlimited demand), a robust supply side would constitute success - efficient operations, high capacity utilization are indicators of success? True.

Are there any other indicators of success? No.

Current state of capacity utilization and efficiency of operations?

*Both have scope for improvement*

Should I consider both operating synergies and financing synergies in my analysis?

*No, ignore financing synergies.*

**Analysis:**

To assess operating synergies: I asked questions and drew the entire value chain of operations at an individual plantation.

Grow trees -> Harvest plantation -> Feed harvest into the milling machines (each plantation has its own milling machine) -> Extract crude palm oil -> Transport crude palm oil to nearest ports -> Ship crude palm oil to various customers overseas.

The shipping of palm oil from Malaysian/Indonesian ports, and subsequent distribution are outsourced activities.

**Sources of synergies:**

- Growing trees – the two plantations are in separate countries. The only possible synergy arises from sharing knowledge by the Indonesian firm (which can extract higher grade palm oil) on the right technique to grow the trees, if any.
- Harvest plantation – as above, the two plantations are in separate geographies, therefore the only possible synergy is from knowledge/technique sharing for efficient harvesting to reduce wastage, conduct the process faster with efficient manpower use.
- Milling machines – with reduced wastage and faster harvesting process, there is greater possibility of higher capacity utilization
- Shipping crude palm oil overseas – pooling the quantities from Malaysia and Indonesia may provide economies of scale in international transportation and distribution.

*Now suppose a third firm – a Malaysian firm – wants to enter the merger, making this a three-way merger. What additional synergies can the third firm yield?*

Where are this new firm's plantations situated?

Geographically – are they separated from the first firm's?

*The plantations are all adjacent to each other.*

Therefore, additional sources of synergies

- Further transportation and distribution synergies.
- Breaking the boundaries between the two plantations and planting trees in a synchronized way – may provide economies of scale in utilizing labor and supervisory power as well as planting machinery
- Milling machines – pooling the harvest from the two plantations may provide a higher quantum of output to feed into one milling machine, allowing higher capacity utilization of

one milling machine. However, this would simultaneously lower the capacity utilization of the other machine, so it's not obvious whether synergies will emerge from this.

*Let's assume that all the output from two plantations can be fed into just one plantation's milling machine. What would happen then?*

This would increase the capacity utilization of the first machine, reducing costs. The second machine need not be used, and it may be divested or used for another purpose.

## Decreased production in food products firm

**Case Source:** ISB alumnus buddy case

**Problem:** We are a food-products manufacturing company. We've experienced a dip in our monthly production levels. Please help us in identifying the root cause and fixing it.

**Scoping:** What products do you make? – *Only breakfast cereal.*

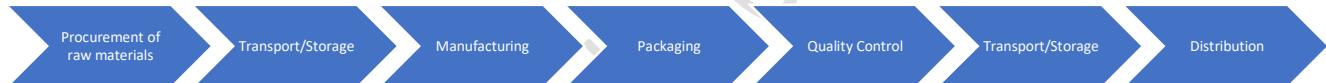
What was the earlier production amount and what has it fallen to? – *We had 20 tons, fallen to 19 tons.*

Since when has the problem manifested – *Past 3 months.*

How many plants do you own and do you see dipped production across all of them? – *We have 4 plants, each producing 5 tons. In fact, the problem is mainly seen in 1 plant. Its production has fallen by 20% from 5 tons to 4 tons!*

That's worrisome. It looks like this is a plant-specific issue and we probably don't need to look at company-wide and industry-wide trends and causes.

I'd like to isolate the components of production here.



Have we maintained logs/time taken for each step for the past 1 year? – Yes

For which of these steps has the time taken increased in the past 3 months?

*We've observed a slowdown in manufacturing*

**NOTE: We now use the people/process/technology framework to isolate the issue**

Have we made any changes in the manufacturing process? - No

Has the efficiency/processing ability of machines gone down? – No, the machines are well-maintained and perform as before.

That leaves us with the employees/workers themselves. Has the daily output per factory worker reduced? – Yes, it has

I'll analyze both the ability and motivation (skill and will) of the employees to find a root cause, starting with the ability.

I'm breaking down ability into physical ability/wellness, mental wellness, skill

Physical ability, have we received complaints from the workers regarding illness or physical discomfort? – Yes, our workers have complained of dizziness and lethargy.

Before I delve into this further, let me rule out mental wellness and skill issues. -No, that won't be needed

Is this complaint faced across all workers? - Yes

Alright, is this a constant complaint from the workers or does it happen at any point in time. Additionally, do they have the complaint even outside the factory premises?

- *We seem to be facing complaints in the second half of the day. No, the complaints are only within the factory.*

I suspect something is up with their lunch. Could you please tell me how the workers have lunch? Do they bring food from home or is there a canteen? – *We have a canteen*

Has there been a change in either canteen management or any processes in the canteen about three months ago, since when the problem has manifested?

- *We had changed the contract terms with our vendor*

Let me investigate possible lapses with the vendor. – *No, that won't be necessary*

Would you like me to recommend solutions? – *No, we can close the case here. Thanks*

**Synthesis:** Was not asked

**NOTE:** This case was solved in multiple ways as it circulated among case groups across ISB. While this instance arrived at the root cause of food poisoning through the physical ability of the employees, there are others who isolated productivity of the factory into timeslots of the day and found out lower production in the second half of the day, postlunch.

#### FEEDBACK FROM THE BUDDY

**What went well :-** *The case went well and you had a conversational tone throughout. The structure used was good and MECE. I liked the fact that you wanted to rule out other branches of the employee effectiveness tree, before digging deeper into one branch.*

**Improvements:** - *At times, you were buried in your paper, especially while writing or drawing diagrams. This could disengage the interviewer's interest. Try to occasionally look up.*

## Abnormal Profits for a Logging Company

**Source:** Case Interviews Cracked, by Sankalp Kelshikar, Saransh Garg, included here with the author's permission

**Problem:** We are a South Indian Teak wood manufacturer. We've been getting abnormally high profits and want you to figure out why is that so.

**Scoping:**

How high are our profits? What are we comparing it to?

*Our profits are significantly higher than our competitors.*

**It is important to benchmark numbers with respect to something like competitors or timeline to put the number in perspective.**

Why is it even a concern?

*The client is concerned if the high profits are sustainable.*

Since when have we been having these high profits compared to competitors?

*Since we started the business three years ago.*

So it seems we have an internal advantage (company specific) ever since we started the business which we are unaware of.

Some questions to understand the business better. What is the client's product? What are the competitors' products?

*Both competitors and the client make wooden planks of two types - A and B. They differ in their sturdiness.*

What geography do we and our competitors operate in?

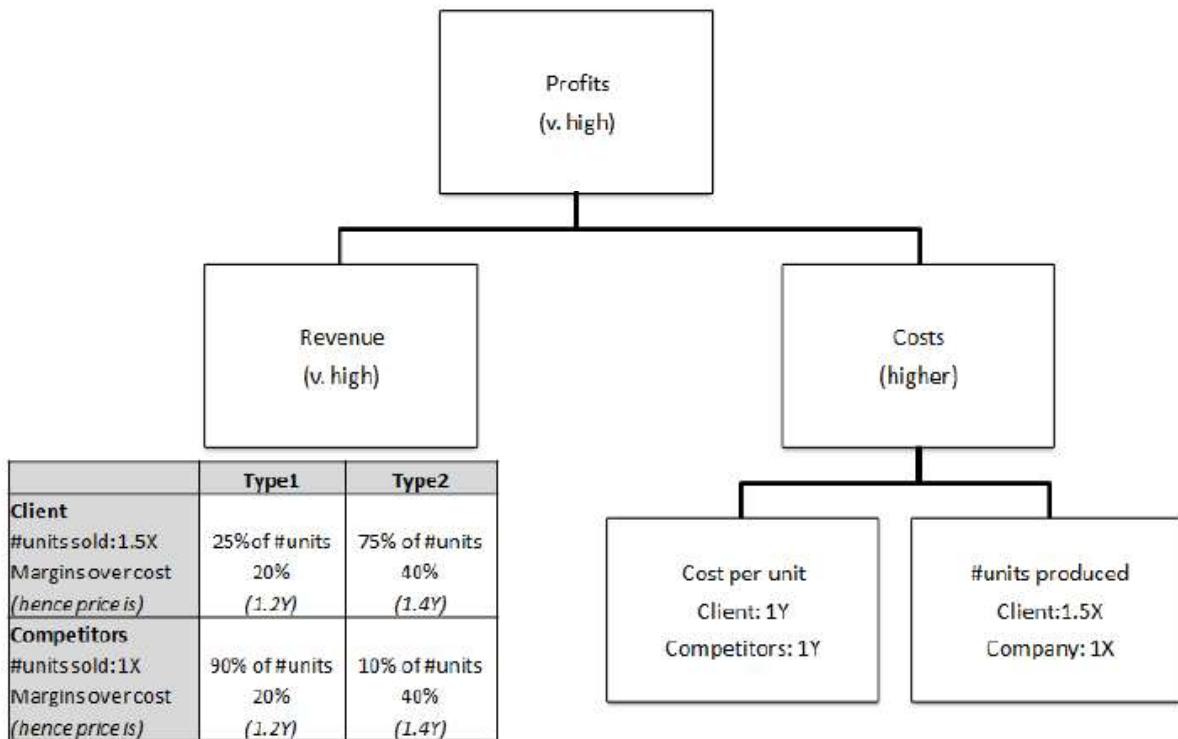
*In the Nilgiri forests, the hub of teak wood in South India.*

Where do we lie in the value chain?

*Most companies in this industry, the client included, own plots of land in the forest. Wooden planks are manufactured from the teak trees that grow there. The planks are then sold in a common wholesale market to customers (primarily construction companies).*

**Analysis:**

First, I want to compare our profit structure with respect to competitors to identify key drivers of our client's high profits. Following that, I want to verify whether they are sustainable.



**Note:** The above Information must be given as and when the candidate asks for each data point. The candidate must come to his own conclusion of price from the margin data.

Based on the above information, there are two reasons why client is earning high profits

1. # of unit sold by the client is 1.5 times more than that by the competitors
2. Client's split of production is 3:1 in favor of higher priced type B planks as compared to 1:9 for competitors

We know what the reason for high profits is, but we need to know why this is happening and whether it is sustainable.

I'd like to begin by understanding why:

### 1. Units sold is 50 % higher than competitors

Let's understand the value chain of the business here.

Production > Distribution push of product > Customer demand

Hence, one or more of the following could be happening

- We are producing more planks.

*That is in fact happening. We are producing 1.5X compared to competitors.*

- Our wholesalers are able to push our products better than anyone else.

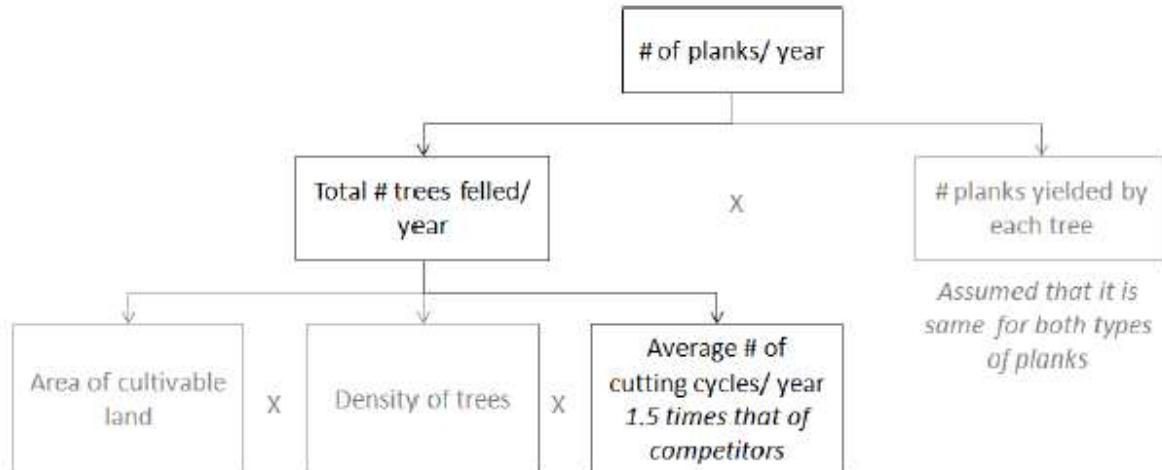
*That is not particularly true.*

- The customers prefer our products better than our competitors'.

*No. The planks are a commoditized product. This means that customers do not prefer our type A over our competitor's type A. Same in case of type B.*

*Assume every plank that is produced in this industry gets sold. So, sales are dependent only on production.*

I want to segment further to identify the driver for higher planks produced by the client.



*Cutting cycles is the number of times the trees in a plot are cut*

*Area of land is same since each company has been allocated a 50sqm area by the government for a 99yr lease.*

Why do we have more cutting cycles in a year? It is possible only if our trees are growing that much faster. Is that the case?

*We've done some research and we've found that there are certain minerals in the soil of our plot of land that allow trees to grow faster.*

So we know why we are able to produce more planks. The big question is, can we continue doing that? Are the minerals going to last forever?

*The minerals are depleting and will get exhausted linearly in the next 5 yrs.*

Hmm so the minerals are the key and they will deplete in 5 yrs. Is there any way to:

1. Re-generate the minerals, for example using special fertilizers? *No*
2. Get more of the soil with these minerals? *No*
3. Get a plot of land where these minerals are present? *No*

This means the profits are not sustainable. We will have to look at other ways to compensate for our eventual depletion of luck. But before that I want to move onto mystery 2-

2. Split of unit production is 3:1 in favor of high-margin Type B planks as compared 1:9 for competitors

Why do we have a more favorable split of 3:1 for type B planks?

*Every company tries to maximize the production of the high margin product. Our competitors are just not able to produce as much.*

Why is that? What determines whether a plank is a type A or a type B wood?

*Every tree gives us wood of the two types. Whether a plank is type A or type B depends on the inherent sturdiness of the wood, which is again because of the minerals in the soil. Naturally, our trees are able to provide us with much more type B wood compared to our competitors.*

So essentially minerals in the soil were the reason for our unsustainable high profits. Since we cannot preserve our advantage of higher unit production and favorable split, we can potentially look to increase our price in the market or reduce costs to maintain our high profits. Would you like me to do that analysis?

*Prices cannot be increased due to competitive pressures and cost optimization will be difficult. I think we've uncovered the crux of the issue. We can close the interview here.*

**Brownie points for mentioning that prices for Type-2 planks can be jacked up since no other company has the soil advantage. Even if it means reduced annual profits in the short run, in the long run we will have a higher cumulative profit.**

## Pricing an anti-hairloss pill

**Source:** Case Interviews Cracked, by Sankalp Kelshikar, Saransh Garg, included here with the author's permission

**Problem:** Our client is a large pharmaceutical company that has found a cure for baldness. It is a pill which will rapidly regrow (within three months) your hair to the thickness it was when you were a teenager. The pill is to be taken every day to maintain the thickness. Please estimate the size of the US market and then decide what price to sell the product at.

**Scoping:** So, the company and its customer base is in the US?

Yes.

Is this a prescription drug or an OTC (Over the Counter)?

*It's a prescription drug*

**This is a useful question to ask when dealing with pharmaceuticals since it tells you how easily the drug can be accessed-through a doctor or directly through a pharmacist.**

**Analysis:** We will first estimate the market size and then price the product. For the market size we will look at the group of people who would require a cure for baldness. For pricing the product we will look at things like cost of the product, competitor prices and try to quantify the value to customer.

*Alright, move on.*

### Market Sizing

Price of the drug determines affordability and hence important while market sizing. We will leave the income segment for later, since we do not know the price?

Yes.

Is it a unisex product, both men and women can use it?

Yes.

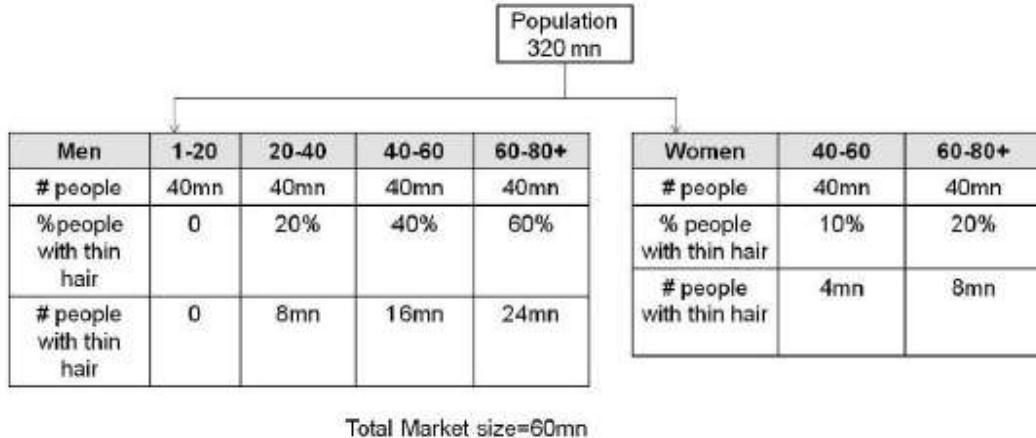
Are there any side-effects to the product?

*It causes sexual dysfunction in 2% of men and women thinking of having children shouldn't take it since it could cause birth defects.*

How serious is this sexual dysfunction?

*Relatively minor and non-permanent.*

We can then say that men who are balding and need the product won't really be deterred. But we can eliminate women likely to have children, which is basically all women under 40 to be conservative.



This is still an intermediate market size. The next step would be to see how many people can afford our drug, but for that we will need to price the drug. Also some people, even though their hair is thin may not want to go for an anti-balding treatment. This might be the case for the older people.

*Alright, this is enough. You can proceed to pricing.*

**Pricing:** What is the goal we are seeking to achieve when pricing the product? Maximizing profits? Yes.

**Note the goal could have been to capture a significant market share, or to break-even on the investments of R&D in a fixed amount of time. So this question is important.**

There are three ways we can look to price the product

1. **Cost based pricing:** We will see what the variable cost of our product is. Our price needs to be greater than the variable cost, else we would not be profitable. We will also see what the fixed costs, mainly R&D expenses, and a payback period the client has in mind are. Cost based pricing gives us a lower cap for price.

2. **Competitor based pricing:** Our product price needs to be competitive else we will lose market share. We can charge a premium over competitors if our product has an advantage. However we will also have to discount it, if there are disadvantages.

3. **Value (to-customer) based pricing:** Here we try and gauge what is the value that is being created for the customer to price our product. For this we can look at similar products in the cosmetic industry to gauge how much customers value balding correction.

**There is a fourth method of pricing called Price-Elasticity based pricing. This is useful when Price-Elasticity data is available. It is also useful in a situation when none of the above methods are useful**

- Cost based pricing is not applicable since the cost is too low compared to value
- Competitor based pricing is not applicable since there is no competition
- Value based pricing is not applicable since value to customer is very high and cannot be quantified

In such situations the ability to purchase the product is primarily dependent on affordability of customers and using price-elasticity we can get a right price.

### 1.Cost based pricing

Do we know what the cost of our product is?

*Yes, it is \$1 per pill.*

That means for a three month course, our cost would be \$90. Our price has to be greater than \$90.

What are our fixed costs, do we have any payback period in mind?

*You can assume that fixed costs were negligible for this case.*

### 2.Competitor based pricing

We will now compare our product with competitors. Do we know who our primary competitors are? What are their product characteristics?

Characteristics	Com A	Com B	Client
Price	\$50/month	\$60/month	??
Duration	9 months	9 months	3 months
Effectiveness	Ordinary	Ordinary	Thicker hair, faster
Side Effects	Serious	None	Minor(in target population)
Prescription/OTC	Prescription	Prescription	Prescription
Covered in health insurance	No	No	No
Type	Pill	Shampoo	Pill
Brand Image	Positive	Positive	Positive
Market Share	50%	50%	-

Note that each of the above information is to be explicitly asked by the candidate as opposed to the interviewer simply giving it away.

So the market is evenly split across A and B. In terms of effectiveness, brand image and accessibility A and B are similar. They do differ in pricing. It seems that although B is priced higher, it is attracting as many customers as A since there are no side effects. Also it is shampoo based as opposed to pills, what do customers prefer?

*Customers prefer shampoo since psychologically it gives them a feeling of using a hair product as opposed to some kind of medicine.*

Will this be a big factor in their consideration compared to our product which is highly effective?  
*Not much, I would say.*

Based on this information, we know that the total price for the anti-balding treatment of competitors is \$450 for A and \$540 for B respectively.

Compared to product A, we have a much better product-less serious side effects, greater effectiveness and faster treatment. So we can at least price our product at \$450. The monthly price would then be  $\$450/3=\$150$  per month.

Compared to product B, the client's product has greater effectiveness which should trump over the disadvantage of minor side-effects (we've excluded women under 40) and the fact that our product is a pill instead of a shampoo. At \$150 per month, our product is still a cheaper buy since the total price comes to \$450 as opposed to \$540 for product B. The combination of better price and effectiveness should attract even those customers who have reservations about using a pill or the fact that there are minor side effects with our product.

We could potentially price our product even greater than \$150 due to its high effectiveness. But we should have a competitive price initially to capture market share and later increase the price when our product gains positive reviews.

On the other hand at \$150 per month, we are making a good profit of \$120 per month and hence we can consider even reducing the price to \$100 per month to capture market share even faster. But let's keep it at \$150 for now, we can reduce the price if we aren't getting market share fast enough.

*Good idea.*

**\$150 is just a number we came up with here. It could be \$100, it could be \$200. It's the reasoning behind your number which matters in the case-interview more than the number itself.**

**Sometimes it makes sense to even look at substitutes as competitors. Not in this case, since hair wigs and a permanent solution are vastly different. However, let's say the client is a construction material supplier. A new material is becoming popular in the market and the client wants to know how to price it. Apart from looking at how the competitors are pricing the new material, it's also useful to look at the price of the substitute, i.e., the traditional construction material to judge the right price.**

### 3. Value based pricing

We can now move on to Value based pricing to see if we're in the right range. Here we can look at products, services similar to getting a full head of hair and see what their prices are for comparison sake. We can also look at services, which we know are definitely of less value or definitely of more value. The prices of these services will give us a lower and upper cap of price range.

*Sure, go ahead.*

We can look at gym membership price in the US for 3 months as a comparable since it also addresses a requirement improving external appearance. (Worth mentioning to the interviewer that a head of hair would be more permanent than a ripped physique and some may value a head of hair over a shapely body.)

We can look at other cosmetic products such as wrinkle removal creams and skin lightening, since the value derived for the customer is with a similar mindset of improvements of facial looks.

As a lower-cap, we can think of something like drinking coffee at a Starbucks for 3 months. It would be worth missing coffee every day for three months to have a full head of hair. A coffee costs \$3, across three months this would make it \$270.

As an upper-cap we can look getting braces for teeth re-alignment. Since it requires regular dental appointments, it would be more expensive than to take a pill for getting hair rejuvenation.

Do you know what would be the price of this would be in the US?

*That's okay, we don't need to go in the numbers. I like your approach. We can close the case here*

# CASE EXPERIENCES

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

Accenture

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Harsh Jaju
Company interviewing for	Accenture Strategy
Number of rounds	4

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager with Supply Chain and Cost
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><u>PI part</u></p> <p>Started off with introducing himself and then the general - How's it going? How has ISB been? Why consulting? etc.</p> <p>Moved to a specific question – Name some personal and professional achievements that you are proud of.</p> <p>I had mentioned some awards I had won at EY; and mentioned those as professional achievements. He nodded; smiled and said he was keen on hearing the personal achievements. I think he was trying to throw me off a bit; and was also asking an open-ended question that would let you direct where you wanted the interview to go.</p> <p>I told him I was extremely happy of the fact that I had started reading again in the past year before ISB; a childhood habit that I had lost. He immediately put aside my resume and asked me what the last book that I had read. I told him that it was "Jaya" by Devdutt Pattanaik. He smiled; asked me who my favorite character in the Mahabharata was.</p> <p>He then said, "Suppose, you had to choose two characters from the Mahabharata on a consulting engagement, who would you choose?"</p> <p>By default, I tried to scope more and ask him further details about the client. He said it was irrelevant but if it makes me happy; lets assume its an iron and steel company.</p> <p>I asked for a minute to think and said I would take Arjuna and Bheema and elaborated as to the reasons why. Arjuna was easy; he's the most skilled and an all-rounder. I had to make up a half-convincing answer for Bheema that he reluctantly agreed to.</p>

	<p>I think he was just trying to get to know me a little/ whether I had simply rehearsed beforehand what I was saying/ if I was lying, etc. It however resulted in a decent atmosphere where we were casually smiling and chatting. Did not seem like an interview at all.</p> <p>We then moved on to a case.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><u>Type of Case:</u> Profitability</p> <p><u>Problem statement:</u> Profits of an Iron and Steel company has been declining over the past 2 years.</p> <p><u>Scoping questions asked:</u> Confirmed objective; Asked about 3C's + P. (Customers; Company; Competitors and Product)</p> <p><u>Frameworks used:</u> Started with Profits = Revenue – Cost.</p> <p><u>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</u></p> <p>Scoping had revealed that the problem was in costs. I told him we could classify costs via PnL nature or through a value-chain framework. He said let's go via the value-chain framework. Once I listed the various steps in the procurement process; he said the problem lay in distribution/transport/logistics. Further scoping/discussion led to the conclusion that the problem lay in the fact that the location of the distribution centres near cities and the local municipal regulations regarding flow of heavy commercial vehicles only during certain times was resulting in congestion at the factory and the factory was over-burdened at times; lying idle at other times.</p> <p><u>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</u></p> <p>Term 3 - OPMG – Little's Law. Play with levers T and R to reduce I.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Lobby with local authorities for change in rules;</li><li>2. Change lay-out of loading docks to a T-hub for faster processing;</li><li>3. 4. Use RFIDs on shipments and GPS on trucks for faster/smooth handling and overall co-ordination.</li></ol> <p><u>Your Comments (if any):</u></p> <p>It's important to establish a decent rapport with the interviewer at the onset. It puts you at ease as well as makes it easier to communicate with him/her.</p> <p>During the case; it is important to keep them engaged and allow them to understand your rationale behind following a line of questioning/structure. They only want to evaluate how structured your thoughts are/can you link basic facts and critically analyze them.</p> <p>Ask for a minute to get all the facts together if you need it. Don't follow a completely rehearsed method. Try to balance the structure and spontaneity.</p>
What went well?	The initial PI part went very well, and he was happy/impressed with our conversation. It made the case easier to do as well; as he was helpful with the case facts and it felt like he was invested in me succeeding.

What could have been done better?

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	25 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager with Supply Chain and Cost
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>General/PI</b></p> <p>General questions about how my day was going, how ISB has been so far, etc.</p> <p>Told me I was the 4<sup>th</sup> Chartered Accountant he was interviewing today and if there were so many of us. Told him there were about 45-50 out of approx. 900; so not really.</p> <p>Then he asked if I was also majoring in Finance and Strategy. He then took a phone call; and excused himself; he apologized later and said it was the partner and he couldn't afford to miss that call. I smiled and said it's fine; just gave me extra time to think about my answer. He chuckled.</p> <p>Told him I hadn't decided upon my major yet; as we didn't have to. Was exploring subjects every term and eventually I'd end up with a major automatically. He was happy to hear that and said it was refreshing to hear that. It's great that I had such flexibility. Asked if I was keen on a vertical/function within Accenture. I told him not really; and was happy to work on any function across sectors instead of a particular sector. Again, he smiled and said that's great and its important to be so flexible.</p> <p>He went through some of the extra-curriculars I mentioned. He was interested in the parts I had mentioned about Scuba diving; Coding/Training courses I had completed; etc. I think he was trying to evaluate a culture-fit/whether I would be able to present myself/talk to a client.</p> <p>We then moved to a case. He however said we won't do a proper full-length one and I may not even need to use paper. I asked if I still could; as it helps me structure my thoughts better. He said sure.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><u>Type of Case:</u> Declining Market Share; Market landscape changing</p> <p><u>Problem statement:</u> A local electronic white goods retailer (state-wide presence in Karnataka – Eg: Girias, Pai, etc.) has been seeing a decline in revenue due to the emergence of e-commerce players. They've come to you for help.</p>

Scoping questions asked: Re-confirmed objective – re-gain market share whilst maintaining/increasing profitability. Re-confirmed understanding of white goods, i.e., refrigerators, washing machines, etc. He was happy to see that I knew what white-goods were. Went ahead with 3C's + P. Same product mix offered by both e-commerce and retailer. E-commerce is cheaper. Retailer has better relationships. He gave me some numbers also as data about market share and how much market-share was lost.

Frameworks used: He told me not to really treat this as a case, but just go about trying to explore what could be done. So, I didn't put down any frame-work as such. But I thought about elements of cost in the value-chain that could be played around with.

Recommendations/ Synthesis:

I came up with 3-4 ideas and wrote them down. I started with a safe one; first one I stated was renegotiating with OEMs for better prices as we have better relations with them. He told me to get more creative.

So; I went to the last one on my list; which was partnering with the e-commerce players and serving as decentralized warehouses to help in last-mile delivery, installation and service of the white-goods as they require installation and in-person interaction with the customers; something that the large physical retailers with a long-standing presence will definitely have an advantage in. He was happy with this and said this was what they had also actually suggested.

We then went over my other points; which were eventually set-up their own e-commerce platform; but volume/traction on the same would be a concern as well as manage inventory and costs better by analyzing customer data/improving demand forecasting and hence reduce the cost advantage that e-commerce players have. The average middle-class family still wants to physically touch and feel these goods; and that is where the retailer has a play.

Your Comments (if any):

Again, I felt having a good conversation in the PI part really helps the case. Numbers were given to me; but were of no relevance in the case. In fact, I think he gave it to me when 203 of my scoping questions were asking for them.

Keeping him engaged and explaining why I was suggesting something, deciding against something was key.

What went well?	The PI conversation; understanding the case and the interviewer's expectations, which was not using a framework/drawing out a solution in this case; but just understanding the various dimensions involved.
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What could have been done better?	
Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Started with generic, How is the day going, Why ISB, etc. She picked up two points from my resume and asked me what exactly I had done, and the impact had been. As I had thoroughly revised and knew every word of my resume and what to say for each part of it; I was able to comfortably talk at length and in detail about the same.</p> <p>One of the above points was about a business re-engineering process for a hospital. So, then she asked me if I could list a Procurement-to-Pay process for her. I asked for a minute, and on a sheet of paper drew out a nice flow-chart encompassing the entire process from an initial budget to a PR – PO – Invoice, a three-way map with the GRN on physical receipt, until payment basis the designated credit period, etc, etc.</p> <p>She was happy with that. She then asked me if I could recollect what was the worst and best day during my time at EY.</p> <p>I think I was a little taken back with the question and after asking for a minute to think about the answer I told her the best day was not related to work; but when we had won the inter-departmental sports tournament. She smiled and said fair enough; and for the worst day I mentioned how I had received a rating of 4 out of 5 instead of a 5 out of in my first year; for which she made a disappointed face. I guess she was expecting something better than just a silly rating.</p> <p>Sensing the same, I told her that there were a lot of days wherein I was wondering what I was doing and performing tasks in a mechanical manner. It was hard to put a finger on the absolutely worst day. She then ended the interview there.</p>
What went well?	I was able to easily answer the initial parts about my past work-ex. Even when she was trying to drill-down into excruciating detail; I was able to confidently defend the same which was good.
What could have been done better?	The last PI question at the end of the interview took me by surprise and I think I blanked out. It definitely could have gone better; and I didn't leave the room completely happy with how it went.

Round No.	4
Type of Round	General PI
Duration	15 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	HR + Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Very general round by a HR and apparently a partner. He didn't introduce himself but some other students who were interviewed by them said he was a partner.</p> <p>They asked me about my family; if I had any siblings; which location I'd prefer, etc. Then they asked me what was the most challenging thing I had faced during my time at EY?</p> <p>I hadn't really rehearsed an answer for this, so I took a minute to think about told them how it's hard to lead a team with more experienced/older people in it. During my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of article-ship, multiple times I had to lead teams with qualified chartered accountants in it. They then asked me how I handled that; and I alluded to the fact that it's not easy, but I had to be respectful; and help them understand that there were things that I knew better; and ultimately, we were all on the same team. I mentioned how I don't think I have perfected the skill and during the group projects at ISB; I have tried to further hone my skills. I also mentioned how as a consultant it would be a critical skill to have as many times; clients would be significantly more experienced as well.</p> <p>I was then immediately informed as soon as I was escorted outside; that they would be rolling out an offer to me within half-an-hour.</p>
What went well?	They acknowledged that it was great that I hadn't rehearsed answers and they could sense that the conversation was genuine. They were happy with that.
What could have been done better?	It felt like my thoughts were a little scrambled. Some more structure/clarity would have been great. It was my 7 <sup>th</sup> interview for the day, so I was also exhausted though. If you're planning on giving multiple interviews for multiple companies; be prepared to be mentally exhausted by the end of it.

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Pooja V Sharma
Company interviewing for	Accenture Strategy
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI+Technical
Duration	25 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager -Harshit Nigam
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><b>Tell me about yourself:</b> I got lucky here as the interviewer also had some background in new product development</p> <p><b>Why consulting</b></p> <p><b>Why Accenture?</b> (cannot stress enough on the importance of this question): In my previous company I was aware of Accenture's consulting engagements particularly linked to Zero Based Budgeting implementation. This became a great talking point to show my motivation to join Accenture and create similar impact for companies.</p> <p><b>Considering you come with a very niche background in F&amp;B R&amp;D, I am not sure how you will fit in if I am to staff you on an Oil and Gas project?</b> This was a comment the interviewer made, almost sharing his apprehensions with moving me to the next round. I thought this was important to answer this question which proved useful as I was moved to the next round!</p> <p><b>Technical</b></p> <p>Since I had a background in R&amp;D and new product development, I was asked the entire product development process in a large MNCs</p> <p>I was asked about the specification management system as well as approval process of new raw materials/ingredients</p>
What went well?	It helped that interviewer knew something about my previous work. The initial rapport helped me navigate through difficult questions
What could have been done better?	I felt I could have answered the technical questions in a better way. It would have helped to revisit my company's processes and technical details.
Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI+Case
Duration	25 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager: Vismay Jani
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><b>Tell me about yourself</b></p> <p><b>Why consulting</b></p> <p><b>Why Accenture</b></p> <p><b>Ethical dilemma:</b> Accenture only suggests clients solutions that they really need and does not suggest additional improvements unless required. If you are dealing with a</p>

client who is hell bent on asking for additional solutions, but you know he doesn't need it. Will you let that relationship be lost forever or go ahead and implement the solution just to please him? There is no possibility that he will find out about the futility of the solution later

**This was a trick question:** I decided to follow my conscience 100% and said that I would still suggest solutions that are only needed by the client even though he finds them inadequate as I know in the long term this would serve the purpose and I can sleep in peace at night having done the right thing!

The interviewer happened to visit my earlier company (Mondelez International) on a consulting engagement and gave me the same problem in the form of a case.

**Case**

**Type of Case:** Unstructured as was an actual consulting engagement

**Problem statement:** How can FMCG companies like Mondelez introduce a service element in their products and improve margins? Give an example of a company that has already done that.

Next, make a recommendation for Mondelez using one of their existing products/brands.

**Scoping questions asked:** What geography? What brand of products? Can the disruption be in the product delivery or consumption level? Asked me to take assumptions and proceed

**Frameworks used:** Did not use any but closest would be 5Ps – Product, Proposition, Place, Price , Packaging

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:**

I started by giving the example of Gillette and Dollar Shave Club. He was very impressed by this as it demonstrated my understanding of his question and set the tone for how I had to create something similar for Mondelez.

As this did not fall under any standard frameworks, I asked the interviewer if I could think aloud and discuss my initial thoughts with him i.e. CONVERSATIONAL which he really appreciated. I decided to start by analyzing each of the categories to identify a suitable one to be made into a service. I ruled out chocolate and candies as I felt these were impulse purchases and could not be made into a regular service. I also ruled out biscuits because Mondelez is not very big in this category compared to other companies like Britannia and Parle. I decided to go ahead with beverage category more specifically Bournvita. Once the category and brand were identified I focused on identifying a suitable customer segment. Children is the biggest for Bournvita so I went ahead with it. Then I thought about modifying how it is being delivered and suggested dispenser machines in schools. Throughout this analysis, I kept bouncing off my thoughts with the interviewer. He was really impressed with my approach and turned out this was exactly the solution they suggested! The last question was on how I would price it. I took some time to say the term "pay per use" pricing mechanism but was able to explain the logic.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** Covered above

	<b>Your Comments (if any):</b> Since it was an unstructured case it helped that I used the conversation approach to solve it. I was calm and did not get scared just because it was not a standard problem statement
What went well?	My understanding of other FMCG categories and how they are consumed etc. helped. Extra reading helped me quickly cite the example of Gillette and Dollar Shave Club which really clarified the expectations of the interviewer from the problem statement itself.
What could have been done better?	As a consultant it is important to use and remember technical terms like "pay per use". Would have helped me wrap up the case faster
Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI + Guesstimate
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	2 partners (one man and woman) I do not remember the names
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><b>Tell me about yourself</b></p> <p><b>Why Accenture</b></p> <p><b>Asked me about a technical paper I had written which was mentioned under publications in my CV (last item on my CV). He has me technical details related to it. Luckily, I remembered the gist. It is very important to know details of all the points on your CV!</b></p> <p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p>I was caught off guard as I did not expect a guesstimate in the last interview hence I struggled to get my mind to that zone</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Number of people eating in restaurants in city of Mumbai on a day</p> <p><b>Approach:</b> I started with the standard approach of population, income split,</p> <p><b>Remarks from Interviewer:</b> He helped me twice when I got stuck and was struggling with the numbers</p> <p><b>Your take on your approach:</b> I was very exhausted and make silly mistakes in the numbers. It was a very straightforward estimate, but I was a little stressed and hence was slow to solve it</p>
What went well?	My previous two rounds were good, and the feedback had been passed on to the partners. Even though I struggled with the guesstimate in the last round, the PI part was good.
What could have been done better?	Do not go by the standard way of how rounds go. The fact that I got a guesstimate in the final round shows that! Be on your best for every round

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Priyam Singh
Company interviewing for	Accenture Strategy
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI + Technical
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner (do not recall name)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI and Technical Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Run through the resume where I was asked to talk about 3 of my projects, all related to digital strategy in detail.</li> <li>2. Asked questions around application of digital in Cosmetics industry (related to another previous client work)</li> <li>3. Asked about favorite subject – Here I mentioned CSTR and MKDM. I was asked about any one framework from CSTR. I was then asked to use the VRIO framework in current context for any company. I took the example of Google (Pixel phones) and how VRIO can help Google strategize the Pixel marketing campaign</li> <li>4. Some questions related to why consulting, why Accenture were asked towards the end.</li> </ul>
What went well?	Revising some of the core subjects would be helpful as Accenture invariably asks question around favorite subject. Talking about the digital strategy project drew interviewer's initial interest.
What could have been done better?	Did not have a lot of questions for the interviewer. I asked very generic question as I could not prepare well on the firm.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	25 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner (do not recall name)

<p>Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)</p>	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A quick round of introduction followed by questions specific to McK projects</li> <li>2. Why Accenture, why consulting, what do I bring to the table with less work experience, strength and weakness – I do not think there is any right answer to these questions, but you need to sound convincing. The Partner kept cutting my answers. I was quick to give examples from my work to substantiate every attribute of strength that I talked about.</li> </ol> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Market entry (focus on marketing strategy)</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> TATA wants to target farmers with their goods van (e.g. Ace). How would you plan the entry? He mentioned that I should explicitly use concepts I have learnt at ISB while solving. (Interviewer was an Alum and remembered the subjects more than me!)</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Asked questions about the product, company's positioning, more about the customer, competition (he clarified that they are the first movers). I clearly stated the assumptions here I was taking.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Market entry for scoping, 4P for marketing strategy, conjoint analysis framework to come up with pricing</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> After initial scoping, he asked me to directly jump to the marketing strategy where he wanted me to focus on promotions and pricing. Under promotions I asked questions around the current way of purchase and existing substitutes. The pros and cons associated with the alternatives and how the existing pain points can be solved and leveraged as promotional strategy. I drew the customer journey to identify the pain points and made recommendations on an ongoing basis. He kept on asking for more recommendations (this loop went on for 10 minutes, when he finally asked me to stop). Then he asked how I would go about pricing and asked me to mention certain attributes I would consider in conjoint. He asked me to explore other pricing methods where I suggested pay-per-use model for farmers. He asked me to stop as soon as I mentioned this suggestion.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Post the recommendations, he jumped back to PI hence no synthesis was done.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> The interview did not follow any traditional approach as the interviewer turned it more into a stress test. He wanted me to quickly make recommendations from the start. It would be good to utilize the first 2 minutes to have some over-the-top suggestions or approach in mind.</p> <p>This interview was followed by an HR round which was more of a generic conversation around my expectations from Accenture and my team preferences. Later during Day 1, the offer was made.</p>
<p>What went well?</p>	<p>I was able to come up with multiple recommendations and quick to include his suggestions while making new recommendations. I had practiced similar case before and hence was able to show newness in suggestions.</p>
<p>What could have been done better?</p>	

Structuring could have been better as I was not able to jot down everything I was recommending. Practice more of cases to have improved writing speed as it helps give more clarity while recommending.

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shivam Swaroop Asthana
Company interviewing for	Accenture Strategy
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	20 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager (Don't remember the name)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>Interviewer started by asking me to walk him through my resume. He then asked me about my pre-ISB work experience with Accenture Technology in detail. He noticed that I have PMP certification and have cleared CFA Level-1, so asked me a few PM questions such as what is a critical path, CPI &amp; SPI definition, what would I do if a project was overbudgeted. What is NPV and how is it used? I answered all these questions crisply and made sure that the definitions were kept as simple as they could be. He then came up with a case instantly and we moved onto case discussion</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Setup a Project Management Office in India for a client</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a typical IT software services provider that has an offshore captive in India and wants to open a PMO in India that will support projects across the world</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> <i>Objective of this setup?</i> He told me the objective was to decide the employee strength of PMO.</p> <p>I then asked him following questions: <i>What geographies the client supports? Number of current projects across these locations? Legal compliance issues in any location that would disallow flow of info/data across borders? Type of PMO support needed across different projects – part time vs full time - in order to assess the #FTEs needed to support these projects?</i></p> <p>He asked me to ignore legal issues and assume certain numbers wherever needed. <i>I then came up with the following formula to determine the FTE count:</i></p> <p><i># Projects running simultaneously that needed Full time PMO support * Average FTE per full time project + # projects running simultaneously that needed part-time PMO support * Average FTE per part-time project + Buffer PMO employees (Bench strength or excess capacity).</i></p>

	<p>At this point he stopped me and asked a few more questions related to my resume – on Robotics in particular– if I knew what is RPA (Robotics Process Automation) and key players in this domain? I answered these questions crisply.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> No Framework could be used here – I just tried to maintain a logical flow and structured thinking throughout the case</p> <p><b>Structure/ Analysis to solve case:</b> I did the scoping really well and then came up with a formula to indicate the way I was going to solve the problem</p> <p><b>Recommendations/Synthesis:</b> Recommendation was not needed as the interviewer stopped the case in between and moved onto PI.</p>
What went well?	I maintained composure throughout the interview and answered honestly. Drew out the Analysis of case on paper along with the numbers and formula
What could have been done better?	I could have answered the Project Overbudget question a bit better, although I tried to build a proper structure by grouping potential reasons of overbudgeting into different categories, I believe I could have come up with a slightly better grouping.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	45 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager (Don't remember the name)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  Asked me to walk him through my resume.  He was keen on my experience in Telecom and created 2 cases on the spot</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Market Entry and another random case on #retail outlets  <b>Problem statement:</b> Our client wishes to enter Asian smartphone Market and is evaluating which country among Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines to choose from  <b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Did the regular 3C + P scoping but focused a lot on company's capabilities and the product that is suppose to be launched. Apparently the company wanted to enter with just one smartphone in any one of these countries with the objective to maximize profit in 1 year. The product was a regular smartphone like any other product in that price range.  <b>Frameworks used:</b> Market Entry Framework and Numeric Distribution concept  <b>Structure/ Analysis to solve case:</b> I drew the regular market entry structure With Market Size, Growth, Competition, Channels to sell – online vs offline, External factors – such as regulations, Risk, and Modes of Entry to evaluate along with a section to analyze the Profitability across these three countries. He then asked me to list down the factors I would use to evaluate the market size. I used the demand side method and drew it on the paper- starting from population, Income, Age, Life of product/Frequency</p>

	<p><i>of purchase. I told him that this would be market size for smartphone in that country for the price range of the product which is being planned to be introduced.</i></p> <p>He smiled and then changed the case. He said now suppose we want to enter India and in India say Delhi. How many stores should we open. He asked me to assume population of Delhi to be 1 crore and only company owned offline store as distribution channel.</p> <p><i>I started with segmenting the market and got to a market size(using similar approach as used above) for the product type the company was planning to introduce at the price range given earlier. I then assumed a certain market share that company would be able to capture. This gave the number of smartphones that would be sold by the client – client specific sales potential. I assumed that one phone would be sold to one person only and that there will be specific localities (prominent malls/ shopping areas) where people would go to buy such pricey phones – I assumed these locations to be 5 in number and assumed each location would serve equal number of people, although I did mention this might vary but can be validated through research. I then picked one location and wrote the formula of #stores to be opened in that locations as: Client specific sales potential of the area / Avg. numeric sales per annum by one store in that location. The data for denominator could be easily gathered from similar store data in those areas.</i></p>
What went well	Engaged the interviewer well, always thought critically, maintained a logical flow and tried to answer in a structured manner. Used A4 papers effectively and neatly - almost 4 sides. Took time to think wherever needed and did not blabber. Remembered the mother of all frameworks whenever I got stuck: Think – Put a Structure – Speak
What could have been done better?	I think I nailed this one 😊

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI
Duration	10 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	MD Round (Don't remember the names) – A gentleman and a lady
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Started with basic Work experience.</p> <p>They looked at my profile and asked me about my pre-ISB work at my previous companies. Minor details about the projects I worked in.</p> <p>The lady asked me where in Accenture strategy do I see myself as fitting – which Industry Group, etc: I answered that.</p> <p>I was then asked about my take on Telecom industry's future and how could I bring in value by providing digital solutions to telecom players – I answered that Telecom players are moving into digital space apart from being Infrastructure providers, gave examples of Airtel and Jio's digital endeavors on moving towards being content providers, etc and how I can not only recommend such digital diversifications but also help clients implement since I have decent project execution and management experience. Interview ended with regular - "Do you have any questions for us?"</p>

What went well?	Knowledge about Accenture's industry groups and flat hierarchy structure in strategy helped me to answer the fit question well and connect well with both interviewers
What could have been done better?	I could have been better prepared for Digital initiatives in Telecom industry that are helping Telecom operators to reduce their costs. My arguments were more on diversification into digital platforms that is bringing in more revenue for operators.

5.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Rahul Ahuja
Company interviewing for	Accenture Strategy
Number of rounds	4

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Guesstimate+PI
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Rohan Mahajan, Business Strategy Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Interview started with a brief introduction followed by a quick walkthrough of my resume and a discussion on my ELP with HUL.</p> <p><b>Guesstimates</b> Question: Estimate the amount of bath soap used in India in a year  Approach: Followed a top down approach starting with the overall population, broke it out into rural and urban (different usage behavior) followed by socio economic (low income, middle income, high income) segmentation. Estimated the number of households in each bucket and assumed daily&gt;monthly&gt;yearly usage in each bucket to arrive at a total number.  Remarks from Interviewer: Interviewer was satisfied with the approach and wanted me to redo the entire calculation using an alternate methodology (bottom up).  Your take on your approach: Took some time to draw up a structure and explain the rationale of the solution to the interviewer. Focused on making quick and accurate back of the envelope calculations and was open to suggestions/modifications from the interviewer</p>
What went well?	Was able to engage well with the interviewer and have a conversation about my ELP which prompted him to ask me about the bath soap market in India and a related guesstimate.

What could have been done better?	
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Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI/Technical
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bahar, Business Strategy Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Was asked to introduce myself and give a brief about my work experience. The discussion majorly revolved around Analytics as a use case in different industries majorly within Retail/FMCG and a detailed discussion about the major challenges I have faced in my previous role with Fractal Analytics.</p> <p>There was a shift in tone from a technical to a behavioral discussion. I was asked about my strengths and weaknesses and how I plan to transition from Analytics to Management Consulting.</p>
What went well?	This round was mostly conversational and being clear and honest about my profile helped drive a more candid and engaging discussion with the interviewer.
What could have been done better?	More clarity on why consulting and how I plan to adapt to newer work and culture of the firm.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Principal, Accenture Strategy
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p>I was shown a number of stacked bar graphs depicting the market share of a few companies across different product categories in the credit card industry. The case focused on our client - "Company A" which was losing share in a particular product category to a competitor "Company B".</p> <p><b>Solution</b></p> <p>I started by briefly elaborating the major insights from the visuals and asked a few scoping questions about the difference in the product categories, how the business works and what are the goals of our client.</p>

	<p>Once clear on the goal to increase market share in one particular product category, I took some time to draw out a structure of the solution (growth framework) and quickly explained it to the interviewer.</p> <p>The rest of the interview was mostly about discussing feasible solutions within each branch of the structure eg – Possibility of increasing revenue by optimal pricing, cross selling, loyalty programs etc or increasing customers by targeting newer segments/markets, modifying existing or launching new products, marketing or increasing sales force.</p>
What went well?	Getting clarity on the business & the goals of the client. Broadly discussing feasible solutions with some business context and examples.
What could have been done better?	Spent more time on understanding the market scenario and talking/asking about the trends in the industry

Round No.	4
Type of Round	Guesstimate + PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Dr. Krishna Murty, Managing Director Accenture Strategy
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>Was asked about the latest financial developments in the country and my thoughts about the ongoing tussle between the government and the RBI.</p> <p><b>Guesstimate</b></p> <p>Question: Estimate the cost of constructing and running the Statue of Unity in Gujarat and the time it will take to break even on the investment.</p> <p>Solution: Started by classifying major cost heads under fixed and variable costs and walked the interviewer through the rationale and assumptions I am taking within each head. Moved on to estimating the number of people who would visit the statue daily along with the weighted average ticket price and other sources of revenue for the establishment.</p> <p>Did a quick calculation about the number of years it will take in order to break even and gave an inference about the feasibility of such a project considering other pressing issues and lucrative investment opportunities in the country.</p>
What went well?	Working out a structure with inputs from the interviewer. Quick calculations and inferences about investment attractiveness

What could have been done better?	Not gone into detailed cost heads eg- security staff, cleaners etc and just focused on broader cost categories.
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6.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Dikshant Khanna
Company interviewing for	Accenture Technology
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	The interviewer went through my resume and asked questions on specific projects. This was a stress interview in which I was bombarded with questions, that were very generic in nature and were primarily focused on my experience. The interviewer basically wanted to grill me and test whether I remain composed in a tensed situation.
What went well?	I did not lose my composure and answered all his questions to the best of my knowledge, keeping things black and white.
What could have been done better?	I had a preconceived notion about what kind the interview would be and that initially worked against me. My suggestion would be to be prepared but go with a blank slate inside.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<b>Case</b> The interview Started with a case on supply chain optimization. <u>Problem Statement:</u> As per your understanding of the Retail Industry what are the most significant issues in the supply chain for that sector and how technology can be used to resolve them.

	<p><u>My Answer:</u> I based my answer on Bullwhip effect in the industry and how this culminates in higher inventory holding cost for a firm.</p> <p>The solution was based on data symmetry across the supply chain using integration of POS data in the retail outlets with central cloud inventory.</p> <p><b>PI</b></p> <p>The interviewer asked me a couple of questions on SAP and my understanding of the role being offered. This segment of the interview was very short spanning about 5 minutes.</p>
What went well?	My detailing on the solution proposed worked well with the interviewer.
What could have been done better?	Not much.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI
Duration	10 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner & HR
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>This was a very short round in which the partner just wanted to understand my expectations out of the role.</p> <p>The HR asked if I would be comfortable with the location and how majoring in Finance competency at ISB would help me at Accenture.</p>
What went well?	I kept things simple

# Alvarez and Marsal

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Nikhil Agarwal
Company interviewing for	Alvarez & Marsal
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Praveen Pajiar (Senior Director)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><b>Tell me about your experience before coming to ISB and how does A&amp;M align to you your goals post ISB?</b></p> <p>I talked about my experience during the takeover and turnaround I did at Waldies, our partnership business, before coming to ISB. I had experience in operations and finance earlier and tried to connect the dots during my 3 years of experience and vision to get into turnaround consulting.</p> <p><b>Was asked to explain the methodology and approach I used during my previous company takeover and turnaround</b></p> <p>Generally, in planning the turnaround, a 100-day initial plan is prepared where all aspects of the business – Man, Machine, Material, Method, Money is planned. I discussed the aspects related to operational and financial turnaround, including reduction of costs – Mostly variable costs and certain Fixed costs - labour costs (negotiation of Charter of Demand), Utilities – Power &amp; Fuel improvement of power factor, procurement planning – through better negotiations with suppliers</p> <p>Making the supply chain more efficient by reducing cash conversion cycle through better demand and purchase planning and inventory management – all these topics were discussed in much detail</p> <p>Better predictive maintenance – availability, better quality and execution (Can use the People, Process, Technology Framework)</p> <p>Restructuring of Debt-Equity Structure of the company – benefits of introducing debt through tax shield and extent upto which debt could be used</p> <p>Was asked about the details of each of the costs &amp; unit metrics (Suggestion: please try to be really thorough with your past experiences)</p> <p><b>Was asked about the IBC code and how it would change the landscape of bankruptcy and distressed companies management and credit lending in India</b></p>
What went well?	The topics covered by Prof. Subbu in CCMA and OPMG was really helpful in the overall understanding of IBC, bankruptcy and M&A and operations management which helped me answer many questions

	I was able to build a connect with the interviewer since I had some experience in operations and turnaround. After my 1 <sup>st</sup> round at A&M, I was sent to the final round with MD
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Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Amith Karan (Managing Director)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>First 10 mins were mostly around my previous experience in takeover and turnaround management. He also asked me about a project that I did earlier with KPMG consulting on Channel &amp; Salesforce effectiveness for a FMCG player. He also focused certain questions on my motivation to join A&amp;M</p> <p>Then the interviewer moved on to a case on turnaround of a manufacturing company.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Turnaround – Profitability &amp; Working capital improvement</p> <p>Problem statement: A company into manufacturing of casting alloys &amp; chemicals is based in India, and most of their sales are through exports to USA, where they have partnered with a company for stocking and sales. The raw material purchase is done through imports from China and some South east Asian countries. Improve Profitability and working capital for the business in 6 months</p> <p>Frameworks used: Value Chain Analysis Framework, Profitability &amp; Costs framework Structure/ analysis to solve case:</p> <p>Approached the problem by asking and clarifying certain preliminary questions on the problem statement. Then I went on to prepare the value chain of the company and understand the kind of contracts that the company had. The company had 2 manufacturing facilities in India that were running at approx~80% capacity and there were 3-4 major suppliers of the raw materials from China. Also, 80% of the sales were coming from 5-6 clients in USA.</p> <p>Tried to break down the working capital in the following and approached each separately –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raw Materials purchase (Accounts payable) – there was a huge lead time in the procurement from Suppliers; hence the payment terms with suppliers could be negotiated</li> <li>2. Inventory management – All types of inventory including RM, WIP, FG and Inventory In-transit to be handled – better demand planning and keeping service levels of inventory at each checkpoint including the factor for variability and calculate the optimum amount of inventory that can be carried</li> </ol> <p>Implement methods such as Just in Time Inventory.</p>

	<p>3. Sales (Accounts receivable) - Improve sales forecast and demand planning and payment terms with the partner company in the USA. Increase client base in the US.</p> <p>4. Cash management – prioritization of payments</p> <p>For profitability, I used the profitability framework broadly after analyzing the Value Chain. Most of the products were commoditized and market driven and our target was to increase capacity utilization by getting more clients on board. I suggested to relook at the contracts for more favourable payment terms and larger pre determined quantities. I moved to costs, taking each and every costs in detail- All plant level costs were considered - labor, electricity, etc. Majority of costs were customs and import/export duties and I tried to analyse the benefits derived from the business from government subsidies and if there opportunities for the same. I discussed areas for improving productivity &amp; efficiency in the plant for workers and maintenance.</p> <p>Once the discussion on the solutions closed, I requested the interviewer to give his feedback on the points I should have looked at and the solutions they implemented.</p>
What went well?	I would highly recommend to get into details of each of the costs and try to use ideas from the courses covered at ISB and be as practical as possible in the suggestions and approach. For A&M specifically, they don't essentially prefer frameworks. The interviewer sets the expectations as per your profile and try to make your profile as transparent as possible, and expects you to approach the case by connecting from your prior experience. The case could mostly be from the industry where you have already worked before.
What could have been done better?	I could have touched upon the practical aspects of the turnaround more exhaustively, which the interviewer was expecting. In most case interviews, rather than focusing on the frameworks, its better to approach the problem from first principles and think more practically.

A.T. Kearney

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Kunal Gupta
Company interviewing for	A.T. Kearney (PAS)
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case
Duration	10 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Vinay Goyal, Associate
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>There was no PI and we immediately started with a case.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Declining Market Share</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> There is a telecom operator and they have been experiencing high customer churn rates. How would you solve the problem?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> I asked a few questions about the telecom operator. Immediately afterwards, the interviewer told me to not use any framework and just tell him 3 different analytical solutions to reduce churn.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> -</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> I directly stated that we could develop the following 3 analytical solutions –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A machine learning/AI based predictive model – predict the likelihood of a customer churning in next few months</li> <li>2) A segmentation-based approach to identify lookalike customers</li> <li>3) Competitive benchmarking</li> </ol> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> I recommended that we develop a machine learning model out of the 3 possible solutions as it will be the most robust method. We also discussed possible variables/attributes that would go into the model. I recommended that we use gradient boosted decision trees algorithm.</p> <p>Vinay told me to deconstruct the algorithm and explain its parameters. I explained the algorithm on paper and he seemed satisfied. He told me to immediately move to round 2.</p>

	<b>Your Comments (if any):</b> Be very thorough with your resume as I had written extensively about different machine learning algorithms that I had worked upon.
What went well?	The interviewer was also from an Analytics background and he understood my recommendations very quickly.
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI
Duration	15 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bharat Thota, Partner (Vice President)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>I had a short discussion with Bharat about my background and career aspirations. He explained the kind of projects that A.T. Kearney works on, its presence in different industries and geographies. He explained the work culture to me in a greater detail and was checking for an organization fit.</p>
What went well?	It was a normal discussion and I was very honest about my motivations behind working in consulting.
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Arpita Ghosal, Senior Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>General PI questions such as tell me about yourself, biggest achievement in life, leadership examples.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p>

	<p><b>Type of Case:</b> Growth Strategy</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Client is a telecom operator and they are not able to grow as the competition has attractive data and voice plans. Solve the problem.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> I asked a few questions about the telecom operator, industry and what the competitors were doing differently from us.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Through scoping, I was able to identify that the client had customized offers (20+ plans) for most of the customers and their prices were better but were not targeting the customers correctly. This was a STP problem, so I decided to focus on this issue.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> I suggested building a recommender engine with 20+ custom plans. This would be done using a collaborative filtering-based approach. We discussed different ways of constructing and implementing a recommender engine.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> Based on my discussions with the interviewers, PAS role requires you to be very hands-on with tools such as SAS, R, Spark etc. I was asked many times if I was comfortable using these tools.</p> <p>Afterwards, I was sent to another room where another Partner was present. We chatted for 2 minutes when we were joined by the Partner from round 2. They made me an offer on the spot to join the company.</p>
What went well?	-
What could have been done better?	-

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aishwarya Kaul
Company interviewing for	AT Kearney
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	40 mins

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ashwin Krishnan, Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about yourself</li> <li>2. Questions about work experience</li> </ul> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability / Increasing market share</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Client is a telecom giant who wants to capture the smartphone user market</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Usual questions about company, industry, competitors, customers, operating model etc. The operating model was new/different from what I knew, so asked few questions regarding this for clarity, which was very important for coming up with the solution</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> No framework applicable</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> I identified the key source of capturing the market, which was based on targeting customers using feature phones, and those using smartphones based on the 'age' of the smartphone. These were the two people who would typically switch to more advanced versions of smartphones thereby using more data packs etc. increasing revenues for our client. Finally, was also asked to come up with a structure/algorithm to target the right kind of people. Also, designed a marketing strategy for targeting</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Targeting people with feature phones and older smart-phones</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> It was a pressure test, important to keep calm.</p>
What went well?	-
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Partner/Behavioral Round
Duration	40 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bharath Thota, Vice President
Round Summary	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about yourself</li> <li>2. Detailed discussion on work experience and projects</li> </ul>

(questions asked and your responses)	
What went well?	Try to make it a conversation
What could have been done better?	-
Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case + PI + fit round
Duration	45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Arpita Ghoshal, Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about yourself</li> <li>2. Discussion on work experience for 15-20 mins</li> </ol> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability, Business optimization</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Clothing retail client wants to optimize product/SKUs in various stores across USA. What factors would this be based on?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Questions about company, industry, competitors, customers, operating model etc.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> No framework applicable</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Identified top criteria on which optimization would be based on, such as profit margins, local style trends, customer requirements, frequent stock-out SKUs, transferability.</p> <p>The discussion went further on transferability, i.e. shipping SKUs from store to store rather than warehouse to store, in case of stock-out one store. Was asked what considerations would be made for making sure SKUs are transferable in the value chain starting from the product itself to how it would be transported. Talked about network models of logistics optimization.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Top issues to look at for optimization as described above</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> None</p>
What went well?	-
What could have been done better?	-

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Manan Bhutani
Company interviewing for	AT Kearney Limited (Solutions Practice)
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	35/40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Arpita (ISB Co11 Alum), Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>AT Kearney has a 4-round structure, Manager&gt;Principal&gt;Director&gt;Partner or VP I bypassed the Manager round, went straight to the Principal round</p> <p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Started off with the standard PI questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Tell me about yourself - Started off with undergrad, moved on to work experience. Lots of cross questioning on the work experience part since it was related to analytics. Arpita was particularly interested in my comfort level with across various Machine learning algorithms and also data science/analytics-based tools such as R, Python, Tableau, etc.</li> <li>2) Why AT Kearney? – Arpita was quite impressed with my resume and was curious to know why I would go with AT Kearney. I was able to answer this question quite well since ATK was one of my target companies and I had done extensive research. I mentioned ATK's global staffing model, which brought up a consequent question on my comfort with global travel. Also touched upon ATK's tie up with the World Economic Forum</li> </ol> <p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p>No guesstimate</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><u>Type of Case:</u> Profitability (Live case)</p> <p><u>Problem statement:</u> Retail chain in USA is facing declining profitability. It is similar to other chains, however they just set up their data capture systems. These data capture systems</p>

	<p>generate PnL dashboards and have reported increasing costs. Our objective is to figure out the reason behind the increased costs and suggest analytics driven solutions to address the problem</p> <p><u>Scoping questions asked:</u></p> <p>Standard 3C+1P line of questioning</p> <p><u>Frameworks used:</u></p> <p>Profitability framework – Profit = Revenue – Costs. Focused on the costs side since given that costs have increased</p> <p><u>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</u></p> <p>Since it was given that PnL data is available, drew out the structure of the income statement. Arpita seemed happy with that and asked me to go ahead with it. Then listed down the various cost heads – It turned out that the Rents have gone up. Broke down rent as (price per sq.ft * Area in sq.ft). Turned out that the price per sq.ft had gone up. Brainstormed further on this and found out that the retail chain had copied the competition in setting up stores in upmarket locations. Hence, the higher rents. Additionally, there were also not being able to sell much because of the competition in these upmarket locations.</p> <p><u>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</u></p> <p>On the recommendations front, Arpita increased the scope of the case and asked me to focus on analytics-based recommendations for increasing profits. So, I broke down recommendations in two buckets:</p> <p>Revenue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product assortment – maximize sales per sq.ft using data</li> <li>• Number of checkout lanes – Optimize based on historical data</li> <li>• Upsell and Cross-sell – Create smart baskets and bundles based on data</li> </ul> <p>Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location optimization – Use data to decide location to set up a store</li> <li>• Inventory Management</li> <li>• Supply chain optimization</li> </ul>
What went well?	<p>The interview, overall went quite well. Especially the PI part. I was able to establish a rapport with Arpita at the very outset – thanks to the why AT Kearney answer. From there on, it was an almost smooth ride.</p> <p>Coming to the case, I think jumping straight to the Income statement structure was the key. What usually happens, is that we have a tendency to focus on Fixed/Variable costs or on the Value Chain approach and hence, forget the Income statement approach. However, in this case, Income statement approach was the key</p>
What could have been done better?	<p>Not much. I think I was able to do quite well and in fact, learnt later that I had scored a full rating in this interview</p>

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	65/70 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bharath Thota, Vice President (Global)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>So, the India Director was busy with another interview. However, ATK was quite keen on me having a second round as soon as possible and hence I was sent to Bharath. Was told that Bharath is the Vice President and hence it was absolutely essential to put my best foot forward</p> <p>As soon as I entered, Bharath introduced himself and stated that he would be making notes about me/my answers as we went through the interview and told me to not be hassled by this particular aspect.</p> <p>And then started the second-longest interview of my life</p>
<b>PI Questions</b>	<p>Bharath too started off with the standard PI question:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Tell me about yourself – I began with my undergrad. Was not expecting any questions there, but Bharath wanted to know more about what I had done at IIT Guwahati. He started by asking why I had chosen IIT Guwahati over the other older IITs and also questioned me on why I had taken up Mathematics and Computing and not the conventional branches such as Mechanical, Electronics, etc. I hadn't particularly prepared for these questions but handled them quite well and gave honest answers. Then Bharath moved on to Quizzing and asked me about how I started quizzing and why I had been continuing to indulge in it even after so many years. This was an answer I had prepared for and hence spoke quite passionately about quizzing and how it has played a big role in my life. Bharath seemed quite satisfied with my answers. Then he moved on to my role in the Placement team and asked about my motivation to take up the role given the stress associated with this job. Again, gave an honest answer here and Bharath was quite happy with that. Then he touched briefly on work experience but didn't ask in detail</li> </ol>
<b>Guesstimates</b>	<p>No guesstimate</p>
<b>Case</b>	<p><b>Type of Case:</b> This was not specifically present as a case. Bharath asked me a question – What, according to you, is the future of analytics?</p> <p>I decided to approach this as a case, in terms of following a structure to answer this broad question</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> What, according to you, is the future of analytics?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p>

	<p>Decided to set some context here, asked Bharath about whether I should focus on a particular geography (told him I was comfortable about the Indian and The US context), or focus on a more generic answer. Bharath told me to focus on a more generic answer</p> <p><u>Frameworks used:</u></p> <p>No set framework could be used here</p> <p><u>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</u></p> <p>Broke down the problem into 3 aspects: Data management, data analytics and strategy formulation. Informed Bharath that according to me Data management is the biggest challenge being faced by companies and hence would want to focus on that first. Broke down Data management further into Data capture systems, Data governance and Data security. Had a discussion on all 3 of these and used my prior work experience to bring in further insights. Over here, Bharath stopped me for a while and mentioned that ATK had conducted a survey of Fortune 500 executives and it had indeed turned out that over 50% of these executives considered data management to be an issue. This really bolstered my confidence 😊</p> <p>Post these, we had a short discussion on data analytics and formulated data-driven strategies. Bharath asked me about two particular industries where I felt that analytics based strategies could play a key role. I mentioned Fintech and Healthcare and then had a brief discussion on why these two industries are ripe for disruption.</p> <p>Post this, Bharath also mentioned his point of view regarding both the industries and also talked briefly about the kind of work that ATK is doing in both the industries. Also talked a bit about ATK's work in creating digital strategies.</p> <p>He ended by saying that he won't make me do a case and also asked if I had any questions for him. I asked him about the AT Kearney-WEF tie up and the kind of work being produced by this partnership. He gave a really comprehensive answer to this</p>
What went well?	Again, the interview went quite well, I would say. ATK's solutions practice puts a lot of focus on communication skills, given the global nature of the role. And this was being tested through the discussions, I gathered. The fact that I was able to hold my ground and have an interesting discussion worked really well for me. Additionally, I was also able to handle questions related to my undergrad and that again led to a positive impression
What could have been done better?	Again, I think every aspect went fairly well.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	75 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sushil Pasricha, Director (India)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>After the second round with Bharath, I was given the feedback that Bharath was really happy with my performance and was keen on extending an offer. I was supposed to just have one more round with Sushil Pasricha, the India Director and that too because he wanted to meet me once before extending an offer.</p> <p>The alums told me stick around (the ATK leadership was taking a lunch break) but also informed that if I were to leave, I might not be able to get the 3<sup>rd</sup> round (it was already 1:30, Bain and McKinsey were calling me for a 3<sup>rd</sup> round and ATK was keen to pack up soon). I decided to stick around for ATK and hence didn't go for McKinsey (I can't begin to emphasize the importance of having your preference order sorted).</p> <p>Prior to day 1 morning, you should have the order ready. For me, it was ATK and McKinsey as priority, followed by Bain and then others)</p> <p>The round started at around 2pm. Prior to the start I was told to stay calm and to carry on the momentum</p> <p>And then began the longest interview of my life</p> <p>As soon as I entered the room, Sushil introduced himself. He straightaway told me that I had done really well in the past 2 rounds. Then we jumped to the PI part</p>
<b>PI Questions</b>	<p>Sushil's PI questions were all based on prior work experience. He touched upon EACH project listed on the resume and asked three questions pertaining to each – What was the project all about? What do you think went well? What do you think could have been done better?</p> <p>Additionally, he followed a reverse chronological approach – focusing first on my experience at Snapdeal, followed by work experience at EXL. He even asked about the numbers on a couple of projects, not the exact value but the process used to arrive at that particular value.</p> <p>The PI part lasted for around 50 minutes. I felt I was able to get his interest in my projects since he was listening intently and asking follow up questions. He ended up by saying that let's move on to a case. But to be honest, I was exhausted by that time (7<sup>th</sup> interview of the day)</p>
<b>Guesstimates</b>	No guesstimate
<b>Case</b>	<p><b>Type of Case:</b> Cost optimization with a different flavor (live ongoing case)</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b></p>

	<p>Client is a pharma company. Have got presence across India. Looking to reduce their advertisement budget. Currently at 100Cr, looking to bring it down to 80Cr. But don't want to compromise on the viewership, want that to stay the same or grow further. Our objective is to help them achieve their target of 80Cr.</p> <p><u>Scoping questions asked:</u></p> <p>Asked in detail about the current advertising scheme. Told him upfront that I have no background in working with ad agencies and hence would want to understand the entire process in detail. Sushil readily explained the entire process to me. It turned out that they have a contract with a media agency (there are only 6 of them throughout India).</p> <p><u>Frameworks used:</u></p> <p>Used a modified framework – the value chain approach with a few modifications</p> <p><u>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</u></p> <p>Tried to understand the entire value chain of advertising and looked at the costs at each step. Tried to figure out which costs are out of line. I think that Sushil recognized that I was quite tired (we had already crossed 60 minutes by then) and directly asked me to focus on the contract terms. Broke down the contract terms into some categories (don't remember the exact details now). We figured out that the client's buying power was high and hence, he could renegotiate the terms. As part of the recommendations, I suggested moving from TV based advertising to the other forms – social media, digital billboards, etc. Sushil liked that suggestion and said that we could close the case.</p> <p>He then informed that ATK frequently handles such cases (in the media sector) and that this particular case was one that he was currently leading.</p>
What went well?	<p>What was good is that I stuck to my preference order and was able to decide on which company's interview to attend/not attend. I think that it's absolutely necessary to have your preference order sorted before Day 1. The reason I chose AT Kearney over other firms is because the Solutions practice's work matched my pre-MBA experience and was also what I wanted to do post-MBA. Additionally, the global staffing model (chance to work out of multiple geographies just after entering), again really appealed to me</p> <p>With regards to the interview, I think that I aced the PI part once again. I felt that Sushil had given me the case just to check my case solving ability and whether I could solve a case even after being absolutely exhausted</p>
What could have been done better?	I think that I could have solved the case in a better manner. But Sushil wasn't really bothered by that since he understood that it had been a long day. Was given an offer just after this round 😊

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Tanya Sood
Company interviewing for	AT Kearney

Number of rounds	3
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Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI +Technical
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sushil Pasricha, Director
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Take me through your resume  Answer 1: Started with my background in economics, transition into data analytics and highlighted the projects that I picked up there. Sushil wanted me to elaborate on a few projects (the entire interview focused highly on my analytics background)</p> <p><b>Technical</b></p> <p>Was asked the difference between Logistic Regression and Neural Networks (AI) since I had mentioned it on my CV. Other questions – How will you measure accuracy of a model, what are the factors to consider when building a predictive model (there were a few more questions based on my CV – can't seem to recollect)</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability  Problem statement: Your client is a pharmaceutical company with operation in India and the US. They are looking to reduce their costs/increase profits</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Sushil didn't want to follow the traditional case format; hence the entire process was more of a conversation. I started with the usual questions like what's the value chain like, identified the major costs, got information about the industry etc. but he wanted me to focus more on the solutions</p> <p>Frameworks used: Since it was more of a discussion, didn't use any framework as such. Identified the major costs (mostly logistics) and directly jumped to how analytics can be used to make the operations more efficient.</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: The company could use analytics to make its delivery and distribution process more efficient (identify the most cost-effective route for delivery, better distributor – customer mapping etc). The company could also optimize on the mode of delivery (air vs water vs road) based on the type of product, days to delivery etc. (use analytics for effective demand prediction etc.)</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): You don't necessarily have to stick to case frameworks. Try following your interviewer's hints and make a conversation out of the process. Be honest when you don't know something and try and remain confident throughout the process</p>

What went well?	The interviewer was extremely friendly which helped me build a good rapport.
What could have been done better?	Could've been better prepared with technical aspect of my previous work ex

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bharath Thota, Vice President, ATK Analytics Practice
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p>Bharath started the interview by giving a brief overview about himself, his background and experience with ATK. He then asked me to take him through my resume and talk about my background, with focus on analytics.</p> <p>Other questions were –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why ATK, why data analytics</li> <li>• What are your views on scope of analytics in India</li> <li>• How would you pursue head of a big firm to use Analytics</li> <li>• Questions around my resume like – Why did I study commerce in school vs science, how did I transition from Economics to Data Analytics Consulting</li> </ul>
What went well?	Building a personal connect really helped. I was very candid and honest throughout the conversation which Bharat seemed to like. Also showed great interest in the firm and the work that ATK does by asking a lot of questions towards the end.
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI + Guesstimate
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ashwin S Krishnan, Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and)	<p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p>PI questions were similar to those asked in previous interviews (ATK puts a lot of emphasis on CV and work ex)</p>

your responses)	<p>Seemed to be a stress interview. I was asked about my low-ish(?) GPA, what I learnt from participating in extra curricular activities, how will I engage with company heads much much older than me, if I'm too young for such a role, what my take-aways from ISB have been</p> <p><b>Guesstimate</b></p> <p>Our client is a real estate firm – they want us to estimate the demand for apartments in Delhi</p> <p>Approach – I tried taking the demand side approach by calculating the number of people who can afford a house, people within the age segment that would want to buy it – however, this approach got too confusing and I ultimately had to ask for some help and direction</p> <p>Correct approach – Population growth (base + growth rate) + elements like migration etc.</p>
What went well?	-
What could have been done better?	I started panicking when I couldn't get to the correct approach for the guesstimate. Shouldn't have lost my confidence post the PI questions. (The interviewer had a straight face throughout, which made me even more nervous). Best would've been to maintain my cool and remain confident.

# Bain & Company

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Abhijith Ganesh Sampathila
Company interviewing for	Bain & Company
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	20 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Apoorv Gautam, Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>Apoorv started by asking me to walk him through my resume. We spent some time talking about the consulting club and activities conducted this year. He's an ISB alum and he reminisced about events from his year. He also had an interesting career path; started at McKinsey post ISB, had a stint in startups and venture capital and then joined Bain as a principal.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Declining Market Share</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a logistics firm that is experiencing declining market share</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> What is our business model? <i>We serve as logistics partners to major FMCG companies. Move goods from point A to B for the FMCG company.</i> Modes of transport? <i>Only road using trucks.</i> Pan India? Yes. How long have we been in business? <i>5 years.</i> Since when are we facing the issue. <i>Past 6 months.</i> Who are our competitors and how has their market share changed? <i>2 other market leaders. They have gained 5% each while we lost 10%.</i> Is market share in terms of revenue? Yes.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Value Chain, Revenue part of the profitability framework, People/Process/Technology.</p> <p><b>Structure/ Analysis to solve case:</b> Started with identifying where revenues had fallen. Price per order per km was the same. Average distance per order was the same. That left out volumes of orders which had fallen.  I explored if it was a supply or a demand issue.  Demand was the issue – I used a modified version of 4Ps. Product (defined here as service package, features, support that the company offered), Place (defined here as service levels, ability to deliver on time and ability to safely deliver), Promotion (any change in customer relationships and deals with longstanding partners). Be careful not to use the names of the 4Ps themselves in such cases.  I soon found out that there was no change in product/ promotion aspects in either client or the competitors and that service was the issue.</p>

	<p>I drew out the value chain extending from placing of order to delivery at the destination. I soon found out that the transit time taken for transport from the source city to the destination city by the trucks had increased and this was the issue.</p> <p>I split it into people aspect (driver), process and then technology (truck). Apoorv said that nothing changed with the truck or the process.</p> <p>Isolating the drivers, I broke down time spent by driver into driving, fueling, breaks and stop points such as tolls.</p> <p><i>At this stage, there was a knock on the door to wind up.</i></p> <p><b>Recommendations/Synthesis:</b> There was no time for recommendation/ synthesis.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> Post the interview, I got feedback that the case went well and to keep the momentum.</p>
What went well?	I had a good PI segment where I was able to build a connect with the interviewer. This helped have a good conversational tone for the case that followed.
What could have been done better?	There could have been a better balance in time spent between PI and case. A lot of time was spent on PI which left little time for the case itself and it ended abruptly.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	45 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Samyuktha T, Principal- Private Equity practice; head of MBA recruitment for India
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Asked me to walk her through my resume.</p> <p>Since I had worked on a robo advisor, she spent time on that section, asking how it is changing the landscape of wealth management.</p> <p>She asked me how consulting could be disrupted by technology and if strategy consulting could be replaced by an algorithm.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> PE Investment</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client wishes to invest in a chain of retail pharmacies. Help them evaluate if it is a good investment.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <p><b>FUND</b></p> <p>Investment objectives: Target ROI, Time horizon, % of company to be bought? 20% IRR in 5 years, controlling stake</p>

	<p>Size of the fund, nature of earlier investments: <i>\$2 billion, we don't have earlier investments in pharma/healthcare.</i></p> <p><b>TARGET COMPANY</b></p> <p>What is our product mix? <i>Both generics and patented drugs.</i> Where do we operate and how many stores? <i>Top 6 metros in India, 100 stores in each.</i></p> <p>Who's the competition? <i>3 other players in organized segment. Pie evenly split between the 4.</i> So, how is the unorganized sector? <i>Huge, 90% of the pharmacy market.</i> Any regulation that I should be aware of? <i>No.</i></p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> PE framework, customer journey for a retail pharmacy</p> <p><b>Structure/ Analysis to solve case:</b> Started assessing attractiveness of the industry. She said that retail pharmacy is growing at 10% but organized sector is growing at 18%. (I think she volunteered this info upfront because I uncovered the unorganized sector in the scoping itself) She asked me how an organized player can compete and can have advantages. I listed out economies of scale, preferential relations with suppliers (these cost savings can be passed on to customers). I also mentioned how probability of stock outs will be lower and orders can be fulfilled by getting medicines from nearby centres (which would not be possible in case of unorganized single stores). I said we could also have better trained chemists, which is needed in cases where the store doesn't have the exact medicine that the customer wants but a trained chemist can find an alternate with the same chemical composition and still make a sale. She then told that the market looks promising and asked me to search for ways to differentiate from other organized players. I drew out the customer journey for a pharmacy purchase and pointed out potential differentiating factors at each step. I also suggested entering the online space and delivering medicines to doorsteps.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Invest in the chain since organized pharmacy would be able to snap up a lot of growth at the cost of the fragmented unorganized segment. Additionally, the invested company could differentiate itself from other organized players by setting up online order-taking and home deliveries.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> She asked me what other shortlists I had and my plan for the day. Told her I had 3 other consulting shortlists and a shortlist for a VC role, but that Bain was my first preference. I had a good long chat after the case, which gave me positive vibes.</p> <p>Post interview, I got feedback that they were inclined to give the offer based on two yesses, but I had to get a yes from a Partner to get the formal offer.</p>
What went well	Built a very good connect with the interviewer early on. Was able to give good insights at each point (used the formula of combining an insight with almost each question/suggestion)
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Mini case
Duration	10 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Lalit Reddy, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Mini-Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Declining Market Share        Problem statement: Our client is a high-end fashion retailer who is experiencing declining market share (in terms of revenue).</p> <p>This was not a conventional case interview and was a very short one.</p> <p>Lalit directly showed me some slides and asked me to identify the root cause of the declining market share. I identified two problems: 1) e-commerce players began eating into market share        2) The client had lost out on customers in the 40-50 age group but had gained on customers in the 60+ age group.        Lalit told me to ignore e-commerce and instead focus on the second cause.        He asked why the second trend could result in decreasing market share. I hypothesized that the 40-50 age group consists of professionals at the peak of their careers and would have the maximum earning potential. At the same time, they would have kids in mid-to-late teens, who would also represent a lot of indirect purchases (parents buying for their kids/ kids using their parents' cards for shopping). While the 60+ age group would consist of people who were retired and thus would be cautious in spending money.</p> <p>He liked the justification and asked me to come up with recommendations for tackling this demographic challenge.</p> <p>I told that high-flying execs at the peak of their careers would enjoy getting an exclusive experience and made to feel elite. I suggested loyalty programs to be marketed as an exclusive club of sorts. I also suggested appointing dedicated fashion consultants for repeat customers (gave an analogy from the finance industry of dedicated personal bankers forHNIs). I also gave some recommendations for tackling e-commerce.</p> <p>The interview ended, and the offer was confirmed.</p>
What went well?	Did not stick to giving solutions to the root problem (declining purchases from the 40-50 age group), but also gave solutions to tackling online retailers. This shows the interviewer that the candidate hasn't lost sight of the primary problem (declining market share)
What could have been done better?	I fumbled a bit in the beginning and could have maintained my nerves better.

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aayush Rajesh Poddar
Company interviewing for	Bain & Co
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case
Duration	35-40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Amit Senior Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question 1: He asked me something about myself that isn't on my resume</p> <p>Question 2: He was impressed with the academic section and said his father went to the same college too. (So, tried to build a rapport and connect there)</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability/PE Investment</p> <p>Problem statement: A PE wants to invest in a consumer goods packaging company has higher operating margins. Investigate if higher margins are sustainable</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Initially my scoping was unstructured but when the interviewer started giving me data on his own, I put out a structure upfront and started driving the interview. Use 3C and 1P and ask about industry.</p> <p>Frameworks used: I broke down operating margin to the one above Gross and below Gross Margin. The answer was in the COGS</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Broke down COGS into material, labor, overheads</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: Figured that they had better procurement rates in terms of timing the market (oil distillation inputs HDPE and PTE). I said that is unsustainable. Next, they had better machines hence lower overheads in terms of maintenance and material usage which I said was sustainable</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): I said the PE should invest since packaging consumer goods is a non-cyclical business with marquee clients and a part of higher margins is sustainable</p>
What went well?	I was very coachable in the interview. I maintained structure and kept asking if I am missing anything or if any other angle should be evaluated
What could have been done better?	I could have laid out a structure in the start instead of a little later.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/Designation	Prateek Mazumdar, Partner – IT services, Bangalore
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: He asked me how come many of us had high CGPAs, I said I am not sure whether this correlation is causal in case of Bain:P He started laughing.</p> <p>Question 2: He asked me about my stint at Ambit and then we discussed that organization a little. We knew a few common people from the company and discussed their stock-market calls. He then saw that I worked at JPMorgan and made an IT services case on spot regarding JPM outsourcing a US-based IT function to India to cut costs.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Costs/Outsourcing</p> <p>Problem statement: How does JPMorgan decide to whether keep low-skill IT services</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: I laid out a few parameters and asked scoping questions like what are the parameters that we are evaluation. He said focus strictly on cost</p> <p>Frameworks used: I compared two options – in-house Indian outsourcing and outsourcing to an IT based vendor.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: So, after some guidance (since I didn't have a background in the IT industry or hadn't done this type of a case), I figured that the cost of a person is higher in case of IT vendors (since they put in their own profit margins) as against hiring an in-house Indian employees. He said I am missing something, and I should think of lines of TCS/Infy and asked me to use a formula.</p> <p>After 3-4 minutes of follow-on scoping and 1 time of Bain representative asking to wind up, I said Cost = Average cost per person * No of Person. Outsourcing to a vendor was cheaper since the vendor will bill you only for the junior people he allocates to the organization, but an in-house IT team would need managers which would cost higher and bring up average costs per employee</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): Always make comparisons on a Like-to-Like basis and if something can be quantified like costs, always use a formula. Makes it easier.</p>
What went well?	I kept the interviewer engaged, although I met a few dead-ends, I asked for help and kept trying to think and ask what I was missing
What could have been done better?	I could have known the IT outsourcing model and since it was focused on costs, I should have immediately used the above formula.

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aksh Sheth
Company interviewing for	Bain and Co
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	35 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Prateek Majumdar, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>1: Tell me about yourself? 2: If we select you, what will stop you from joining Bain?</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a global IT service provider and looking to start operations in India. Should it outsource or have a captive setup in India?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> What services does it provide? Why is it looking to enter India? What is more important for the company – cost or quality of service? (The interviewer asked to focus on cost aspect for the case)</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Profitability.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve the case:</b> Validated key cost heads and the interviewer asked to focus on only the staffing cost. Staffing cost includes hiring cost, training cost and salaries. (In IT companies, major activities are done by junior-level executives and therefore, they are high in number.) I assessed both the options quantitatively. For instance, hiring costs in case of captive operations will be high, training cost will also be high, and finally, the salaries will be high given MNCs are expected to give higher salaries. I assessed the cost savings in outsourcing option considering hiring, training and salaries cost. Also, setting up office and rentals will involve costs</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> I recommended to outsource the operations to an Indian company as that resulted in savings of xx%</p>

	Your Comments (if any): You just need to stay calm throughout. Interviewer helps you in case you get stuck.
What went well?	Staying calm. Showing structure to the interviewer. Validating thoughts at every stage
What could have been done better?	Should have read about the broad overview of IT industry

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Lalit Reddy, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Mini-Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Declining Market Share</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a high-end fashion retailer who is experiencing declining market share (in terms of revenue).</p> <p>It was not a typical case interview. Lalit directly showed me some slides and asked me to identify the root cause of the declining market share.</p> <p>I was told that the industry is growing at 10%. I was shown a slide on growth rate of 5 companies, including the client. All the companies had a growth rate of less than 10%. I was asked to infer. I mentioned that there are other companies (not on the slide) which have a growth rate of more than 10%. I was asked who those other companies could be. To which, I mentioned that those companies could be either local unorganized players or international players. He pushed me to think further. I then came up with market share capture by e-commerce players (which was the actual reason). He asked me to assess the reasons for the same. I came up with three broad buckets: cost, quality and time and mentioned reasons in each of the buckets. For instance, in quality, I mentioned assortment, availability, return policies, etc. He then showed me the market split by age group. I could observe that one of the age groups (40-50) has reduced shopping from our client. That was the highest spending age group as they ideally purchase for their children as well. He asked me to assess the reasons for the reduction in sales for that age group.</p> <p>I provided the following recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. List the products on e-commerce websites and/or start an online purchase channel</li> <li>2. To increase customer loyalty, introduce loyalty programs</li> </ol>

	<p>3. Tap customers in the age group of 20-30 as these customers start shopping independently at that age. These customers will eventually stay</p> <p>4. Ensure no stockouts and collections for all age groups</p> <p>The interview ended, and the offer was confirmed.</p>
What went well?	<p>1. Validating insights</p> <p>2. Making a note of slides on paper so that I need not ask the interviewer to go back to an earlier slide</p>
What could have been done better?	Segmenting the market in terms of online vs. offline, age group, etc. This would have helped me build hypothesis much early on.

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Sandeep Ganesh – President, Graduate Student Board
Company interviewing for	Bain & Co
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case(25 mins) + PI (5mins)
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Samyuktha – She manages recruitment in India along with Megha Chawla
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> About Yourself and then she introduced herself. Then a few PI questions before she jumped to the case.</p> <p><b>Case</b> The Radio Case: You wish to set up a Radio Station in Mumbai. You already have the funds. How will you go about it.</p> <p>You can get details of this case in previous consulting yearbooks. Fortunately, I had glimpsed this case during case prep – hence was able to remember a few ideas.</p> <p>I did the scoping questions and laid down the initial structure. Before I could take her through each part, she started asking questions. She included the Guess estimate part – I laid out the approach and she was fine with it.</p> <p>Over the next 20 mins, she kept asking several questions over various areas – How would you start a news radio, How will customers be attracted to you, How can you</p>

differentiate etc and I kept answering them. It was like a rapid fire round. She was testing me on my ability to process information quickly, get fresh ideas on the go and communicate with clarity.

Fortunately, I answered all her questions correctly and she was impressed by it.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Watson (nickname), Private Equity Partner at Bain
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b>            About Yourself and then he said be prepared for a tough interview and jumped to the case.</p> <p><b><u>Case</u></b>            An Indian BPO Company with US Clients wishes to increase their earnings per employee. How would you do it without firing anyone.</p> <p>I asked the scoping questions in a detailed manner, which helped me solve the case-timelines, targets, employees, revenues, office locations, org structure, call schedules and etc.</p> <p>Then came with a structure on how I would solve the case. First, how can I increase my revenues with current employees. Second, how can I reduce the costs per employees.</p> <p>Since I had worked with a startup that dealt with similar work and read a few BPO cases, I was able to come with ideas on solving the case. Few examples – move the office to Tier 2 cities, reduce middle management, increase office timings, reduce time spent per call by automation, eliminate unwanted conversations in call etc</p> <p>Similar to the previous interview, he kept bombarding with one question after another. This went on for 25 mins.</p> <p>Fortunately (again) , I answered all his questions correctly and he was impressed by it.</p> <p>I received the offer after the interview.</p>
General Tips	<p>I would like to share a few points, which I hope will help you.</p> <p>a. Why Consulting?</p>

I have seen many peers choose Consulting only for high salary. It is a myth. There are several career lines out there which pay higher salaries such as Tech, PM and few finance, operations and marketing roles.

So deeply introspect why consulting and check if consulting is actually the right choice.

#### b. Applying for Consulting Firms

- Your background plays a big role in selection. You cannot change the past but you can change how to plan and move ahead. Your undergrad college & grades, work experience, brand of company, extracurricular achievements, number of work experience all play a huge role in selection. Hence be wary, seek help and focus on the feasible things.

- Start Resume reviews early. Consulting companies post their job early and you should have your resume ready by then. Start by July first week and complete by Aug end. You have to spend close to 50 hrs making the resume, contact 10-15 trusted alums who can help you and around 10 revisions.

#### c. Preparing for Consulting Interview

- Very tiresome, but interesting experience. Maintain a separate notebook for cases and start after you receive the shortlist. Do not start case prep before. Focus that time on resume.

- Materials used: ISB Consulting Casebooks, IIM & IIT Casebook, Victor Cheng Videos & Case in Point

- Work with several groups – You should have done case with around 15 different students and 10 alums by the end. Understand that you do not compete with your friends, you compete with yourself. If you are above a benchmark, the firms will take you.

- We generally solved around 40-60 cases. More important, is the review of the cases and frameworks. 25 mins Case + 15 mins review

None of the frameworks you prepare can be directly used in the interview. It is the thought process that you develop by solving these cases that will help you.

There will be days where you will be very stressed wanting to give up etc. So take breaks, catch a movie or go out to maintain focus and reduce stress.

#### d. Interview Day

Goal is not to get a job, but to Give your best. There are forces higher than us that will take us to the right job. You have to be patient and continue delivering your best.

My 3 golden rules for every interview:

1. Be Confident – Sit Straight, communicate with full clarity and look in the eye.
2. Structure all words & Every sentence – PI or Case related should be well thought before saying and structured. Structure your ideas, thoughts and explain it clearly.
3. Smile – You cannot get in without smiling and building a trust with the interviewer.

Finally, If you are done with your placement, please help your friends and also volunteer and help CAS. Your friends need you, but they might not say it, hence please stay with them and help them.

Finally, wanted to share some points on my Bain & McKinsey interview experience. I had an LEK shortlist, but during my preparation and company research, I realized that the firm would not suit me and decided not to interview.

My Mck interview was very different from Bain. 2 Rounds – Same as Bain. However, the Bain interview was very conversational unlike McKinsey, where I was given a case and told to do on my own. The Mck interview was interviewee led whereas Bain was interviewer led. Second, my first round in Mck had 10 mins of PI whereas Bain had less than 5 mins PI in both rounds. This experience could vary for others.

Third, my Mck 2<sup>nd</sup> round was done in Skype. I knew before that some students could have Mck skype interview. Since I performed badly in Skype interviews, I had informed my Mck buddy before the interview day that if I get a VC interview, I need one more chance as I am bad at it and would not be able to give my best. Mck is helpful in these things and he promised to do so. However, since I had the Bain offer in morning and I wanted to join it, I decided not to request the additional interview.

Both Bain & McK were very professional & helpful in the entire journey and the buddies were extremely supportive. Hence feel free to share your concerns to them and they will definitely help you out.

Wish you all the best!

5.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Abhishek Jain
Company interviewing for	Bain & Co.
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1/2/3
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ramji, Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  The interview started with a standard 'tell me about yourself' question. After 2 minutes of that, we jumped straight to the case.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Growth strategy</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> You're advising the head of a wire making company which has seen stagnant revenues in the last 3 years. How should they achieve growth to double their volumes in the next 3-5 years, while keeping profitability constant?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What is the product exactly? – Steel wires</li> <li>2) Who are the customers? – 70% B2C (farmers primarily using wires for fencing, farming activities), 30% B2B (mainly auto and infra)</li> <li>3) Do we export anything? – Surplus after India demand has been met is exported ~ approximately 10-15%</li> <li>4) Where are we operating? – Pan-India</li> <li>5) What does the value chain look like? – We are part of a larger industrial conglomerate. The parent company helps us in sourcing of the raw material. (Asked a follow up question on whether this could be a constraint, was told that yes, raw material capacity could be a limiting factor for growth)</li> </ol> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Since the case was about doubling volumes, I did not focus on any price changes (double-checked this with the interviewer).</p> <p>To increase volumes, focus on –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase number of customers – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In the same market – (i) Improve marketing, (ii) Improve distribution</li> <li>b. Explore new markets – (i) Broaden product portfolio, (ii) New geographic markets, (iii) New customer segments</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

- 2) Increase amount bought by existing customers –
  - a. Bulk discounts
  - b. Loyalty programmes

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:**

Asked the interviewer if I should focus on any 1 part – he told me to start wherever I wished to.

- 1) Started off with focusing on the ‘new geographic markets’, since I knew that we were only exporting surpluses right now. The interviewer told me that our exports were mainly opportunistic to meet short-term demand, largely to SAARC and the Middle East countries. There was huge volatility in demand, and the customers were primarily B2B. Suggested we do demand-forecasting, build up a sales force, improve marketing and distribution, and try growing exports. Interviewer seemed okay with this as a possible solution.
- 2) The interviewer nudged me to think more in terms of B2B and B2C, as he had given me the split earlier. I decided to dig deeper on B2C, as that was 70% of the revenues. I asked him about where the bottleneck was – supply or demand. He said that demand was very ‘peaky’ (i.e. seasonal) and our distributors were prone to stockouts. In times of high demand, factory capacity also became a supply constraint.

Asked for the customer decision journey – farmers buy from dealers (stock merchandise from multiple vendors – not exclusive), who are supplied by distributors (exclusive to a vendor). The company deals with distributors directly. Farmers are highly influenced by dealer recommendations.

- a. Suggested the client invest in inventory management and demand planning systems to smoothen out production. Interviewer agreed.
- b. Also recommended we explore leasing capacity in other factories for high-demand periods. Interviewer liked this, and said they were already exploring 3-4 units to lease. This would give a 20% bump to volumes.
- c. This was the last part of the case, where we discussed how to incentivize dealers to push the client’s products. I thought of –
  - i. Interviewing distributors to identify pain points
  - ii. Surveying farmers to see where we could intervene and help
  - iii. Exploring market research reports
  - iv. Talking to experts

I was hitting a bit of a dead end here. The interviewer kept on saying that these were one-time or short term measures that were unlikely to sustain in the long term. Eventually, we closed the case here.

	<p>In the actual situation, the team implemented a tech/digital solution based on an app for dealers after extensive interaction and work with them.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Explore growing exports by investing in sales/marketing capabilities and demand planning</li> <li>2) Invest in demand planning for domestic markets and also lease capacity for high-demand periods</li> <li>3) Engage with dealers to identify how to incentivize them to push client's products</li> <li>4) Explore additional suppliers of raw material in case the parent was not able to supply sufficient amounts</li> </ol> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b></p> <p>I later found out that the interview went very well. I was taken for the partner round almost immediately.</p>
What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) I was able to structure the case well and come up with further splits and micro-structures whenever the interviewer pushed me in a direction</li> <li>2) The Q/A after the case also helped. I engaged him in a 5 minute chat about how the team actually went about helping the client, what the app they created looked like, how they addressed lack of literacy/tech-savviness for a typical dealer or farmer</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) I should have used a B2C/B2B breakdown at the start, given that it was given in the outline of the problem statement</li> <li>2) I didn't think about the tech/digital angle, which I should have given how big that story is in India and Bain's ongoing work on Digital Bharat</li> <li>3) The short PI put me on the backfoot since PIs are typically a significant part of any interview, and I was worried I had messed that up. I gained confidence as the interview went on.</li> </ol>

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Lalit Reddy, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>He asked me about my previous interview, and who took it. The PI itself was very short. He asked me about where I was from, my school and then a minor clarification on my CV related to my undergraduate academic performance.</p>

your responses)

### Case

**Type of Case:** Declining market share

**Problem statement:** The client is a premium apparel retailer in the US. Market share has been declining. Identify the reasons for the same and give recommendations.

**Scoping questions asked:**

- 1) What sort of apparel do they sell? – Multi-brand, high-end apparel
- 2) Where are they based – High-end shopping districts and malls
- 3) How are they placed along the value chain? – Only stock the merchandise and sell it to customers

**Frameworks used:** This was an unconventional case. The interviewer showed me a series of successive slides. For each one, I was asked to analyze and ask questions. If I was headed in the right direction, he would move to the next one.

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:** The case is described below on a slide-by-slide basis.

Slide 1: Bar chart of growth in the industry, the client and the competitor

The chart showed that the industry was growing at ~9% (don't remember the exact numbers), the client was at 8%, competitor 1 was at 9% and competitor 2 was at 7%. He asked me to analyze.

I asked about the relative size of the players – he said they were roughly even. I told him I was having trouble understanding how the industry average was at 9% since the client and competitor 2 were so far below. This was the key insight. There were other players in the market not shown on the chart.

Slide 2: We then moved to the next slide, which showed a fuller picture. Online players were growing at 15-20%.

Here, he asked me to analyze why this could be happening. I spoke about the challenge traditional retail is facing from online. We also spoke about how traditional retailers could protect their turf. Possible strategies including loyalty programmes, in-store stylists and concierges (since this was a high-end brand).

Slide 3: Slide showed 3 stacked bar charts – client, competitor 1 and competitor 2, showing break-down of sales by age-group.

The client's age split was roughly even across age groups, whereas competitor 1 (the market leader) was heavy on 45-55 (again, directional numbers) and low on some other age group. I was having trouble identifying the insight, so the interviewer asked me to compare the leader (comp 1) to the laggard (comp 2). Looking at those 2, I

could see that the problem was with the 55+ age group (comp 2 was very heavy on those and we had an even split). And the insight was to focus on 45-55.

Lalit asked me why this could be, and I spoke about how these customers are near retirement, have high disposable incomes, are less tech/online savvy and appreciate the premium experience from going to a store. They are also likelier to spend more if offers and programmes are targeted at them properly.

After this, we talked about –

- A) Whether in the long run, this was a sustainable strategy for the client. Here, I spoke about how 5-10 years down the line, the customers would have aged into their next brackets. In the long run, the client had to be mindful of the 20-40 age group, their needs and how to build an online presence

Here, we discussed possible strategies, and I gave him a list – (i) we could build up a store online ourselves, (ii) sell via Amazon, or (iii) partner with 3<sup>rd</sup> party players and just provide warehousing/storage for the merchandize (since we'd already have the offline stores and infrastructure, without taking on the risks and headache of managing and end-to-end e-commerce operation). He quite liked the last option.

- B) We also discussed how to address the issue with the 45-55 age group. He asked me how we could improve our performance here. I asked him the standard 'is this a demand or a supply issue', and after discussing what I meant, he told me that demand was the constraint. I suggested -
- We examine our retail footprint and see if our competitors are in any high-traffic locations where we aren't present
  - Revamp our in-store designs and explore how we lay the products out
  - Revise our brand and product portfolio
  - Invest in in-store stylists/consultants to offer a concierge-like experience to buyers, and also provide home-delivery and fittings of items
  - Create a loyalty programme for customers

He seemed happy with these suggestions.

We closed the case here.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** As described above.

**Your Comments (if any):**

- The interviewer was very friendly and conversational throughout the process

	2) I knew that I had made it in the by the end of the conversation. After a brief Q/A round, he then went out to get someone from the recruitment team to bring me an FIF to sign
What went well?	<p>1) I was able to establish a rapport with the interviewer early on in our chat</p> <p>2) Again, towards the end of our interview, I asked him a few pointed questions on what working at Bain was like, and we had a 5 minute chat about that</p> <p>3) He asked me about my other shortlists and 'why Bain', and I had a solid 2 minute answer prepared on that which I had also personalized and tied in to my experiences and profile. This was well received also.</p> <p>4) I think the only three pieces of advice I'd like to offer are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Take a minute to structure before you speak</li> <li>b. When stuck, ask for help. Always.</li> <li>c. Prepare a few pointed, insightful questions to ask your interviewers</li> </ul>
What could have been done better?	N/A

## 6.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Suyash Khetan
Company interviewing for	Bain & Company
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Short PI + Case
Duration	30 Mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sam (Don't recall her full name)/ Manager or Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> General tell me about yourself – Told her about my prior work-ex in analytics and my passion for music and sports. My extra-currics were a plus for me so made sure I bring it out to hook her into the conversation.</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: PE Due Diligence/Growth strategy Problem statement: A PE firm is looking to invest in a Pharmaceutical retail chain. How should it go about it?</p>

Scoping questions asked: So, I had studied about PE investments and almost every time PE firms invest to make a certain return in a certain time period and exit. I brought this up by myself and then asked her if this was the rationale behind the investment. Other than this asked in detail about the Pharma company. Existing footprint (No. of stores), Part of value chain (manufacturing/distribution/retail), Business model, type of products, type of customers that come in etc. I had a fair understanding about the Pharma company before I moved forward to structuring the problem. Took around 3-4 mins in scoping the problem.

Frameworks used: Having practiced PE cases before, I started by telling her my overall approach (PE framework from ISB case books) to the problem. Broke down the problem into Industry attractiveness, Due Diligence and Source of return.

Structure/ analysis to solve case: I knew that she would not want me to do all the 3 parts of the framework because of time crunch so I asked her if she wanted me to look at something particular in these. She asked me how I would go about doing the Due Diligence.

(Predictable? – To me it was predictable. I knew Bain did a lot of PE cases and these cases require a lot of Due Diligence. So, since the cases given by interviewers are cases that they have worked on, it was quite likely that this would turn out to be a Due Diligence case with a flavor of Growth strategies)

I proceeded with breaking down the Due diligence bucket further into business model, top management, products and services, margins, any valuation available. Next she asked me to look into the business model and the profitability of the business. She wanted to understand what could be done to grow the business both in terms of topline and margins. I used the growth strategy framework here to suggest a few methods to grow in the existing geography. Asked about the demand and supply in the existing locations and if new stores could be opened, new tie ups with hospitals, doctors etc. could be made, home delivery could be started or product portfolio could be broadened to sell high value products with higher margins. Since, it was a retail chain, I was comparing it with a 98.4 or Apollo pharmacy and bringing out real world examples to keep her interested. Also, gave her the idea that since it was a branded store, customers would find it less risky to purchase high value items. Then she asked me if I would open the store in a new geography first or in the existing geography. I said that if the demand was there in existing geography, it made more sense to open in the existing geography as there would be cost synergies. Mentioned the Hub and spoke model of distribution. Eventually talked about any partnerships with other retail chains that could have been beneficial.

Recommendations/ Synthesis: Was asked to synthesize the case. Synthesis was difficult because the case had a lot of content. So, I took a few minutes and summarized the entire discussion in a structured manner.

	Your Comments (if any): I felt my case went well and I got the same feedback from a Bain official post the round as well.
What went well?	<p>1. I was able to keep the interviewer interested. Kept it like a discussion rather than an exam in which I had to crack the case. Also, bringing out real world examples helped as it showed how well I could think on the spot.</p> <p>2. I was regularly asking for time to think (20-30 seconds 2-3 times in the case). Ask for time and be crisp with points rather than random faafing.</p> <p>3. Structuring – On placement day, you can't afford to recall frameworks in the interview. It has to come out subconsciously and this only happens when you practiced all kinds of cases. Also, remember to structure your recommendations/summary</p>
What could have been done better?	I could have come up with better points for cost synergies. Initially I did not catch why opening a store at existing location could be better than opening at a new location. I was thinking from a Top-line perspective while she wanted a margin perspective. Also, this was my 5 <sup>th</sup> interview and I was hurrying a little. Made sure I did not hurry in other rounds

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Only Case (Data based)
Duration	30 Mins
Interviewer Name/Designation	Lalit Reddy/Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> There was no PI. It was a disadvantage for me. Talking about my Extra-currics I was able to make the interviewer interested usually. Lalit said let's do a case straightaway</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: Growth strategy Problem statement: Luxury apparel retail chain based out of the US with stores in locations like New York 5<sup>th</sup> avenue (Premium locations) was witnessing below average growth.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Asked the magnitude of the problem upfront. (7% - Industry average was 10%). Was shown a graph with industry average 10%, competitor 1 – 10%, Competitor 2 – 8%, Client – 7%. Asked straightaway how come the average was 10%, it seemed lesser to me. Lalit said good point, and showed another slide that</p>

	<p>contained sales data and it had online as a competitor as well with above average growth. Asked more about the number of stores and also if was growth a problem in a few stores or for few products. Was told it was a problem across all stores.</p> <p>Frameworks used: No particular framework. The interview was interviewer driven and he asked me questions throughout the case.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: He asked me on what parameters would I classify the customers for a premium brand. I said Income. He asked what other factors and I was not able to think the 2 other basic factors that he was looking for. He was looking for basic parameters like age and gender. I was probably thinking too much. At this point, he showed me another graph (3<sup>rd</sup>) which had the sales data with respect to the age. Now he asked me to use the 3 graphs to give some insights to the client. I gave some basic insights like which segment was buying our client's product vs who was buying competitors. He wanted a more thorough analysis. I gave him a few more points that 35-50 was the right age bracket to target and had maximum potential in luxury segment because people at this age are at the peak of their career (like VPs and Senior managers) and buy luxury products to maintain social status in their peer group. He liked this point however he wanted me to do a thorough analysis with respect to a competitor and competitor's portfolio</p> <p>Recommendations: Recommended to target the 35-50 segment. Talked about marketing plans to target the segment (STP analysis). Spoke about online presence with a standalone website of the brand. Also talked about celebrity endorsement.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): I felt my case did not go very well and I got the same feedback and I had to give a 3<sup>rd</sup> round. Also, be ready to get some data in any case in any interview. Don't be nervous if something unusual comes up that you might not have practiced for. Just think with an open mind in a structured way. Eventually with a lot of case practice, frameworks and sub frameworks come out subconsciously according to cases so practice a lot.</p>
What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial scoping was good. I was able to ask the right questions and was proceeding well in the case</li> <li>2. I had done a few marketing cases so recommendations were nice</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	I was not able to think what the interviewer was thinking and couldn't catch the right direction in the middle of the case. It was a bad miss because I was thinking it to be a complex problem while it was not

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI + Case

Duration	30 Mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Prateek Majumdar/Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  General tell me about yourself – Told him about my prior work-ex in analytics and my passion for music and sports. My extra-currics were a plus for me so made sure I bring it out to hook him into the conversation.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  Type of Case: Growth strategy  Problem statement: Mindtree an IT solutions firm is looking to grow its business. How would you go about it?</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: I actually had stocks of Mindtree in my portfolio so started the conversation by telling him this. Had a small conversation regarding a few IT stocks in the market and my rationale behind a couple of investments. Post this asked about the business model of Mindtree. Coming from EXL services I knew it would work on the KPO model with billable FTEs, so, just confirmed this with him. He said yes. Asked about the product/service portfolio, existing geographical footprint, existing customer base. He said the current clients were only from the USA</p> <p>Frameworks used: Growth strategy</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Started by laying out the growth strategy framework. Laid out the Ansoff matrix for clients vs geographies. He asked me what KPIs will I look for in evaluating growth. I said revenues per partner, clients per partner, margins per partner etc. He said lets focus on revenues per partner and clients per partner. Drew a 2 by 2 matrix (Revenues – low, high and Clients – small number, large number). Analyses each bucket in detail and gave recommendations for each bucket</p> <p>Recommendations: Common recommendation across the 4 buckets was to cross sell and upsell the products/services. Also, add more partners if looking to expand in new geographies like Europe. Also, expand more partners if the partners time is already 100% utilized. He asked who should be fired. I said the partners with a lot of clients and low revenues should be fired.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): I felt my case went well. Also, I had practiced the same case before with friend so knew exactly how to use the growth strategy framework in this. The KPI and the matrix was something that I dint practice before but I knew thinking with an open mind would help me solve it. Prateek gave me the offer after the case.</p>
What went well?	1. I was able to make the interviewer interested by talking about why I invested in Mindtree.

	<p>2. I was able to keep like a discussion. Even if I fumbled slightly, Prateek helped me out.</p> <p>3. I had practiced plenty of recommendations for growth strategy cases and they came in handy.</p>
What could have been done better?	I stalled a little in one bucket. But then it was not that big an issue. You don't really know what the interviewer might exactly be looking for so don't panic. Just keep your calm, proceed with the case and take direction. Keep it like a discussion and everything goes well.

7.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Karan Singh Chhabra
Company interviewing for	Bain & Company
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Amit Shah, Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Private Equity</p> <p>Problem statement: A private equity investor is evaluating a plastic goods manufacturer for an acquisition. They have hired Bain to conduct the commercial due diligence. Should they go ahead and make the purchase?</p> <p>Scoping questions asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PE Firm: Understood about their existing portfolio. What is their hurdle rate? Why this industry? Why this company?</li> <li>2. Target: What does the manufacturer make? There was some industry jargon used as well in the initial question (which I do not remember). So clarified those as well. Understood the entire value chain. Who are the suppliers / who are the customers?</li> </ol> <p>Frameworks used:</p>

	<p>I had created my own structures prior to the interview for each type of case. So drew out the structure to cover (Note: this is indicative and not exhaustive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulatory environment (given the nature of the industry, wanted to understand if there were any current / upcoming regulation regarding the plastic industry)</li> <li>• Industry             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Size</li> <li>◦ Growth</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Competition             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Market shares</li> <li>◦ Product differentiation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Customer             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What are the purchase drivers?</li> <li>◦ How long are the contracts with customers?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Post this, I was asked to size the market. I clarified if I should do a bottom up approach or a top down approach. The interview became more of a discussion, where I explained how I would go about each of them.</p> <p>The formula I arrived at was          Total market size = Average price per bottle x number of plastic bottles per kg x gross weight of plastic bottles sold</p> <p>Then I was asked, how would I go about it in a real life scenario.          I mentioned that I would pull the gross weight of plastic bottles sold from Euromonitor, do a market survey to understand the average prices of the plastic bottles and finally buy some plastic bottles and physically weigh them to get to the number of plastic bottles per kg.</p> <p>The manager was impressed and asked me if I had any questions for him.</p>
What went well?	The interview became more of a discussion and we discussed on the lines of how I would do this if I were on the case. Since I was able to come up with creative ideas and the interviewer liked this aspect (he mentioned this later)
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Lalit Reddy, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Declining Market Share</p> <p>Problem statement: A luxury clothing brand is underperforming compared to competition</p> <p>The interview was driven by exhibits and I did not use any framework. The partner kept showing me exhibits and asked extremely pointed questions.</p> <p>To illustrate, I was shown an exhibit with revenue growth numbers of the total premium clothing industry along with those of 3 major players and was asked for insights based on the chart.</p> <p>Overall the story was our client was not targeting the right age demographic and was not in the e-commerce space.</p> <p>Post this, I got the offer.</p>
What went well?	This was a very non-conventional interview and the partner was happy with the insights I provided.
What could have been done better?	I think I was a little hesitant in providing recommendations prematurely. For instance, I said that there seems to be a correlation in the shopping habits of 40-50 years and online sales, but would recommend the client to conduct consumer surveys to confirm this hypothesis. When the partner pushed me to take a stand I said I would recommend that the client enter the ecommerce space to target the 40-50 year old.

8.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aashish Sharma
Company interviewing for	Bain and Company
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Anant Bhagwati, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p>Questions: Where are you from? How are you feeling? So what drives Aashish Sharma?</p> <p>Answer: I talked about “impact” as the core theme which drives me and substantiated with examples from my time in undergraduate studies, profession and voluntary engagements.</p> <p><b><u>Case</u></b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability in disguise</p> <p>Problem statement: The client is a finance and accounting BPO. This type of BPO offers services such as bookkeeping, Payroll processing, Tax preparation, Financial reporting, etc. They are inviting bids from consulting firms to help them reduce costs. How will you go about preparing for the first meeting with the client?</p> <p>Scoping questions asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being a very detailed problem statement, I reiterated it in a concise manner to highlight my understanding and clarify any doubts. I further stated that the first meeting is about highlighting the approach one would follow as part of our analysis of the client’s problem.</li> <li>2. Clarified the understanding of this business. How many centers do they have and where are they located?</li> <li>3. Who are their competitors? Similar other firms, fragmented market.</li> <li>4. Who are the clients? 200 US Based clients; 10% projects in India; 90% projects in US.</li> <li>5. Are there any other revenue streams? How do they charge their clients? There are two ways in which they charge their clients – Price / dedicated employee and, Price / month. The distribution is 50-50 among the clients for the two ways.</li> </ol> <p>Frameworks used: Cost part of profitability. Broke down the costs into Fixed and Variable.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Fixed costs: Utilities; Software Subscriptions; SG&amp;A (Salaries, Administrative Expenses, Marketing expenses) and Rentals. Variable costs: Variable costs of delivering services.</p> <p>After pausing for few seconds, I started walking the interviewer through my approach. I started off in the order it was written on my sheet. Anant intervened and asked me which is the most dominant cost head. I answered Salaries and then he asked to dive deeper into that.</p> <p>I took a few seconds to break down “Salaries” as #Employees x Avg. salary / employee and gather my thoughts.</p>

	<p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: My recommendations to reduce the number of employees were 1. Improving efficiency of the employees by cross-training, skilling, etc. 2. Exploring opportunities of automating some of the tasks. To reduce the average salary/employee, I recommended 1. Replacing high salaried employees by low salaried people on certain non-critical, repeatable, tasks. 2. Moving operations to 2-tier cities to cut down on the salaries they had to pay to their employees.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any):</p>
What went well?	The rapport I could build with Anant right in the beginning helped me navigate through the interview smoothly. Anant was very helpful and happy with the discussions we had. He seemed very pleased with the interview and wished me luck for the day.
What could have been done better?	While walking the interviewer through my cost breakdown, I started in the order it was written on my sheet. I should have started with the most important cost head of Salaries.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Prateek Majumdar, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b>          "This is a nice bag", exclaimed Prateek as I settled down into the chair for the interview. This is how our conversation kicked off. We spent 2-3 minutes talking about leather bags and leather spas. He then asked me which all countries I have been to. That went on for a few more minutes.</p> <p><b>Case</b>          Type of Case: Profitability/Market Entry          Problem statement: A New York based bank want to set up their IT infrastructure. Should they go for a captive model or outsource it to a company in India such as Infosys or TCS.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: 1. Clarified the objective. 2. Understood the business. 3. What was their objective to move to India? Prateek replied "Cost, Talent and Technological Advancement".</p> <p>Frameworks used:</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</p>

	<p>Listed down the three parameters – Cost, Talent and Technological Advancement – and started comparing the two models – Captive and Outsourcing on the three parameters.</p> <p>The interviewer mentioned that 400 people in the captive model were equivalent to 370 in the outsourcing model. And the salaries in the outsourcing model were 10% lower in the outsourcing model. The outsourcing company charges 30% margin on its total costs. Doing the maths, Outsourcing came out to be 8% expensive than the captive model.</p> <p>Interviewer then asked me how does the outsourcing industry is thriving. The catch here was that the salaries mentioned in the case for like vs like people. However, in case of outsourcing, the firms employ people with lower work-experience and hence able to pay them lower. They are okay at having high attrition rates as their business entails massive scale hiring from engineering colleges across the country, providing internal training and hence maintaining a low-cost structure.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b></p> <p>Your Comments (if any): Do's – a. Keep the interviewer engaged. Attempt to strike conversations. Build a connect with the interviewer. Be enthusiastic during the interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Walk the interviewer through your approach. If stuck somewhere, layout your understanding and interviewer will guide you.</li> <li>c. Keep a target of around 2 cases/day. Make sure to reflect back on learnings from each case.</li> </ul> <p>Don'ts – a. Don't ramble.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Don't try to fit in a framework. No matter how many frameworks you practice, it is the logic and your structural thinking that will help you cross the line.</li> <li>c. Don't stick to one line of thought. Be open to feedback.</li> </ul>
What went well?	Again, the key was to get into a comfortable conversation with the interviewer right in the beginning of the interview.
What could have been done better?	I should have begun my analysis in a more structured manner. Also, I wasn't at my best in doing the numbers quickly. The interviewer had to push me twice or thrice to make me think of the reasons enabling the viability of outsourcing industry.

9.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Mrigank Sanghvi
Company interviewing for	Bain & Company
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Anant Bhagwati, Partner, Telecom Media Tech
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p><i>This interview was 90% PI based on the ECA section of my resume with a very small analytical question based on the discussion that we had as part of the PI.</i></p> <p>Anant was closely associated with the social impact initiatives at Bain and thus asked me a few questions related to the volunteering work that I had done over the years and my thoughts on it.</p> <p>The interview started out with basic questions around what the organisations I had worked for. What did these organisations do? How were they structured? What was my role? What were the different projects I was associated with?</p> <p>I answered these with ease as they were very basic questions.</p> <p>But after a point of time, he really started to slightly more difficult questions which were related to my personal opinions. We discussed a few grim realities about student volunteering and I spoke very passionately which was appreciated by the interviewer.</p> <p>At the end of the interview we had a small brief discussion on what makes any social enterprise sustainable. I structured the discussion in a Model-People-Process type way.</p> <p><b><u>Key Learning:</u></b></p> <p>As a consulting aspirant, we take PI slightly lightly as typically not more than 5-10 minutes are spent on it. But it is possible that even a small bit in your resume can be discussed in great depth.</p>
What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fortunately, I was extremely relaxed and had purposefully done almost zero preparation for this section because I wanted to speak from my heart. Also, do feel free to take a stand and give your honest opinions.</li> <li>2. I happened to give very specific instances/stories to the questions that were asked and got a very positive response from the interviewer on these stories.</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	The interview soon became mostly about fit. None of my analytical skills were tested at all. This put a lot of pressure on my following round, wherein there was no PI at all and we jumped straight into a case.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Lalit Reddy, Partner, Private Equity and Financial Investor's Practice
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>I was told before the interview that my round 1 went well but that there was no real technical check and therefore the next one will predominantly be a case. The interviewer had a quick look at my resume and directly told me that we will jump into the case. There were no PI questions asked before the case. This limited my ability to establish a rapport with my interviewer.</p> <p>Post the case, the interviewer asked me for my CGPA since it was not printed on the resume (Tip: Print and carry the CAS copy for interview and not the file that you submit on the portal)</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Declining Market Share</p> <p><b>Format:</b> The interview had a set of slides that he showed one after the other and asked for our inferences and thoughts on the same. (Tip: I knew that Bain laid a lot of emphasis on hypotheses generation. So, I ensured that I was laying out all the possibilities in front of the interviewer.)</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a retailer based in the US who is experiencing declining market share (in terms of revenue).</p> <p><b>Scoping Questions:</b> What sort of products do they sell? Single brand/Multi brand? Details of the value chain?</p> <p>The interviewer told me that they were high end apparel multi brand chain with stores in high end malls and hi-streets. I asked if this was something like 'The Collective' in India and he said yes something similar. (Tip: If you get a vague idea of who the client may be then do check with the interviewer. So, if the interviewer mentions that client is a food delivery app, then mention something like a Zomato/Swiggy. This will help you to relate to the business model)</p> <p><b>Analysis:</b></p> <p>Slide 1:</p>

The interviewer showed me a graph in which the industry growth was equal to or higher than the growth rate of our client and its competitors and asked for my thoughts on it. I told him that the graph does not show all the players in the market and there is definitely at least one other player(s) who is growing at a higher rate which is pulling the industry growth upwards.

Slide 2:

On this slide he showed the complete bar chart which had another online player who was growing at a much higher rate. We discussed why that can be and a brief discussion on online vs physical stores. I brought out some insights from my previous work ex as well.

Then the interviewer asked me how I would classify customers. I instantly said Income and Age. The interviewer said you are missing one more very essential one. It took me almost 30 seconds of struggle to come up with gender. (Tip: I felt very stupid knowing that I couldn't come up with gender. In moments like this don't panic. These moments aren't really make or break. Also thinking simple helps. If I would have been slightly more chilled out I wouldn't have missed something as simple as gender)

Slide 3:

On the slide there was a stacked bar chart for the client and two of its competitors with sales split by age.

I took a one full minute of silence to thoroughly read the chart and noted the age groups which dominate the sales for the competitor with the highest growth rate (say company 1) and the age groups that dominate the sales for the competitor with the lowest growth rate (say company 2). Herein, I started setting up my hypotheses stating that the reason for higher growth rate for company 1 could be because they target the age group of 45-55. This could be because they have made enough money in their lives/are stable/have kids who are of a certain age/settled etc. etc. I laid out a variety of reasons and I could sense that the interviewer was satisfied. Similarly, I went on to discuss the reasons why company 2 had the least growth and why our client also didn't have a higher growth rate. This was predominantly because of poor targeting- either a younger age group was being targeted wherein they have lower incomes, lower savings, higher expenses etc. or that they were targeting much older people where again they have retired and wish to save for a rainy day. It was essential to move beyond just reading the graph and giving other reasons as to why a particular age group works/doesn't work for this kind of a business.

Solution:

Post this we moved on to the solutions bit. The interviewer asked me what I would recommend to the client. I laid out a complete declining market share structure (Awareness-Likability-Accessibility or similar) (Tip: Please don't use the phrase

	Awareness-Likability-Accessibility and come up with something else) and stated my other hypotheses beyond the age group insight that should be looked at basis the structure and can be a source of problem/growth. I tried to provide one-two solutions on each point. The interviewer stopped me mid-way and seemed satisfied. We had a brief discussion on how mass-market advertising would dilute brand-image. I had a few out-of-box ideas such as private viewings, social media marketing, partnerships with banks to target HNIs etc. We also spoke to how best to get the growth out of online platforms. We discussed Amazon vs Self vs 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party. I did mention that while numbers suggest that growth is available if products are sold online it should not be at the cost of losing what the business has-both in terms of its current customer base and its brand image and it is essential to assess what are the kinds of capabilities that the client currently has, what are the capabilities that are required, and if it is possible to bridge the gap at all or not.
What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is important to lay out all the possibilities in front of the interviewer. I went with the thought process that nothing should be missed and that the interviewer should feel that I have covered all bases. I received positive feedback that I brought a business perspective more than an engineer perspective towards solving the case</li> <li>2. I took two good long breaks and wasn't uncomfortable with them. Post that I had enough content to speak for a few minutes. I feel that while it may have been slightly awkward for the interviewer, I ensured that I had enough content post that to make up for the silence</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	<p>I didn't do a very neat job on my sheet. This I believed could have been done better especially in the solutions bit.</p> <p>In the low bits of interview, I felt I should have been slightly calmer. The interviewer helped me in these times.</p>

10.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Pooja Jose
Company interviewing for	Bain and Company
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	40 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Prateek Majumdar, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b> Had a very short conversation (less than 5 minutes) on a point on my ECA regarding music. At the end, he asked me as a joke whether I'd like to sing out the case solution instead of speaking it. There was a ha-ha and we moved on to the case.</p> <p><b>Case</b> <b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability/Market Entry Problem statement: An American based bank is looking to fix their IT infrastructure. The choice is between a captive model where they handle it in-house or to outsource it to an IT services company in India.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asked to understand what exactly this IT infrastructure includes and what the business is like.</li> <li>2. Clarified the objective - understood reasons for moving business to India at all.</li> </ol> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> I made a matrix of parameters to evaluate and compare between the two options at hand. But it mainly came down to cost. Prateek then gave more details on the case as I was about to start evaluating on the basis of cost. 400 people in the captive model were equivalent to 370 in the outsourcing model. Salaries were 10% lower in the outsourcing model. But, the outsourcing company also charges a 30% margin on its total costs. Post doing the calculations (not my strong point, so I took it very slow and walked him through every step which was also giving me time to make sure I was doing the right math). Outsourcing came out to be more expensive than the captive model.</p> <p>However, then the discussion began on whether it still makes sense to do it in-house, even though the cost is lower. He asked me specifically why I think the outsourcing industry is so large and why it's successful. It went onto a discussion of how hiring happens at these organisations and how they manage to hire skilled employees with low experience for very low costs - they go to different tiers of engineering colleges across the country, they manage to hire in large numbers and at a cost that smaller companies cannot compete with. When a company hires for a captive center, they will look for skilled professionals with considerable work experience. And hence the cost is actually higher. The initial salary mentioned was for these kind of people on both sides, but in reality, the cost for outsourcing turns out lower, since salaries are lower for them. Their overall cost of operations would also be lower due to economies of scale.</p> <p><b>Your Comments:</b> Do's - a. Be open - ask questions wherever you have doubts and clear them.</p>

	Don'ts – a. Don't be too stubborn or try to seem like you know everything in the business or the particular case. b. Don't try to force fit any framework.
What went well?	Walking the interviewer through my thought process - it led to better discussions and avoided gaps in communication.
What could have been done better?	1. Structuring the problem and its solution 2. Calculations should've been done quicker

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ramji, Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> - very short, basic tell me about yourself question. He didn't seem very interested to be honest.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Growth strategy</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> The head of wires unit of a steel manufacturer has seen stagnant tonnage and revenues in the last 3 years. They want to double their volumes within the next 5 years, while maintaining profitability. How should they do this?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What is the product exactly? – There are flats and longs - flats take up 70% of tonnage, and longs take up 30%. Out of the longs, 45%-50% are wires, and the rest are rebars - which implies wires unit contributes to about 15% of overall revenue</li> <li>2) Who are the customers? – 70% B2C (within which 80% is used for fencing and 20% for farming), 30% B2B (50% auto/ trucks and 50% infra)</li> <li>3) Geographical presence? – All over the country; asked specifically about plants - then instead of location information, he gave me the info that some are owned and some are franchise units</li> <li>4) Do we export anything? – 15% to SAARC countries</li> <li>5) Who is our competition? - there are some strong regional players and the market is largely unorganised</li> <li>6) What does the value chain look like? – We are part of a larger industrial conglomerate. The parent company helps us in sourcing of the raw material. (Asked a follow up question on whether this could be a constraint, was told that yes, raw material capacity could be a limiting factor for growth)</li> </ol>

**Frameworks used:** Ansoff matrix as a basic starting point on where the growth can occur.

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:** Using the Ansoff matrix, post discussion, ruled out possibilities of any new product. It was a standardised product. So only possibility was to improve presence in the existing markets and to see if new markets could be explored.

The value chain was discussed shortly where he told me that there are raw materials which are being sourced by the parent company, then brought to the plant and then through further transportation, they were moved to the B2B customers and distributors who then took the product to the B2C customers.

At this point, he asked me to not do any further analysis and to tell him what I think the recommendations should be based on my prior consulting experience (although I have only worked on completely unrelated sectors)

I took a couple minutes at this point and structured my recommendations in the form of suggestions to improve B2B and B2C business:

B2B:

1. There was a threat of regional players taking over - so suggested putting in place better sales and marketing professionals and systems in place
2. Try to increase number of large orders - he mentioned demand is seasonal and hence the supply also suffers, so spoke about inventory management systems and better demand forecasting methods to make sure this doesn't happen. This discussion also further went into how to manage this demand fluctuation by having flexible manufacturing systems wherein some of the franchise units are instead maybe leased out short term to cater to the seasonality etc.
3. Expanding presence abroad - Especially through B2B since the flow of business would also be more stable here and suggested looking into the possibility of offsetting seasonal demand locally with the demand abroad
4. Price discrimination based on the grades of the product provided - especially to compete with the local/ regional players

Here, did not suggest discounts on bulk orders or introducing any kind of reward schemes etc. since he had mentioned maintaining profitability and these would increase cost incurred (clarified with the interviewer as well)

B2C: Given the company was a national player, the prices were standardised and the biggest threat of competition was from local/ regional players playing on price and quick supply of products. So suggested the following:

1. Improving distributor coverage - while suggesting this, also checked with him on whether this is an issue and he mentioned that there are certain geographies where this could be, so this was a valid point. This sorts out the quick supply issue. So again, an improved sales network and system.

	<p>2. Price benchmarking study - Post review and and a go-ahead from management, suggested to consider benchmarking prices of our products with the local products, especially considering the quality of our products provided.</p> <p><b>Your Comments:</b></p> <p>When the interviewer stopped me from performing any more analysis and jump to recommendations, I was a bit stumped. I guess key is to remain calm in these situations and not be suddenly overwhelmed.</p>
What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The detailed scoping also helped me form my recommendations - scoping was probably longer than average time taken, but it was somewhat more of a discussion than just Q&amp;A, so that helped me a lot.</li><li>2. The short break I took before recommendations really helped me sort out my thoughts and filter out the relevant and irrelevant information</li></ol>
What could have been done better?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. My recommendations felt a bit repetitive to me as I said them out loud, so I could have probably worded them better</li><li>2. I did not enter the digital angle of solutions at all which was a big part of how they actually executed this project</li></ol>

# The Boston Consulting Group

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Neeraj Krishna Giridharan
Company interviewing for	The Boston Consulting Group
Number of rounds	4

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Guesstimate+Case+PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Nikhil Sethi, Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  Nikhil first asked me to walk me through my resume. We spoke a bit about my startups. He commented that work at BCG may not be as interesting and asked why I would want to leave such interesting work and join BCG. I explained why working at BCG at this stage in my career perfectly fit my future growth aspirations.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Startup valuation/ VC investment</p> <p><b>Problem Statement:</b> Our client is an angel investor who is interested in knowing the valuation of a particular startup in the recruitment industry.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b>  Does the investor have any specific objectives? No. Just want to know the valuation.  Where is the startup located and where does it operate? India  What is the business model of the startup? N  Who are the startup founders? Do they bring in some specific capabilities? Wharton grad and has done deep research in this field.  What is the current status of the startup? Are they operational? Three years into operations</p> <p><b>Framework used:</b> Modified VC investment framework (Specific to startup valuation), Market Sizing</p> <p><b>Structure/ Analysis to solve the case:</b>  Started with looking at current market factors. Nikhil directly asked me to estimate the market size. I pointed out that since the business model was akin to a marketplace that involved two sides (here jobs and candidates), it was necessary to estimate both. I estimated both using proxies for each. For the candidates, I mentioned that population estimates could be used to arrive at numbers and on the job side, job portals could be scraped (web scraping) to find out the available jobs and their</p>

	<p>number. Nikhil seemed impressed with my answer about web scraping and mentioned that's exactly how they did it.</p> <p>Nikhil then commented that since I was from a VC/ incubation background, he wanted to know how I would now go about valuing the startup in terms of what I would consider and what I won't.</p> <p>I mentioned that I would try to understand how much of the potential market the company could capture. Further I mentioned that since the space was very nascent, there would be other competitor firms who would also come into light and would need to be accounted for.</p> <p>I also added that if analyzed from the perspective of an exit that the VC firm wants, the VC firm would want to see what assets the firm has been able to build that cannot easily be replicated. In this case one example was the network of company employees who were ready to provide internal referrals.</p> <p>Nikhil seemed satisfied with my responses. We also chatted a bit regarding BCG.</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Saurabh Chhajer, Project Leader
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  Saurabh first asked me if I had any questions about BCG. I asked specific questions about cross-functional expertise building. Saurabh then directly went into the case.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Growth Strategy</p> <p><b>Problem Statement:</b> Our client is a US-based asset management firm and is looking for our help to increase its revenues.</p> <p><b>Framework used:</b> None. (Saurabh specifically advised during the case to not use any specific framework due to the unique nature of the problem)</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b>  Basic questions regarding the location and operations of our client.  What are the current revenue streams? How does our client make money?</p>

- Saurabh went ahead to explain to me about various kinds of service packages that the company offered to its clients. I clearly mentioned to Saurabh that I didn't have deep knowledge in this industry and these services seemed more like a black-box to me. Saurabh said that it was absolutely fine and I didn't need to know the details. He simplified the details and allowed me to ask more questions till I was able to understand how our client functioned, who were their clients, how our client made money and the revenue drivers. The main driver of revenue was the commissions charged.

Based on this understanding I went ahead with breaking down revenues into price and volume.

Saurabh said that it was a stagnant industry with no growth expected and almost no client switching unless some serious issues. He hence asked me to identify how the price can be increased.

I asked if better services/ returns could be provided. Saurabh said not much could be changed and wanted me to find how our client could convince its customers to pay higher without providing any better service.

I asked Saurabh about the stickiness of clients. Saurabh mentioned that if the client felt that they were being unfairly charged they could switch and hence the challenge was to rationalize why charges were higher.

I then asked Saurabh about how the charges of our client fared in the industry.

Saurabh mentioned that there were some players who charged higher and others who didn't.

I said that our client could benchmark against those who charge higher and explain to the client that the industry was moving towards such charges.

Another way I pointed out since services were always sold in specific bundles was to change prices of individual services within the bundles such that the prices of services that the client really values are benchmarked higher and others are benchmarked lower.

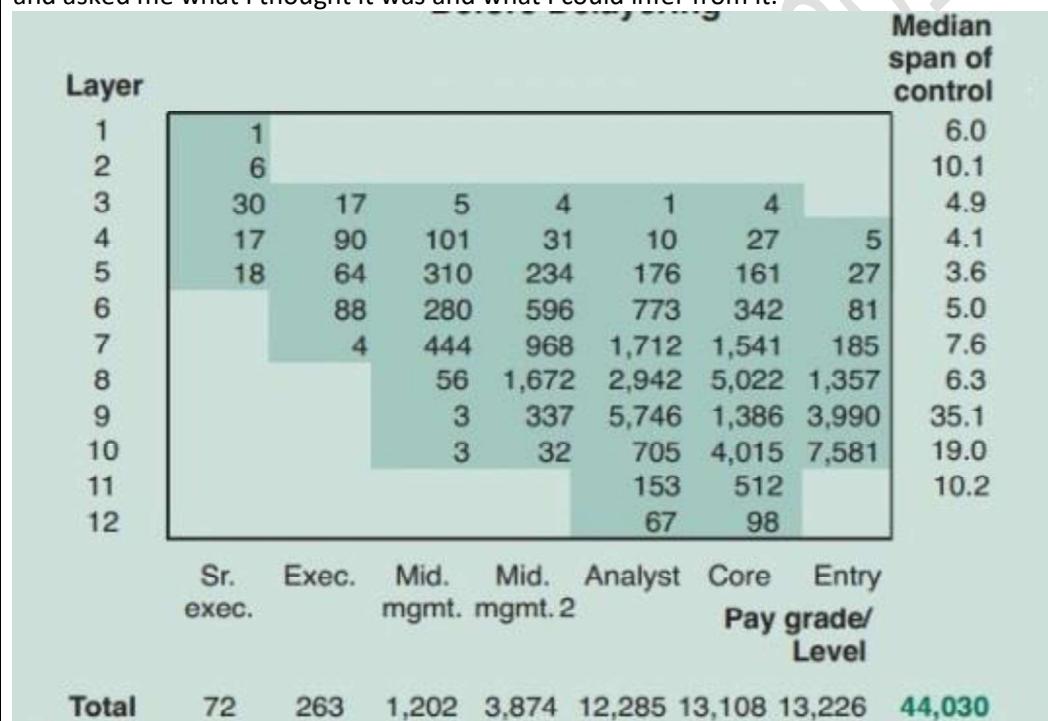
Saurabh seemed satisfied.

What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI+Case
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ankush Wadhera, Principal
Round Summary	<u>PI Questions + Case</u> <u>PI Questions</u>

(questions asked and your responses)

Walk me through your resume.  
 Why do you want to switch to consulting?  
 You have changed roles in a short span of time in the past. What was the rationale behind your change in roles? Was it purely impulsive? Is this an indicator that you won't stay at BCG for long?

**Case****Type of Case:** Visual Data interpretation**Problem Statement:** Partner showed me a chart (representative example shown below) and asked me what I thought it was and what I could infer from it.**Scoping questions asked:** None**Framework used:** None**Structure/ Analysis to solve the case:**

Based on looking at the labels of the axes, I was able to understand that the chart was describing the structure of an organization. Ankush asked me what all I could interpret from the chart. I started by stating things that occurred to me immediately. I pointed the following:

The numbers in the boxes were number of employees at that layer and payscale. The employee at any particular layer reported to an employee who is at least a layer and grade above. At each layer there could be managers and individual contributors. The individual at the top left corner must be the CEO of the company. The 6 individuals in the layer below must be CXOs. The layer below would likely have heads of departments.

	<p>Ankush then asked me to think of other broader interpretations I could draw from the chart.</p> <p>Based on looking at the chart from an overall sense, I observed that there were large number of employees at the lowest layers and payscales and very few in the layer immediately above. I pointed out that the organization must be a manufacturing type company in which a supervisor manages large number of technicians. Ankush agreed and said in this case it was a BPO which is analogous to a manufacturing setup in the sense of having a supervisor manage large number of employees.</p> <p>Ankush asked to then think of any issue with the organization I'm able to observe. I pointed out that the span of control was erratically changing, and the overall structure looked more like a diamond rather than a pyramid. I suggested that probably the organization is either underutilizing managers or has incompetent managers.</p> <p>Ankush seemed happy with this response and allowed me to ask questions regarding BCG.</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	4
Type of Round	PI+Case
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Saibal Chakraborty, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>            Walk me through your resume.            Details of specific work ex related to the tech industry.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Abstract</p> <p><b>Problem Statement:</b> Saibal showed me the investment brochure of the Government of Bangladesh. Our client is TCS and they want to decide whether investing in Bangladesh would be worthwhile.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b>            What do we mean by TCS investing here? Setting up a campus for operations</p>

Are we specifically referring to the core business of TCS (software services)? Are there any other sources of revenues to be considered here? Are the potential sources of revenue only international or also domestic?

**Framework used:** None but borrowed a bit from Market Entry

**Structure/ Analysis to solve the case:**

Started by analyzing what all TCS would look for to set up a campus in any city. I divided this into setup and operational requirements and listed down financial, operational, strategic aspects and risks pertaining to each. Saibal was satisfied with this and asked me to map these to the information that was provided in the brochure. I was able to find most of the things I had mentioned as part of the brochure and the overall costs were lower as compared to India. I hence concluded that the overall offer of the Government of Bangladesh seemed to be lucrative but I felt lower costs were accompanied by risks that I had outlined earlier. Saibal said that there was something in the brochure that could prove as a deal-breaker and asked me to look for it. After scanning through the brochure for couple of minutes, I was able to identify that the size of internal market for software services in Bangladesh was comparable to the revenues of TCS (in terms of order). I hence concluded that TCS hence would not only benefit by the lower cost but will also have access to an underserved market.

Saibal was happy with my observation and asked me to wait outside. A few minutes later Saibal came out to congratulate me and give me the offer.

What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Akshay Chawla
Company interviewing for	BCG
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI+Case

Duration	30 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Your client is the IT ministry of Bangladesh and they have hired you to help them figure out the following: a) What should be the pitch for foreign investors to setup operations in Bangladesh? b) Identify countries where domestic companies should expand their business to?</p> <p>I started by clarifying the objective and recalled a discussion that potential clients are asking three questions before partnering – has the firm/country done similar work before, does the firm/country have skills to do the work and can this be a long term partnership. Started with this as my structure and refined it throughout the discussion, adding elements like financials, risk, IT infrastructure.</p> <p>Then, conversation turned towards how will you differentiate from competitors. I initially focused on selling cost advantage and doing a competitive benchmarking of different costs. I was told that the costs are the same in India and Bangladesh. So, I focused on differentiation strategy and discussed how the internal economy was doing. I realized that IT is a booming industry in Bangladesh and recommended increasing taxes or bringing in regulations to allow foreign players to access the market.</p> <p>The discussion then focused on the second objective. I was given a list of countries and asked to select where should the domestic companies expand to. Since, there was a little time left, I straight away pointed out that middle east looked like an attractive option. I mentioned that language can be a problem with China and Japan, and that developed economies like US and Europe are looking for disrupting the industry with automation and AI not outsourcing. I also emphasized that middle east is spending a lot of money on attracting foreign investment and could be an equal partner.</p> <p>Since we were over time, the case discussion ended around this.</p>
What went well?	I was able to draw quite a few parallels from my prior experience and industry knowledge.
What could have been done better?	Time management could have been better.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI+Case
Duration	30 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Principal

Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Your client is an electric motor company which has observed a decline in profitability. I was also told at the start itself about what is the product, who are the customers and what was the market like. I was asked to look into the costs.</p> <p>I asked about the key cost components and identified that cost for copper had increased significantly and it was the major driver for the decline in profitability. I was asked what should they do.</p> <p>I recommended either focusing on copper costs or focusing on other costs (to make up for the increased cost in copper). In copper cost I broke it down by number of windings on motor, circumferences of one winding and area of the wire. I was asked to look at substitutes and wastage also. On optimizing cost in other areas, I looked into operational and financial elements and listed down ideas around each.</p> <p>I wasn't asked to synthesize the case and discussion turned back towards PI.</p>
What went well	MECE structure for analysis as well as recommendations
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI+Case
Duration	30 min
Interviewer Name/Designation	PL
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Your client is an entrepreneur who wants to assess whether to buy a graphite mine in Tanzania. How will you value the mine?</p> <p>I started with understanding the key characteristics of the mine and figured out that key focus was on a special flake that was only found in mines in Tanzania. This flake was used in electric car batteries. I laid out a structure leveraging DCF model but the discussion quickly turned towards understanding what are the risks involved and how they can be quantified. I broke down risks into mine specific and external risks and identified a couple of risks.</p> <p>I was asked to quantify the impact of two specific risks – discovery risk i.e. what if estimated percentage of special flake was not as expected, and the risk of doing business in Tanzania. As a structure, I looked at probability for different special flake estimates and valuation for each estimate. To estimate probabilities for different special flake estimates, I looked at primary and secondary research. For primary</p>

	<p>research, I drew parallels from Oil and Gas industry and for secondary research, I recommended looking at other mines. For cost of doing business in Tanzania, I asked if we are thinking of doing a JV or have any political connections. The answer to both was no. Then, I drew a similar structure for the risk of doing business in Tanzania, but focused on probabilities around government seizing mines, increase in taxes etc. I gave examples of using social media, rare event modeling etc. for estimating probabilities.</p> <p>I wasn't asked to synthesize the case and in the end, I asked whether it was an actual case and what they actually did.</p>
What went well?	Keeping the structure simple
What could have been done better?	The focus on risks could have been discovered in the scoping part itself.

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Apoorv Singh Saini
Company interviewing for	The Boston Consulting Group (BCG)
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 Mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Rachit Mathur, Partner and MD
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Rachit went through my resume and asked me about my work experience at Amazon. The operations director at Amazon happened to be a good friend of his and he asked me about any projects that I had done under him. There were specific questions about Amazon's temperature-controlled warehouses as the partner was working with a firm that operates similar warehouses for large E-commerce firms in the country.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Declining Market Share</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a large snack manufacturer that entered India 20 years back and its market share has declined from 60% to 40% in the last 10 years.</p>

Identify the root cause and provide recommendations. The partner was posing as the client's Chief Marketing Officer.

**Scoping questions asked:**

1 – What product lines do we have and where have we witnessed the maximum loss of market share? – Our key products are in the salted snacks segment (Chips, etc.) and this is the focus area

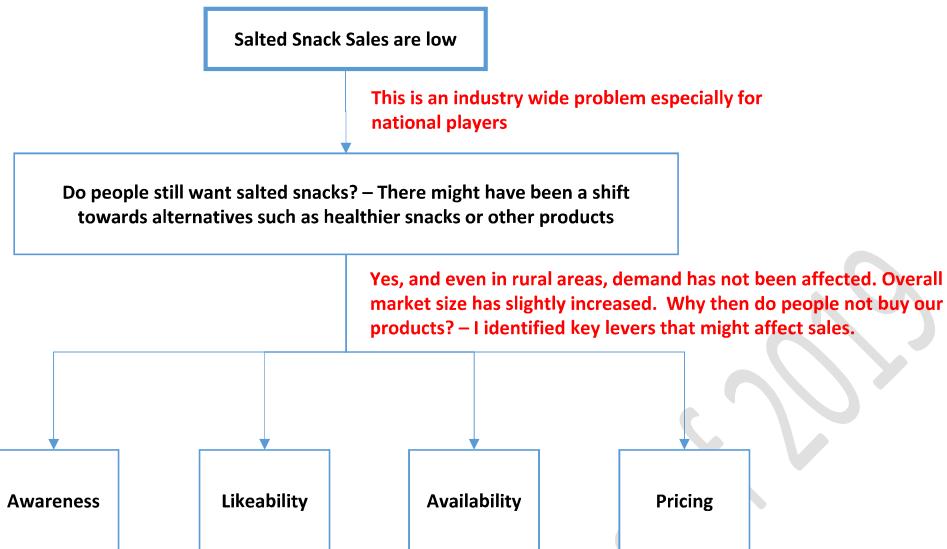
2 - What part of the value chain do we control – do we own manufacturing units also?  
– Yes, we own manufacturing units, we have two, one in Maharashtra and one in Uttar Pradesh.

3 - Information about other competitors. Have they faced a similar market share loss?  
– There are 2 major competitors in the organized sector with national presence who collectively owned 30% of the market 10 years back. They have lost ~10% of their share too. New regional competitors have emerged, and they are the ones stealing this share.

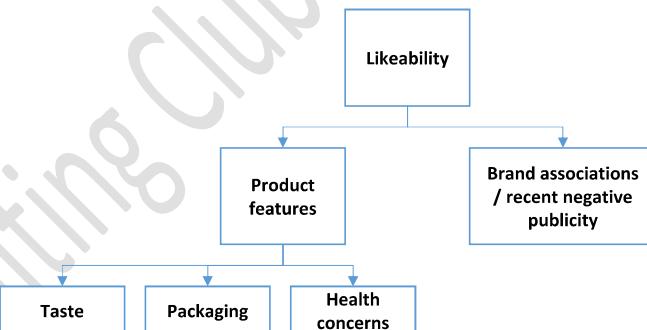
4 – Have the competitors emerged in specific regions and where have our markets been affected the most? – Pan India, most states have witnessed the rise of such smaller players and no state level trends are available. There however is a Rural-urban divide. We have been worst hit in Rural areas.

**Frameworks used:** No standard frameworks could be used, and I started drawing an issue tree with the key question to be addressed being – Why are our chips not selling in rural areas.

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:** I would recommend solving cases with a very first principle approach and this is where issue trees come in handy. I tried to break down the case and assess competitive reactions that might be leading to a decline in market share at each level. It is also important to validate each level of the issue tree and engage the interviewer in a conversation about your thought process behind drawing it.



As the problem was predominant in rural areas, availability and pricing seemed more important to me. Once I had drawn this structure, Rachit however told me that this is a likeability issue and people in the rural areas are not preferring our products any longer even when prices have remained the same. I tried to drill down further using the below structure,



I had asked about any recent changes that we did to our products and any new product features that our competitors might have introduced while discussing this structure and Rachit told me that yes this indeed was the key problem area. The firm had introduced variants such as 'Cream and Onion' and 'Spanish Tango' that people in Rural areas could not associate much with. Regional brands that had more relatable flavor names in Hindi / other languages were hence picking up as their manufacturing quality was improving.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** Rachit did not ask me to summarize the case and there was a small discussion around recommendations where he himself told me that this was an actual case and the company introduced flavors that had better local connect and made a series of acquisitions of such brands (Uncle Chips, Kurkure, etc.)

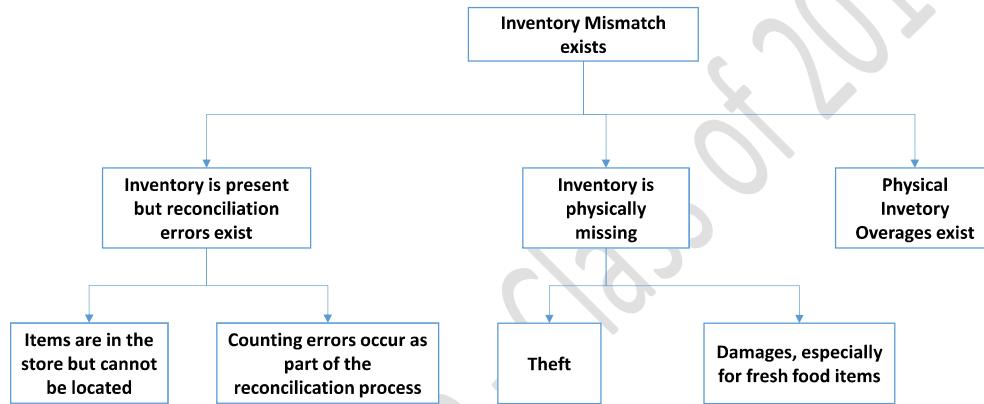
What went well?	Rachit was happy with the structure that I had used and told me how he liked that I had asked about the product line of the firm right at the outset. PI went well for me and even during the case interview he kept asking me questions related to Amazon. At the end of the interview I had asked him about his opinion on how consulting will evolve with the rise of E-commerce firms and he really liked discussing this as he happened to lead a few E-commerce operations related projects at BCG.
What could have been done better?	The structure that I was using could have been more comprehensive and I did not use the initial data that he had provided anywhere in the discussion.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	25 Mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Abhishek Bhatia, Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Abhishek asked me to take him through my resume. I had done an ELP with Dell's strategy team and he asked me for three key problem areas that we identified and recommendations that we had provided for them.</p> <p><b>Case</b> <b>Type of Case:</b> Abstract (Was an Ops related case maybe because of my Amazon Ops background)</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Client is a Mom and Pop store based out of Hyderabad that has recently expanded from 1 to 6 outlets. They are struggling with inventory management and when they reconcile their inventory at the end of the month, close to 25% of the items don't match. What could be going wrong and what can the client do?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <p>1 – How is inventory mismatch measured, the 25% is in terms of what? – The mismatch figure of 25% is in terms of value of the items not the number of items for which a mismatch exists.</p> <p>2 – What product lines does the store have? – They have FMCG products, fresh fruits and vegetables, electronic items of smaller ticket sizes.</p> <p>3 – How is the 25% mismatch figure as compared to industry benchmarks? – The mismatch is high as compared to other mom and pop stores in the city.</p>

4 – Is the mismatch significant and similar across all stores or are their stores where the numbers are high – For the purpose of this discussion assume only one store has been affected, let us focus on that.

**Frameworks used:** Again, no standard frameworks could be applied. I started drawing an issue tree again and first tried to identify what inventory mismatch means and what can be the contributing levers.

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:** I used the below issue tree for solving the case,



Abhishek asked me to not focus on inventory overages. He asked me for more details on theft and damages. He liked that I had highlighted the first bucket of reconciliation errors. He asked me to draw from my inventory management learnings at Amazon and come up with recommendations for reconciliation errors and theft.

In the discussion about recommendations for reducing theft, I had asked about specific product lines that are the most affected and suggested how items that are easy to conceal, are of smaller size but higher value and can be sold outside with ease are the most lucrative and a separate location can be designed for such items. Further, the ease of stealing and theft can come both from customers and internal employees. For internal employees, better security checks can be put in place and to eliminate customer theft for high ticket items, RFID tagging can be done.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** Abhishek agreed with the recommendations that I had put forth. He told me how this again was an actual case and how his team had come up with a set of metrics to define the ease of concealment of all products and plot it against the return that a potential thief would get from stealing them. They had used this data to identify the worst affected products and to start tracking their inventory mismatch patterns.

What went well?	I had worked in the inventory management team at Amazon and that experience was very useful for solving this case. The issue tree starting points came in directly from how the inventory teams at Amazon go about solving cases.
What could have been done better?	The questions that Abhishek had asked about my ELP project could have been better answered. Top 3 challenges and recommendations should have been ready with me but I had to think about them during the interview itself.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	20 Mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bitan Datta, Partner and MD
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>          Bitan asked me to introduce myself. He asked me about experience in the previous 2 interview rounds and introduced himself, telling me about the practice areas that he specializes in. He then quickly moved on to a short case.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Revenue improvement</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> The client is an automobile manufacturer and revenues from its spare parts business have been stagnant at levels below the industry average. What are the potential problem areas and how can the client resolve them.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <p>1 – The revenue figures have been stagnant at what levels and what is the industry average? – The spare parts business contributes 6% of total revenues for the client in India however the industry average is 10-12% and even the client makes 10% of its sales through spare parts outside India.</p> <p>2 – What part of the spare parts value chain do we own? Do we manufacture parts or procure them? What are our sales channels? – We procure spares from OEMs who supply the original vehicle parts and do not manufacture parts. We have national presence and the primary sales channel is that of automobile dealers who own franchisee workshops.</p> <p>3 – What is our product line? Do we deal in commercial vehicles also? – For this case assume that this problem is specific to 4 wheelers sold to households and there are no commercial vehicles sold by the firm. In the car segment, the firm is a slightly more premium player – think of the client as more of a Toyota than a Maruti.</p> <p>4 – Are there any improvement constraints to be kept in mind? Timelines being considered and budgets available – As the client is a global player, there are no</p>

budget constraints. On the timelines front, come up with both short term and long-term solutions. Focus more on sales channels and branding related solutions even though that is not a constraint.

**Frameworks used:** I tried to use the conventional declining revenues framework to identify the problem initially but had to proceed using first principle approaches to come up with recommendations.

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:** I stuck to my issue tree approach and prepared an initial structure using the standard declining revenues framework. I broke revenues into a mathematical formula and identified levers that affect spare part revenues.

Revenues = # of Items sold X price of items

Bitan asked me to not focus on prices as they were competitive. Drilling down further into the low # of spares sold for the company, I identified key levers:

- 1 – The quality of our original parts – if they outperform the parts used in other vehicles, people wouldn't purchase spares.
- 2 – Ease of replacement – The lead times it takes to replace
- 3 – Supply side problems – Availability of our spare parts and the geographical coverage of partnering dealers/workshops.

Bitan stopped me here and asked me to focus on the supply side problems. He asked me to identify what could be going wrong with respect to the dealership model that they have in the Indian context.

As I explored potential issues with the dealership model (incentives, margins, their efficiency and training), he asked me to work backwards from the customer and prepare a sample flowchart.

I should have taken a pause here to design the flowchart and to think about it, but I started drawing it straight away without asking for time.

Working backwards from the customer, it was identified that Indian customers are price sensitive and roadside workshops or unauthorized dealers offer cheaper, Chinese manufactures spares that are not durable but are still preferred. He then asked me to think of a business model that can solve this issue. He asked me to also focus on branding related recommendations (I had no idea what he meant by this and was stuck for a while – I finally asked him for help here and asked him a few clarifying questions on branding related solutions)

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** My final recommendation with respect to the dealership model was to come up with a model where spare parts can be sold by authorized dealers to roadside smaller workshops. This would ensure that authorized dealers get some margins from the spares and genuine parts are used for

	<p>replacement. I also recommended developing a supply chain for used parts where they can be repaired and sold again by authorized dealers at cheaper prices to compete with the Chinese products.</p> <p>Bitan agreed but did not look very satisfied. I assume that was because this recommendation still was not focusing on branding solutions.</p> <p>Post this discussion, he asked me if I had any questions and extended me the offer.</p>
What went well?	The interview round was more of a stress case round where the interviewer kept interjecting and negating any direction that I was taking except the one that he wanted me to take. In my opinion, what went well was that I was patient and kept listening and asking for feedback. I even asked for suggestions and areas of focus once when I was stuck in the case. At the end of the case, Bitan did mention that even though I did not come up with the exact solution that he was looking for, but he was fine with the approach.
What could have been done better?	Coming up with an initial structure is important but it is equally important to pause in between and develop smaller micro-structures that fit into the broader initial structure. I could have asked for time to think when Bitan was throwing in new points instead of straight away responding to him.

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Nikhil Bharadwaj
Company interviewing for	BCG
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Arjun Bhaduri, Project leader
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>It started off with Arjun taking me to the pantry and asking questions about Rivigo (previous company) and my projects there and general discussion about what my motivation was to leave start-up and enter consulting.</p> <p>Question1: Why do you want to do consulting after working in start-ups?</p>

Answer 1: I had a genuine reason for my choice and explained it to him in detail, for which he counter-questioned here and there. Overall, he seemed content and suggested that we start with the case.

**Case**

**Type of Case:** Diversification

**Problem statement:** Our client is a Mid-stream and down-stream oil and gas player and wants to figure out what non-fuel businesses to enter in next 5 years. He asked me to come up with a long list first and then the reasoning followed by shortlisting framework for the businesses identified.

**Scoping questions asked:** Does the client have any specific financial target in mind? Financial strength? Geography restriction?

No target in mind. Company is financially stable with credible lending ratings and wants to focus on India currently.

**Frameworks used:** This wasn't a standard case where one could apply a framework. Hence, I asked for a couple of minutes and came up with macro level insights which I checked with Arjun.

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:**

Understood value chain of the client and most profitable pool in the value chain. Began my analysis right from the raw materials and had an in-depth discussion regarding the chemicals being used and the final products manufactured. I then started listing down multiple industries for each of the component in value chain and tried to evaluate them as deeply as possible. For eg. I highlighted that instead of complete oxidation process in the refining to process petrol and diesel, partial oxidation should be looked at, to synthesize ethanol that can be sold to distillers or can be distilled in-house to make alcoholic beverages. Additionally, the company should look at synthetic resins, paints/ cosmetic products that involve partial oxidation.

For the transportation component, I figured out that the company had a huge fleet of trucks that transport fuel across the country. Hence, the learnings of route optimization and asset-light fleet management portal for trucking industry can be looked at.

The company's fuel pumps can start retail outlets serving Quick service foods or liquid foods to cross sell their offerings and enter retail business over time to get scale. The knowledge of managing franchise business can be leveraged to scale rapidly and gain slots at prime real estate spots inside cities and towns.

Other industries such as Disaster management and consulting, Bio-ethanol processing to sell to future fuel companies to help them comply with E10, E15 laws were also discussed.

After thoroughly coming up with ideas that can leverage existing shareholders and resources in the value chain, I started dividing the shorting criteria into 3 buckets.

	1) Financial - to eliminate those businesses whose ROC is less than what the company's ROC is currently, legal/anti-trust compliances and other ROI filters 2) Strategic - Analyzed 3, 2*2 matrices with time on X axis for all and firm knowledge, industry attractiveness and profitability on Y-axis 3) Operational – Risk mitigation by choosing negative Beta or low Beta industry to serve as a hedging strategy for firm's revenues in the future.
What went well?	The connect with the interviewer from the beginning and confidence in solutions when cross-questioned, helped.
What could have been done better?	NA

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Largely a case-based round
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Aparna Bijapurkar, Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Where are you from and what all activities are you involved in ISB?</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Un-structured, Government &amp; Social impact  <b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is Government of India and is currently facing issues in one of its subsidy programs which involves issuing of ration cards and distributing grains such as rice, wheat at subsidized prices to the poor. The client noticed that, even though 100,000 tons of grains were commissioned, only 50,000 tons were being made available to the target segment (All this was figured out in the field research conducted by a top-notch consumer survey firm). The client wants our help in identifying the root causes for all the challenges currently and coming up with a leak-proof process design to tackle this issue.  <b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Asked questions about the entire value chain of the procurement and distribution of grains. Detailed questions about the process followed in the survey and price points at which the grains for being made available in the market vs the market price.  Then asked a few questions related to the consumers, how were they being identified and if there were any restrictions on the maximum quantity one can purchase in a month, number of retail outlets in the city eligible to run the program etc.  As you can see, the problem statement itself is lengthy and Aparna narrated the entire content, non-stop for 2 minutes. Then, I took more than usual time, in scoping as it is important to understand the crux of the problem at hand.  <b>Frameworks used:</b> This wasn't a standard case where one could apply a framework. Hence, I asked for a couple of minutes and came up with macro level insights, which I checked with Aparna.</p>

	<p><u>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</u></p> <p>Clearly laid out the entire value chain of the process at hand and identified key stakeholders at minute level (for eg. Labor force to load/un-load bags into trucks, number of transport vendors etc.)</p> <p>Then, I began analyzing each component one-by-one and came with possible issues in each of them and in parallel, I started laying out effective processes to replace existing processes at each of the components in the value chain.</p> <p>It was helpful, that I kept doing these two tasks simultaneously, as it looked structured and gave me time to think about next steps.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): Key things that were appreciated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Identifying that there were a lot of stores/sqkm that were eligible to run this scheme and hence owners weren't making enough profits due to competition</li> <li>b) Identifying the arbitrage trade play by retail and transport contractors by selling the grains in open market at higher rates</li> <li>c) Identifying that, a lot of stock was being wasted due to poor storage hygiene at retail outlets – this led to reduction in total addressable inventory in the process</li> <li>d) Identifying that, while the sample set survey might target desired segment, it is possible that those who don't fall into the segment, have access to ration cards due to poor screening process – causing inventory side-tracking to non-target segment, which wouldn't have been surveyed by the agency</li> </ul>
What went well?	Asked for time, whenever I felt I needed some and was always encouraged to feel free to take as much time as possible to come up with quality recommendations
What could have been done better?	NA

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Largely PI with case just for 10mins
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Yashraj Erande, Partner and Managing director
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>It was more of discussion, started off with Yashraj asking me how many interviews I have given so far and what other firms I was interviewing with. He then asked me about my work experience at Rivigo and went in depth about my motivation to join consulting. It was evident that he was looking for precise answers and I kept it as accurate as possible.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Un-structured</p>

	<p><b>Problem statement:</b> List down all the financial needs, that an entrepreneur would have if he/she were doing good with current business and had excess cash at disposal.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> No standard structure. Took some time and thought about it from first principles. Came up with 6 needs (contingency planning, transfer network, appreciation opportunities etc.) in a structured way and Yashraj was pleased with the options mentioned. As a closing note, he asked if you were to develop a portfolio of investments, where and how would you invest in. Answered by saying that, I'll first look at industries that are expected to grow at greater than a threshold rate we have in mind and would eliminate those options that have ROC &lt; the ROC in our existing industry as a first step. Then depending on the risk appetite, I would balance risk/variance by opting instruments that would yield optimal risk and return with no other trade-offs. Justified it by using the risk equation of <math>r = (1/N)*Var + (1-1/N)*Cov</math> to highlight that there's always going to be some systematic risk associated and hence, industries with complementary Betas could be looked at.</p>
What went well?	Being honest and straight forward with answers to PI questions worked well and helped build connect with the interviewer
What could have been done better?	NA

5.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Tejas Nikam
Company interviewing for	The Boston Consulting Group
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Saibal Chakraborty
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Walk me through your resume</p> <p>Answer 1: Built a story around the resume. Included reasoning for each and everything that is put in my resume</p> <p>Question 2: Questions around my cricket and other sports such as whom all did I play with, how long, why did I leave cricket etc</p>

	<p>Answer: Since I had highlighted my sporting achievements, I was expecting this line of questioning, rather I was hoping that he would ask me this 😊. I gave all the answers and I guess I had built a good rapport with the interviewer at this stage.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Abstract</p> <p>Problem statement: Your client is Bangladesh government. Bangladesh is currently known for its textile industry and currently no IT company is present in Bangladesh. Pitch the Bangladesh story to one of the leading IT companies and persuade them to open a BPO in Bangladesh.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Why BPO in particular? – Choice of Bangladesh government; What are our objectives behind opening a BPO in Bangladesh, investment, employment, anything else? - lets figure that out as we discuss.</p> <p>Frameworks used: No defined framework, had to come up with one on the spot</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: I told him I am going to look at this from 2 aspects, in order to pitch to someone like Infosys, (i) infrastructure and land; and (ii) human capital. After analyzing both the aspects, he asked me to think of one more macro aspect that I was missing. After a hint, I guessed that it was the political stability of the country. After this, he asked me, why would Infosys not go to Srilanka or Vietnam etc, and he asked me is there anything other than costs that I should consider? I quickly asked him how big is the Bangladesh as a market place? He told me it is the highest growing market in Asia. He asked me why would Infosys not set-up a BPO in Kolkata to serve the Bangladesh market? To which, I told him the Bangladesh government here will need to incentivize Infosys for it</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: the biggest worry for an IT company like Infosys is training. I would recommend Bangladesh government to subsidies such in the form of reimbursement of a part of training costs and provide other resources such as manpower.</p>
What went well?	I built a rapport with the interviewer in the beginning and he was finding reasons to select me rather than not to select me. We also ended the interview at a lighter note, when I asked him do management consultants get time to concentrate on their fitness. He was kind of chubby so I think I got away with this and he made a joke out of it saying, “don’t judge the profession, looking at me, there are a lot of people who are involved in fitness and sports and BCG promotes fitness”
What could have been done better?	I had no clue about the IT industry. Maybe reading a little bit about some key industries would have helped me come up with insights faster.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI + guesstimate
Duration	25 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Abhishek Bhatia
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Walk me through your resume</p> <p>Answer 1: Built a story around the resume. Included reasoning for each and everything that is put in my resume. This time the interviewer did not seem interested in my resume. It seemed like he wasn't that amused with a finance professional such as me.</p> <p><b>Guesstimate</b></p> <p>Problem statement: Estimate the number of refrigerators sold in India every year</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Tejas - In Rupees or volume? – Abhishek - how will you calculate volume? – Tejas – Tons? Abhishek – take liters.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: I broke this down into B2B and B2C. He asked me to concentrate on B2B. I told him B2B would majorly include restaurants, hotels, hospitals, schools and institutions, small to big retail stores etc, basically wherever you could have a canteen. Here I realized that I should mention that I am going to look at the existing demand and the new demand. But this insight seemed a little out of place. Moving on, I told him let's first look at hotels. I told him we will break the types of hotels down into high-end, mid-segment and low-end hotels. Then, estimate the number under each category and multiply it by average capacity in liters. He asked me how will I come up with a number of hotels. Here I goofed up. I directly assumed that we have to do a guesstimate. He later told me that if I bifurcate the hotels based on the number of stars such as 1 star, 2 stars...7 stars, the data of number of hotels is available publicly. Here I was stumped but I calmed myself down and accepted my mistake and moved on. He then asked me to concentrate on hospitals. I then broke it down to different type of hospitals i.e multi-speciality hospitals like max, local hospitals and small nursing homes. Then I told him that the analysis for hospitals will be a little different because the use case for hospitals is different. Hospitals would use refrigerators for storing food, beverages, medicines, injections, blood, mortuary. At this stage he stopped the case.</p> <p>Later I asked him if BCG has any presence in the sports and fitness industry. We had a good discussion over it and concluded that as of now not many consultants are</p>

	present in this space in India but it would be a good area to explore in the years to come.
What went well?	I guess I kept my cool when I went wrong in the middle and moved on, which went well.
What could have been done better?	I should have not gotten into estimating without asking if the data is publicly available.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	35 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ankush Wadhera
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p>Question1: Walk me through your resume  Answer 1: Built a story around the resume. Included reasoning for each and everything that is put in my resume.</p> <p>Question 2: Why is your CGPA so low? (3.58)  Answer – I believe that I had proved my hold on academics before coming to ISB and at ISB, I wanted to concentrate on other aspects such as the EVC club, i-alpha fund, PAEV etc. Because of my involvement in these activities, I had to make conscious trade offs.</p> <p>Question – Give me one specific trade off that you made.  Answer – I sat with my PAEV team finalizing our market survey and research a day before the exam for 5+ hours instead of studying for the exam.</p> <p>Question – If you were to start your year from the beginning, would you change anything?  Answer – I guess I would manage my time a bit more effectively and pay a little more attention during the 8am classes.</p> <p><b><u>Case</u></b></p> <p>Problem statement: It is 1962. Your client is Filmfare magazine. They sell magazines and hold an award function in order to alleviate the credibility of its magazine. There are two types of awards, technical (best director, best cinematographer etc) and non-technical awards (best actor, best actress etc). As of now, in the music field there is only one award i.e best song award, which is accepted by the producer and the music director of the movie. Filmfare has been receiving fan mails to introduce the best singer award, should they introduce this award?</p>

Scoping questions asked:

Revenue streams and their proportion – Subscription and ad revenue – 20:80 split.  
Is it fair to assume that the objective behind introduction of the award is to further build the credibility of the magazine.

Framework:

No defined framework used.

Structure/ analysis to solve case:

I told him I am going to analyse the introduction of the awards by looking at (i) advantages; (ii) disadvantages. Advantages – Strengthen the credibility of the magazine, which will lead to increase in revenues. The marginal cost of introduction of this award is very low. Further, since filmfare will be the first one to recognize a new art (singing), they will get a very positive media attention, which will again soar their revenues.

Disadvantages – At this stage I had no clue what to say here. So I started fishing. I told him I am going to think out loud here, so we are in 1962, how many songs were there in movie at that time. He immediately smiled and said good question. There was a reason this award wasn't there already. Only recently multiple songs per movie were introduced. Then I asked him who are the stakeholders in a song creation. I said there is a music director, singer, musicians, lyricists, choreographer, and artists. He said that is correct. I asked him how are these people remunerated. He told me that the music director sells a package of 3-4 songs to the producer that the movie producer gives a fixed lumpsum amount to the music director and the music director pays all the other stakeholders.

The 'fixed sum' was the biggest clue. I then told him that if singers are recognized, their bargaining power will increase and they will demand higher fees. Hence, the 2 stakeholders, producer and music director may suffer.

#### Recommendation

Yes, the client should introduce the best singer award. The upside potential is huge. The downside will take care of itself. I told him that the music director will pay higher fees to the singer, and ask for a higher fee from the producer while selling the songs package. The producer will sell the movie rights to the theater at a higher cost (because of involvement of a recognized singer). The movie theater will increase the ticket price, again because of the recognized singer. The public will pay the higher cost because of the recognized singer.

	This is when Ankush stopped the case and said very good! And asked me if id buy him a drink. To which I said, only if he'd give me an offer straight away. Finally I heard what I had been wanting to hear since the past 1-2 months! "Congratulations, we are extremely delighted to give you an offer!"
What went well?	<p>I kept giving insights in the middle.</p> <p>I completed the whole value chain in my recommendation.</p> <p>I kept the main objective behind introduction of awards in mind (i.e establishing credibility) and kept giving insights keeping that in mind.</p> <p>I did not use a single pre-defined framework in any of my cases. It is important to understand that the frameworks specified in the case books are just for one's guidance, which help you to develop the thought process to solve cases. But that is it, do not force fit any framework.</p> <p>Additional info:</p> <p>The way I see it, there are 3 plans to crack a case interview:</p> <p>Plan A: Do your buddy cases, case workshops very thoroughly. Build rapport with the volunteers, your buddies etc. Be active in the interactions. Don't overdo it by asking stupid questions and acting clingy, be smart about it.</p> <p>Plan B: Build a rapport with the interviewer. I cannot stress enough on the importance of this aspect of the interviewer. Once you get the interviewer on your side, he/she will find reasons to select you rather than finding reasons to not select you.</p> <p>Plan C: Crack the case! As easy as that, rip the case apart. Come-up with a MECE structure on the spot. Do not copy paste the framework from the case book. Bring your experience in the insights and recommendations. Keep giving insights in the middle of the case. Give a well rounded recommendation.</p>
What could have been done better?	I could have maybe solved the case a little faster but nothing other than that. This case went so well that they quashed the 4 <sup>th</sup> round and gave me an offer after this round!

6.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shatakshi Sharma

Company interviewing for	Boston Consulting Group
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI+Case
Duration	40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Aparna Bijapurkar- Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Tell me about yourself?</p> <p><b>Answer 1:</b> Took her through my journey since graduation from St. Stephen's and she quickly recognized QCI on my resume'. I found the commonality of a Ministry where she had also worked, and we discussed the working style of the Secretary there.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Abstract Policy Case (<i>Since I knew BCG is active in education space and given my background in policy, I was somewhat expecting this case. This is something that I would recommend big time to people: it will be smart on your part to prepare specific cases that match your background and has overlap with the firm practices.</i>)</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> You are the Principal Secretary of Orissa and the state has been ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in the "learning outcome" survey. You are asked to help figure out the reason and provide recommendation.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Asked to assume information such as we are doing this for class 5 students. Time agnostic recommendations, when asked about election timings.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Divided the problem into 5 parts: Customers, Product, Capability, Collaboration and Risks (<i>she mentioned she liked how I had fit a business framework to policy case as well</i>)</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Asked where she would like me to start with. (<i>This is important- always ask before proceeding</i>). She mentioned that customers seem like a natural starting point. Started with <b>customers</b>: Was told that these are class 5<sup>th</sup> student getting taught in English. We are referring to public schools here. On further probing, figured out that the entire state population is divided into 2 parts: interior and coastal areas where the problem is worse in interiors. On further probing, figured out the decreased income and living standard was the cause and gave example how girls education suffers because of poor sanitation once they hit the age of menstruation. Summarized key take away and moved on.</p>

	<p><b>Product:</b> Asked about which curriculum state or CBSE: was told we are discussing state. Questioned about the difficulty of the state curriculum as that could be hampering the results. She liked the point and asked for more. Questioned on teacher quality, level of tests, if regular H.W. was given or not. She seemed satisfied with the questions. At this stage, I realized I need to move to next lever. Summarized key reasons and moved on.</p> <p><b>Capability:</b> Further sub-divided into resources, operations capability and finances. Asked the teacher/student ratio and was informed that the ratio is less, and other states seem to be consolidating their public schools to standardize the number across schools (another Aha moment). Also asked if monitoring was taking place under operations, she smiled and mentioned that the challenge was existing senior teachers were pulled up to monitor junior teachers and because of biasedness the results seemed ok but the outcome was poor. At this stage, she told me that the project is genuinely struggling with this problem. I want to brainstorm ideas with you (<i>at this stage we were not operating like interviewer and interviewee but rather colleagues</i>).</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recommended 3<sup>rd</sup> party recommendation around the lines of QCI. She questioned the recommendation that there can be biases from QCI as well. At this stage, I counter argued (<i>though politely</i>) that since RBI governor is appointed by government, RBI also cannot be autonomous, hence by that rationale there will always be some percentage of biasedness. However, with the QCI recommendation since QCI operates on proofs for every data point, its extremely hard to skew the data.</li> <li>2. Also recommended, periodic audits to check of quality measures are in sync with on ground reality.</li> <li>3. Post this, she said great points. I proactively asked whether I should synthesize the case, she smiled and I did so.</li> </ol> <p>On questions, asked questions more around the policy projects undertaken by BCG.</p>
What went well?	3 things: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial connect</li> <li>2. Unshakable Confidence while giving recommendation</li> <li>3. Structured approach in an abstract case</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	N/A

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Steven Remedios- Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  <b>Question1:</b> How was your last interview?</p> <p><b>Answer 1:</b> It went great.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Market share dropped.</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> The toothpaste market is divided into 2 parts: chalk and gel. The gel market is 35% and the chalk is 65%. Your client operates in the chalk market. Its market share has declined from 25% to 20%.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Asked whether this was a market trend or idiosyncratic to the client. The interviewer mentioned only to the client. He also gave me data points for chalk market: Colgate is at 50% m.s., while HUL's Pepsodent is at 20% and the rest 10% market share is fragmented.  To understand customers, I was told the value chain is: factory-&gt;distributors-&gt; wholesale/key accounts like big bazaar-&gt; mom &amp; pop stores.  On asking about product and key feature: Was informed that per gram my client product sold for : Rs. 10/-, pepsodent for Rs. 14/- and Colgate for Rs. 15/-</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Declining revenue framework</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Divided the revenue into Price* Volume. Asked whether we can start with price.</p> <p><b>Price:</b> As established earlier, the price for the client was less than the competition by choice.</p> <p><b>Volume:</b> To deep dive, divided framework into a) customers b) product c) capability: operations, financial and resources d) competition.</p> <p>While explaining the framework I would want to if any competitor's market share is increasing especially under fragmented and he said "yes". Eventually the Principal stopped me and said that I have already broadly covered everything important in the framework. Didn't ask for recommendation.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asked what are the key learnings I can get to become a startup founder post my journey at BCG ? He mentioned I will get exposure to varied business models and will become adept at making and breaking hypothesis.</li> </ol>

	<b>Moved to next round</b> 
What went well?	2 things: 1. Confidence 2. The framework used and asking right questions in the starting of the case.
What could have been done better?	N/A

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Yashraj Erande- Senior Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: How has been your day since morning?  <b>Answer 1:</b> I told him it has been going great and I am enjoying the case marathon.</p> <p>Question2: He appreciated my energy and that I looked fresh after a long day. He asked about why ISB for me?  <b>Answer 2:</b> I told him since my long-term plans are to be in India, ISB is the best business school to bring holistic learning. Also, since I wish to launch my startup one day, ISB is the best platform for learning and growth in that area.</p> <p>Question3: He probed me further how ISB helps on startup front?  <b>Answer 3:</b> Till this question, Yashraj was very quiet and I guess was trying to stress me by silence (<i>however because I had a sense of my previous round performance, I was pretty confident, the point is don't let the mood of interviewer lower your spirit</i>).</p> <p>Regarding the answer, I told him that there are 3 areas where ISB has helped me 1. Academic front by the elective course on entrepreneurship where I learn how should we divide equity between cofounders 2. Support from Professors 3. Vast Alum support from the specific field.</p> <p>We also discussed a book kept on the table where ISB had put stories of top 2% of alums till date and his name had featured in it. I also struck a conversation by asking if he knew Ankur Warikoo (as I had a short stint at Groupon India), who turned out to be his batchmate.</p> <p>Question4: Why BCG and not McKinsey, especially since I have previously worked closely with Mr. Adil Zainulbhai?</p>

**Answer 4:** I told him my long term goal is to launch a venture in policy and public sector domain and with BCG's high focus on public sector, my preference would be BCG.

**Case**

**Type of Case:** Abstract

**Problem statement:** Given that I mentioned about my enthusiasm for startup, the case was surrounded by same subject. Your client has \$100M and he/she wishes to invest in financial services business with 3 cofounders. How would you divide the equity?

**Scoping questions asked:** Asked about the sector specifically and was informed that there are 3 sub-segments: retail, wholesale and one more (can't recall). On further probing, he told me that this is not important to the case and move to equity model.

**Frameworks used:** Abstract. Applied in class learning and experience

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:** Divided the problem into a) Background b) Time c) Idea d) Risk taking appetite e) Relation

**Background:** Mentioned that higher equity should be given to someone who gets a business on the table than b) has only execution capabilities

**Time:** This factor will be important in terms of commitment as higher equity will be given to someone who invests not only her a) weekends but also her b) weekdays

**Idea:** Idea is also a critical component. The founder who incepted the idea and improvised it usually gets a higher weightage on this component.

**Risk:** Risk taking appetite is also important factor. The idiosyncratic risk i.e. married/single i.e. what are your stakes, also the market risk: if the market is volatile or stable for the product

**Relation:** Here I personalized the conversation for him. I mentioned that if the other 2 cofounders are your ISB batchmate from 2006 and are your current friends, then you would want to get closer to egalitarian model to avoid conflict in the start.

**Questions:**

2. Asked what are the key learnings I can get to become a startup founder post my journey at BCG ? He mentioned 3 things: a) Will improve in my persuasion b) My leadership skills improve (politically) c) Decision making skills will improve

**Was welcomed to the firm after this 😊**

What went well?	2 things: 1. Confidence
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	2. Structured thinking in case of an absolute new and abstract problem.
What could have been done better?	N/A

7.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Alexander Hogeveen Rutter
Company interviewing for	BCG
Number of rounds	2.5 (3 <sup>rd</sup> round was just for offer)

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~ 30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Fairly generic. Why Consulting? Why India? Why BCG?</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: Market Entry/Market Share</p> <p>Problem statement: Our client is a foreign manufacturer and distributor of mid-premium hand tools. They entered the Indian market 3 years and have invested a great deal in building a distribution network, but their market share is &lt;1%. They want to grow their market share.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Asked their target market share (20-30%), asked about any other goals (eg. profitability), target customers (mostly commercial eg. the construction industry), asked about the number/market share of competitors and their target markets. Target timeline.</p> <p>Frameworks used: Build/Borrow/Buy (think CSTR spectrum)</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Evaluated the cost/benefits of each approach. Also did market segmentation (eg. value vs. mid-range vs. premium, broke by geography and customer segment)</p>

	<p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Buy a local player with a complementary skill set (eg. value, residential market). Co-brand products as required. Some brief discussion about what to look for/risk in an acquisition target</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> It was important to recognize fairly early on that growing from 1% to 20% in 1.5 years is not realistic organically</p>
<b>What went well?</b>	Case was resolved fairly quickly
<b>What could have been done better?</b>	Should have asked more scoping question about the tool industry as I don't know much about it

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~ 30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Questions were very generic such as what are my future plans (note that at this point I had already spent extensive time with buddies and met partners at the Dinners)</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: Digital Implementation</p> <p>Problem statement: The government has an eProcurement portal but has seen relatively low uptake. How to increase the use of the eProcurement portal?</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Asked about the structure/types of contracts (there were three main categories-asked a bit more about them). Asked for current percentages and target by category, and what main items were currently being procured/not procured through the portal</p> <p>Frameworks used: People, Processes, Technology</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: I broke down the challenges by People (eg. training, skills, incentives, who uses it), processes (eg. what are the consequences for using/not using, how does the procurement flow currently work) and technology (UI, analytics of how it is used, abandoned "baskets", etc.)</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b></p>

	I can't remember my exact recommendations, it somewhat became more of a general discussion on the different angles we could take
	Your Comments (if any): Difficult to really define a concrete framework. A lot of the evaluation seemed to be based on the quality of the discussion/questions
What went well?	Had a good discussion about the system and how it fit into broader policy more generally
What could have been done better?	I should have asked more questions about the technology. Digitization is not my forte and I should have acknowledged that up front. Could have been a bit more structured in terms of recommendations.

8.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Rhishabh Garg
Company interviewing for	BCG
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability</p> <p>Problem statement: How to improve profitability for an office furniture manufacturer?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What kind of office furniture does the company sell? – Mainly office chairs and desks. Most of the revenue comes from chairs.</li> <li>2. What is the trend of profits? How has the profit margins of competitors? – Profits have been low for our client while the competitors have higher profits.</li> <li>3. What parts of the value chain do we own? – The client procures raw materials like wood, cotton and other materials from suppliers. Client owns manufacturing and sells finished product to corporates</li> </ol> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Profitability Framework</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b></p> <p>To understand the revenue side, break it into average price and volume. Average Price can be different because of quality, variety or type of products. Though the</p>

	<p>client offers chairs in 20 different colours, price is same across the industry as it's a competitive market. A typical competitor offers around 4 colour for chairs. 80% of the client sales were happening by top 4 colours.</p> <p>From the cost side, the major cost heads important in the case are the raw material costs, processing costs, sales and marketing, inventory holding costs (working capital).</p> <p><b>Raw Material Costs</b></p> <p>Raw material was being sourced locally by the client which was costlier than importing it from Malaysia (which was cheaper for the competitors). I asked if we can shift our suppliers to Malaysia to which the partner replied that what are the factors which might impact our decision making. I laid down the factors like quality of raw material, minimum order quantity, lead time involved in sourcing, change of process required to process Malaysian raw material. Partner told me to focus on the lead time as it was 2 months compared to 15 days for Indian supplier. Because of 20 different colours, it also impacted the minimum order quantity for low demand colours.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shift the sourcing of top 4 colours to Malaysia to save on raw material costs.</li> <li>Evaluate if it makes sense to continue with the other 16 colours. I checked with the interviewer if he would want me to an analysis on this front but he wanted to wrap up the case. So, I continue with the recommendations.</li> <li>If we do decide to continue with the low demand colours, shifting the raw material procurement to Malaysia will lead to higher inventory holding costs (due to minimum order quantity). Hence, it will be better to continue procuring raw material for these colours locally from India.</li> </ol> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b></p> <p>I laid down the cost structure and asked the partner for directions. This helped me focus on raw material costs and helped me solve the case efficiently in 30 minutes. During interview, it is always good to lay out the exhaustive structure and check with the partner for directions.</p>
What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentioning variety as a factor in 'average product price' helped me understand about the 20 different colours. I was able to use the hint and solve the case.</li> <li>Partner was happy see me talk about the inventory holding costs while giving my recommendations on the low-demand colours.</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	

Type of Round	Case & PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>We started off with basic introduction and he asked me why I want to join BCG. The partner knew a senior colleague at my previous company which helped me establish a common ground. He asked me about two factors which can impact the growth of my previous company (a startup). I structured my answer into market-based factors and internal company factors to answer the question.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability Problem statement: Client was a national cement manufacturer. They had hired BCG to improve their profits.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What kind of clients did the cement manufacturer have? – Both B2B and B2C. They wanted us to look into both segments.</li> <li>2. How is the industry structured? Have there been any recent changes in the industry? – There are some national players and multiple regional players. We had a good market share among the national players. Of late, regional players had been gaining market share.</li> <li>3. What parts of the value chain do we own? – In B2B business, we sell directly to contractors and builders. B2C business – we sell it via multi-brand retail stores using intermediate distribution network (not owned by the company).</li> </ol> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Value Chain Analysis and Profitability</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Understand the complete value chain of the company – Raw Material procured from mines -&gt; 3 Factories situated across India (near mines to reduce transportation costs) -&gt; Processed material transported to contractors in different states via road.</p> <p>I compared this to the value chain of regional players who were able to setup factories closer to their clients though they had higher transportation costs because of being away from the mines.</p> <p>Since I was not able to understand what would be preferred by B2B customers, I asked him if we have talked to the client's customers to understand their pain points. The partner asked me to conduct a mock customer interview where I asked about the quality, pricing and delivery time for our client. This helped me uncover the following facts –</p>

1. The customers were happy with our quality and rated it top-notch in the industry (better than the regional players).
2. The pricing was lower as they gave us bulk orders. Though it led to higher inventory holding costs at their end.
3. In case of a stockout at customer's end, the customers had been shifting to regional players as they provided quick turnaround time. Also, smaller orders could be placed which led to lower inventory costs.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:**

The major issue was reducing the turnaround time for the end customers.

*Short-term –*

1. Understand if there can be stockyards built near major demand states which can help provide quick turnaround for clients. This would also need an analysis of the shelf life of cement.
2. Change contract terms to provide 10% extra material on 'free returns basis' which can help the clients during stock-out situations.

*Long-Term –*

The long-term solution was to divest in big plants and acquire smaller plants closer to major demand areas. This was needed to catch up with the changing market trend.

**Your Comments (if any):**

We could not touch the B2C business because of shortage of time. After the second round, I was asked to wait for 5 minutes and then given an offer.

<b>What went well?</b>	I broke down the value chain at a very minute level to understand the industry. This helped me in understanding why the factories were located near the mines for national players while the regional players had focused on establishing factories near to their clients. I asked the right questions during the mock interview which helped the partner judge if I can handle stakeholders without much preparation.
<b>What could have been done better?</b>	I wasted some time on the profitability framework instead of jumping right to the value chain analysis. This is generally helpful incase of unknown industries and in manufacturing setups.

9.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Himanshu Muchhal
Company interviewing for	BCG
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
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Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Vivek Mandhata (Project Leader)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  I was the first one to be interviewed by him and we entered the room together. He casually asked me to sit on the interviewer's chair and he sat on the other side. He then asked me to introduce myself. When he saw that I've worked in banking, he started asking about how do banks make money? Is working capital loan product profitable? What are the economics of Home Loan and Personal Loan products?</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Growth/Expansion</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> A large bank wants to aggressively grow their Home Loan (HL) and Personal Loan (PL) Portfolio. How should they go about it?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Where is the bank located? : Pan India  Existing portfolio of type of loans?: All financial products including HL &amp; PL. How are they sourcing the customers? : Branch network via only walk-ins  How are the top players in HL &amp; PL sourcing their customers? : Sales force, offering pre-approved PL, DSAs  What is the risk appetite of the bank?: Medium (They don't want growth at the cost of profits)  Is there any other objective or restriction to account for in recommendations? : None (to define the boundary)</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Unstructured</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> I created my own structure instead of following traditional approach as I had detailed understanding of the sector and it got clear during scoping that client already had presence in HL &amp; PL and it was not a pure market entry case. I created four buckets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What competition is doing?</li> <li>2. Leveraging existing strengths</li> <li>3. Identifying gaps / new competencies to be acquired</li> <li>4. Risk</li> </ol> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b></p> <p>Common recommendations for both products:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cross sell to existing customers</li> <li>2. Onboard DSAs</li> <li>3. Increase sales force</li> <li>4. Buy entire portfolio of another bank/NBFC/HFC</li> </ol> <p>Recommendations for HL:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tie-up with real estate developers</li> </ol>

	<p><b>Recommendations for PL:</b> As the product unsecured, client should not sell PL to new customers. Instead it should start with credit cards.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> Lead the discussion wherever possible but take interviewer's buy in. Try to showcase your strengths, in my case it was the business understanding and interviewer didn't even bother about the structure. Use this strategy only if you know the industry very well.</p>
What went well?	I gave several examples of things ICICI Bank and Citibank (ex-employers) did to expand their HL & PL portfolio, even though I was working in Working Capital division.
What could have been done better?	I asked for the feedback immediately after the case got over, he said overall it was a good discussion but if he were at my place, he would have asked more questions about the client but that's ok.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Aparna Bijapurkar (Principal)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> She introduced herself and asked me to introduce myself while she goes through my CV. Before I could even finish 3 lines, she asked me if I know anything about ration card system and that was the segue to the case.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Unstructured</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Government of India is our client and has observed that central warehouses are reporting 100k tons of food grains at the beginning of the month, retail stores where these food grains are transported are reporting 75k tons and when govt. appointed Nielsen to find out how much was consumed by ration card holders, the quantity turned out to be 50k tons. So why don't you list down all the possible hypothesis for this difference?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Any particular geography where the problem is? : Its Pan-India</p> <p>Clarified the problem statement and confirmed that there is a 25k tons mismatch at each stage and I have to list down all the possible reasons that we can explore one by one afterwards.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> NA as the case was abstract</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Drew a flowchart with three stages and listed down the reasons in a chronological order starting from wrong reporting/accounting of data to willful and accidental pilferage of food grains at each step.</p> <p>She said that instead of starting with warehouse, let's start with households</p>

	<p>Discussion then went on various methods of data collection and how can we verify the appropriateness of sampling method including random sampling, stratified sampling and related biases (I gave reference to SMMD course that she seemed to like). During this discussion she threw certain numbers at me to calculate and we concluded that we can account for 10k tons of food grains due to incorrect data. Then there was detailed discussion on duplicate ration cards and middlemen taking advantage of weak governance and how Aadhar cards could possibly solve this problem to an extent. I briefly touched upon how current government is trying to improve the Public Distribution System.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> NA</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> After she concluded the case, I asked her if she worked on the case. She said that it was her first case at BCG and in reality, there were much more layers to the case than we discussed. But overall, she was happy with the breadth of the discussion given time constraints.</p>
What went well?	I kept the entire discussion engaging. It was more of a conversation than a Q&A session. I was also able to correlate case problems with real life governance issues and was able to emphasize on my awareness about issues in general.
What could have been done better?	None

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bitan Datta (Partner)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> None</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Growth/Market Share</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Large global tool manufacturer entered India 3 years ago but has not been able to capture significant market. Head office has now instructed India team to be in top 3 players in next 18 months else wind up the operations. We have to advise them on how to capture more market.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Geography: Pan India</p> <p>Product line: Hand tools and Powered Tools (Problem is with Hand Tools such as hammers etc.)</p> <p>Value Chain: We import all tools from global manufacturing hubs</p> <p>Customers: Handymen (Plumbers, Carpenters etc.)</p> <p>Competition: Top 3 players have 20%, 15% and 10% market each and rest of the industry is fragmented that includes our client (1.5% share) as well (only for hand tools segment). Reiterated the problem that we have to help client increase their market share in hand tools segment by more than 8.5% in 18 months.</p>

	<p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Ansoff Matrix and Revenue side of Profitability framework <b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Thought about Ansoff Matrix and then clarified as the problem statement is specific, I will not discuss new products and new markets and will focus only on current product in current market to which the interviewer agreed.</p> <p>Used the revenue side of profitability framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revenue = <b>Price</b> * Volume</li></ul> <p>How does our price point compare to that of the top three players?: If median price is 100, our price is 104.</p> <p>Why?: As the quality is higher. Confirmed that high price point is not because our client is incurring additional cost of importing that competitors are not, which he asked to ignore.</p> <p>Is there room to decrease the price point: No.</p> <p>Quickly realized that it's a classic problem of niche product targeted towards customers whose WTP is low i.e. plumbers and carpenters.</p> <p>Started discussing other Ps without explicitly bringing out the 4P framework on the sheet. Broke down product into aesthetics and functional utility to make the discussion slightly fancy. Identified the problem that India market has not developed enough to accept such high quality and high-priced product at scale unlike other developed markets.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Concluded that no matter what the company does internally, its products will be valued only by a small segment and company won't be able to become a mass player.</p> <p>To make the conversation interesting, I pointed out that company can think of buying entire company or manufacturing facility of one of the existing smaller player (not the top 3) to include lower quality product in existing portfolio and use its own brand/marketing/distribution strength to gain market share. As expected, he asked why not one of the top 3? I said, we'll end up paying more. We only need the capability to manufacture mass product.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> Try to be innovative with the framework but don't forget MECE. Play on your strengths (I tried to do the same in all the rounds, discussed more practical business-related concepts rather than mechanical case frameworks). State your assumptions/approach upfront.</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

10.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aksh Sheth
Company interviewing for	BCG
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	40 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about yourself</li> <li>2. What offers do you already have?</li> <li>3. Why BCG over Bain and McKinsey?</li> </ol> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Entry Strategy</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Your client is into a financial product such as a 0% EMI loan. (Banks can't lend because of MCLR requirements)</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which geography?</li> <li>2. Does the client have operations in any geography?</li> <li>3. Could you explain the product and revenue model of the product?</li> </ol> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Entry Strategy, 4P</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve the case:</b> Initially, started with customer profiling and competition products. I also assessed the need for 0% EMI product from a customer's perspective. I then assessed the current limitation of lower penetration of these products (It is because customers perceive these products to be fraudulent). I approached the case using 4Ps. Since the product was in place, I focused on price, promotion, and place. In terms of place, I recommended to focus on Metro cities and eventually focus on Tier 2 and rural areas. Since this is highly dependent on the push by retailer/chains, tie up with chains was very crucial. I recommended to tie up with consumer durables retail chain where average bill value is high, and customers would prefer a loan. In terms of price and promotion, I recommended incentive plans for the retailer to get them on board and thereby attract more customers</p>

What went well?	Staying calm. Use of framework and structure
What could have been done better?	Could have thought out of the box ideas

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Revenue and Profitability</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Give me ways to increase farmer's income</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any specific farmer belonging to a geography? (Interviewer mentioned to consider any farmer)</li> <li>2. What is the current average income of farmers?</li> </ol> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Profitability.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve the case:</b> I started with streams of revenue for farmers to which interviewer asked to focus on only income from the sale of farm produce. I broke the revenue as Units * Price per unit.</p> <p>With respect to increasing units, I mentioned the following recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use modernized techniques that result in a productivity increase</li> <li>2. Increase the utilization of farm land by cultivating different crops during the non-season phase</li> <li>3. Cultivate crops that have a high shelf life</li> <li>4. Cultivate crops that are less prone to damages</li> </ol> <p>With respect to increasing price, I mentioned the following recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultivate crops that are in demand and which fetches a high price (price of produce from an acre of land has to be highest)</li> <li>2. Avail benefits of government schemes for minimum selling price</li> <li>3. Tie up with corporates for direct sale of farm produce</li> </ol> <p>For the reduction in cost, I mentioned the following recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tie up with other farmers to share capital intensive equipment</li> <li>2. Consolidated buying of pesticides to avail discounts</li> </ol>

	Since it was a short interview, the interviewer asked me to stop and summarize the recommendations
What went well?	Use of framework and structure
What could have been done better?	Giving some real-life examples of how farmers have increased their income

11.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shwetal Karade
Company interviewing for	BCG
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20min
Interviewer name	Akshit Shah (India HR Director)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Your client manufactures and sells office furniture. Sales have increased but profit per unit sales are down. Advise.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where does the manufacturer operate? Ans. Has one manufacturing unit in Maharashtra; Sells all over the country</li> <li>• Is this an industry wide problem? Ans. No, specific to the company</li> <li>• Since when has the client been facing this problem? Ans. Last 2 years</li> <li>• What are the products that the client sells? Ans. Open plan office systems (OPOS)</li> <li>• When you say sales have increased, do you mean \$ sales or volume sales? Ans. Volume</li> </ul> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Profitability</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b></p> <p>Broke down profit/unit as [rev/unit minus cost/unit].</p>

	<p>Cost/unit had remained same as per the interviewer. That means the Rev/unit has declined despite increase in volumes. Which means that price has gone down.</p> <p>Why has the price gone down? The price had gone down because the price was decided through bidding. The client had to bid for contracts. Competitors prices were low but the profitability was still high because they had lower costs.</p> <p>Why did the competitors not face a decline in profitability? The client had higher costs because the client was providing laminated wood in 60 shades manufactured in India, while competitors were providing only 10 shades manufactured in Malaysia.</p> <p>How can the client increase his profitability?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Procure from Malaysia, if it's a cheaper option</li> <li>2. Provide fewer shades of colors, if that provides some economies of scales</li> <li>3. Increase the price because he's providing more variety</li> </ol> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> The client is facing a decline in profitability because he is competing with other firms in the bidding process and dropping the prices. The client can increase his profitability by either cutting costs through fewer shades or procuring from Malaysia, or the client can charge a premium because he's providing a larger variety to his clients.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b></p>
What went well?	The interview was pretty basic. So sticking to a straight forward approach helped.
What could have been done better?	-
Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20min
Interviewer name	Stephen Remedios (Principal)
Round Summary	<u>Case</u> <b>Type of Case:</b> Abstract

(questions asked and your responses)

**Problem statement:** You've worked in Viacom18 Media. So let's talk about that. Your client is a mobile operator who has 60% of his advertising budget in TV & sports-related advertising. He wants your help in reshaping this advertisement spend for the future.

**Scoping questions asked:**

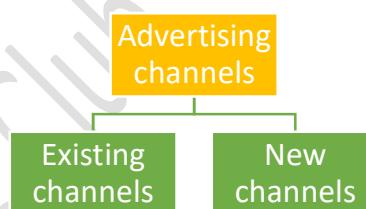
- Can I assume the mobile operator to be similar to (let's say) Airtel/Vodafone? Ans. Yes
- Where does the client currently spend this 60% of his budget? Ans. 20% to be the title sponsor for a cricket team, 20% in Primetime programming on TV, 20% on sports channels (airing IPL, kabbadi, etc)

**Frameworks used:** None

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:**

I realized that the interviewer wants to see how I think and how well do I understand the industry.

I started by breaking down the problem in terms of advertising channels–



We then discussed the channels through which the advertiser is currently advertising. We had a good conversation about how the media industry is going digital and it's important to focus on new channels for reaching the target audience.

The interviewer then asked me to list down the new channels that the client could explore. I listed – social media, print, radio, outdoor, product placements in movies/Tv shows.

He then asked me which of these would be my top2 picks. I started eliminating different channels while giving proper reasoning for it. And finally picked – social media & outdoor.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** Not applicable. It was more like a discussion throughout.

	Your Comments (if any):
What went well?	<p>Towards the end of the interview, the interviewer told me that he really liked the way I broke down the problem in a way that is easy for the client to understand (his existing channels vs the new channel he can explore).</p> <p>Expressing opinions on the different channels with conviction is another thing which the interviewer mentioned he liked.</p>
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case + general discussion
Duration	40min
Interviewer name	Vipin Gupta (Partner)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>The partner was from TMT and I too had a media background so we had a good chat about the industry after the case. Vipin's an amazing interviewer to have!</p> <p>I vaguely remember the case. So, I'll describe it very briefly towards the ends. The industry discussion happened after the case, but I'm mentioning it before the case part.</p> <p><b>Industry discussion:</b> The interviewer asked me about my thoughts on where Viacom18 was going and how is the industry shaping up.</p> <p>He then asked me to plot several TV shows on a graph with vertical axis as the advertising revenue they earn and horizontal axis as the TRPs the shows garner.</p> <p>We had a fun discussion about the TV shows in India. This really helped me connect extremely well with Vipin.</p> <p><b>Case</b> <b>Type of Case:</b> Sales force</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Your client is an IT service provider. His profits are lower than competitors.</p>

	<p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General scoping questions (what services, which geography, since when is the client facing the problem, etc)</li></ul> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> None</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b></p> <p>The client was involved in testing. The process was linear. And the client was hiring from the same college for all levels in the testing process.</p> <p>The idea was to hire cheap labor for processes that do not require much technical knowledge.</p>
What went well?	<p>Whenever you get an IT case, remember you have to focus on the people. They are either on bench or not properly staffed/mapped. Going through previous year's casebooks helped.</p> <p>I had a very normal conversation with the Partner, as if I was talking to one of my friends. And Vipin too made me feel at ease. That really helped me establish a fantastic rapport.</p> <p>I was given an offer immediately after this. I ended up accepting McKinsey's offer. But my experience with BCG too was absolutely amazing and I was in a major dilemma for a very long time regarding which offer to accept.</p>
What could have been done better?	-

# Dalberg Global Development Advisors

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Kinshu Sultania
Company interviewing for	Dalberg
Number of rounds	5

Round No.	2  Round 1 was just a basic HR round testing motivation for joining, basic quant and verbal skills
Type of Round	Guesstimate+Case+PI
Duration	1 hour
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Patrick, Project Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tell me something about you that is not there on resume, then follow up questions based on the points I mentioned</li> <li>- Why Dalberg? Etc etc</li> <li>- What according to you are some of the skills needed to succeed at Dalberg</li> <li>- Tell me an idea you heard recently that you really liked</li> </ul> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability</p> <p>Problem statement: Clients owns a chain of budget health centers operating in Mumbai Slums and only a quarter of them are profitable. The case started with him asking me that if I only had 15 mins with the client CEO so what are questions I would ask.</p> <p>I asked broad scoping questions about the client, about the business, competition, customers. He guided me to be more specific post which I asked about the Revenues and Costs- in particular Fixed and Variable costs.</p> <p>He gave me a lot of price and cost numbers and asked me what insights I could draw. I proceeded to do a Breakeven analysis (FADM concepts helped here) and he really liked my approach.</p>

	<p>Then I proceeded to answer why only a quarter of centers were meeting the BE by mapping out the customer value chain. Broadly:</p> <p>Fall sick- decide to see a doctor (awareness about our clinic)- choose which clinic to go to (preference)- actually go to the clinic (accessibility)- get treatment (any supply constraints, already clarified that this is the same across clinics and not a concern)- make payment (affordability, already clarified that WTP is not a problem)</p> <p>Discussion about some of these factors affecting performance of the different clinic. No numbers here, he was checking how logically I could think, whether I have covered most of the factors, and if I can justify my points if cross questioned.</p> <p>This followed a market sizing Guesstimate:</p> <p>One clinic has 100,000 people near it, so would they be able to reach their daily break even number of patients (assuming no supply constraints).</p> <p>To solve this, I took the same value chain drawn above and the case boiled down to estimating the number of people who would fall sick on an average day. This was too abstract for me, especially since the clinic had no specialization and would treat every disease, and so I struggled a bit here. Patrick was very patient and guided me post which I took an age cut, made frequency assumptions, and reached a number which said they can reach BE assuming zero competition.</p>
What went well?	<p>I was told immediately that he is recommending me to the next round. He really liked my structure (BEP and Value Chain). My PI went really well and it helped establish connect which boosted my confidence during the case. I also didn't give up when I struggled during the guesstimate, keeping calm and taking hints and working out along with the interviewer is the key. Use the interviewer like a sounding board when you get stuck and they would love to guide you.</p> <p>Diverse thinking was also appreciated. Not losing confidence when my BEP number did not match and instead thinking why (in my case, I made the assumption of center being open 7 days a week when infact it was just 6 days)</p>
What could have been done better?	Mental math could have been faster and more accurate.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Guesstimate+Case+PI
Duration	1 hour
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Keshav Kanoria, Sr. Project Manager

Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Typical PI questions based on resume, questions around the projects I had undertaken at McKinsey. Detailed strategy and impact discussion on my work around women's menstrual hygiene and what all I learnt from that.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Market Entry</p> <p>Problem statement: Client already has XX acres of land in Gurgaon with plans to open a premium school. Should they go ahead?</p> <p>Standard scoping done to understand the client's motivations, competition, consumer segments, regulation, etc</p> <p>Standard market entry framework applied as part of which I was asked to guesstimate the market size and whether they would be able to recover costs.</p> <p>Since the school was a premium offering, the discussion got anchored on Income; estimating #households in the area which have incomes above a certain level (assumption made on #children at schooling age per HH). Was asked several approaches to figure out someone's income.</p>
What went well?	<p>Again, PI allowed me to bring out my strengths and my experiences while working at McKinsey and share my high motivations for joining Dalberg (especially since I already had another offer which they knew about).</p> <p>Thinking of different approaches to the problem statement, and them problem solving along with Interviewer to discuss pros and cons of each approach. Also not losing calm when stuck. Just going in a very structured and logical manner.</p> <p>Also, Keshav is an ISB Alum so that helped to establish connect during PI.</p>
What could have been done better?	<p>I think I applied a very standard case framework but it would have been appreciated if I customized it a bit more according to the case. Clarifying profit/social motive for opening the school was missed (aim was to provide the best quality education in India which is currently lacking).</p> <p>Again, mental math as Dalberg cases tend to be very number heavy so practicing that is also a good idea</p>

Round No.	4
Type of Round	Guesstimate+Case+PI
Duration	1 hour

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Dayoung Lee, Associate Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Typical PI questions based on resume, questions around the projects I had undertaken at McKinsey</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: Abstract + Investment</p> <p>Problem statement: Client has \$XX Million to invest in improving primary school enrollment from XX% to YY%. How should they go about it?</p> <p>Scoping: Standard questions, important insight that the region/geography has not been decided.</p> <p>I started with a 3 step approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify Region(s) to invest in</li> <li>2. Identify causes for lack of enrollment currently</li> <li>3. Solutions and Stakeholder identification to aim in Implementation (whom to give the money to)</li> </ol> <p>I aligned with the interviewer at every step to take her buy in. She liked this approach and asked me to elaborate on each point.</p> <p>For region identification, I made a 2X2 matrix with Enrollment rate and Infrastructure. I wanted to identify those regions that already have primary school infra because it is easier to fill built schools than make new schools and then fill them. After some discussion here, the interviewer provided me with India, Kenya, Ivory Coast, and other country as the new scope.</p> <p>I proceeded to identify causes for lack of enrollment in these countries using the People, Process, and Technology approach. Under people, I was looking at both student angles and teacher angles. Due to lack of time, she told me to assume that cause has been identified and to move to step 3.</p> <p>Here, discussion involved around finding NGOs or entities that would bring about the change. My structure for identifying such NGOs was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Willingness (they should be willing to work for the cause)</li> <li>2. Capability (they should have the capacity to bring about widespread change)</li> <li>3. Need (whether they need the funding or not, eliminate if already well funded)</li> </ol> <p>A little more qualitative discussion here post which I was given some numbers which I had to use to calculate cost per student per year. The numbers seemed straightforward but were not, I got a little stuck here but the interviewer was extremely calm and helpful.</p>

What went well?	<p>The case was a standard one from their website and I had already practiced cases along similar lines.</p> <p>Tip: Do go through their website and look at projects- try and make cases out of them. Also, Dalberg cases tend to be more interviewer led compared to other consulting firms.</p> <p>Having confidence during PI round also helps. Try and cover as many things as you can.</p>
What could have been done better?	Numbers. Take a moment to structure your thoughts even during the middle of the case.

Round No.	5
Type of Round	Guesstimate+Case+PI
Duration	1 hour
Interviewer Name/Designation	Gaurav Gupta, Regional Director (Asia)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He already seemed to have detailed notes from my previous PIs and asked me to elaborate on a few points I had mentioned in earlier interviews.</li> <li>- I already had another offer so discussion around that company vs Dalberg and what motivated me to join Dalberg</li> <li>- The feedback (both positive and negative) I received during my 2 years at McKC</li> <li>- My experiences in school, college, ISB and how I have evolved and whether I expected it, etc</li> </ul> <p><b>Case 1</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Abstract</p> <p>Problem statement: What are the social costs associated with a pothole on a road in Gurgaon.</p> <p>Very abstract case that didn't really have a structure to begin with, it was about exploring as many angles as you can think of and structuring them. Post continuous guidance from the interviewer, the following are some of the points I came up with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Opportunity cost of time (salary forgone by spending that extra 15 mins on the road due to congestion caused by pothole)</li> </ol>

2. Health: Direct costs (say backpain caused due to pothole when the car goes above it), and Indirect costs (during monsoons, water can fill in it and cause Dengue in the neighborhood)
3. Vehicle costs: Depends on the depth of pothole, can range from say alignment damage to accidents
4. Pollution: Pothole causes congestion due to which people must be on the roads longer. This causes Air Pollution from vehicle gas emissions. Land Pollution is also caused because in India people tend to throw things out of cars. (The interviewer seemed to hit Aha moment when I said Pollution and he seemed satisfied post this)
5. Wastage of precious non-renewable resources- Petrol/Diesel as the car now must run for longer.

I was asked to not estimate the costs (put numbers to it). Since the factors are a lot, I asked to prioritize. I was asked which points according to me were most important. The key was to not give the right answer but provide a good logic for whatever you choose to pick. I chose opportunity cost of time.

My estimation equation:

#cars passing the pothole X Average delay per car X Average salary per car  
(this was done for say a given day)

Interviewer: How would you find the salary for people who are not working? Like Housewives

Answer: I would put the value of the substitute for her. If she is not cooking or taking care of the baby then they would probably hire a cook or a nanny to do it so salaries of the cook or nanny would be my number. He seemed satisfied.

He ended this case here and gave me another one.

### **Case 2**

Type: Market Sizing

Problem Statement: What is the 5 year (not annual) market size globally for Solar Lanterns (imagine lamps which charge during the day and run during the night)

Again, due to paucity of time we could not get into numbers but there was enough qualitative discussion around who the target groups would be, who are the people that would use this, is it just limited to rural houses or would people with electricity also use it. Turns out, I did not quite understand the product even after scoping questions and so I was questioned on everything I said because I seemed to have been getting it wrong. But I think the fact that I did not give up, and was able to align my thinking with the interviewer worked for me.

I received an offer after this round (thankfully!)

What went well?	Confidence, not being nervous, talking to interviewer very candidly. The feedback I received was that he would be comfortable putting me in front of clients because my answers were honest and genuine, and Dalberg appreciates that. Don't try to glorify your PI answers, and if you don't know something then it's okay to show weakness (it's a sign of maturity). Do your cases well. Take the interviewers buy in, think of as many things as you can and then narrow it down. Structure every step. And if you get stuck, don't lose your calm. Everybody gets stuck one place or another.
What could have been done better?	Scoping of the second case. I am not from the industry and I don't know anything about Energy products. It's okay to take more time to scope if the case is not familiar to you to avoid controversies later.

**Deloitte USI**

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shubham Tayal
Company interviewing for	Deloitte USI S&O
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1/2/3
Type of Round	Guesstimate+PI
Duration	25 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Bhupinder Arora Senior Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Tell me about yourself. Answer 1: Gave a brief about myself which was in the resume, then some more that wasn't on the resume. Eventually ended with my hobbies and interests and one of these interests was picked up for a guesstimate.</p> <p>Question2: Resume based question about a project I did. "Tell me how you went about it."</p> <p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p>Question: An app developer is trying to estimate the market size for an astrology app that he intends to build for children between the age of 6-10. Approach: Clarified whether we need to come up with the number of children or revenue. I was told that monetization has not been thought of so come up with the market size in terms of number of children. Divided population into urban and rural and then further divided by age to get to the number of children in the specified age range. Then divided income wise to come up to a number who could afford a smartphone and internet connection. Then further considered religion as a factor since astrology can be linked to religion. Another consideration was to assert that children will be forced to learn astrology at that age by either parents or teachers. Remarks from Interviewer: Just wanted the approach and not the numbers. Stopped me in the middle and said it was fine. Your take on your approach: I talked a lot about numbers even though he said he did not want it. Could have structured it a little better.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): Make sure to connect with the interviewer through your body language, smile, answers, and the questions you ask. That matters a lot, at least it did for me.</p>

What went well?	The conversation was good. I felt I connected with the interviewer with the way I answered the initial questions. Also, the final question, "Any questions for me?" was something which went in my favor. Since he had told me earlier that he had been with Deloitte for 9 years, I asked him what his journey is and what makes him stay at Deloitte. Another thing I asked was about the "Impact Day" at Deloitte and how is it organized. These questions made him talk about himself more and tell me more about the company, thus establishing a personal touch.
What could have been done better?	The guesstimate could have been handled better.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Don't remember
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Tell me about yourself. Answer 1: Handled it the same way I did in the first interview. He straight away went to the case.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability Problem statement: Data based case about an automotive manufacturer which had production and service business. No general scoping questions or frameworks since it was an interviewer driven case based on data, i.e. he was giving me context and then asking specific questions which needed analysis of the graphs and tables given in the data sheets. There were 4-5 sheets with data and charts and each was successively used for the overall case study. Your Comments (if any): Do not panic if you are taking time in understanding data. It is better to take a few seconds extra than missing out on important things in the data.</p>
What went well?	<p>I guess my patience and ability to take feedback and correct my answers was the only good thing. I messed up in the questions multiple times and missed data points, but he was correcting me, and I was able to take the cue and give the correct answer thereafter.</p> <p>As in Round 1, the final question helped me get into a conversation with him. I asked about the strategy of Deloitte in times when consulting is becoming commoditized and margins are declining.</p>

What could have been done better?	I froze when the interview started, and he asked me the first question. Politely asked him for water and restarted. The case could have been handled better. Data could have been observed in a much better way.
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Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI (Culture fit with MD)
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Siva Paramasivam, Managing Director
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: How has your day been till now? How are you feeling?  Answer 1: The day has been hectic and tiring. I am feeling confident and nervous at the same time. Have been outside since morning. (subtly trying to convey that Deloitte is my first preference)</p> <p>Question 2: So what brings you here? (Another way to ask tell me about yourself)  Answer 2: Improvised the “Tell me about yourself” answer. Focused more on the journey and the reasons for making the choices that I made. Engineering, then which job and why. Why did I chose to do my MBA and why ISB. Then why I want to do consulting and why Deloitte, which is the reason I am sitting here today.</p> <p>Question 3: Asked a couple of questions from the resume.</p> <p>Question 4: Did a roleplay exercise. He became an employee who is performing badly but feels is doing very well and is also a very aggressive person. And I, being his manager, needs to convey this to him so that the team and company does not suffer.  Answer 4: Use learnings from MGTO, MGTM, RLDP to confront. Talked to him about his performance and instead of telling him he is performing poorly, told him he is doing well but the company feels he is capable of much more and has set high standard of competence for him and for that he needs to work more. Talked to him about his areas of interest and told him that new projects are coming up and we need to assign to him to the relevant area so that he can perform as per the company expectations.  (The interviewer was impressed the way it went)</p> <p>Question 4: Why Deloitte? (asked in some fancy language but this was the underlying question).  Answer 4: Told him that Deloitte’s social work, L&amp;D center and employee quality amazes me. He argued that everyone does social work. I countered by mentioning “Impact Day at Deloitte”, stating that other companies do it for CSR but Deloitte does it on such a scale which actually brings out the company’s commitment. Also mentioned that Deloitte was the first company to start with diversity and inclusivity and I want to work in such a forward-looking company.</p>

	<p>Question 5: Deloitte pays 20-30% less than other consulting companies. Even then, why do you want to come here?</p> <p>Answer 5: I clearly told him that money is not the priority when I am looking for a job. There surely needs to be some basic criteria met since I have to maintain a standard of living and pay off the debt, but after a threshold it does not matter, and I am very black and white in that aspect.</p> <p>Finally, he asked me if I had any questions for him. I politely said that I asked enough in my previous interviews so nothing.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any):</p>
What went well?	The interview started off on a good note and that gave me confidence. The role play went great. All the questions asked were the ones I anticipated, so no surprises here.
What could have been done better?	NA

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Karan Padgaonkar
Company interviewing for	Deloitte USI S&O
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Guesstimate + PI
Duration	15 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Don't remember
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>The interviewer asked me the basic PI questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about yourself</li> <li>• Key takeaways/lessons from work</li> <li>• Favorite project</li> <li>• Hobbies/interests</li> </ul> <p>The interviewer asked me a guesstimate related to my hobbies.</p>

	<p>Towards the end we had a general discussion on the future of retail in India and how brick and mortar companies are trying to go omnichannel and create experiential stores from customers.</p> <p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p><b>Question:</b> If there was an app that could look inside the contents of your fridge and recommend recipes for cooking, what would be the potential market size?</p> <p><b>Approach:</b></p> <p>I started by clarifying the question: (i) This was only for the city of Delhi (ii) It would be a mobile/tablet app that would require internet access (iii) Market size for him = potential customer base</p> <p>I outlined my approach upfront: I said that the target market for this app would primarily be the working population in the age group 21-30 and that the secondary target group would be college students as well as adults in the age groups 30-50 (caveated saying that these groups would use this less frequently. I clarified that the B2B segment for this app would be minimal. I told him I would take the population of Delhi, and be eliminative in the following way (i) Filter out BPL and lower class people (ii) Filter out people not in the relevant age groups (iii) Take smartphone penetration as a proxy for potential customers (iv) Told him that if needed, we can classify the segment by occupation and frequency of usage as well</p> <p><b>Remarks from Interviewer:</b> The interviewer seemed happy with this approach and stopped the guesstimate here</p>
What went well?	The interviewer and I connected well, and the PI went very smoothly. I think that this was the key to the interview going well. With guesstimates, outlining the entire approach worked well for me. If the interviewer is happy with the approach, he/she may not ask you to do the calculations and get to a final number.
What could have been done better?	N/A

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Don't remember
Round Summary	<u>Case</u> <b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability

(questions asked and your responses)	<b>Problem statement:</b> A Japanese auto manufacturer is facing declining profitability. Please diagnose and provide recommendations to reverse this trend  <b>Case synthesis:</b> Deloitte cases are structured differently from other consulting cases and involve a fair amount of data sheets. Over the course of the interview I was provided with 5-6 data sheets, each leading to different insight. The data sheets indicated that revenues from selling buses was strong while that from after sales service was falling over the past few years. The case then moved towards identifying the right segments to target for after sales service and spare parts
What went well?	I was able to analyze the data sheets well and draw good insights. The Deloitte buddy cases are very good practice to understand what to expect from these interviews
What could have been done better?	I fumbled a bit with the calculations and got a bit flustered in the middle. I felt that I could have retained my composure a bit better

Round No.	3
Type of Round	PI
Duration	10 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner Round
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<b>PI Questions:</b> It was a generic round to analyze fit with the company. He asked me about myself and why I want to join consulting. He asked me why I would pick Deloitte over other consulting firms and which division of the firm do I see myself working in. We had a conversation about his experiences at Deloitte, post which he made me an offer.
What went well?	It was a fairly light interview with the partner checking for fit. Nothing particular was being tested here and overall, it was a pleasant conversation. It was good to go prepared with basic knowledge of Deloitte and their various divisions. Knowing my CV quite well was also essential for Deloitte's round 1 and 3.
What could have been done better?	N/A

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Vikram Katti
Company interviewing for	Deloitte USI – Tech competency – M&A Practice
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Resume walk through
Duration	20-25 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Don't remember the name / Senior Consultant
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Q - Walk me through you resume</p> <p>Ans – Quick walk through with emphasis on exp that matters most for the consulting firm – client exposure, buzz words in the industry etc</p> <p>Q – Tell me how your experience landed you in a B school</p> <p>Ans – Explained how I wanted to brush up my leadership skills while gather industry exposure from my peers.</p> <p>Q – Why Deloitte? And why Tech Competency? You are majoring in Finance and Strategy - how do you think these experiences will help you in your role?</p> <p>Ans – Tied up a story on why Deloitte is my choice of firm – its exposure in both tech services as well as a strong consulting brand. Added in perspective of how consultants need to go over an beyond tech expertise and understand business. In short it was a sell pitch about myself.</p> <p>Q – Do you have any questions for me?</p> <p>Ans – Questions about location and travel requirements and kind of projects coming in along.</p>
What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confident behavior throughout the interview</li> <li>2. Making the interview a conversation rather a question answer format</li> <li>3. A healthy eye contact throughout the conversation</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + Technical + PI
Duration	30-45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Name don't remember / Senior consultant or Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Q – Tell me about yourself</p> <p>Ans – Similar to the last round but in a most concise.</p> <p>Q – A case on divesture – Company A are splitting in 2 parts – A' &amp; B – 1000 systems are being split in 300 used by A' , 300 used by B and 300 being used by A'&amp;B. How would you go about this?</p> <p>Ans – Case prep 101 :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repeat the question</li> </ol>

2. Clear on objective
3. Make it a conversation –
  - a. Ask why the business is splitting
  - b. Objective of the systems
4. Gave 3 stage approach
  - a. Start with B's system only
    - i. Check process dependencies
    - ii. Check access
    - iii. Check data dependencies
    - iv. If none, these systems can be migrated
  - b. Start with A's system only
    - i. Like above approach
  - c. System's used by both A&B
    - i. Mention this is the trickiest part
    - ii. Again 3 approaches here
      1. Replicate parts required by B and build capability at B's side, Original systems stay with A
      2. Replicate parts required by A and build capability at B's side, Original systems stay with B
      3. Complete replication at both parts
      4. Other approaches will be (at either A or B side)–
        - a. Integration in existing system
        - b. Shutdown of systems
        - c. Rebuild of systems

Q – What you think is the hardest part in a divestiture?

Ans - <This is to test on your understanding the steps involved in divesture>

Explained all the steps involved. And explained why planning phase (delimiting scope) is the most difficult part – because of lack of documentation and lack of knowledge.

#### **PI Questions <based on my exp of datacenter migration>**

Question1: What was your most challenging part in the project? And what was most satisfying exp?

Answer 1: Explained how coordinating among 6 companies and 200 members the most challenging part was.

Most satisfying - sending a completion on time mail to C-suite members and getting a appreciating email back from them.

#### **Guesstimates <no questions on this end>**

What went well?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintained calm and replied for all cross questions –           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Give me an example when will systems be handed over to divested entity – Ans: when systems are old and A wants to upgrade on its end.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Converted interview into a conversation – Gave answers to question in a concise fashion and asked for the interviewers' view on those topic.</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Personal
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Jospeh Joy / Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Tell me about yourself</p> <p>Answer 1: Like above questions, but now focus was more on intent of actions rather than actions –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Example – why computer science engineering</li> <li>2. Why Sony and Cargill &lt;places I worked before&gt;</li> </ol> <p>&lt; Idea was help build a mental image in the mind and present a candid behavior &gt;</p> <p>Question 2: What do you want to do in life? And how your career fits in this plan?</p> <p>Answer 2:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explained why Tech consulting is the place to be in –           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explained changing role of CIO's from order taker to direction provider</li> <li>b. Explained how traditional businesses are clueless on technology capacity and splashing money on mergers.</li> <li>c. &lt;Though I didn't tell the partner anything new, but just gauged his interest in things I was saying &amp; showcase my experience in this feild&gt;</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>Question 3 (I am bundling things here) –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you do in your free time?</li> <li>2. Have you ever been to the US?</li> <li>3. What is the last book you have read?</li> </ol> <p>Your Comments (if any):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One big problem I faced was not knowing that I was interviewing for M&amp;A competency. Hence, I kept my answers in partner round too generic which could have matched for both Tech Strategy and M&amp;A.</li> <li>2. This got the partner irritated and made him ask directly – "All the hear is tech and strategy. Are you interested in M&amp;A?"</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. It was difficult for me to make a comeback from there, but I could manage it with witty answer 😊</li> </ul>
What went well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Candid and confident approach to all questions asked</li> <li>2. Made the interview a conversation</li> </ul>
What could have been done better?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowing what competency I was interviewing for – should have taken a hint from the case topic.</li> </ul>

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Utsav Patodia
Company interviewing for	Deloitte USI S&O
Number of rounds	3 rounds / 3 interviews

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	Behavioral + Mini M&A Case
Duration	25 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Take me through your resume ?</li> <li>2) Why Deloitte S&amp;O ?</li> <li>3) List three characteristics of yours which you think make you fit for this role.</li> </ul> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case – Mergers And Acquisitions</b></p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b>  Revenues, COGS and EBIT of two companies were provided. While the absolute numbers of Rev and COGS was given. EBIT was given as a percentage of revenue. If the two companies merge, assuming no synergies, what would be the EBIT as a percentage of Revenue for the combined firm</p> <p><b>Initial instinct of Approach –</b>  The obvious answer that struck me was that I should add the revenues of company A &amp; B. The EBIT figures of Co. A &amp; B and then calculate total EBIT as a percentage of Total Revenue.</p>

	The only problem was that it just seemed too simple ! It was so obvious, why would someone ask this to you ?
What went well	I quickly worked out the absolute EBIT figures by multiplying the percentage with revenues for each of the companies. Added the EBIT. Added the Revenue and then calculated the EBIT as a percentage of revenue and then just went blank !
What could have gone better	I should have interacted with the interviewer a lot more. I worked out the answer quickly. For the next 5 mins I was staring at the sheet to understand if there is any other trick. The interviewer almost forced the answer out of me ! In retrospect I realized that he was testing my Mental math rather than anything else. Typically round 1 for Deloitte S&O is Behavioral and Guesstimate ! I wasn't asked the Guesstimate but the M&A problem instead.

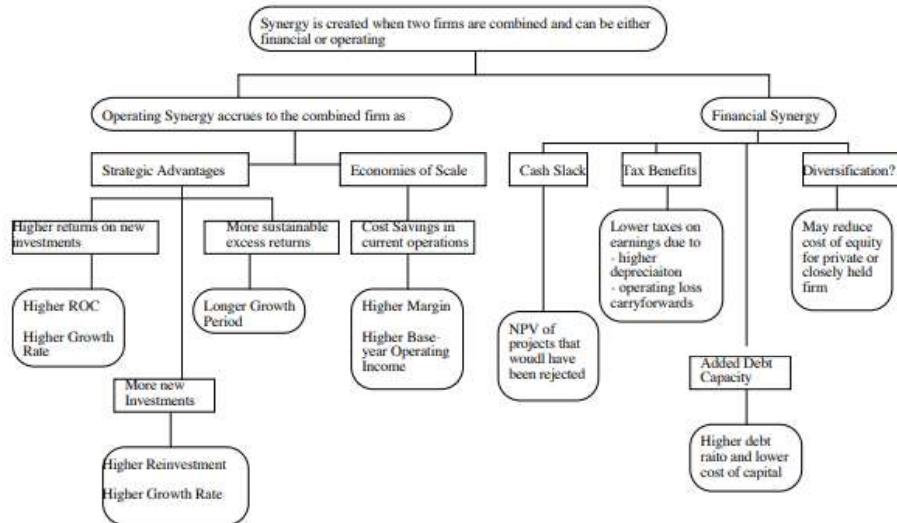
Round No.	Round 2, Interview
Type of Round	Short behavioral and then Case
Duration	1 hr
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Director
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Run me through your profile.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case –</b> This was a Deloitte M&amp;A case. Deloitte cases are interviewer lead, in the sense that there is a set of questions and charts and a set of specific answers to those questions. It is a lot like solving a question paper in an hour, with the other person looking at each and every step of yours !</p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b> Case Narration (all upfront) – Company A and Company B are merging. Both provide a range of software products. There is a substantial overlap between their offerings.</p> <p>Question 1 – How will you go about valuing their synergies ? Question 2 – Based on the data sets provided calculate the cannibalization amount because of the overlap in product offerings Question 3 – Based on the data given, calculate the savings from employing lesser personnel.</p> <p><b>Initial instinct of Approach –</b> There wasn't an overall approach. Each question was very specific and required thinking along those lines alone.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked –</b></p>

I asked if I should look at the operating aspect of synergies or the financing aspect as well

**Frameworks used –**

Used Damodaran's Synergy estimation framework

Figure 3: Synergy and Value



Source : <http://people.stern.nyu.edu/adamodar/pdffiles/papers/synergy.pdf>

**Case flow post scoping –**

Question 1 -

Narrated the Synergy estimation framework verbatim! Modified it little to make it appropriate for software industries.

Question 2 -

Straight forward multiplication, division and addition.

Question 3 –

Same. The data sets are not allowed to be taken outside.

Post this, in 5 mins I was called for Round 3

**Recommendations/ Synthesis –**

None. The case didn't require it.

**Your Comments (if any) –**

Keep calm when you are confronting the data set. Very important to keep interacting with the interviewer. Consider it a discussion and not a Viva !

What went well	I think I answered the Synergy valuation part quite well. Even though I struggled a lot with the nos., I felt that the first answer served as an anchor and helped my cause.
What could have gone better	Could have kept calm with the data sets. Seemed like an overload of information. Didn't know what to consider and what to avoid. Highly recommended that one becomes comfortable with Mental math and all types of graphs and charts. Referring to CAT DI and GMAT Integrated Reasoning material is not a bad idea at all

Round No.	Round 3, Interview
Type of Round	Behavioral + Fit test
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Mr. Kamesh, Country Head of Deloitte S&O
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>1) Take me through your resume?      2) I have doubts that you are going to stick with the firm. I don't want to train you only for you to leave us and join some other place.</p>
What went well	Was the best out of all the three rounds for me. I did 80% of the talking and finally I ended up convincing him that I was going to stick with the firm and that I was there for the long haul. Was made the offer in 10 mins post that
What could have gone better	Can't really say

5.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Anuj Bahl
Company interviewing for	Deloitte USI S&O
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1/2/3
Type of Round	Guesstimate+PI/ Case /Partner Round
Duration	Round 1 – 20 Mins, Round 2 – 30 mins, Round 3 – 15 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partners took my interview in all 3 rounds
Round Summary	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Tell me something about yourself.</p>

(questions asked and your responses)	<p>Most of the questions revolved around the start up I had worked for.</p> <p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p>Question: Estimate the market for a furniture retail company deciding to enter India Approach: Asked questions to know more about the company and the products that it offered Remarks from Interviewer: My guesstimate lasted 5 mins, I didn't even reach the final number but he seemed satisfied with my approach Your take on your approach: Broke down the problem exhaustively</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: M&amp;A Problem statement: The case had multiple questions with a lot of data and charts. The interviewer went question by question and asked my approach Recommendations/ Synthesis: Don't make math mistakes. Quick mental maths is the reason why they were impressed. Your Comments (if any): Stay confident and believe in your answers</p>
What went well?	Connect with the interviewer early on in the interview
What could have been done better?	-

# Parthenon India

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Kunal Gupta
Company interviewing for	Parthenon EY
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ajay Kathuria, Senior Consultant
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Ajay started by asking me to tell him about myself. He told me he had already read my resume so wanted me to tell him something that I was very passionate about. I talked about my passion for machine learning and football. I was grilled on why I wanted to work in Education consulting when I had a very technical background. I told him that as an Analytics professional, I was in the business of problem solving. Consultants also do something similar and I would be able to see the impact of my work at a much bigger scale. He seemed satisfied and afterwards, told me about his background.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Market Entry</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> There is a linear city as in a city with nothing but buildings along one road. There is an ice cream parlor on one end and the city has 100 residents uniformly distributed along the road with a common demand of 1 ice cream per week. Your client is an ice cream company like Baskin Robbins and they want to open a parlor in the city. How would you go about it?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> I enquired if profitability or market share were the objectives and if there were any baseline targets. I also drew a layout of the city (it was a straight line) and asked some questions on the same.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Ajay told me to not apply any frameworks and think about various parameters on which the sales would depend.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> I wrote down parameters such as distance, flavors, density, neighborhood, serving size (# of scoops), price etc. and went through them</p>

	<p>one by one. Ajay kept saying that they were exactly the same for us and the competition. He basically shot down all my suggestions. Afterwards, I decided to think from a value chain perspective. I listed all the components starting from an individual sitting on their couch wanting an ice cream to finally getting and eating it and post-eating feelings.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> With the case going nowhere, I summarized my findings stating all the parameters we had discussed and how ice cream business is actually very complicated.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> I believe that Ajay just wanted to understand my thought process. There was no real solution to the case and we just had a long discussion on how an ice cream company should set up its business.</p>
What went well?	I was very honest during my PI. I told the interviewer that I was very clear about getting into consulting and I had not applied to roles in other functions. This gave the interviewer the confidence that I was serious about consulting and not just there because of the hype.
What could have been done better?	I could've started with the value chain analysis in the first place. This would have reduced the duplication and saved a lot of time spent solving the case.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	35 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Saini Krishnamurthy, Consultant
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Saini started off by asking me to walk her through my resume. She was very curious about my deep financial services and machine learning background and my interest in consulting. I used my original answer and we also had a brief discussion about the digital transformation that many companies around the world are undergoing.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> There is a coffee place (like Starbucks) outside a college. Recently there was a strike inside the college which led to the canteen inside the college being shut down for a month. In that one month, the coffee shop saw an increased traffic from the college students, but the profitability went down. Though this strike was</p>

	<p>called off after a month and the profitability went up again, we want to make sure it doesn't happen again. Diagnose what happened and give possible solutions.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> I started my analysis by asking more information about the coffee shop, any competition nearby, the customer mix before and after the strike, and the product offerings (food menu) and their margins.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> I used the simple profitability framework to break down revenues and costs.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> I quickly identified that the problem was with the changed product mix. The increased college students visiting the coffee shop were ordering more MRP based items such as cookies and chips and less high margin (80%) items such as coffee/other beverages. Also, the regular customers couldn't find available seating space.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> I recommended that the coffee shop do the following: 1) launch promotions for college students to push them to buy coffee albeit at lower margins (50-60%) 2) change seating layout to accommodate regular customers 3) have schemes based on time of the day as college students are more likely to visit during the day.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any): -</b></p>
What went well?	I built a good connect with the interviewer early on and this helped drive the analysis forward.
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case (booklet) + PI
Duration	1 hour 50 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Raunaq Sabharwal, Case Team Leader
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	Raunaq introduced himself and asked me about my background. Immediately afterwards he told me that we'll be starting with a case where he would give me a case booklet and 30 minutes to read and solve the case on a whiteboard. He told me that he wanted me to present the case later just like I would do during a client pitch. I was given a case of 16 pages (slides), with all the information relating to a business (business model, financials, industry, current situation, client speak, and employee speak).

After handing over the booklet to me, Raunaq told me that he wanted me to answer the following 3 questions: 1) Identify all the key issues in the case 2) Explain all the possible recommendations 3) If you were the case team leader, how would you structure your team to solve this case?

### **Case**

**Type of Case:** Growth Strategy

**Problem statement:** The client was a chemical company whose growth had stagnated due to intense competition and general industry trends. They produced multiple products such as animal feed, pharmaceuticals and bleach. They wanted to increase their growth profitably.

**Scoping questions asked:** I couldn't ask any scoping questions as I was left alone with the case for 30 minutes.

**Recommended Approach:** It is important to read (skim) the case very quickly as the time is very limited. Start off by finding the key issues on the first two pages and immediately jump to client and employee speak. Once you've identified the key issues, read all the remaining pages and don't leave any of them untouched. It is important to start solving the case in a structured fashion directly on the whiteboard as you'd waste time copying it from a paper later. I divided the whiteboard into 3 columns listing key issues in first, recommendations in second and any incremental analysis in the third.

**Frameworks used:** I analyzed all the data I had and started with the growth strategy framework dividing my solution between organic and inorganic growth.

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:** For organic growth, I did a marketing mix analysis suggesting all possible improvements in the 4Ps. For the inorganic growth, I identified an acquisition target. Raunaq grilled me quite a lot on my acquisition target recommendation as there were multiple good options. I stood my ground and convinced Raunaq why my choice was the most optimal.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** I tried to give all my recommendations in a tabular format listing pros and cons of each option. This gave the whiteboard a look and feel of PowerPoint slides just like I would make for a client pitch.

**Your Comments (if any):** The discussion on the case went for almost an hour after the initial 30 minutes. I recommended that we reduce our prices to gain market share. Raunaq didn't agree with the idea so I quickly did a hurdle analysis (Pricing course to the rescue) to show mathematically that my suggestion could work. This impressed Raunaq quite a bit.

	<p>After an hour of a grueling case discussion, Raunaq offered me some water and told me we were done with the case. We arrived at multiple possible solutions and throughout the discussion, it felt like we were having a conversation and just brainstorming on ideas.</p>
<p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p>After the case ended, Raunaq asked me to tell him about myself. It was general PI with one specific question that I found tough to answer. Raunaq asked me that despite a high GPA, good education and work background, why didn't I get shortlists from other consulting companies. I said that perhaps it was because of lack of client facing experience in my resume. But an MBA at ISB has taken care of it. Raunaq asked me how ISB had solved the issue. I stated that I learnt how to work in teams of people from diverse backgrounds which is how the client engagements would be. Raunaq seemed satisfied with the answer and after 20 minutes of discussion about Parthenon and the kind of projects, I was told that there would be no more interviews.</p> <p>My interviews went on non-stop from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm and I was made an offer around 4 pm.</p>	
What went well?	Dividing the case into issues, recommendations and other incremental analysis helped me structure my solution well.
What could have been done better?	I could've paced myself better skimming through the case. I couldn't complete the entire analysis in the 30 minutes and things were clicking to me while I was explaining them to Raunaq.

# EY-Parthenon MENA

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aksh Sheth
Company interviewing for	EY MENA
Number of rounds	1

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	40 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. About yourself</li> <li>2. What are your interest areas?</li> <li>3. Why don't you want to join a startup? (after I told that I am interested in learning about business models of startups and problems solved by startups)</li> </ol> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Guestimate</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Estimate the number of spark plug sold in Andhra Pradesh</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asked about the vehicle type, I should include to which he mentioned 2W, 4W (cars) and buses</li> <li>2. Asked about the number of spark plugs in each vehicle type</li> <li>3. Asked whether I should include both new and replacement demand to which he replied 'we can discuss when we go into details.'</li> </ol> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> NA</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve the case:</b> I asked him demand side or supply side and explained the approach for both the methods. From the demand side, I calculated the number of vehicles (2W, 4W, and bus) sold in Andhra Pradesh. However, I should have only included the replacement demand. The fact was that no OEMs were in Andhra Pradesh. So only replacement demand had to be included. Then I focused only on the replacement demand. The interviewer gave numbers of the installed base. I asked about the replacement cycle to which he mentioned that the spark plug needs to be replaced after every 1500 kms. I converted that to number of years. E.g., in case of 2 wheelers, <math>50\text{ kms per day} * 300 \text{ days} = 1500 \text{ kms}</math>, so I assumed that spark plug needs to be replaced in a 2 wheeler every year. Similarly, I estimated the replacement</p>

	cycle for cars and buses. I calculated the replacement demand using installed base, replacement cycle and number of spark plugs in each vehicle type
What went well?	1. Show all your workings to the interviewer so he can correct you if required 2. Take time to think as opposed to quickly answering without much thinking.
What could have been done better?	1. Stay calm 2. Don't get nervous if you don't know about the industry or the product. Ask a meaningful question to the interviewer to understand the same

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Jagriti
Company interviewing for	EY MENA
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	50 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Shehzad Ali, Director, Dubai Office
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question 1: Introduce yourself? Answer: Gave a prepared answer, focusing on parts that I thought were more relevant for this role and company.</p> <p>Question 2: Why consulting? Answer: Spoke about how I have built a strong foundation in analytics with ~4 years of experience and now wanted to move to front end management/strategy consulting. Gave reference of my time at BCG and how working closely with consultants and realizing the impact my analytics solutions had on clients' businesses, I felt motivated to make this functional switch.</p> <p>Question 3: Why EY-Parthenon? Answer: International/Global experience, more exposure, interesting projects, diverse teams, immense opportunities, and possibility of shaping your own career going forward.</p> <p>Question 4: Tell me about a time you faced conflict at work and took steps to resolve it? Answer: Gave the example of an analytics project for a banking client at BCG.</p>

	<p><b><u>Case</u></b></p> <p>Type of Case: Market Sizing and Market Entry</p> <p>Problem statement: European manufacturer of office chairs specializes in niche technology (has its own IP) for “swivel chairs”. Client wants to look at opportunities within the home market and identify growth opportunities abroad to pilot. Client wants to identify and establish a base in foreign markets, primarily in UAE. They are ranked #3 in Europe, want to become #1 How can they achieve this?</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Should I focus only on UAE for the sake of this analysis? Market sizing based on value or volume? Only for swivel chairs? Client's current market share and expected market share to become #1? Product advantages/disadvantages? Core strengths of company? Competitors? Customer response to the new technology? Ease of adoption?</p> <p>Frameworks used: I listed down various ways in which we can size the market i.e. top-down or bottom-up, supply or demand side, etc. For market entry, I used Build, Borrow (JV), Buy (inorganic method i.e. M&amp;A) framework.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: After discussing with the interviewer, I used the top-down approach starting with the total infrastructural area available in UAE (interviewer gave me the number), and dividing it into residential, commercial and retail. Then I divided commercial into industrial and non-industrial. Among non-industrial, I took assumptions for available (open) floor space in offices. Finally, I divided into swivel and non-swivel chairs considering factors such as area required by a chair, life of a chair etc. to arrive at 2 figures – market size for swivel chairs for new market and for replacement market.</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: I suggested to enter the market through partnering with other firms in middle east. Gave a list of pros and cons along with potential barriers to entry and how to tackle them.</p>
What went well?	I was confident throughout the interview (Specially in PI/Behavioral questions). I got stuck at few places during the case, but I didn't flutter and maintained my calm. Asked relevant questions to the interviewer and moved ahead. I also always shared my thoughts with the interviewer and asked him if my approach was correct. That saved us time as he would correct me beforehand if he thought I wasn't thinking in the right direction.
What could have been done better?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At various times during the interview, the interviewer had to help me to arrive at the most logical and correct answer. I would have preferred if I thought about it myself proactively.</li> <li>I should have practiced more Market entry cases.</li> </ol>

Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	35-40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Thomas Bradtke, Lead Partner, Riyadh Office
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question 1: Introduce yourself?      Answer: Gave a prepared answer, focusing on parts that I thought were more relevant for this role and company. Followed up by asking about the partner. (He was an ex-BCG partner and had joined Parthenon few years ago, so I tried to strike a conversation around that and asked for his reasons to make the shift etc.)</p> <p>Question 2: Tell me 3 unique things about yourself that make you stand out?      Answer: I spoke about my work experience in analytics, my ability to work well in teams as well as work independently (quoting examples from past projects), and my initiative-taking abilities (again substantiating with examples). (I further rambled on to tell more about myself but in hindsight, I don't think I should have done that)</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Pure strategy case with no standard case type. The case was slightly abstract and very open-ended. (The partner just wanted to test whether I can think logically and structure my thoughts well)</p> <p>Problem statement: How can Saudi improve international relations with other countries and build stronger ties and strategic partnerships? For simplicity sake, I was asked to take India as the other nation. Client was Govt of Saudi Arabia.      (It was a real ongoing project with a 3 months' timeline that the partner himself was working on)</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Not a lot of scoping questions since the case was very open-ended.</p> <p>Frameworks used: No standard frameworks could be used. I still tried to incorporate the PESTEL framework.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: I recommended dividing the project into 2 phases – evaluating historic ties and potential future opportunities separately. I listed a few points that can be looked at under each head (using PESTEL framework and other points such as trade relations, international projects together, common allies etc.). In the final “business plan”, I came up with a 5-step approach to completion of the project – Identifying opportunities/pain points, strategic planning, understanding tradeoffs, implementation/execution planning, and identifying bottlenecks.</p>

What went well?	Very important to ask relevant questions to the partner, for example, I asked about the industries and projects prevalent in MENA, what kind of assignments is he working on, what's in the pipeline, UAE trends and future landscape etc.? I also stayed calm and answered confidently.
What could have been done better?	I could have been more concise in my answers (very important to give sharp and to-the-point answers to both behavioral and case questions).

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Kriti Jain
Company interviewing for	EY MENA
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~50 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Director
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>I had previous management consulting experience, so the main questions were about why do I want to go back to consulting, why did I leave it in the first place, why not join the same consulting firm again, etc.</p> <p>Questions about a case competition I had won – general approach and concepts used. A problem that you have solved in workplace – fairly detailed on how did I approach it. No guesstimate. I was also asked questions on how good I am with my corporate finance concepts, questions on cash conversion cycle, inventory turnover, etc. (just basic formulas)</p> <p><b>Case:</b> I was asked what type of case I want to do and I asked for a manufacturing industry case. It was a fairly straight forward case on improving profitability.</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2
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Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~50 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner Dubai (over Skype)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Top three things on your resume that you think are the most significant. No guesstimate.</p> <p><b>Case:</b> Type of Case: Abstract Problem statement: Government of Saudi wants to improve its ties with Government of India. You have to advise Saudi Government on engagement strategies and roadmap.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: I used three sets of relationships that would have to be evaluated – Saudi &amp; other nations, Saudi &amp; India, Other 2 nations who relations might influence Saudi-India collaboration (like something between Iraq-US influencing Saudi). Then, there could be direct engagement strategies – military, economic, sports, cultural, etc, or indirect engagement like through lobbying in international forums, UN, etc. We discussed examples of a lot of these points.</p> <p>Second part was a deeper discussion on how would you choose/prioritize from a list of these strategies. I used the effort vs impact chart to evaluate these. We also discussed what exact parameters would have to be used to measure effort and impact in this case.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): Try keep your answers in as much structure as possible. Having a structured approach is the only thing that can help in such cases, since there was not much info. There was no problem to be solved. Also, have clarity of any solutions that you propose, the interviewer could go down into depth on any point</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~50 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner Singapore

Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>General PI, tell me about yourself, questions on resume. No guesstimate.</p> <p><b>Case:</b> Type of Case: Profitability, Numbers Problem statement: Profits for a Telecom player in the US have been declining</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Used the basic scoping questions on what are the main revenue streams, segment sizes and market scenario. Turned out that their customer care costs are too high. We discussed some ways of reducing the cost. There were a lot of numbers and required fairly detailed quantitative analysis (quantitative comparison of the options).</p>
What went well?	Practice around frameworks
What could have been done better?	Numbers – speed and grasp

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aayush Rajesh Poddar
Company interviewing for	EY MENA
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Guesstimate+Case+PI
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Aman Bedi Senior Manager (ISB Alum)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>He started off by asking me about my family business. I had used some jargons on my resume, so I explained that and the business model. This discussion went on for 20 minutes. I explained the business in detail using ratios like DuPont, industry trends, etcetera. I gave him internal insights and he got quite interested in understanding the details.</p>
	<p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p>Question: Estimate the size of the waste management market in India Approach: Top-down approach with personal experiences</p>

	<p>Remarks from Interviewer: He asked me to make sense of the final figure      Your take on your approach: Always include all possibilities, try to ask the interviewer if you can eliminate some difficult branches and focus on the crux. For example, I asked my interviewer if I could ignore industrial waste, and then excretory waste in domestic waste. He was happy that I was considering everything and not making my own assumptions.</p>
<b>Case</b>	<p>Profitability/Market Entry etc      Problem statement: A Waste Management company wants to enter India      Scoping questions asked: Use the 3C and 1P for scoping ALWAYS. Don't assume.      Frameworks used: Basic market entry start with scoping      Structure/ analysis to solve case: industry, competitive advantage and how to enter      Recommendations/ Synthesis: Not enter India since waste management has high government risk      Your Comments (if any): I missed out on this but the interviewer told me this is a Mafia Business (Remember: Sacred Games?!) and hence it very difficult to get your hand on waste</p>
What went well?	Highly unconventional industry but I maintained CALM and stick to your framework and scoping.
What could have been done better?	Always do sense check or sanity check of your guesstimate

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI
Duration	1 hour 15 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Amit Zutshi, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>This was a Skype Interview. The partner was sitting in a café in Dubai below his office. He started off by telling me to relax and that he just wants to know me better and have a conversation and not an "interview". He explicitly mentioned that there won't be any case</p> <p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>It was over a 70 minutes interview on me. Any question that could be asked, was asked. He started off with my resume. He asked questions on every move I made in terms of engineering, Civil Engineering, CFA, shift to finance, and 2 jobs and then family business. He wanted to understand my rationale behind each move and logic.</p>

	<p>Next, he asked me situational questions for example if I had dissenter in a case group, difficult colleagues, irrational clients, how would I deal with them.</p> <p>Abstract questions like where I see myself 5-10 years? What is success for me</p> <p>In the end he asked me to ask him questions, I asked him 4. He then said I have to ask two more questions and that would determine my interview result.</p> <p>PS: PI is all about making a connect or rapport with the interviewer. Keep smiling.</p>
What went well?	I think I could think well on my feet combined with well-prepared answers for PI. I think it helps to structure in PIs as well. Makes your answer organized and well-thought of.
What could have been done better?	I was skeptical about the Skype bit first. Carry earphones if you can but it was well setup.

FTI Consulting

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Harsh Jaju
Company interviewing for	FTI Consulting
Number of rounds	3
<b>Round No.</b>	
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager – ISB Alum and Managing Director – Montek Mayal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>3 rounds of interviews were held after a written test had already been conducted pre-placements. FTI primarily deals with valuation and the written tests/interviews were structured extensively around valuation. Only 10 candidates were left for actual in-person interviews.</p> <p>An ISB alum conducted the interview. Montek Mayal (MD, India) joined mid-way through it. Basic run-down of resume; "tell me about yourself", "why FTI", "How has the time at ISB been so far?", etc. Followed by a case. The case details were as follows:</p> <p>A Qatar investment fund wanted to buy the chemicals division of a large US manufacturer. They agreed at a valuation of say \$100 million in June 2008. They performed diligence activities and signed the share subscription agreement for the SPV owning the assets of the division as well. However, in December 2008 they refused to follow-through with the transaction. Why?  After questioning whether there was anything wrong with the company; any fraud, etc, etc.; I asked for a minute to re-evaluate the facts. When going through the timeline; I realised that between the two dates, the 2008 crash had occurred in September 2008. The solution was that the crash resulted in credit-rationing; higher interest rates; and lower valuation; and hence making the \$100 million valuation unsustainable.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b>  It's important to establish a decent rapport with the interviewer at the onset. It puts you at ease as well as makes it easier to communicate with him/her.</p> <p>During the case; it is important to keep them engaged and allow them to understand your rationale behind following a line of questioning/structure. They only want to</p>

	<p>evaluate how structured your thoughts are/can you link basic facts and critically analyze them.</p> <p>Ask for a minute to get all the facts together if you need it. Don't follow a completely rehearsed method. Try to balance the structure and spontaneity.</p>
What went well?	The initial PI part went very well, and she was happy/impressed with our conversation. It made the case easier to do as well; as she was helpful with the case facts and it felt like she was invested in me succeeding.
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	25 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager – Raghav Jindal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>A senior manager from FTI - Raghav Jindal conducted the interview along with Mr. Montek Mayal (MD, India).</p> <p>General behavioral questions followed by specific questions breaking down the basics of CAPM, Beta, Interest rate risk, Risk-free rates and effect of the same on Valuation. They tried trick questions such as "If two companies; exact same assets and future cash-flows; would have same valuations in two different countries?".</p> <p>Keeping him engaged and explaining why I was suggesting something, deciding against something was key.</p>
What went well?	A proper understanding of basic fundamental concepts is essential for twisted questions which try to confuse you. Every concept questioned was thought in class.
What could have been done better?	Didn't get every answer right. Would have been impressive if I could instantaneously answer every question without asking for time to think/scribble on a piece of paper.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	20 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager – Raghav Jindal and Managing Director – Montek Mayal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>At this stage only 3 of us were left. The interview was merely to assess how keen we were on joining FTI and whether we were okay with the Delhi NCR location. FTI is very keen on ensuring a culture-fit and does not wish to waste time and effort in hiring someone who will leave in the next 6 months. They re-iterated how valuation-heavy the job is and if we were okay with that.</p> <p>Between our Round 3 interviews, the 3 of us who were selected discussed within ourselves and realised that another candidate and I already had FIFs from other companies that we were going to accept over FTI and there was no point in us accepting an offer from FTI.</p> <p><b>Result</b> Rejected FIF and did not sign FIF part 2 itself</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

# GEP Worldwide Consulting

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Arsh Singh
Company interviewing for	GEP Worldwide
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	60 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Jigar Bhadra, Director
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><i>Question 1:</i> Tell me about yourself (not the resume)  <i>Answer 1:</i>  Strengths, weaknesses, what I like doing outside of work, fat to fit linking back to strengths, traveling</p> <p><i>Question 2:</i> Tell me about yourself (resume)  <i>Answer 2:</i>  Undergrad – why I chose Economics and why not Engineering  Post undergrad – why I chose a tech company and not an I-Bank  Work – what I did and biggest achievements  Work – what I could have done better  MBA – Why ISB (diversity not IIM-esque class homogeneity, cheaper than foreign B schools so better ROI)</p> <p><i>Question 3:</i> Do you have any questions for me  <i>Answer 3:</i>  How GEP sees GST as a business opportunity for India business  Asked about his background and how work was for him at GEP, including culture Progression at GEP</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> GTM  <b>Problem statement:</b> NBA wants to increase viewership of basketball matches being streamed at 6 am IST – 3-year strategy  <b>Initial Thoughts:</b></p>

No understanding of basketball so decided to use sports in general as proxy (working under constraints) and pursue scoping initially

**Scoping questions asked:**

What is the reason behind increasing viewership for basketball in India and what is the current state of basketball in India? Big population and tapping into young generation – revenue potential, currently low awareness, poor infrastructure, no leagues, only basketball aficionados streaming in for US matches

What is the current viewership of basketball in India? Low

Reason for low viewership? No history or investment

What are the constraints other than time (3 years) and increasing viewership of only live matches @6am?

None

Are we looking to focus on any specific areas in the GTM strategy?

Yes, to focus on the segmentation, channels and marketing strategy

**Frameworks used:**

None, GTM cases like market entry cases are fairly generic with a need to redefine and narrow the scope at the beginning. Meshed STP concept to give structure.

**Case analysis post scoping:**

Defined sports as an industry with high CAC but low retention costs. Thus, once converted, lesser investment required to maintain proclivity. Basketball is a sport which requires a ball, hoops, and a hard court (which is the biggest cost hurdle for playing basketball).

Playing basketball is as important as increasing awareness since builds engagement. Drew structure on the paper with a flowchart method. Divided the potential market (12-year to 45-year old primarily male) into segments. Teenagers in school leave generally by 7 am for 8 am school. College goers usually starts later at 10 am so most fertile segment. Office goers is also a feasible set.

Used the conversion funnel for each segment – with highest focus on awareness stage which needs to be ramped up for basketball in India

Lined up ease of adoption for each segment using factors like ease of access to basketball infrastructure, population density, openness etc. Post this, created an offline advertising strategy (target sports villages, streaming both live and past matches; low hanging fruit since audience already sports driven, and discussion will translate into interest, basketball drives much like Polio drives, partnering with a sports company like Jaina to ramp up sales of hoops, balls and cards), start setting up hoops in tier 1, 2 and 3 cities in common areas like gated colonies etc like how basketball is played at backyards in the US removing the need for a proper hard court, thus lower CAPEX + an online strategy (social media campaigns with trivia driven sportkeeda partnerships, online gaming like Fantasy Premier League which will also act as a potential revenue stream) and tying up with brand ambassadors which helps

	<p>in awareness stage to take up a new sport segmented locally, like Randeep Singh Hooda for Haryana, Mary Kom for NE etc. At this point, he asked me that he would like to recommend me for the second round and to stay in the room till he sends in the second interviewer.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Stopped me before I gave one and I briefly summarized all points.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> None</p>
What went well?	The ability to have a good conversation cannot be stressed enough and if you understand what ticks with the interviewer, bring in your experience (work ex, something you have read) to gain his/her interest at such opportunities. PI comprised of 30 mins of the 60 mins.
What could have been done better?	I could have scoped better and asked more details, but interviewer was pushing towards continuation of my solution.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Karthikeyan Subramanian, Director
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Revenue</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Indian Railway Minister wants to increase revenue. One idea is to partner and jointly own railway stations with private players. You are a private player participating in the e-tender process for NDLS railway station. The pay-out to the Indian Railways will happen across 5 years with equal payments each year at the beginning of the FY. What is the maximum you are willing to bid?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> All details were provided, was about confirmation of assumptions.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> No framework per se, but a logical number-based estimation with ability to think quick on your feet.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Assumed that as owners of the land, to ensure measurability and easy negotiation, I would take 10% of revenue generated. Thus, made the case about calculating the</p>

potential revenue generated from the railway station. At the point of each assumption, confirmed with Kathikeyan – junction station, trains start and end at NDLS, 12 tracks, 12 bogies, 50 ppl in each bogie, calculated flow of ppl/year – throughput rate, segmented ppl flow – low income, middle income and high income, ARPU of each segment and total spend of ppl flow, direct revenue only generated from train passengers, thus have eateries and merchandise stores and take 10% of the same. Max bid would be the 10% net of my costs. Such stores have a two-pronged benefit

- 1) Rent revenue
- 2) Eases the queue as reducing pressure on waiting time with ppl spending time on entertainment

Own real estate so advertising acts as indirect revenue.

*Stood up and upped the aggression (putting in the spot with a rapid fire)*

*Q – possible revenue streams?*

*A – real estate...hmm...so...advertising is the most obvious one*

*Q – More?*

*A – can be turned into a mall, not only catering to train passengers but everyone*

*Q – More?*

*A – Ppl want to go their end destinations...thus need taxis...rent parking space to Uber/Ola...partner with Paytm for transactions etc...*

*Q – More more?*

*A – There are trains going in and out...so motion...so mechanical energy...which can be converted into electrical energy to serve the station and sell excess power to discoms/companies*

#### **Recommendations/ Synthesis:**

**Your Comments (if any):** Dives straight into a numerical case to test quant prowess, lasts for an hour, GEP typically does this – two different kinds of cases, one more marketing/strategy oriented and one numeric heavy.

What went well?	I was able to follow a linear thought structure with good estimations and number analysis quickly. Additionally, I was able to think of solutions calmly when put under pressure.
What could have been done better?	I could have thought more out of the linear frame of calculations and given a more comprehensive macro outlook.

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Anuj Bairoliya
Company interviewing for	GEP Worldwide
Number of rounds	1

Round No.	Only 1 round
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager Director (joining in the last 5 minutes)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><i>Question 1:</i> Run me through your resume  <i>Answer 1:</i>          Structured 2-minute pitch in chronological order covering early days, under-grad, work experience and ISB journey.</p> <p><i>Question 2:</i> How have your roles and responsibilities changed in the 5 years of work experience  <i>Answer 2:</i>          Discussed how I started as a Trainee then got 3 promotions over the 5 years and how with every promotion the responsibilities and expectations evolved. Used numbers to show the change in value of projects and the number of team members working in the team.</p> <p>Also discussed the extra responsibilities I undertook in areas of client management, business development and employee trainings with each promotion.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> GTM  <b>Problem statement:</b> Design a 2019 general elections political campaign for Rahul Gandhi  <b>Initial Thoughts:</b>          A very random and open-ended problem statement which could have a lengthy and multiple response</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b>          When I started asking question, the interviewer replied to assume the scenario to be the actual political situation of the country and make assumptions accordingly.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b>          There was no set framework which could have been used. I started thinking how to structure my answer and then I decided to go with 5C's approach.</p> <p><b>Case analysis post scoping:</b>          I started the case with context and discussed how Rahul Gandhi's current image is and about the political situation of the country. Politics is one of my topics of interest, so this went smooth.</p>

Then I discussed about the competition, how the NDA government will publicize its achievements and the positioning of other parties.

For collaboration, I discussed how Congress can form an anti-NDA alliance and try to garner maximum support from regional parties.

Customers- This took the maximum time as I discussed how the different section of societies look at Congress and Rahul Gandhi. Also discussed, what are the aspirations, demand and needs of different strata of the societies and how can they be fulfilled.

The interviewer here asked me to come up with point for the election manifesto covering all the sections of the society.

Communication – In this area, I discussed how data driven elections have become now and how social media can change the results and sentiments of the people.

The whole discussion took 10 minutes with inputs from the interviewer.

**Your Comments (if any):** Just be calm and structure your thoughts before starting. In my case what they were testing was more of thought process than my answer.

#### **Guesstimate**

Post the case, I was given a guesstimate question. The problem statement was to calculate the first month sales of One Plus 6.

I took 2 minutes to think through and lay out a structure to my answer. Two approach for the answer came to my mind – 1) approach with number of mobile phones sold in India 2) approach with the population and mobile penetration.

I chose the latter as I was not sure of the number of mobile phones being sold. I divided the population of 1.25 Bn into 4 classes – upper class of society consisting 10% of population, upper middle class consisting 20% of the population, lower middle class consisting 40% of the population and lastly the lower strata consisting 30% of the population. Then I took an assumption that only 1% of the population will buy the One plus as most will consider other flagship phones such as Apple and Samsung. For upper middle class I took the probability of buying a One Plus at 25% and for lower middle class the probability at 5%.

Then I took an assumption that on average a person changes a phone at an interval of 3 years. So divided the numbers I got from population, I further divided it by 3. Now from that number I evened out the sales in 12 months and by dividing by 12. The number I got was the estimate sales for One Plus 6 in first month of launch.

I also cleared out the assumptions made and spoke about cross sales to IOS users and how some people change their phone every year.

	<p>The interviewer stopped me there and he mentioned that he was just checking my thought process and no further details are required.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> In most guesstimate questions, it's not the numbers which matter but the reasoning and the interviewer is just evaluating whether you have taken an exhaustive approach.</p> <p>Post the guesstimate, a Director of the firm walks into the room and he is just observing without any interaction.</p> <p><i>Question 3</i></p> <p>Discuss one of the projects you have undertaken from the various cost saving projects you have mentioned in your resume.</p> <p>I discussed one of my favorite projects right from context, problem at hand, my approach and solution provided. The interviewer asked me to talk about my individual contribution.</p> <p>Once I was done, the director introduced himself and he asked me some specific details about the project. Then he asked me to derive the cost saving number, I have mentioned.</p> <p>There was a lot of cross-questioning happening and they were testing whether I have made up the numbers or is it actual.</p> <p><i>Post this I was told that I am being given an offer and the HR will take it further. I signed the FIF but did not end up accepting the offer as I got an offer from Cars24 which I found better.</i></p>
What went well?	My confidence in the resume-based questions and the approach to the cases given. I had well researched about the company and had attended the pre-placement talk which helped a lot in my discussion.
What could have been done better?	-

# Infosys Management Consulting

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Prateek Agarwal
Company interviewing for	Infosys Consulting
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	50 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Some Banerjee, Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b> Started with his intro, went quite long. Simple intro.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Declining Market Share  <b>Problem statement:</b> Client is a coffee shop in Hitech City and facing revenue decline.  <b>Scoping questions asked:</b> About the shop? How old? what brand? How have the sales declined? Who are typical customers? Rented or owned place?</p> <p><b>Answers:</b> Seems like the shop is struggling because Starbucks opened recently in the same complex. Also, it's a coffee shop thus the service time needs to be faster, they had slower service time.</p> <p>Given numbers around the processing time for an order. The main issue was that they had their kitchen centralized and the commute took time. I was asked to evaluate the pros and cons of having the kitchen in house.</p> <p>Another small problem given around how</p> <p><b>Rapid Fire Round:</b> Asked me a bunch of questions on politics and sports.</p>
What went well?	I had a good PI and the case went well. Apart from the questions asked in the case I was able to highlight other strategic considerations.
What could have been done better?	It was a long interview, over 50 minutes. By the end of it I was restless which is not the best thing.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	40 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Tell me something about yourself that's not in the CV. Went okay.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> general strategy  <b>Problem statement:</b> What are the top concerns of ISB Dean. How would you solve them  <b>Scoping questions asked:</b>          Took some time to write down my framework. Used a framework to go from function to function to highlight the typical problems.          Students – Attract students, applications, manage quality of student          Faculty- Attract the faculty, best faculty across the globe, focus on research          Finance – We pay in dollars and get paid in INR. How do we manage the currency risk          Operations- Use of tech for managing classes and exams. We have close to 900 students          2 campus- having 2 campuses causes some difficulty           Asked to dig deeper in the student issues. How to attract better talent and higher number of applications           Points explained like, making a name in the media          How it resembles a platform, where people are attracted if other people are interested.</p>
What went well	The conversation was very informal and I was able to connect well. The conversation had multiple moments of a big laugh
What could have been done better?	-

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Conversation with the Partner
Duration	12 min, Whatsapp video
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Rajesh, Partner

Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	More of getting to know the person. Asked me to design a digital transformation journey for a company. Didn't go very well as the video connection was poor.
What went well?	I explained my points using examples from the public domain.
What could have been done better?	Should have known the Digital transformation journey

# KPMG SSOA (Shared Services and Outsourcing Advisory)

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shriram Jatar
Company interviewing for	KPMG – Strategy and Operations (Shared Services and Outsourcing Advisory)
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	Round 1
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	35-40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Karthik, Partner (Head of the Team)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>4) Tell me about yourself        5) Why ISB?        6) Why Management Consulting?</p> <p>The Partner started off by explaining the role, what his expectations are from the candidate and asked probing questions to see whether I'll be a good fit for the role. I come from a finance and accounting background, so the Partner wanted to understand my motivations behind interviewing for a management consulting role as well.</p> <p>He then asked me my understanding of what the difference between a shared services center and an outsourced operation was. He questioned me about the different ways that having a shared services center can benefit a company (I mentioned cost reduction through employee and location pooling, shared IT resources, faster learning curve, sharing of knowledge and best practices, better resource allocation etc.)</p> <p><b>Case Study</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case - Transformation</b></p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b></p> <p>It was an unstructured case based on my CV. He asked me how a company can go about transforming its finance function by leveraging shared services/outsourcing where necessary.</p>

### **Initial instinct of Approach –**

I started by listing out the various functions within finance (e.g. treasury, accounting, taxation etc.). Here I left out Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable, which the partner pointed out that this is the lowest hanging fruit when it comes to outsourcing or process optimization. I asked if he would like me to focus on those, to which he said yes.

I then mentioned the different levers we could be aiming at improving. E.g. Cost Reduction or revenue improvement. He asked that we focus on cost reduction. Here, I lost my structure a bit and began throwing different ideas including using technology, robotic process automation, blockchain, outsourcing to third parties etc. He latched on to my blockchain point and asked how we could leverage this. At this point I wasn't too sure, never having used blockchain myself, but I turned the question into a conversation and began discussing how the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh was using it to secure land records and wondered if this principle could be applied to maintaining vendor or debtor records.

### **Frameworks used – None**

### **Recommendations/ Synthesis – None**

**Your Comments (if any)** – Typically, Partner rounds tend to be a little unstructured as they want to test your ability to think on your feet. For example, while I was solving the case, he noticed a point about my extracurriculars on my resume (I'm a runner) and began quizzing me on it.

At this point it could be flustering to lose your train of thought, but keep your cool, take a few seconds to compose yourself and then get back into the case.

Keep in mind that most interviewers will ask questions pertaining to clients or hot button issues they are facing in their recent engagements, so they are usually interested in getting your perspectives on those issues. **Be sure to research the most important issues facing that industry/profession or future direction it is likely to go in and have a viewpoint on it.**

### **What went well**

At the end I had a discussion with him about the future of outsourcing in the world of AI/machine learning, which went on for 10-15 mins.

I was also able to display a fair understanding of the KPO space including some key issues around talent acquisition and retention, selecting the right location, issues with time zones etc. which seemed to impress him.

What could have gone better	I could have done much better with the case, asked more probing questions etc.
Round No.	Round 2
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Run me through your profile.          Can you list out any situation in your workplace where you were challenged and how did you overcome that challenge?          What motivated you to do an MBA?          Why do you want to get into consulting post MBA?          What subjects did you enjoy at ISB?          What have your biggest takeaways from ISB been?</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case – Profitability</b></p> <p><b>Frameworks used – Profitability, PPT framework</b></p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b> A global consumer products company has an Information Technology back-office in Bengaluru, India. The company has seen a few years of stagnating profitability. How can the company leverage its IT division in Bengaluru to improve its overall profitability?</p> <p><b>Initial instinct of Approach –</b> It's a straightforward profitability case, however the solutioning required is specific as we need to leverage the capabilities of our IT center in some way.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked –</b></p> <p>Does the company have any objectives other than increasing their profitability?          Has the company seen a decline in revenues?          Has there been an increase in costs?          Are there any recent changes to its product portfolio?</p> <p><b>Structure to solve case –</b></p> <p>I started out by listing out that lack of profitability growth could be due to a fall in revenue or an increase in cost. The interviewer wanted me to start with cost</p>

reduction where I listed out fixed costs and variable costs and the various components within it. I decided to focus on leveraging the IT office in Bengaluru for this.

Starting off with the variable costs, I split it into three components – People, Process and Technology

People – I noted that the company could either reduce its workforce or hire younger, lesser experienced people requiring lower salaries to be paid and move more of the work into the India office by cutting jobs in the U.S./European locations. The interviewer seemed to be interested in this idea and asked me to explore it further.

Process – To hire younger people, strong processes and SOP's needed to be in place with clearly defined tasks. This would reduce the expertise required to carry out a role.

Technology – I mentioned the usual suspects here including automation, artificial intelligence, machine learning etc. to reduce manual intervention in certain processes like accounting, finance, internal audit, quality control, customer relationship management, supply chain etc. I gave certain brief examples on how these processes could be transformed using technology.

The interviewer then asked me to move to the revenue side, asking how we can leverage IT to increase revenue.

I split revenue into pricing and volume. Starting off with pricing I mentioned how data can be used to optimize pricing, employing analytics to determine value-based pricing and identify price discriminating opportunities.

For the volume she asked me to focus on increasing market share. She noted that the salesforce was a bottleneck for the company. I mentioned that the sales staff could be provided with an application to help them with CRM related work, use of auto-mailers, chatbots etc. to optimize the existing salesforce and reduce need for outside hiring.

#### **Recommendations/ Synthesis –**

Ultimately, my recommendation was to increase profitability of the company by reducing costs and increasing market share by leveraging the people, processes and technologies of the IT function located in Bengaluru.

This could be achieved by moving several roles from high-cost countries to India and expanding the scope of the division there. I also focused on how it is imperative to keep a lean operation in India with a heavy focus on well-defined processes and SOP's to allow the company to keep a low-cost profile and allow smooth interactions between the Indian/foreign counterparts.

	The interviewer was satisfied with my responses. The next part of the case was about how I would go about expanding the offshore center in India. I did not apply a particular framework but instead spoke about Planning, scoping, setting up processes, determining space and headcount requirements, negotiating for extra space with developers, university and off campus hiring, newcomer orientation etc.
What went well	My case went pretty well, I was able to cover all the major pain points. The interviewer had mentioned that this is an ongoing engagement, so I tried to keep the discussion contemporary and drew from my previous experiences in working with Deloitte USI.
What could have gone better	N/A

LEK Consulting

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Naman Chaudhary
Company interviewing for	LEK Consulting
Number of rounds	1

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Data based long case
Duration	45min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Ashwin (Senior Manager)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b>  Type of Case: Growth Strategy</p> <p>Problem statement: A deck of 7-8 slides with data was given. I was asked to find the problem with the company and then to recommend next steps. I was given 20-30 minutes to formulate my solution and then present it to the interviewer.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: The interviewer was not present for scoping as all data was given in the slides. Rather than questions, make it sound like you're thinking out your thoughts aloud to make the interviewer feel more comfortable and makes it feel less like a interview.</p> <p>Frameworks used: Profitability and DCF/ NPV analyses</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: It was a cement player in India who was facing loss/stagnation in market share on a pan-India basis. I asked a few basic questions about export and import possibility but most of these questions were irrelevant.</p> <p>Market growth was 2-3% on a national level but different zones (N/E/W/S) were growing differently. Also, as cement is a pure commodity, prices and unit costs were almost normalized across industry in different regions. Hence, the way to grow was to add/ buy capacity as just increasing utilization puts pressure on variable costs making the product unaffordable. I used capacity utilization of plants in each zone to calculate output and matched it with regional demand as cement is a regional market due to high logistics cost. There were supply-demand gaps which helped in shortlisting regions. Another slide had regulatory and competitor news about new plants, M&amp;A, tax changes, etc. which helped in evaluating different zones by looking at PROs and CONs. I used High-Medium-Low framework to see the impact of all these news/regulatory changes to shortlist zones further.</p>

	<p>Once the zone was selected by the interviewer and I by discussing extensively, I moved on to the next steps. Option was between buy or make capacity. For this, there were numbers given for cost to make a plant for a given capacity and also for the current cement units on sale. I used the DCF method to evaluate which option had larger NPV. It is always better to come up with a quantitative measure to make decision backed up by a logical voiceover with the interviewer. Using the basic formula using the life of the plant, cost of capital,etc. the answer was evident as another rival was looking to sell a plant at a discount.</p> <p>While I was answering a question raised by Ashwin, he came back into the room with another Principal who then made me the offer.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b></p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b></p> <p>For LEK, I'd advise you to prod for numbers and use these to come at an answer as the work at LEK involves a lot of data/ quant and hence is valued by the team during placements.</p> <p>Also, I'd advise to take all interactions(buddy call, case prep sessions, dinner) prior to the final day seriously. No need to stress yourself too much about them but always helps to be prepared and be confident.</p>
What went well?	I feel my prior knowledge about cement industry, exhaustiveness of approach as well as a mix of quant and qual analysis helped my chances. One doesn't need to stick to frameworks all the time. Final day cases tend to be different for a lot of reasons. I know a lot of people got stuck in frameworks once questioned repeatedly by interviewers.
What could have been done better?	I feel I tend to use more of a qualitative approach which helps me use my prior knowledge gained by working in consulting before. This was called out by buddies to me after which I changed my approach a bit. I felt I could have still used more quant measure to come at an objective solutions.

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Mohd Kashif Khan
Company interviewing for	L.E.K. Consulting
Number of rounds	1

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	45-50 mins

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sudeep Laad
<b>Round Summary</b> (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>          Sudeep started with asking me to introduce myself. It was my first interaction with him. He also touched around a bit of my work at UrbanClap, but he was primarily interested in knowing the reasons I wanted to join consulting, and especially LEK. He asked me what other shortlists I had and in less than 10 mins we proceeded with the case.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Growth Strategy</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is an Indian cement mfg. firm that wants to expand geographically.</p> <p><b>Scoping:</b> In the interview we were given a printout of case (8-10 pages) that had the problem statement and a lot of charts/ metrics. I was given 15-20 mins to go through the case and present my analysis.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> It wasn't a standard framework case, but I used 3CP framework for scoping. A few concepts from CFIN, CCMA, and Macro/Micro Economics came handy while solving the case. It was also about how comfortable you are with numbers and back-of-the-envelope calculation.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> You're initially given a lot of numbers and charts to figure out where the problem might lie and how to solve it. I was a bit intimidated with the amount of information thrown towards me., but I stuck with first principles while solving.</p> <p>I started with noting down all the scoping info in the 3C P format, and given, it was a growth strategy case, I started by analyzing demand-supply gap and competition in each region. Other factors such as FC, VC, payback period, time to completion etc. were all factored in to evaluate the strategy with the highest NPV.</p> <p>I was able to figure out the key problem and the right strategy in 20 mins, but it was only when I started presenting the case, I was able to tie things neatly.</p> <p>During the discussion, there was a lot of back and forth around the case. I think strong fundamentals from core courses and learning finance really helped. Also, the fact that I pointed out potential risks with my approach helped my case. It tells the interviewer that you're an exhaustive thinker. I felt Sudeep was very happy with the quality of my arguments because I was immediately given an offer at the completion of my case.</p>

	<p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> There was no official synthesis, the case ended after a lengthy and satisfactory discussion with the interviewer.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> Have strong fundamentals from core terms and don't panic. Take your time.</p>
What went well?	I was able to come up with good deductions, calculations went well (didn't make any mistakes), and was able to showcase my knowledge of strategy and finance to the interviewer.
What could have been done better?	Initially, I was a bit nervous because it was my first interview of the day. I fumbled, maybe for the first minute, while talking, but I quickly gained control.

## 3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Manu Agrawal
Company interviewing for	L.E.K. Consulting
Number of rounds	1

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	1.5 hours
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Chinmay Jhaveri (Principal) + Ashwin Assomull (Partner)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions (Happened post the Case)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Tell me about the most creative project you've led in your career?</li> <li>2) Why LEK?</li> <li>3) Will you survive the double staffing model, especially in year 1?</li> </ol> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>I only had 1 round which lasted for 1.5 hours and comprised of both PI (20%) and Case (80%). This is the typical last round of LEK. I was given a printed deck of data-heavy 5 slides (if I remember correctly) and 40 minutes to analyze the case and figure out a solution. Post that, the Principal came and started the discussion on the case. The details of the same are given below -</p> <p><b>Type of Case: Market Entry</b></p>

Problem statement: A global Cement manufacturer, having some installed capacity in India is considering expanding capacity in the country.

Scoping questions asked: None since everything was given in the slide. Data in the slide included –

- 1) Current and projected growth rate & size of the Indian cement industry (installed capacity)
- 2) Current and projected profit margins for the industry
- 3) Current market share % & market growth rate (demand) by region & by the player
- 4) Absolute market size split by region represented on the map of India
- 5) Cost per ton, time to construct, projected capacity additions by player & some news snippets about the competition and industry in general

Frameworks used: Market Entry, NPV

Structure/ analysis to solve the case:

I divided the case in 3 parts -

**1) Should they enter?**

I first evaluated the industry in terms of its size, growth rate (going up) and profit margins (becoming stable). Next, I looked at the competition in terms of their market share and planned capacity additions (The client had one of the top capacity additions planned). Finally, I looked at the regulations by taking hints from the news snippets (some regions were more difficult to crack than the other). Basis all these, I came up with a 'go' verdict. This part was done within 3-4 minutes only.

**2) If yes, where should they enter (NSEW)? If no, why not?**

I made a table and calculated the industry utilization by region (market size/total installed capacity) currently and listed the growth rate of market and planned capacity additions in the future. When I extrapolated the growth rates for future projections, I found that in one region, demand was expected to exceed supply (this is what most people missed!). Since cement was a commodity, utilization is all that matters. Once I quantitatively zeroed in on that region, I found further qualitative support from the news snippets.

**3) Should they build or buy capacity?**

Since time was less, I just did a simple Cost-Benefit analysis and did some math on the CM/ton of cement sold. When the Principal came to this part, he wasn't very happy with this section and asked me what metric I will use to make a decision. I listed down a few (Breakeven, Payback period, NPV) and we finally agreed that NPV was the way to go ahead with. He then asked since time was less for me to do an NPV calculation, intuitively, by looking at just the analysis we have done so far, which option had a better NPV. I instantly said 'buy' since the projected utilization levels were above 100% and we would be instantly making money on the expanded capacity as opposed to 5 years it will take to build the capacity.

At this point, the Principal smiled, and made the offer.

Recommendations/ Synthesis: They should enter India, build in x (don't remember which) region and go for acquisition.

	After the Principal left, 2 other Senior Managers came and took my PI, which revolved around how I will fit in with the LEK culture (and other questions mentioned in the beginning). Finally, the Partner came and said he remembered me from the dinner we had 2 weeks back and handed over the FIF.
What went well?	Everything. LEK loved candidates who use quant, especially Finance concepts whenever they are presenting any recommendation. That worked in my favour. Also, I had built a good connection with the Principal and Partners over the dinner we had 2 weeks prior to Day 1.
What could have been done better?	A better brush up of CFIN1 and CFIN2 courses would have helped in the final section of the case.

McKinsey & Co.

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Alexander Hogeveen Rutter
Company interviewing for	McKinsey
Number of rounds	2.5 (3 <sup>rd</sup> round was just for offer)

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~ 30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>      Questions were very generic such as why consulting (note that at this point I had already spent extensive time with buddies and met partners at the Dinners)      Discussed my industry experience (Energy industry)</p> <p><b>Case</b>      Type of Case: Market Entry/Market Sizing</p> <p>Problem statement:      What applications do you see for the Hydrogen Economy in the future?</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Asked if I should limit based on geography or customer type (eg. commercial/industrial/consumer) and what time line to consider (10 years)</p> <p>Frameworks used: Broke into broad categories (eg. transportation, electricity, heat) then sub-categories (eg. personal vehicles, commercial trucking, rail, shipping)</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case:      Went through each potential use case one-by-one      Partway through switched to Market Sizing as I was asked to evaluate the market sizing of one of the segments I had recommended (transoceanic shipping)</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis:      Recommended a focus on domains which are difficult or uneconomic to electrify such as trans-oceanic shipping, commercial aviation and industrial heating application</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): It seemed very fair. He definitely pressed me but gave me the time/space to succeed</p>

What went well?	I was able to successfully identify several segments that looked promising (in this case, direct to consumer is a bit of a red herring as it is unlikely to be cost effective)
What could have been done better?	I actually didn't realize we were doing a case. I thought we were just talking about the energy industry generally. About a minute in I realized we were doing a case and asked for paper/pen.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~ 30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Questions were very generic such as what are my future plans (note that at this point I had already spent extensive time with buddies and met partners at the Dinners)</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: Profitability</p> <p>Problem statement: Our client is planning to build an oil refinery in Gujarat and the IRR is below their hurdle rate, what can they do to improve the IRR?</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Is not building an option (they wanted to do it for strategic reasons). What is the hurdle rate and current IRR? Any other objectives?</p> <p>Frameworks used: Revenues/Costs.</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Talked about the risks/variability on the revenue side Focus was on costs. Initially broke into capex/opex. Capex was the major cost so focused on that. Financing was the major cost so focused on that</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: Made recommendations to shorten the construction time thereby decreasing the WC requirement and financing costs, which improved the IRR above the hurdle rate.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): I took my time and paused to ask questions. Made sure to be MECE and cover everything but asked for guides as to what to focus on (eg. "Do you want me to delve into this deeper"). This "pruning" of the tree really helped-was able to not spend too much time on paths that were irrelevant</p>

What went well?	I was able to "crack" the case (it was based on a real problem the partner had worked with and there was indeed a solution that he had identified)
What could have been done better?	NA

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shubham Gupta
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Company
Number of rounds	1 Round (2 Interviews)

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	35 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sudipto Paul/Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>We started with discussing about Mohali campus and how different it is from Hyderabad. Then discussed a bit on my work experience. He specifically asked me what was my most memorable moment at J.P. Morgan.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Profitability</p> <p>Problem statement: Our client is a leading Indian airline company which has appointed us to improve their negative EBITDA</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: This was the time when Jet Airways was going through a rough patch and they were consulting McKinsey, so I didn't ask the basic questions. Checked if we have any EBITDA increase target. If this negative EBITDA is on international or domestic route. Within international if there are any specific routes which have negative EBITDA. He asked me to choose any international route for analysis and so I chose India to London (8-9 hours flight in line with employees work timing)</p> <p>Frameworks used: Profitability framework</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Used the normal profitability framework to solve the case. Started by analyzing different sources of revenue. He restricted me to ticket sales. Went into different type of customers, average occupancy in each type and</p>

	<p>revenue per seat (corporate and retail separate) in each type to calculate the total revenue. The numbers were not rounded up and required some calculations. He was happy with the approach and calcs, so we moved to the cost side. There I divided the expense by fixed and variable. Listed down all the costs. There was a discussion on whether employee cost should be considered fixed or variable. Also, since the trip time was 9 hours, aircraft could be used for another travel reducing the per day leasing cost or depreciation cost by half. He gave me some numbers on expenses and asked for recommendations since we were short of time then.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Basis the numerical data, I recommended to shift some of the economy seats to business. Reduce some of the major expenses by doing few things. We had no time to discuss the recommendation or synthesis the case. He asked me if I had any questions and we discussed a little on his experience.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> At the start of interview, I asked him about his background and that helped me ask a meaningful question in the end.</p>
What went well?	PI went really well. I established a connect and we spoke for 15 minutes out of the 30 minutes interview slot. I felt the case was quant heavy and there was no calc mistake.
What could have been done better?	This was my first interview and my nerves were out of control. I fumbled initially with dividing revenues in different buckets but fortunately got back to drive the rest of the case.

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	30-35 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Vivek Arora/Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Small introduction to start and then he asked me what was the most challenging aspect of my job.</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: Market entry Problem statement: Our client is an Indian pharmaceutical company well established in selling human drugs. They're evaluating if they should enter animal drug business and if so which segment to target.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Clarified the objective of expansion plans. Checked their current business profits to see if animal drug business is worth chasing for. Asked the usual company details (specialty if any), understood the value chain. Next asked about the animal drug market</p>

	<p>Frameworks used: Market entry, market sizing</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Following up with the scoping questions, I started sizing the market. He asked me to think on how the market looks. I dissected the market in terms of types of illness. Drawing a parallel with human drugs, identified the major buckets. Then further dissected the market based on pets, cattle and poultry (customer segments). In this matrix, based on our discussion we found a sub sector which had a good market and profitability. Having identified the niche, I said let's evaluate if it makes sense to enter or not. I looked for synergies and risk. In synergy, I evaluated revenue and cost synergies. After analyzing each of the aspect, we found brand of the company to be the big asset. We discussed few risks to conclude the case.</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: I recommended our client to enter the cattle drug business because of its market size, profitability and good income customer base. Further the supply chain and established brand made our client a suitable company for this market.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): I didn't have much idea on the pharma business, but I was able to move smoothly because I involved Vivek in the case and drew the right parallels. Since, we were conversing he gave me certain leads which guided me to find the niche in animal drugs.</p>
What went well?	PI again went well. Laying the structure was crucial for the case. Once the objective was clear, case traversed smoothly.
What could have been done better?	-

## 3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Anshul Aggarwal
Company interviewing for	McKinsey
Number of rounds	1 Round (2 Interviews)

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	PI + Guesstimate
Duration	1 hour
Interviewer Name/Designation	Sr. Partner (Saurabh Misra)

Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>The interviewer browsed through my profile presented to him.</p> <p>Question 1: Tell me a little about yourself</p> <p>Answer 1: Gave info on personal and professional background. This is a standard question. Make sure you have points prepared beforehand.</p> <p>Question 2: How was your experience with Amazon.</p> <p>Answer 1: Talked in detailed about my work, my major projects and my transition into leadership role.</p> <p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p>The interviewer smoothly transitioned into a guesstimate by implying that I would have travelled a lot by air during my time at Amazon and asking me to guesstimate the number of airplanes being handled by the Delhi terminal.</p> <p>Approach: The key here was to scope out in the initial 1-2 mins that he wanted the unique number of planes that visited the terminal in a day. Once that was scoped out, I estimated # of planes = The number of gates * average planes handled by a single gate in an hour (15 mins to board so 4 per hour) * 24 hrs. Of these 50 percent would be unique (justifying using qualitative factors). The interviewer probed further if this would be right approach. So, I began revisiting each assumption. I told the interviewer that the assumption of 4 planes per gate per hour might not be possible as there could be bottleneck at the runway. Re-did my calculations by assuming # of runways, #planes landing and taking off and diving by 2 for uniqueness.</p>
What went well?	Even though I fumbled a couple of times in the guesstimate and the case, I maintained a conversational rapport till the very end, asking him questions about what he did and providing my two cents on the issues we talked about.
What could have been done better?	Read all past case books. Most questions are hidden/transformed ways of asking similar questions

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sr. Partner (Somnath Chatterjee)
Round Summary (questions asked and	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p>What technological innovations can help improve primary education in India?</p> <p>I started by identifying all stakeholders. These included government, students, teachers, private entities like NGOS etc. Next I asked the interviewer which of these</p>

your responses)	would he like to focus on. We started from the government perspective. Here I went ahead that government has 2 instruments: policy and provisions. On the policy front, we decided problems for students , teachers and parents (primarily in rural areas). The issues boiled down to the fact that the education material should be understandable for students, accessible and timely updated for teachers and cost efficient for parents. Next for solution I tapped into the fact that India has high mobile penetration. The solution proposed running mobile classes on hand held devices with high storage capacity, in a manner that they are easy to use for teachers.
What went well?	I had prepared for government as well as education based cases so I could borrow ideas from there.
What could have been done better?	It was a tele presence interview and the interviewer was checking his phone during the middle of the case. I could have been most engaging given the remote presence.

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shwetal Karade
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Co.
Number of rounds	1 round (2 interviews)

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	30min
Interviewer name	Suyog Kotecha (Partner)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><b>Question 1:</b> I've gone through your resume in detail. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me?</p> <p><b>Answer 1:</b> I talked about 2 things that weren't on my resume – one professional and one personal</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> What are the problems that you have faced in your work life?</p> <p><b>Answer 2:</b> I stated a problem, mentioned why I considered it to be a problem, and explained how I overcame it.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Capacity expansion + Profitability</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Your client is an Aluminium manufacturer and has a capacity of 5 mn tonnes. A) He wants you to evaluate whether she should add another 1 mn tonne</p>

of capacity to his plant. B) [this part was asked after I completed part A] What can the client do to increase his profitability?

**Scoping questions asked:**

- Why does he want to add capacity (what's the objective)? Ans. Increase profits
- How much investment is required for adding the capacity? Ans. \$5000 per tonne
- What's the geography in which the client operates? Ans. Exports all over the world
- Who are the competitors? What's the market share of the client? Ans. Chinese firms have 50-60% market share
- What is the rate at which the industry is growing (just to check if there's enough demand)? Ans. 5-6% globally
- What's the hurdle rate? 15%
- What are the steps in the Al manufacturing process (the process flow)? Ans. Bauxite mining – raw material procurement – processing to get Alumnia – energy input – aluminium is obtained – shipping

**Frameworks used:** Profitability; Concepts of ROIC & hurdle rate

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:**

1. Calculated the profitability (Per unit revenue – per unit cost)  
Revenue/tonne = \$ 2400  
Cost/tonne for energy = \$ 1450  
Cost/tonne for other processes = \$350  
So, total cost per tonne = \$1800  
Therefore, profit per tonne = \$ (2400 – 1800) = \$600
2. Calculated the ROIC to check if it is greater than the hurdle rate  
Investment required per tonne = \$ 5000  
So,  $ROIC = (\$600/\$5000) = 12\%$   
ROIC was less than the hurdle rate of 15%, so advised that the client should not add the additional capacity
3. What can the client do to make it a profitable investment?  
The interviewer had given me 2 different types of costs. Energy costs were given separately. I had made a mental note of it that it might be required for further analysis. So I mentioned that the energy costs seem too high to me. Suyog agreed and asked me to suggest some ways in which I can cut down on these costs.

I then asked – how does the client meet his energy requirements currently?

	<p>Suyog mentioned that they use coal to generate power. So I broke the solution as follows – Either they should increase the efficiency of their coal power plant or use alternate sources of energy. He agreed that exploring alternate sources is a good idea.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> The client should not add the 1 mn capacity because the 12% return is less than the hurdle rate. The client should look at lowering his energy costs by exploring alternate sources of energy to increase his profitability.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b></p>
What went well?	<p><b>PI part:</b> My interview started with PI questions and I felt I could connect well with the interviewer during this part.</p> <p>Structured answers, confidence and a smile will help you a lot as the interviewer is looking for people he/she can take to the client and are pleasant to talk with.</p> <p>Also, while answering the PI questions, it'd help if you give examples that are <i>relevant</i>. For example, if you have faced a problem that you'd likely face in your consulting job also...the answer would probably have more impact as the interviewer will instantly be able to connect with you and understand you.</p> <p><b>Case part:</b> I proceeded very slowly with my calculations so that I do not make any errors. I'd advise you to do the same. It's fine to go slow and take a few seconds to divide 60 by 12 rather than blurting out an incorrect answer for a very simple calculation.</p>
What could have been done better?	I asked 1-2 extra scoping questions, which in hindsight could probably have been avoided. But overall the interview went extremely well, and about a minute after I stepped out of the interview room I got a feedback from one of hiring team members that 'it looks very positive'.

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 2
Type of Round	PI + Case (over VC)
Duration	30min
Interviewer name	Prashanth Vasu (Partner)
Round Summary (questions asked and	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><b>Question 1:</b> Tell me a little bit about yourself</p>

your responses)

**Question 2:** A) What sports do you like to engage in and why. B) You seem to know how to play most racquet sports except for lawn tennis. Any particular reason for that?

**Case**

**Type of Case:** Abstract

**Problem statement:** A) Your client is a private mid-sized regional bank. It wants to expand its SME loans portfolio. The client wants to sell more and in a faster way. Advise. B) [This was asked after I completed part-A] How many RMs to hire if it ramp up time is 1 year for them?

(Note that the interviewer used a lot of banking related abbreviations, which I think he expected me to know considering I had worked in a banking setup (that too on loans) earlier. Thankfully, I knew those and did not have to ask him for any full forms.

RM= relationship manager, SME = small and medium enterprises)

**Scoping questions asked:**

- When you say the client wants to sell more, is there a particular target he has in mind? Ans. They want to grow at the industry growth rate.
- What's the industry growth rate? Ans. 25%
- What's the rate at which the bank is growing? Ans. It is growing at ~16-17%.
- What's the size of their current book size? Ans. 10,000 crores.
- Which region does the bank operate in (since it was a regional bank)? Ans. South India
- Are they open to expanding to different regions? Ans. No
- What's the market share of the client? Ans. Pretty low
- Who sells the loans' products...RMs only or RMs & branch managers both? Ans. Both. However, they already have stretch targets.

**Frameworks used:** None

**Structure/ analysis to solve case:**

1. I observed that the bank is growing at 16-17% but industry is growing at 25%. And considering that the current sales staff is already over-burdened, I asked if the client is looking to hire more people (I also explained this rationale behind asking the question). The interviewer said Yes.

This was the **real problem statement** for me then!! Essentially – how many RMs to hire to get 25% additional business

2. I started with breaking down the problem as follows –  
$$\#RMs = \#RMs \text{ per customer} * \text{total } \#customers$$

I asked about the average loan amount per customer and tried to find the number of new customers that the RMs will have to onboard (given the 10k loan amount target). We had a little bit of discussion on this. The interviewer then asked me to use loan amount directly. So the equation became –  
 $\#RMs \text{ to hire} = (\text{Total new business} / \text{Business done by each RM})$

Total expected loan book size was  $10,000 * 1.25 = 12,500$  crore.  
 The bank was already growing at 16-17%. I checked with the interviewer if I can assume it to be 15% for easier calculations. He said yes, absolutely.  
 So, out of 25% growth, only 10% would come from new business that the new RMs get. So target for new RMs =  $10,000 * 10\% = 1000$  crore

Business that RMs can = 1.5 crore per month  
 $\text{So, } \#RMs \text{ required} = 1000 / (1.5 * 12) = \sim 55$

3. Follow-up question: Now suppose these RMs need to be trained extensively and their ramp up time is 1 year (linear ramp up). How many RMs would you hire then?

Average business that can be done by these RMs in a year =  $(0+1.5)/2$   
 So,  
 $55 * 1.5 = n * 1.5/2$   
 Ans.  $n=110$

**Recommendations/ Synthesis:** The client should hire 110 new RMs for growing at the industry growth rate.

Your Comments (if any):

What went well?	<p><b>PI part:</b> Answering every question in a calm, truthful and logical manner helped. Also, keeping in mind that the interviewer is just trying to break the ice is crucial because it helps you to be more comfortable.</p> <p><b>Case part:</b> Not having to ask the interviewer about the abbreviation used by him helped.</p>
What could have been done better?	-  (Got an offer after round-1)

5.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Shatakshi Sharma
Company interviewing for	Mckinsey & Company
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Indraneel Banerjee- Partner, Tech. Practice
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: Tell me about yourself?  <b>Answer 1:</b> Just quickly ran him through my “practiced” answer of professional and personal journey.</p> <p>Question2: Asked me about my experience at Groupon India and what are the scope of improvements?  <b>Answer 2:</b> Mentioned the areas of weakness and how the company already seemed to be attacking the same already.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> PE Case</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> You are a PE company and you want to evaluate factors for investment in 2 tech. firms: one in mobile application and other in financial services ERP solution.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Asked about the product and services in both the segment, customers and competitors in both. Also asked about specific IRR and exit period. No special information was found after it.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Standard PE framework.</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Divided the problem into 3 parts: Market analysis for both segments, business model for both and finally returns for both segments. (<i>at this stage he seemed little disinterested in the approach, hence I turned the sheet 180 degree and made sure he was with me while solving the case</i>)</p> <p><b>Market analysis:</b> Highlighted that would look into market size, growth, competition, suppliers and most importantly interaction effect and synergies between both segments and not look at things in silos.</p>

	<p><b>Business model:</b> Would look at capability in terms of employees, tech capabilities and operations. Would also look at profitability and pricing of both segments. On tech capabilities, he questioned how you would measure the quality of platform, I mentioned KPIs like a) frequency of breakdown b) app store rating c) time spent while engagement d) conversion ratio. He further probed me how would you check quality of employees, I mentioned that a) hiring practices b) appraisals and feedback can be leveraged as data point to benchmark.</p> <p>He seemed happy with the approach and asked whether we can one more guestimate case.</p> <p><b>Guestimate:</b></p> <p><b>Question:</b> How would evaluate the revenue of online taxi drivers at the airport of Hyderabad?</p> <p><b>Approach:</b> Asked whether I should go by supply/demand/competitor approach?</p> <p><b>Remarks from Interviewer:</b> Anything is fine.</p> <p><b>Your take on approach:</b> I realized that supply approach is the best and took below steps to solve the case.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Started with capacity of the airport in terms of landing belts. Took them as 2 for domestic and 2 for international. From thereon, was asked to focus on domestic.</li> <li>2. Mentioned that airport operates for 9 hours let's say and one flight takes 5 minutes to land. Calculated total number of flights landing in a day.</li> <li>3. Categorized different types of aircraft and assumed on average 100 people are carried in an aircraft. The number however will vary depending on seasonality of the destination.</li> <li>4. Mentioned that consumers can either take single cab or sharing cab and the prices will vary according and from here calculated the daily revenue.</li> </ol> <p>At this stage the partner stopped me seeming happy with approach (<i>especially when I covered seasonality and sharing cab aspect</i>). He asked for questions, which I did around digital practice of McKinsey and how it ties to policy projects at McKinsey.</p>
What went well?	<p>3 things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Engaged the interviewer</li> <li>5. Personal genuine stories are always the best to connect</li> <li>6. Structured approach and big picture thinking in cases</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	N/A

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case
Duration	40 minutes

Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sasi Sunkara- Partner, Financial and Policy Area
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Abstract Case</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Your client is a state government and you are asked to plan the capital city of the state. How would you go about it?</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Asked about the geography and was told that this is in South near Kaveri river. I asked whether we are talking about Amravati, the partner smiled and nodded. (<i>I had somehow expected this case in the hindsight given my policy background and McKinsey's public involvement in Amravati's establishment and in fact this is something I would recommend all to do, map your background to the practice areas of interview firm as firms check your grip on your experience.</i>) This interview was the highest point of my day's performance.</p> <p>Also asked about the allotted land area, if any and was informed that is something we have to estimate. Discussed the time frame and was told 3-5 years.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Abstract case</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> Divided the problem into 5 parts: Customers/Residents, Products/Services to be provided; Capabilities: Financial/Labor/Operational; Collaboration and Challenges. Asked where we should start with and he mentioned we can start with customers.</p> <p><b>Residents:</b> Here we will have to account for residential buildings, education institutes. I asked whether there are rural habitations around and the partner nodded. So I highlighted that we will have to make "<i>Adarsh Gram/Model Village</i>" around Amravati to ensure that not more than threshold value of rural citizens occupy residents. Sasi genuinely seemed intrigued by the idea and asked me further. So I applied the GDP cobb douglas equation to explain that quality of labor is a very important component to drive the GDP of the capital city.</p> <p><b>Product Services:</b> Mentioned we will have to look at a) public transport, b) airport, c) commercial markets, d) hospitals, e) manufacturing hubs, f) roads, g) government offices and h) service sector jobs. We will also have to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development goals and look into the i) heritage of the city by allocating area and building monuments to attract tourism.</p> <p><b>Capabilities:</b> We will need labor to build construction, construction companies to be present and the raw material to be accessible. At this stage, Sasi asked me how you would get residents in the city.</p>

Here I applied learnings gained via my ELP project with Telangana Government and mentioned that we move supply first and give subsidy/discounts to manufacturing and service companies to come to Telangana, eg: Microsoft in Hyderabad and also establish international institutes to attract young labor eg: INSEAD in Singapore. Once jobs will be established by the supply, residents will start moving in. He probed me further what are the other factors residents look for, I mentioned ease of living index such as security, family nearby and happiness index. However, we mutually agreed that employability will be the number one factor. (*After a point in the case I realized Sasi was not interviewing me but perhaps picking fresh ideas for the live case, which was fantastic point I had achieved during the 30 minutes*)

He asked me so how would you eventually go about it?

I made the 3\* 2 matrix and put in rows: Strategy and policy around attracting investors on supply end, getting the city infrastructure executed and lastly marketing to the demand about the city and put in columns: short term and long term.

Sasi seemed happy with the overall case and eventual action plan and asked me whether I had questions.

I genuinely was intrigued how was he managing financial division and policy project. He told me about the same and his experience.

**Moved to the 2<sup>nd</sup> round 😊. However, had already happily accepted offer from BCG by then.**

What went well?	<p>3 things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Picking hints as to where the interviewer wishes to lead me.</li> <li>2. Thinking cross functionally. Setting up a city literally requires all aspects to be covered.</li> <li>3. Genuine connect with interviewer and passion for the sector.</li> </ol>
What could have been done better?	N/A

## 6.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aashish Sharma
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Company
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
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Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sasikanth Dola, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  Where all have you been? How was your day so far? Why consulting after years in oil and gas? We also talked for about 10-12 minutes on my role at Schlumberger</p> <p><b>Case</b>  Type of Case: Profitability</p> <p>Problem statement: A pharmacy chain with 2000 stores and annual revenues 2000 crores has profits of 60 crores. They asked us to help them double their profits without capital expenditure.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: What are the revenue streams of the pharmacy chain? Where are they located – concentrated or dispersed?</p> <p>Frameworks used: Profitability. Broke down revenue into #Stores x #Revenue/store</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Before I could ask the scoping questions, the interviewer asked me to do a couple of quick Maths questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If the client wants to double their profits, what should be their revenue for that? While instinctively I replied that the revenue should also be twice, the interviewer replied asking – will all the costs get doubled up? That reminded me to consider the Fixed and Variable parts of the cost. I enquired about the fixed cost to which he replied that Fixed costs are Rs. 500 crores and the variable costs are 75% of the revenue. Solving the equation, I got Rs. 2480 crore as the required revenue for a profit of 120 crore.</li> <li>b. What will be the revenue required if the clients wanted to keep its profits margin constant at 3%?  <math display="block">(0.25R-500) \times 100/R = 3</math> <math display="block">\Rightarrow R = \text{Apprx. Rs. 2500 crore.}</math></li> </ul> <p>The interviewer then asked me to proceed with the analysis. As the client did not want to do capex, I focused on increasing the #Revenue / store.</p>

<pre> graph TD     A["#Revenue/store"] --&gt; B["#Customers"]     A --&gt; C["#Revenue/Customer"]     B --&gt; D["Product Range"]     B --&gt; E["Marketing / Advertisements"]     B --&gt; F["Tie-ups"]     F --&gt; G["Government"]     F --&gt; H["Doctors"]     F --&gt; I["Hospitals"]     F --&gt; J["Insurance Firms"]     C --&gt; K["Price"]     C --&gt; L["Cross Selling"]     C --&gt; M["Product Range - To increase basket size"]     C --&gt; N["Loyalty Programs"]     C --&gt; O["Discount / Offers"]     C --&gt; P["App Development"]     P --&gt; Q["Customer Analytics"]     P --&gt; R["Repeat Purchase"]     Q --&gt; S["Profile -&gt; Customer"]     R --&gt; T["Home Delivery"]     R --&gt; U["Reminders"]   </pre>	<p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Your Comments (if any):</p> <p>What went well? I could break down the revenues into appropriate components and came up with a number of recommendations to increase them.</p> <p>What could have been done better?</p>
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Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aashish Sharma
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Company
Number of rounds	

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sasi Sunkara, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>1. What is your leadership style? What was your offshore rotation at Schlumberger? What were you doing when you were on your off days? We spent a good 10-15 minutes on the PI part.</p>

your responses)	<p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Go-to market strategy</p> <p>Problem statement: A start-up which provides therapeutic treatment / services post treatment of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, etc. They want us to help them design their go-to market strategy.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: What is their product / service exactly? Is it ready to enter the market? Yes Where are they planning to launch it? Pan-India Who are their competitors? Their competitors are scattered specialized service providers. There are no direct competitors providing an aggregation of therapeutic services. Who prescribes these services? Usually doctors. Frameworks used:</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: I broke it down as follows:</p> <pre> graph TD     GTS[Go-To Market Strategy] --&gt; Product[Product]     GTS --&gt; Price[Price]     GTS --&gt; Place[Place]     GTS --&gt; Promotion[Promotion]     GTS --&gt; Preferences[Preferences]      Product --&gt; Q1[What is your product?]     Product --&gt; Q2[Is it ready to be launched?]      Price --&gt; C1[Cost-based]     C1 --&gt; V1[Value-Based]     C1 --&gt; C2[Competitor-Based]      Place --&gt; O1[Online]     O1 --&gt; O2[Offline]      Promotion --&gt; MA[Marketing / Advertising]     Promotion --&gt; T1[Tie-ups]     T1 --&gt; I1[Insurance]     T1 --&gt; G1[Governments]     Promotion --&gt; R1[Referrals]     R1 --&gt; D1[Doctors]     R1 --&gt; H1[Hospitals]     Promotion --&gt; P1[Preferences]     P1 --&gt; S1[Success Stories]     P1 --&gt; F1[Freemium]   </pre> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis: Being short of time Sasi asked me to highlight top-3 things I would recommend to the client.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): Sasi was very pleased with the points I mentioned that he kept my sheet and said he will pick up pointers from the discussions we had.</p>
What went well?	<p>Do's – a. Keep the interviewer engaged. Attempt to strike conversations. Build a connect with the interviewer. Be enthusiastic during the interview.</p> <p>d. Walk the interviewer through your approach. If stuck somewhere, layout your understanding and interviewer will guide you.</p> <p>e. Keep a target of around 2 cases/day. Make sure to reflect back on learnings from each case.</p>

	<p>Don'ts – a. Don't ramble.</p> <p>d. Don't try to fit in a framework. No matter how many frameworks you practice, it is the logic and your structural thinking that will help you cross the line.</p> <p>e. Don't stick to one line of thought. Be open to feedback.</p>
What could have been done better?	

7.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Abhishek Amar
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Company
Number of rounds	1 Round (2 Interviews)

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	35 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sasi Sunkara, Senior Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>7) What factors and influences would you attribute your academic performance to?      8) Was there a time you faced conflict within your study group? How did you handle it and how did it pan out?      9) What is your opinion on how conflict/disagreements should be handled at the workplace?</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case - Go-To-Market Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b>      Your client is a provider of therapeutic services that are offered over and above traditional treatments. These services improve both patient outcomes and management of the disease. Design a go-to-market (GTM) strategy for this service line.</p> <p><b>Initial instinct of Approach –</b></p>

Given the relatively broad scope of this case and my lack of experience/knowledge in the domain, I decided to spend some time on the scoping and rely on the interviewer to guide me through the case.

**Scoping questions asked –**

- How exactly do these services work? - They are typically managed services and treatments that are of a broad scope. Let's just assume that their specific details aren't necessary.
- What kind of diseases are we talking about? - Chronic diseases and terminal illnesses, both. The major ones are diabetes, cancers, hypertension and pulmonary diseases.
- What do we mean by patient outcomes and disease management? - Patient outcomes are things like survival rates, mortality rates. Disease management refers to the physical effort that goes into managing a patient and the toll it takes on the patient.
- Do we have a target segment in mind? What are the price points? - Customers are all those patients who have the above-mentioned illnesses. Pricing is a case by itself, so let's not delve into it.
- Are we looking to focus on any specific aspects of the GTM strategy? - Yes. Focus on channels, advertising methods and salesforce development. (Personally, I felt that this was the most important question. It narrowed down the scope of the case significantly)

**Frameworks used –**

None. GTM cases are quite like Market Entry cases from a case-approach perspective, so you can use that as a starting point. But, I decided to ask the interviewer which aspects I should focus on and started off with those.

**Structure to solve case –**

Took each aspect identified above and stated explicitly that I would be analyzing each of them separately.

**Case flow post scoping –**

Caveats - My PI went on for a long time. Sasi stated that we don't have much time for the case and that he'd like to wind it up quickly. Despite this warning, I did scope because I had zero knowledge of how the service works. Hence, my time to solve the case reduced even more.

I started with the channel aspect. My first statement was that we have two groups to market the product to - doctors and patients. Sasi then asked whether I was referring to channels by which products/services were to be sold or channels through which we could market. I said that my understanding was that it was a marketing channel and asked him if I could continue along the same lines, to which he agreed. I then mentioned the primary ways in which doctors can be marketed to - medical journals, word-of-mouth and conferences. I also asked Sasi if I was missing out on something,

	<p>to which he said that other methods were sales representatives and continuing medical education.</p> <p>At this point, he also said that since we were running out of time, it would be best if he guided me to a different direction. He asked me to list out as many ways as possible in which we would be able to appeal to doctors and patients. I listed out two for each. For doctors, I said we can focus on the efficacy of the treatment and the fact that the doctor's reputation would increase if they were perceived as prescribing better and less painful treatments. For patients, I said that we could focus on the improved quality of life (being able to continue with existing living patterns) and the fact that the effort of disease management would come down significantly. We wound up the case at this point.</p>
	<p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis –</b> Didn't really have time for one. I presented my final recommendations as a summary.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any) –</b> None.</p>
What went well	I think I was able to have a really good conversation with Sasi. My PI lasted for more than 25 out of the 35 minutes that I spent with him. This phrase ("An interview is a conversation") will be beaten to death during your case preparation, but its importance cannot be emphasized enough. If you're able to draw in the interviewer's interest, you've made it easy for her/him to select you.
What could have gone better	I could have solved the case a little quicker, but I would have had to sacrifice the scoping questions, which I was unwilling to do.

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Kunwar Singh, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Run me through your profile.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case –</b> This was a McKinsey Structured Case (a real problem solved by McKinsey in the past, which has been documented in a specific manner as a set of questions and answers).</p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b></p>

Case Narration (all upfront) - You have been roped in by the Ministry of Health of an African nation to help design an eradication programme for the Rubida disease. This disease affects children under the age of 5 and is transmitted due to poor quality of water and sanitary conditions. The disease can be eradicated by vaccination but does not require expertise in administration. The vaccines, however, need to be stored at temperatures between 4 and 8 degrees centigrade. To be cured of the disease, all children under 5 years of age need to be given a minimum of 5 doses by the time they are 5 years old and the doses need to be separated by at least a month.

Question 1 - How will you go about identifying the areas that need to be prioritized for the implementation of this program?

Question 2 - What questions will you ask the Minister of Health to know how you should go about implementing this program?

Question 3 - Calculate the number of vaccines required over the next year if 90% of all children need to be vaccinated (this was a straightforward set of calculations)

**Initial instinct of Approach –**

There wasn't an overall approach. Each question was very specific and required thinking along those lines alone.

**Scoping questions asked –**

All the details were given. I only asked if the disease was communicable, to which he said it was.

**Frameworks used –**

None. This case (according to me) tested how you could streamline your thought process to answer specific questions in an exhaustive manner.

**Structure to solve case –**

Honestly, the only way I thought about approaching the problem was to break down the question into as many tiny and MECE (mutually exclusive, collectively exhaustive) buckets as possible. I also relied on inputs from the interviewer.

**Case flow post scoping –**

Question 1 -

My answer was very brief for this. Since the disease was communicable, we'd have two kinds of areas - affected areas and prone areas. Affected areas could be identified through reports and existing information sources. Prone areas could be identified based on analytics and on-ground surveys by medical teams. (I'm not sure how good an answer this was, but I was asked the next question).

Question 2 -

I started off by being redundant and giving roughly the same answer as the previous one. Kunwar gave me a little guidance and told me what he expected in terms of the kind of questions - focus on understanding the country first, etc. Based on this, I stated that I would start off by asking about the demographics, population distribution geographical access and public facilities distribution of the country. To

	<p>this, he said that it was a good set of questions, but he would also include financing constraints, supply chain considerations (because of the temperature restrictions), existing access to health facilities and potential partnerships with international organizations (WHO, Doctors without Borders, etc.).</p> <p><b>Question 3 –</b> It was a straightforward bunch of calculations. Direct percentages and multiplications.</p> <p>Post this, after a couple of hours, I was called in at the beginning of round 2 and made an offer.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis –</b> None. The case didn't require it.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any) –</b> None.</p>
What went well	While the case was very detailed, the questions required a linear thought process, which I was fortunately able to implement. I also focused on listening more and writing less, which was helpful since this case was frontloaded with information. Additionally, I was able to work through it despite never having solved a similar case during the preparation phase.
What could have gone better	I could have worked a little harder at solutioning and thinking more exhaustively. That would have helped in this situation.

8.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aksh Sheth
Company interviewing for	Mckinsey
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	40 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Shirish Sankhe, Senior Partner

Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>1: Tell me about yourself? 2. How has been your day and what are you thinking at this point? 3: Tell me your contributions to ISB other than grades, club activities, and case competitions?</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Market size and cost estimation</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a global automobile major and wants McKinsey to estimate the proportionate of electric cars sold by 2022</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> What geography are we talking about? What is the current market size of non-electric cars in India? What is the average cost of electric and non-electric cars? (The interviewer didn't answer this and asked me to estimate the cost). The case was then focused on the estimation of the cost of both types of cars.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Clean Sheet costing (breakdown of various costs involved in making a car)</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve the case:</b> I broke down the car assembly into the car body, engine, and ancillary components. He asked me to estimate the cost of each of them and provided hints whenever needed. For instance, engine cost was based on factors such as fuel capacity, mileage, etc. I assumed the cost of the car body to be the same, and the interviewer approved the same. Similarly, the interviewer asked me to consider the cost of ancillary components to be the same for electric and non-electric cars. I finally came up with both the cost and cost of electric cars came to be approximately 20% higher than the non-electric cars. Then I mentioned that customers would only buy electric cars if a)they are ready to pay the 20% premium and b) There is the economic benefit of paying 20% premium. For part a), I segmented the population into the high-income group, mid-income group, and low-income group. I eliminated mid-income and low-income group as they would not be able to afford a 20% premium. Within, high-income group, I eliminated customers who already possess a car and unwilling to scrap the old car. I included the demand from people moving from mid-income to high-income group. For part b), I estimated savings in operating cost (fuel and maintenance) due to the adoption of electric cars. Considering four years of usage of the car, I could come up with a hypothesis that electric car is cheaper than non-electric car considering both capital cost and operating costs. The interviewer then asked me the pros and cons of electric cars.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> The proportion of electric cars of the total market will be xx% considering the addressable segment will only be a high-income group who will be able to afford the upfront premium</p>
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	Your Comments (if any): If you don't have much idea about the composition of a product, ask rather than assume things on your own. In this case, I was not much aware of what are the factors impacting engine costs. So, I guessed something and immediately asked the interviewer if that's right
What went well?	Right calculations.
What could have been done better?	Knowing about components of the car, electric cars in general.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case
Duration	20 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Abhijit Kulkarni, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>Mini-Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Guestimate</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Estimate average number of marriages</p> <p><b>Scoping questions:</b> Are we talking about the Indian market? What time frame are we talking about? Should I include same-sex marriage?</p> <p>The interviewer asked me to look at the Indian market, estimate average marriage in a day and exclude same-sex marriage</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve the case:</b> I segmented the population into rural and urban population. I mentioned that I would take the average age of marriage for rural people as 22 for males and 19 for females and urban people as 26 for males and 24 for females. The interviewer was fine and asked me to proceed. Now I had to estimate the population in each age bracket. I knew that India has more than 50% of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65% below the age of 35. Also, I knew that the rural population is 70% and the male-female ratio in India is 0.95 females per 1 male. Based on the above information points, I estimate males and females in rural and urban areas at the relevant age. I came up with a number of people eligible for marriage. From that, I excluded people who would not marry and people opting for same-sex marriage. I clarified to the interviewer that I am excluding repeat marriages for this estimation. I divided the final number by 365 to come up with average marriages in a day.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/Final Statement:</b> The average number of marriages in a day is XX in India</p> <p>I was given an offer post Round 2</p>

What went well?	Identifying early on that average age for marriage is most important. If I would have an estimated number of marriages at each age, then the entire analysis would have been a mess
What could have been done better?	NA

9.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Akshay Kumar Athuri
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Co
Number of rounds	1 Round (2 Interviews)

Round No.	1 (Interview- 1)
Type of Round	Guesstimate+Case+PI
Duration	50 Mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Kunwar Singh- Partner (Extensive projects in steel and auto industries)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>My interview was at 8 AM in the morning and hence it was the partner's first interview for the day. We had a brief discussion about how my life at ISB had been till now. Post which he had asked me to walk him through my resume. During the discussion on my work ex he had mentioned that he liked my profile and the kind of work which I did at JSW and would love to have a chat on that post the interview. At this point he had also mentioned that he had worked extensively in steel &amp; auto projects. This helped me get comfortable and confident for the case interview ahead. The PI definitely helped me break the ice and build a rapport with the partner. The PI took roughly 10 mins.</p> <p>*Enter a cup of tea*</p> <p>And the partner quickly signaled at doing a case</p> <p><b>Case &amp; Guesstimate</b></p> <p>The case was a HBS type booklet case. He opened the deck which he claimed he was also reading for the first time (<i>which I later came to know was a signature style of this particular partner</i>). He started reading the case and asked me to note down the details. The case was about a vaccination for a non-communicable disease in Africa and how would McKinsey help the Ministry of health to plan and administer the</p>

vaccination to achieve a particular target (80% of children aged below 5 years) in next 2 years. (*This was like a mix of an abstract and market entry case*)

After giving a flurry of details about the current situation in Africa, the cold storage requirement for the vaccine (< 8 degrees), the total dosage required (5 doses) and the frequency of dosage required (minimum gap of 6 months but all 5 doses to be administered before the child turns 5), the partner had told me that we need to solve this case together by answering some key questions.

His first question to me was to determine the certain questions which I would like to ask on our first internal brainstorming session with the team. (*Ring any bells? Yes, he wanted to understand the scoping questions which I would ask*). So I went ahead understanding the severity of the disease globally and in Africa and its effect (Basically Africa was severely hit by the disease vis a vis the other countries and hence the focus by MoH), the R&D for the vaccine (A Global team at UN was working on the vaccine), the procurement method, the target patients (preventive vs curative), other alternatives if any and the cost of the vaccine to the patients/govt (Free)

Next, he wanted me to estimate the total dosages of vaccine required to achieve the target set by the Ministry of Health (MoH). I don't remember the exact data, but it was a pretty straightforward guesstimate that is starting with estimating the no of children in < 5 years bracket, next removing the children who have already been administered all the 5 dosages and taking certain % for children with 1 dosage, 2 dosage etc. and finally multiplying each segment with the amount of dosage required to cover 80% of that segment gives total dosages required for 80% administration. After checking my math, here he wanted to have a more qualitative discussion and ending notes and recommendations which, I would give to the ministry of health.

Post the case discussion he had asked me if I had any questions for him. I had asked him about his journey at McKinsey and what kind of steel projects he had done till now. We had a good 10 min discussion on his recently concluded steel project in China. I think this discussion also helped the partner understand me as a person and the job role I had done at my previous organization.

At this point there was a knock on the door and the partner realized that it was already 50 mins and that he had to close the session.

Overall, the interview was pretty good, and I was confident that I left a good impression

What you did good?	Building good rapport with the partner initially Linking the examples in the case with my previous work ex Keeping my calm and being confident during the whole interview
What you could have done better?	Honestly it couldn't have been better

Round No.	1 (Interview- 2)
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	40 Mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Arjun Balaji- Partner (Extensive projects in Tech-Media-Telecom sector)
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>My second interview was 10 mins after my first one. The interview started with typical “Tell me about yourself”. Here we had a good 10 min chat on my resume and life at ISB. Post which he signaled at doing a case.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Client was a software company looking to increase its revenue per employee. I began with a few scoping questions understanding the company (Involved in providing softwares for accounting, marketing and HR softwares to their clients), the client and company location (Clients based out of US and the company was located in India), Industry and company metric comparison (Company was doing better than the industry average on revenue/employee but wanted to improve more)</p> <p>To go ahead I had divided revenue/employee as revenue/product*product/employee. The interviewer asked me what these two terms are called. I couldn't answer the first one, but I had answered the second term (Product/employee) as efficiency. The interviewer didn't look happy. Then I went ahead to further break and discuss the factors affecting revenue/product. Wherein points on increasing the price via differentiated product/service, Increasing the customer base for similar products to increase the quantity of similar softwares sold was discussed. Next, I went on to discuss the factors to improve the efficiency of the employees (i.e. Product/employee) wherein modules structure of a software, automation in the supply process was discussed along with discussion on the lines of salesforce efficiency framework was discussed with lengthy discussion on offshore/onshore employees, hiring process, training, motivation etc. The interviewer was impressed when I could draw parallels between a software module and Lego blocks and how the efficiency could be improved. Overall, the interviewer looked decently satisfied but I was scared deep down that I had screwed up somewhere as I couldn't answer some of his questions.</p> <p>After the case he had asked me if I had any questions for him. We had a discussion on strategy vs implementation aspect in McKinsey.</p> <p>After a long and painful wait for 4 hours for first round results, I got to hear the four golden words which I had been waiting to hear since eternity- “Welcome to the Firm !!”</p>

What you did good?	Keeping my calm inspite of a flurry of lows (Read not answering questions, fumbling, blanking out etc.)
What you could have done better?	Being upfront to the partner about not knowing certain things. Its completely OK to not know some things. All that matters is to keep your calm and answer the questions to the best of your knowledge and logic. The partner is not interested in whether the answer is right or wrong all he/she cares is the way the interviewee thinks and approaches a problem.

10.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Prerit Varun
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Company
Number of rounds	1 Round (2 Interviews)

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Shashikant Dola, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions (10 mins)</b></p> <p>10) Tell me about yourself.      11) What did you do in your last job? Why did you switch from your previous job?      12) What kind of challenges did you face in changing your role from field engineer to a product manager?      13) What was my biggest takeaway from the first job I did</p> <p><b>Case (15 mins)</b></p> <p>Since I had worked as a product manager in my last role, he told that he will give me a case where in I had to develop an application.</p> <p><b>Type of Case – New Product Launch/Market Entry</b></p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b></p> <p>Your client is a healthcare giant and is currently present in 3 sectors namely – hospitals, pharmacy and diagnostics. All these services are provided separately and have different mobile based applications for users. The company wants to act as a one stop solution</p>

for all kind of medical services. Devise a strategy to achieve this target and propose a roadmap to develop mobile based application(s) for users.

**Initial instinct of Approach –**

Given my lack of experience of healthcare industry. I decided to get more information on each type of service to understand pain points.

**Objectives -**

I started by asking the objectives of the service to be developed in terms of target market, size, timeline and limitations in terms of costs. I was told that there is no limitation in terms of funds and the aim was to start as soon as possible.

**Scoping questions asked –**

I told the interviewer I wish to start by understanding more about the company and its services offered. I asked the following questions

(Company and Product)

- Where is the company located? – *India*
- What is the USP of the company? – *they provide value for money*
- What kind of cities are the services offered? - *tier 1 and tier 2 cities*
- How exactly do these services work? – *standard appointment - based services*
- What kind of services do they offer, premium or economy? – *economy services*

(Competitor)

- Are there any competitors who provide one-stop solution for medical services? - *No*

(Customer)

- Who are the primary customers for these services? – *Middle and Upper class*

**Frameworks used –**

I started by applying the market entry framework and explained my overall approach. He said he wanted me to not use any standard framework and approach the case using first principles.

**Structure to solve case –**

I took a minute before proceeding and mentioned that I would take up the persona of a customer/patient and map out the user journey. He liked the approach and asked me to proceed with it.

**Case flow post scoping –**

I listed all the steps involved in the journey of the customer starting from the point where they have some illness to post-treatment checkups. For each stage I listed down all the services that the customer would need. In addition to the areas our client currently operated in, I added services such as insurance, physiotherapy, telemedicine etc. I was quite detailed in explaining why the customer would need every service and the logic behind introducing additional services at any stage. He asked me some questions about the implementation of new services and potential challenges for all. I

	<p>suggested that our client should develop one application that would provide access to all the services to improve customers convenience.</p> <p>It was around 25 mins at this stage and he said that he was satisfied with the progress we made and asked me to summarize the case.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis –</b> Didn't really have time for one. I presented my final recommendations as a summary.</p> <p><b>Quant Question (5 mins)</b> He then told me that he wants to do a quick quant check with me. He said that a company has 30Cr Profit and 100Cr revenue. The company wants to achieve 60Cr profit. How much should be the revenue.  I split the cost into fixed and variable costs. Then I asked the contribution margin to understand the variable costs per unit and he gave me the figure as a %age.  At this point I fumbled with the numbers and made a calculation error. He pointed out my mistake and worked with me to solve the question and arrive at the answer.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any) –</b> Even if you make a mistake in calculations do not lose focus. The interviewers are relaxed and are there to help you with the process.</p>
What went well	I think I was able to have a really good conversation with Shashikant. I connected well with him during the case and involved him in creating the customer journey. I was able to come up with my own structure at the right spot and suggested additional services that would help client achieve their goal of becoming a one stop solution.
What could have gone better	Avoiding calculation errors

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Abhijeet, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and	<p><b>PI Questions (10 mins)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Tell me about yourself?</li> <li>2) Run me through your resume. Few cross questions about the projects that I had mentioned in terms of how I contributed.</li> </ol>

your  
responses)

### Case (20 mins)

#### **Type of Case –**

This was a Structured Case (a real problem addressed by McKinsey three months ago)

#### **Problem statement –**

Case Narration (all upfront) – There is a metal producing company in Africa. They own the mines and have their own extraction and refining process. The company has been facing losses since beginning of operations while the rest of the companies are not facing such losses. The client needs your help to identify the cause and determine ways to address this problem.

#### **Initial instinct of Approach –**

This was a standard profitability case and given that it came from metals and mining industry, I was pretty sure this case would need me to investigate the cost side of the operations.

#### **Clarifying questions –** How much loss is the company seeing? – *Irrelevant*

- 1) What has been the trend in losses? – *There is fluctuation in the degree of loss but overall it remains*
- 2) Market growth? – *market is growing at 10% p.a.*

#### **Scoping questions asked –**

*(Company and Product)*

- 1) What are the different revenue streams and the split? – *Cobalt (20%) & Copper (80%)*
- 2) Is it a commodity product? – yes
- 3) Value chain – *Extraction -> Transportation to refinery -> refining -> warehousing (post warehouse it was handed over to customers)*
- 4) How is our product quality as compared to competitors? – *it's at par with our competitor*

*(Competition)*

Since the issue was not being faced by the competitor, I decided to not ask about the competitor and focus on the company itself

*(Customer)*

*I was told the customers were enough and were willing to purchase more product given the high growth rate of the industry.*

#### **Frameworks used –**

Profitability Framework.

#### **Structure to solve case –**

Profits = Revenue - Costs

**Case flow post scoping –**

I started by going with the standard opening of profitability. Given that the company had been making losses since its incorporation, I did not ask for any trend. I said we can either start with the revenue or the costs. I chose to start with costs and the interviewer stopped me there. He said, he wants me to investigate the Revenue aspect and had no information on the costs incurred. I tried to ask for the marginal profit of unit produced to evaluate whether any incremental production was even useful to which I was told there is no information.

As this point I took a break to gather my thoughts. Going back to the revenue equation  
$$\text{Revenue} = Q_{\text{copper}} * P_{\text{copper}} + Q_{\text{cobalt}} * \text{Price}_{\text{cobalt}}$$

I asked for the selling price of copper and cobalt. Copper sold at \$10,000/ton and cobalt sold at \$100,000/ton. I asked for the production split in terms of quantity and was told the copper-cobalt split was again 80-20. I could see that the revenue split given earlier was not matching but got the intuition that our client was producing far more copper than cobalt and I decided to investigate this further.

I was told the mining process wherein both cobalt and copper ore occurred simultaneously and their percentages in mix is not controllable once extracted. I investigated further and understood about the mining process. I found that the company was not being selective in extracting ore and was simply extracting whatever they encountered in the ore layer. At this point I started trying to evaluate the minimum %age of cobalt that would make production profitable. I started asking for more information on costs which the interviewer refused to give. I tried to get some percentage based on the previous data given but could not proceed.

I communicated to the interviewer what I was trying to do, and he was satisfied with my approach. I continued trying to arrive at some conclusion but was unable to arrive at any concrete result.

The interviewer gave me the main solution – extract ore selectively from zones that have %age of cobalt > % of copper. He then said he wants me to take a few minutes and come up with one more recommendation.

I took a couple of minutes and proposed that the company should set up a threshold %age of cobalt for different depth and extraction should be permitted only if the cobalt content of that zone was above this threshold. Additionally, this value would increase as one went deeper because the cost of production increased with increase in depth of extraction.

Post this, after a few of hours, I was called in at the beginning of round 2 and made an offer.

**Recommendations/ Synthesis –**

No synthesis.

	<b>Your Comments (if any) –</b> Do not worry if you are unable to solve the case. Having a right approach and identifying the root causes correctly are more important. No idea is bad, so do communicate whatever you are thinking to the interviewer. They are there to help you.
What went well	My approach was on target and I asked the right scoping question. The recommendation I gave was also in line with practical solution implemented.
What could have gone better	I had thought of the recommendation the interviewer mentioned but did not say it out loud thinking it was too obvious a solution. I should have continued communicating with the interviewer even when stuck to get their support in solving the case

11.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Rukmi Sarmah
Company interviewing for	Mckinsey & Company
Number of rounds	1 round (3 interviews)

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Gaurav Sharma, Associate Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Mostly resume questions, biggest challenge at Goldman Sachs, why consulting, what would make you stick with consulting, what would make you leave consulting</p> <p><b>Case</b> Type of Case: Abstract/ Numbers based Problem statement: Hyderabad airport wants to open a new terminal. Help them</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: Is the terminal replacing the existing one or is it a new terminal? What exactly does the airport authority want help on? The interviewer told me that this will replace the existing terminal and the AA wants help on determining the people capacity needed for the airport</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: I divided the terminal into domestic and international arrival/departure. I assumed number of runways to be 20, took average</p>

	<p>turnaround time of a flight in an airport to be 20 mins (domestic) and 30 mins (international).</p> <p>The equation to come up with the number of people from flights each hour (arrival+deparature) was</p> <p>Number of runways * (60 mins/ Time taken for one flight turnaround) * Utilization of runway during different hours* no of people in the flight</p> <p>I mentioned that utilization will vary by times of the day (e.g., there are fewer domestic flights between 2am and 5am)</p> <p>Then I assumed different number of seats for domestic and international flights and came up with different utilization of flight seats as well (not all flights will be completely occupied)</p> <p>Once I had the number of people travelling by flight in a day, I said 70% of these people will come in the peak hours for flight travel and hence I would like to estimate the peak hour capacity (5am-9am). The interviewer happily nodded, and I assumed that a typical person spends 1 hour navigating from check in- boarding in the airport and calculated the peak hour capacity.</p> <p>The interviewer probed a little more and asked what the implicit assumption was in the analysis and how would I verify my number.</p> <p>I said that we must factor in flight delays and layovers into the analysis and factor in the people who are waiting at the terminal because of that</p> <p>For verification, I suggested that we could look at the toll collected at the toll gates, use a number from a different city like Hyderabad, say Bangalore.</p> <p>The interviewer looked happy then and the case was closed. He asked me if I had questions in response to which I asked a few questions about McKinsey's involvement and projects in FinTech</p>
What went well?	Being very thorough with my resume
What could have been done better?	Stating all assumptions more clearly

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Sudipto Paul, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Questions about Goldman Sachs and my experience with classical music. The interviewer played the Tabla and asked me about my favorite Ragas. We connected on the fact that both of us had learned classical music</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Cost optimization</p>

	<p>Problem statement: A major FMCG company (like Unilever) wants to optimize their supply chain</p> <p>Approach: I asked initial questions about the company, the geography, the product line and laid down the value chain. I then probed which was the element in the value chain that was to be optimized. The interviewer told me it was inbound and outbound logistics. On probing and asking more questions I figured out that the company had very scattered warehouses and there wasn't a centrally controlled logistics system. I then asked about the transportation and the interviewer told me that transportation was inefficient, and the trucks were going back empty, that was leading to a lot of costs. The case involved a lot of number crunching in terms of the EMIs of truck using simple interests, cost of fuels, tolls, road taxes etc to find out the costs associated with the supply chain</p> <p>Recommendation: I suggested few measures to standardize this delivery network and improve utilization of the trucks to not go back empty, by partnering with a logistics player or sending back finished goods via the truck</p>
What went well?	Applying the 80-20 rule at all junctures of the case to find out the major cost buckets in the supply chain
What could have been done better?	
Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Toshan Tamhane , Senior Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>PI Questions</p> <p>This was mainly a discussion round but felt more like a stress interview. I was mostly grilled on my work at Goldman Sachs and the current happenings in the investment banking/ financial services space (1MDB Scandal). The interviewer was laughing at everything I was saying so I couldn't figure out if the answers were correct. He also banged the door in between, and it was difficult to understand if this was part of the stress interview script. Suddenly the conversation went on to retail banking and I was grilled on Marcus, the retail banking arm of Goldman. I was asked which countries Marcus is present in and should they enter India. Having worked for Women in Tech group at Goldman, I was asked why do engineering and MBAs have less women and what can be done to improve that</p>
What went well?	Remaining very calm and smiling all throughout a stress interview
What could have been done better?	

12.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Mohit Batra
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Company
Number of rounds	1 Round (2 Interviews)

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	40 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Brajesh Chibber, Expert Associate Principal, Automotive Practice
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>14) Tell me about yourself?      15) Why do you want to do MBA after doing MBBS and M.D.?      16) Give me 3 specific changes you did in emergency services of your Hospital which had the greatest impact according to you?</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Process improvement</p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b>      Your client is one of India's largest pharma players. It has entered into an exclusive contract with Japanese pharma company, giving it exclusive rights to produce the latest type of insulin, for which the demand is much more than the supply (leading to bad name in media as people think we are doing it to boost our profits). What can be done?</p> <p><b>Initial instinct of Approach –</b>      Tried to gather the basic facts of the case first by asking usual scoping questions about competition, price, demand, etc. Then asked questions to figure out the bottle neck, which turned out to be in the manufacturing process.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of the manufacturing process - Brajesh explained that it was an automated process and described in detail about the process.</li> <li>• Tried to eliminate options like raw materials, machinery limitations, logistics, etc. by asking the necessary questions. Bottleneck found: we had a limitation on the maximum no. of vials that can be filled with insulin by the robotic machine.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asked about the no. of hours the machine currently works, breakdown time, set up time for the machine, etc.- he said machine is working at the maximum level possible and said to look at other options.</li> <li>Asked can a new machine be installed to supplement the existing process to which he denied and said we are looking at options within the existing infrastructure.</li> <li>Asked questions about the design of the insulin filling machine - how many vials are filled in a single go, what is the area of the platform on which vials are placed, design of the vials, can more amount of insulin be filled in the existing vials.</li> <li>Then finally asked about the dimensions of the vials and gave the recommendation to increase the height of the vials and decrease the base, which will lead to increase in number of vials in the existing platform. To this he replied McKinsey also gave this as the first recommendation which boosted the output by 25%.</li> </ul> <p><b>Frameworks used –</b></p> <p>None. It was clear that he wanted me to delve directly into the manufacturing process and guided me there in the beginning only.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis –</b></p> <p>He was happy to hear the recommendation and didn't ask for synthesis separately.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any) –</b> None.</p>
What went well	Although the case was from an industry I was familiar with, but the solution didn't strike me in the first go. I kept my calm and tried to ask questions in a structured manner which I think helped me solve the case.
What could have gone better	I was able to come up with the solution at the last moment and that too because Brajesh nudged me in the right direction. Thinking from the very basics and trying to solve every case as a new one should help most of the times.

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 2
Type of Round	PI only
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Toshan Tamhane, Senior Global Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>It was purely a conversation and not an interview. He basically wanted to understand why I decided to have a career change and why specifically McKinsey.</p> <p>Be very clear with your answers as they will not be satisfied with any superficial answers. You need to be very clear how McKinsey fits in your career goals and how can you add value.</p> <p>Also, PI has a lot of weightage, at least equal to the case if not more.</p> <p>Post round 1, I was called in at the beginning of round 2 and made an offer.</p>

What went well	I think I was able to connect with him really well. He seemed interested in what all I did during my med. school and residency. Also, I asked him questions regarding McKinsey's life sciences practice and how can I fit into it.
What could have gone better	

13.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Rakhi Goyal
Company interviewing for	McKinsey & Company
Number of rounds	2 Rounds (3 Interviews)

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Akash Lal, Senior Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>The discussion started as Akash introduced himself and his work in McKinsey and then he asked me to introduce myself.</p> <p>In my introduction as I mentioned about current PAEV project around social entrepreneurship idea of providing mentorship to underprivileged students. Akash asked few cross questions about PAEV and then jumped onto case discussion:</p> <p><b>Type of Case - Abstract</b></p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b></p> <p>Since you are working on providing mentorship let's assume that you started your work now in suburbs of Mumbai. Your research shows that there are people from different parts of India there and they have to send their kids to Marathi municipality school nearby only. They can't understand or speak Marathi, so they can't help their kids with anything and their kids always stay in stress since language at school and home doesn't match. What will you do to solve this problem using mentorship?</p> <p><b>Initial instinct of Approach –</b></p> <p>Since I was working on similar kind of situation with a government school, I had some ideas what can be done but I knew I have to structurally approach towards the given</p>

problem. I started by asking some clarification questions and to understand the problem properly:

**Scoping questions asked –**

- Who are these people, where do they majorly belong to and do we have some information about their occupation or income levels? – Mostly these people come from UP and Bihar and they work majorly as construction workers.
- Why do these people send their kids to Marathi speaking school and not any Hindi medium school? – Hindi schools are 20 km away and they neither can afford nor want their kids to go through the travel stress.
- What kind of services do these kids get at the current school they go to? – It's a government school and you can imagine the level of services being provided.

I added so I can imagine normal government school situation where teacher to student ratio is poor and students are struggling to get their queries clarified both at school and at home.

He nodded.

**Frameworks used –**

Majorly I went with an approach to identify Cause, effect and then the proposed remedy of major problems identified in the scoping part.

**Structure to solve case –**

Took each problem identified in scoping above and stated explicitly that I would be analyzing each of them separately and one at a time.

**Second Case -**

Aakash was very quick to finish this case once he observed that I am going with an approach and a systematic way. Also, he was certain that I am working on my PAEV project seriously by this point and not just bluffing in my resume.

He jumped straight to next case which was finance heavy case.

He asked a bank is facing problems in growing after a point and asked your team to identify reasons and come up with a solution.

I started by asking general scoping questions about the bank, it's business, target customers, area of operations. Then I asked how client defines growth what are the targets in client's mind. This brought a smile on Aakash's face. He answered by asking cross questions. What are general streams of a banking business. I answered majorly we can divide bank's revenue in two parts – Primary and secondary. Primary - Interest (net-off i.e. interest received on loan started - interest payments on deposits) and secondary may include service fees on ancillary services such as wealth management, locker providing etc., credit card – late payment and annual charges etc.

	<p>Then he started asking me question on each of the revenue stream what you can do to increase interest income for bank. What can you do to increase the service fee? What can you do to attract more customers? I found the case was very generic and from my observations of a banking system I gave solutions from top of my head such as reduce idle money at any point of time so that we don't lose interest income. Try to get more deposits and then utilize that money efficiently by getting more loan customers or by giving inter-bank loans.</p> <p>At this point, after asking many general questions about banking industry and finance aspects Akash seemed happy and he asked if I had any questions for him. I asked if he could tell me about the challenges for a new person in McKinsey initially and what are the main parameters he/she is expected to meet. Akash explained all of that very patiently while also narrating his own example. I then before leaving asked for a quick feedback on my performance in this round so that I can do better in next round. He said you are doing good, keep the confidence up and just keep going.</p>
	<p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis –</b> The case was very generic and just included general discussion.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any) –</b> None.</p>
What went well	I think I was able to have a really good conversation with Aakash. The initial conversation about my PAEV project and my real time experience on the project helped me a lot in this round. Also, there is always area of expertise for everyone for me it is always Finance. I could strike good rapport by showing good knowledge about banking industry.
What could have gone better	I think this round was nearly perfect for me.

Round No.	Round 1, Interview 2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	45 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Indranil Singh, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Run me through your profile. Why McKinsey.</p> <p>He wasn't convinced by my answer of why McKinsey and seemed not happy with my answer. He asked again don't give me a general gyan but tell me reality of why McKinsey. This made me really nervous and I started fumbling. But I gave a genuine</p>

answer why it makes an obvious career path for me and he seemed convinced this time.

### **Case**

#### **Type of Case – Guestimation**

##### **Problem statement –**

Indranil seemed interested in checking my calculations and structured approach as he asked me you need to tell me a number (definite number) of taxis needed at Delhi Airport.

Approach – The key was to come up with a structured approach as to how number of taxis can be computed. I stated the number of taxis at airport will be directly correlated with the number of customers arriving at airport. Then the capacity of taxis and average travel time of each taxi can help us arrive at number of taxis needed. Indranil was closely observing my all computations and approach. I arrived at a number from this approach and Indranil just nodded.

He then moved to a next case.

Your friend has approached you who is a partner in VC firm. He wants an advice if he should make an investment in a company which provides data analysis and call center services.

##### **Initial instinct of Approach –**

I knew that call center business is having lot of risk in near future so need to ask the current business model and future model as well.

##### **Scoping questions asked –**

I started following CPCC model and asked all relevant questions. Majorly I wanted to ascertain what is the main purpose of investment by VC firm.

##### **Frameworks used –**

None. This case (according to me) tested how will I go ahead for current valuation of the company and what needs to be checked before making any investment decision.

##### **Structure to solve case –**

Honestly, there is only one structure to solve any case i.e MECE (mutually exclusive, collectively exhaustive) buckets. Listening skills are also very important since the interviewers give lot of hints for solving the case.

##### **Case flow post scoping –**

After that he asked me suddenly what are my viewpoints on #Metoo campaign. I told my honest opinion that how there are some positive as well as negative effects of the campaign.

	<p>Post this, after a couple of hours, I was called in at the beginning of round 2 and made an offer.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis –</b></p> <p>The valuation of the company was attractive looking at future growth, but the investment should be made under certain caveats.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any) –</b></p> <p>None.</p>
What went well	The guestimation part went really well since I didn't make any calculation mistake which I always fear. The listening skills helped me catch the cues Indranil was throwing my way while solving the case.
What could have gone better	PI part could have been much better. Never make generic answers to any questions. After few hours I was called for second round of interview.
Round No.	Round 2, Interview 1
Type of Round	PI
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Toshan Tamhane, Senior Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>The discussion started as Toshan introduced himself and his work in McKinsey and then he asked me to introduce myself.</p> <p>In my introduction as I mentioned about how even after coming from a village I could dream of many big things and achieve most of them because my father used to tell us inspiring stories every night since mostly we never had access to electricity in dark hours.</p> <p>Toshan seemed very impressed from my introduction and told he would like to listen one of the stories my father used to tell me.</p> <p>I was surprised by this turn in interview since I never expected any such thing. But anyways I narrated the one most inspiring story which was most strongly engraved in my heart and really inspired me a lot.</p> <p>Toshan smiled at end of it and said that he tells the same story to his kid many times </p> <p>He said that they are very impressed from my profile and the success I achieved after the hardships I faced. They wanted me to continue doing that in McKinsey. Saying so he said the words I wanted to hear from long time – “Welcome to the Firm”.</p> <p>Your Comments (if any) – Believe in yourself. Even if you have one good shortlist, don't worry you can make it if you just work hard and have faith in yourself </p>

PWC DIAC

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Jasmeet Singh
Company interviewing for	PWC DIAC
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1/2/3
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	40 MINUTES
Interviewer Name/ Designation	
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question1: The interviewer asked me to perform a stand-up comedy for 2 minutes as I am a stand-up comedian and have put that in the resume.</p> <p>Answer 1:</p> <p><b>Guesstimates</b></p> <p>Question: Approach: Remarks from Interviewer: Your take on your approach:</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Operations Problem statement: How to reduce time of Toll gate in between Hyderabad airport to ISB from 15 seconds to 8 seconds Scoping questions asked: The initial questions revolved around whether this average time is during peak or non-peak hours. Once I get the clarity, I divided the problem into peak and non peak hours. I also asked about the number of toll gates and number of people involved. Also whether the process is manual or automated Frameworks used: no direct framework Structure/ analysis to solve case: I made the case quite structured. Once I have identified that the problem was in peak hours, that too on one side of the road, I moved forward with whether the process is manual or automated. As the process was manual, it added to the issue. She asked me for couple of recommendations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Automating the system</li> <li>2) Operations concept of rather than having different queues- there should be 1 queue which divides into many diff toll gates.</li> </ol>

	<p>3) Fast tags implementation 4) Using non peak side toll gates for the other side when required (allocation of toll gates)</p> <p>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</p> <p>Your Comments (if any):</p>
What went well?	Structure, presence of mind and confidence.
What could have been done better?	MORE RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE ADDED

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Urvashi Tripathi
Company interviewing for	Strategy& (Healthcare Focused Consulting in Conjunction with DIAC)
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	50 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Tamanna Tripathi, Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI</b></p> <p>I was asked about my journey at ISB and what I did differently here. I spoke about my focus on case studies and the ELP to better my knowledge of the final consumer, something I had no experience in, earlier. My interest in healthcare and work in the previous organization were also discussed. The mode was conversational and relaxed and went on for about 20 mins.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Market Entry</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Our client is a diagnostics firm that is looking to enter the Indian market. Help me understand if this is a good decision, if so what is the market size and which mode of entry would you use.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Defined the market and check for opportunities of growth in the market, current structure, current players in the market, the firm's financials,</p>

	<p>purpose to enter the market, the consumer's outlook towards diagnostics i.e. insurance policies in place, inherent biases about quality, value on convenience, the urban vs. the rural market and the pricing model they had in mind.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> 3CP for scoping, Market entry framework: strategic vs. economic intentions, industry attractiveness, value chain management, market sizing, Build:Borrow:Buy</p>
What went well?	<p>During the PI, I was thorough with my resume and hence, tackled each question with ease and confidence. I was able to build a rapport with my interviewer. The nature of the interview became conversational, and the interviewer tried to diffuse the pressure when the case happened. Knowledge about the industry, especially in a role such as this one which is tagged to an industry, always helps. The interviewer becomes comfortable when you speak in her language.</p>

Round No.	Round 2
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	40 Minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b> Run me through your profile. More detailed questions on past projects and impact created. I was asked about tough situations at work, handling clients that are overseas.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><b>Type of Case: Profitability and Pricing</b></p> <p><b>Problem statement –</b> A bullet train is to be launched from Bombay to Ahmedabad. Details such as average speed, number of carriages, differentiation of carriages, stops in the journey, fixed cost investment etc. were given out</p> <p>Question 1: Price tickets for premium and economy customers Question 2: Years to achieve breakeven given costs; Tangible value in executing this project Question 3: Additional sources to generate revenue</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Number heavy case with most details provided</p>

	<p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Profitability</p> <p><b>Structure to solve case:</b> The case was number heavy even though it was simplistic in approach.</p> <p>The interviewer tried to induce stress through numbers and any assumptions I made for simplicity were shot down.</p> <p>Once I arrived at an answer, the interviewer wanted to further up the pressure so asked me about 15 mental math questions right after the case</p>
What went well	PI was structured and well thought out
What could have gone better	The math made me flustered despite it being a simplistic case.
Round No.	Round 3
Type of Round	PI
Duration	25 Minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	This was a round to judge company fit primarily. I was asked about US laws I would like to change. There was discussion on my undergrad, my previous workplace and the career trajectory of my choice.

Roland Berger

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Anand Shekhar
Company interviewing for	Roland Berger
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+Guesstimate+PI
Duration	30 mins (10 min PI + 20 min Case)
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Himank Shanker, Senior Consultant
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>          Himank started by asking me to walk him through my resume and then went on to ask specific questions related to my work experience such as the most exciting project I have done, my learnings from that project, some metrics I used in one of my projects etc.</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Market Entry</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Client is a global steel manufacturer with presence in India and wants to enter cold rolled (CR) steel production in India. Client wants us to evaluate the present demand for this product and help them figure out a suitable location for their plant.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> What is the objective of the firm? <i>Profit maximization</i>. I went on to give an overall structure I would follow for the case and took buy-in from the interviewer. Here I was told that the client has already decided to enter this segment and wants us to evaluate the demand and location. My structure went for a toss and I had to rework based on the interviewer's guidance.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> No particular framework used</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> The interviewer asked me to start with demand estimation. I mentioned I would start by analyzing industries where CR steel is used. I mentioned some of the industries which use CR steel heavily and was asked to focus on automobile industry. Within automobile industry, I mentioned various product categories and was asked to focus on passenger vehicle. Although all passenger vehicles use CR steel, different segments use different type of CR steel. Client wanted to enter HSS (High Strength Steel) and AHSS (Advanced High Strength Steel). Then we</p>

	<p>discussed which segment under passenger vehicles use these grades of CR steel and concluded that the target segments would be premium passenger vehicles, MUVs and SUVs. I went ahead with demand estimation with the following approach to arrive at number of vehicles in target segment: Population -&gt; Income. I soon realized this needs further refining and took a second shot at my approach: Population -&gt; Rural/Urban -&gt; Income -&gt; Propensity (not everyone who has the income level to own a passenger vehicle would actually own one in the given segment). We discussed appropriate numbers for each classification and finally arrived at a number where the rural segment seemed to own more passenger vehicles in the given segment compared to urban population. I told the interviewer that this seemed off and he asked me to make certain changes in the numbers. Finally, I arrived at annual sales by dividing current number of vehicles with their expected life (I was asked only to take the churn and not the growth in this segment). This was multiplied with average weight of CR steel used in a given passenger vehicle to arrive at the total demand. Further, I was asked to look at the location. I started the analysis by mentioning that profit maximization was our goal and hence, we need to look into parameters that affect profits. I took some time to write-down some of these parameters. On the revenue side, I mentioned that the customer clientele would affect revenue as different customers would use different proportions of HSS and AHSS. On the cost side, I mentioned that raw material (hot rolled steel) source, its proximity to our plant (logistics cost), distance between our plant and customer (logistics cost), type and source of technology we will use to manufacture CR steel (capex in the form of depreciation), utilities such as electricity (steel is a utilities heavy industry and commercial electricity rates vary across states) and employee cost (prevalent labor laws and labor unions in the state would affect employee cost). I added that there are few other factors that we need to consider – government approvals to establish the plant, the support given by various state governments to industries, time taken to get clearances from CPCB (Central Pollution Control Board) and SPCB (State Pollution Control Board).</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> Not asked</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> If you are not able to apply a particular framework or if the case is more interviewer driven, try to understand what he/she is looking for by asking relevant questions. Make it a conversation instead of a dialogue.</p>
What went well?	I gave an overview of my approach even before I started scoping which helped me in understanding that the client has already taken a decision to enter. I was able to add insights at each stage due to my experience in the steel industry. I was able to catch an error in the guesstimate by doing a sanity check of the final numbers.
What could have been done better?	I could have arrived at the specific segment the interviewer was looking for much faster. I could have scoped better (although I was asked to begin with demand estimation directly).

Type of Round	PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	2 Partners
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>This was a completely behavioral interview (I am mentioning only the questions and not my answers as they would be specific to an individual). I was interviewed by 2 partners at once. They started off by asking me whether JSW (my ex-firm) is still planning to venture into Electric Vehicles and whether I had worked on that project (Roland Berger was one of the consulting companies who was evaluated to assist JSW). Then, I was asked if Mr. Nilesh Narwekar was still the CEO of JSW Cement (he came to JSW Cement after his role as a partner in Strategy&amp; and I believe the partner knew him). I told them that he is still working with JSW Cement and I was asked what would Nilesh say about me if the partner gave him a call. Some of the further questions that followed were:</p> <p>Tell me your 3 weaknesses.</p> <p>What would you do to overcome your biggest weakness?</p> <p>Tell me your 3 strengths.</p> <p>Which project did you enjoy the most at JSW?</p> <p>You come off as a very soft-spoken guy. How would you fit into a brutal role of a Consultant?</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> I was very honest in my answers (probably a little more than an average interviewee should be in any interview) but I believe it helped me as I came off as a very open and honest person and was able to defend my stance on things very well. I did not have to make up any answer.</p> <p>The offer was confirmed towards the end when they rolled out the final list after all interviews were done.</p>
What went well?	I believe the interviewers liked my honesty and my stance on things. I was completely relaxed and had a smile on my face throughout the interview.
What could have been done better?	Nothing. I think I wouldn't have changed any of my answers.

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Kanishk Singh
Company interviewing for	Roland Berger
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case + PI
Duration	50 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Amrit Singh – Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question 1 - Tell me about yourself (He browsed through my CV meanwhile)  Answer 1 - Gave a brief introduction keeping the focus towards my general interest in automobiles and highlighted a few of my wins in racing as a track and rally driver followed by my work with Maruti that kept in line with automobiles.</p> <p>Question 2 - So why consulting and why specifically RB?  Answer 2- Kept this in line with how I felt a lot of client facing roles previously and a number of on-site projects made me a good fit, plus the above answer to build on my passion for cars helped me answer the why RB part.</p> <p>Other general questions about family and all followed. He said he liked the racing aspect of my profile and took 2 minutes to make up a case that was related to cars.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Abstract</p> <p>Problem statement: The traffic congestion issues have risen in Delhi-NCR over the past few years. The government has hired you as a consultant to resolve this issue. Tell me a few short term and long terms solutions.</p> <p>Scoping questions asked: There was not much to ask. Focused on the means of transport already available, public ones - buses, autorickshaws and the metro lines. Also asked about the Delhi population and the growth rate over the mentioned years.</p> <p>Frameworks used: No framework was applicable here</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Started with the Delhi population, did a guesstimate of sorts to break down the number of people in the working segment, then, with an income split, arrived at the potential number of people who used public transport for daily commute. Used a factor to consider use of public transport for personal work and came to a number. Then looked at the number of metro lines, boxes per train and capacity as well as frequency to determine which areas were well served and which ones were overcrowded leading to more traffic on the streets. Did the same with buses. Realized one problem was low capacity on the yellow line. Second issue was with how old the buses were, slower speed and lack of maintenance causing lesser people to use them. Then looked at the number of cabs registered with Uber/Ola and the likes, how</p>

	<p>they had grown over the past few years. Drivers were cancelling trips out of the Delhi region during the day time because their incentive structure was based on number of trips, hence they preferred to stay within Delhi. This prompted people to use personal transport thus increasing traffic. Finally, looked into the structural aspect – the condition of the roads, potholes, traffic signals, police barriers and roundabouts, which ones helped, and which ones did not.</p> <p><b>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</b> After diagnosing the issue, there were multiple problems, some which could be addressed in the short term, others that required some time to implement. Collaborate with cab sharing companies to revise incentive structures so more drivers are available, and more people use public transport – especially pooling cabs. Adjust the traffic light timings to be more optimal. Since traffic takes a fixed time starting or stopping, increasing red light duration would mean lesser loss of speed for cars especially in areas like CP. Long term recommendations involved increasing metro capacity, roundabouts instead of red lights (widening of roads was not feasible in a lot of places) and finally underpasses like those in recently made in Gurgaon that had vastly reduced traffic in a lot of areas.</p> <p><b>Your Comments (if any):</b> I expected a proper framework-based case as informed by alums. An abstract one popped up instead. I asked for 2-3 minutes to think through my approach and then started talking. Keeping it interactive always helps, and in the end, the interviewer told me he was happy with the way I broke down the problem.</p>
What went well?	I always had the paper slightly tilted towards the interviewer so that he could see what I wrote down at all times. This kind of makes him feel a part of the discussion too, and the slight pauses in between hardly come to note.
What could have been done better?	Given more time, I could have come up with better recommendations. I was asked to suddenly synthesize after about 40 minutes.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Guesstimate + Case + PI
Duration	1 hour 15 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Jeffry Jacob – Partner   Saumitra Seghal – Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question 1: Again, a general introduction and why consulting. After that, I was asked about something I had done in my professional experience that I was proud of.</p> <p>Answer 1: The first part is mentioned above. Regarding what I was proud of, this was a question I had somewhat prepared. I spoke about a project I was given, and the youngest to be given something of such a scale. How having more time at my hands as compared to my manager who had a lot of things on his palate, I was able to do a lot of</p>

on-site work that over a few months provided enough data and contacts, that a decision could be taken higher up the chain to implement the solution we proposed and prevent stoppage of the production line. I stressed upon how, being a part of such a vast employee base and at a lower level, I could contribute to an impact making decision in a place that is governed by a set number of operating procedures and hierarchical flow of information.

### **Guesstimates**

Question: Estimate the number of golf balls used in one year in India

Approach: I started off by highlighted both the top down and the bottom up approach, to which I was asked the better one in my opinion. I went with the top down one as it would be more accurate based on the number of people playing golf and the interviewer agreed. I wrote down a formula of sorts at the top, something like number of golf courses x number of people who go there to play x number of balls used per person per year / average life of a golf ball, to give the interviewers an idea of my approach. Started off with the Indian population, urban rural split followed by mentioning that people go to golf courses to play golf. There would be no golf courses in the rural cities, and amongst the urban areas, number of metros, tier 1 cities and tier 2 and below. After discussion, assigned a number of golf courses to every type or city and added a factor for army cantonments also having a golf course. Assigned an X number of players who would visit golf courses and their respective frequency in different tiers of cities that brought me to the number of people playing golf annually. Accounted for the number of golf balls lost on course, whether in the sand or the ponds, as well how many would be damaged per session of play to arrive at a total number of golf balls required. Finally divided that by the life of a golf ball to come at the number used in India annually.

Remarks from Interviewer: Putting your approach into a formula gave them a good idea on what I was about to do next.

Your take on your approach: It's best to clarify which way the interviewer is wanting you to go at the start of it. I said what I have in mind, specified the assumptions and when I get the nod, it enabled me to proceed with more confidence. Also, taking a minute to ensure your calculations are correct is crucial. Cannot mess up the mathematics aspect of guesstimates.

### **Case**

Type of Case: Profitability

Problem statement: You have been hired by a cement manufacturer who has faced a decline in profits over the past few years. Diagnose the problem and give some recommendations.

Scoping questions asked: Started off by asking since when had the profits been declining and by how much, and whether the competitors had also faced a certain issue. They had not. Understood the business model – a number of plants Pan India, they transport the cement from the two closest plants to the customer. Asked about any recent changes in the market for cement, was told that if anything, more construction had been happening over the past few years, so the market was growing. Stated that it would be an internal problem and decided to analyze the revenues and costs to determine which it was.

Frameworks used: The Profit = Revenues – Cost Framework

Structure/ analysis to solve case: Asked the appropriate questions to determine that revenues increase with demand, but the profits had not gone up in proportion even though the demand had spiked. Hence, I said I would want to focus on the cost aspect. Realized further that in certain locations in the south, the two nearest plants did not have enough capacity to fulfill the client needs, as a result, firstly, transportation costs from the third nearest plant had to be incurred. This increased costs. Next up, still further unmet demand was lost to our competitors; hence the revenues did not increase as much. I was asked to look into the problem further, because another issue was at hand. I used the value chain framework to determine whether raw material, production, transport or any marketing costs had increased further. The issue was with raw material, the chief one being limestone, that cost had increased because our main supplier had some issues at their end and we were forced to buy at a higher rate from elsewhere. I was told there is another problem. Looked at how the cement was transported. It was outsourced to a third party who provided trucks and drivers. The lorry was weighed when it left our plants and again weighed when it entered the client site. The weight was found to be the same. Despite that, the quantity of cement was found to be lesser. On further questioning, it was noted that the time per trip had gone up, and reason was that drivers made unscheduled stops to remove two bags of cement per truck and got extra fuel put in to compensate for the weight. Hence, extra costs were incurred to transport the contracted amount of cement to the client site.

Recommendations/ Synthesis: First and foremost, I recommended to hire drivers if possible, or change the outsourcing company with stricter monitoring policies to ensure no pilferage happens. Next up, the company should enter long-term tie ups with a couple of raw material suppliers to reduce costs and hedge supplies in case a similar situation is repeated in future. The final recommendation was using data to analyze region wise demand and trends over the past few years to decide which would be the optimal locations where they could increase capacity.

Your Comments (if any): This case had multiple issues that needed to be solved. Don't stop at one, always keep digging for more data. Using the value chain framework really helps because you can exactly pinpoint where the problem is.

What went well?	The guesstimate was followed by a case and it was pretty time consuming. I paced my answers and did not rush into any conclusion, which helped me be clear about the direction I was headed in at all times.
What could have been done better?	One partner was silently gazing at me all the time, throwing random questions here and there, trying to find flaws in my structure. It happened quite a number of times and towards the end I slipped up at one point, where this same partner called me out. All this seemed intentional and did not do much harm, but it's best if you can identify a bait set out for you or a genuine guiding hand when you're stuck in solving the case.

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Karan Padgaonkar
Company interviewing for	Roland Berger
Number of rounds	2
Round No.	1
Type of Round	Behavioral + Case
Duration	25 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Don't remember
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>The interview started with basic PI questions: tell me about yourself and why consulting. Had a general discussion on few points on my resume.</p> <p><b>Behavioural Question:</b>            You are the manager of a case team. The project involves shutting down an African branch of an American MNC. The CXOs of the African branch are extremely reluctant to provide you with data and are not cooperative. There are some language barriers as well. What will you do?</p> <p>To start with I tried to understand the rationale behind the lack of cooperation. The main reasons seemed to be that the staff in the African branch were fearful of not finding a job in the future and had resentment towards the MNC. The language barrier was another factor that made the consultant seem like an outsider. The solutions were primarily 2-fold: (i) Hire a translator in the short run. But also take local language classes parallelly to help with communication (ii) For a job guarantee, provide 2 months extra severance to the employees. And use contacts in the region to help these employees find jobs elsewhere in the country/city</p> <p><b>Case Question:</b></p>

	<p>You are part of the ministry of trade of India. You have a meeting lined up with the ministry of trade of Canada to decide what commodities the 2 countries can trade in. How will you decide which items to prioritize for trade?</p> <p>This case did not follow a typical framework. The interviewer did not want to delve into scoping too much and wanted to understand what metrics I would use to evaluate what goods should be traded. I spoke about the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Comparative advantage – focus on what goods are more cost effective to produce in India and Canada, and try to negotiate the exchange of those items</li> <li>(2) Excess supply and demand mismatch – focus on goods in India that are overproduced/have spare capacity for more production and check whether demand for those goods exist in Canada</li> <li>(3) High GMV – focus on those goods that have a high rupee/kg ration (hypothetical metric)</li> <li>(4) Future and current capacity – Certain goods like food grains and dairy products require specialized containers for transport. Hence, these considerations should be taken into account (both current and future capacity of such containers) while agreeing to volumes to be traded</li> <li>(5) Strategic Industries – The government may have certain strategic industries it wants to grow in the country (based on political lobbying, Make in India, Export substitution etc). The products of such industries could be prioritized as well).</li> </ul>
What went well?	The interviewer seemed like she wanted a crisp and to the point discussion, and I was quick to catch on to this. I was able to adjust well to a case that did not follow a typical structure/framework. The case was conversational and interactive, and I made sure that it was not one-sided
What could have been done better?	I felt the interview was low on energy. It was towards the end of the day and I was quite tired. As a result, the interview was a bit slow-paced and I may not have come across as energetic/enthusiastic

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Behavioral + Guesstimate
Duration	25 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner – Jeffry Jacob
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>This was primarily a PI interview. We spoke about my previous work experience at length. He wanted to know what role McKc played and how that's evolving. He asked me about a few projects on my CV to make sure I was not lying. We had a brief chat about Roland Berger and what makes the firm different and a quick discussion about the startup landscape in India.</p> <p>He did ask me one guesstimate – estimate the number of ties sold in India in a year</p>

	For ease of calculation I assumed women don't buy ties (pointed to evidence from placement day where close to no women were in ties) and that rural sales could be negligible. I split the male urban population by age group and income levels. I made the assumption that school children would have ties as part of their uniform and white-collar workers may use ties as part of their formal attire. This gave me a steady stock of ties for the year. I assumed the average life span of a tie based on experience, which gave me the number of ties sold in a year
What went well?	The interview was more of a discussion, which suited me well. Knowing my resume and previous work experience thoroughly helped. I was able to hold a conversation with him well, which I felt was the key criteria for me being selected by the firm
What could have been done better?	Guesstimates are usually conversational. However, in this case the partner wanted me to provide him only with a final number and was not interested in discussing the approach. This threw me off a bit as it was unusual. I did fumble a bit with my calculations and provided him with a slightly wrong number in the beginning. But after a brief discussion, I was able to regain my composure and provide him with a more accurate estimate.

# Siemens Management Consulting

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Uttara Joshi
Company interviewing for	Siemens Management Consulting
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI + Market Entry Case
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>The first round was an elimination round. SMC focuses heavily on PI questions, especially on why you'd want to join the organization.</p> <p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p><b>Question:</b> Why SMC? What is your preference ranking among the consulting firms you're interviewing with.</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> SMC has the distinct advantage of providing consulting services to all of Siemens' businesses in India and abroad. Since Siemens is present in multiple industries, this offers the opportunity to quickly gain exposure to multiple areas. Also, because of the small size, the learning that you'd get especially in the beginning of your consulting career is immense. Regarding the preference rankings, I was honest about the fact that I'd rank SMC above the Big Fours yet below MBB. I think that the interviewer appreciated my honesty.</p> <p><b><u>Case</u></b></p> <p><b>Type of Case:</b> Market Entry</p> <p><b>Problem statement:</b> Your client is planning to set up additional plants in one of the 5 countries listed (he gave me the list) and needs your help in deciding the location.</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b> I asked the general scoping questions - what does the client produce, where are the current plants, etc. However, the interviewer told me to assume that I have all the information I need. He showed me an Excel sheet and wanted me to focus on how I'd analyze the data provided there.</p> <p><b>Frameworks used:</b> Market Entry + Basic Analytics</p> <p><b>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</b> I began by asking the general scoping questions, but when the interviewer steered the conversation towards the Excel sheet, focused on the methodology I'd use to rank the locations. At every step, I explained why I'd</p>

	<p>use/ignore a metric, why that'd be important to the client, how much weight I'd give, what would be the next steps.</p> <p>The interviewer was satisfied with my approach and asked me if I'd do anything else. I answered that some qualitative factors would also affect the decision apart from the analysis conducted till then and went on to explain some of these.</p> <p><u>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</u> The interview ended at that point, before I could give recommendations.</p> <p>The interviewer then asked if I had any questions for him, and I asked how his experience has been in internal consulting vs consulting for external clients. He responded by saying that the type of projects is similar but working with SMC also has the additional advantage that it trains you to be a future leader within Siemens's businesses units.</p>
What went well?	I think that keeping my composure really helped me, because I was able to turn the interview into more of a conversation. Also, the fact that I was honest about my ranking of firms helped set the right tone.
What could have been done better?	I think that this round went smoothly.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	PI + Expansion Case + Guesstimate
Duration	30 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p><u>Question:</u> Similar to the first round, I was asked detailed questions on why I'd like to join SMC. They really want to make sure that they hire candidates who are excited about joining SMC.</p> <p><u>Answer:</u> I gave an answer similar to the first round.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p><u>Type of Case:</u> Expansion</p> <p><u>Problem statement:</u> Your clients want to increase the number of warehouses they have in a city, and needs your help in deciding whether they should go ahead or not</p> <p><u>Scoping questions asked:</u> I asked the general scoping questions - what does the client produce, where are the current plants, etc.</p> <p><u>Frameworks used:</u> Expansion + Guesstimate</p>

	<p><u>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</u> The case began with me starting out with the normal expansion/growth framework, but then became heavily focused on solving a guesstimate for the demand for a new warehouse, in terms of the packages stored there.</p> <p><u>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</u> I approached the guesstimate through estimating the number of consumers that the clients serve per day * the number of parcels per customer, and then accounting for the size of each parcel, etc.</p> <p>The interview ended by me asking the interviewer questions regarding his experience at SMC.</p>
What went well?	Keeping the tone conversational and involving the interviewer in your thought process makes a world of a difference.
What could have been done better?	I think that during our case prep sessions, we focus a lot on frameworks and not so much on guesstimates. However, most of the interviews that my friends and I faced had at least one guesstimate. Therefore, it's very important to practice guesstimates also, in order to develop the knack for innovative ways to estimate something that is not as straightforward.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Market Entry Case + Guesstimate
Duration	20 minutes
Interviewer Name/ Designation	
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><u>Case</u>  <u>Type of Case:</u> Market Entry</p> <p><u>Problem statement:</u> Your client has inherited a property in Gulmarg and wants to decide whether to open a ski resort there.</p> <p><u>Scoping questions asked:</u> Other businesses, size of property, location in Gulmarg, etc</p> <p><u>Frameworks used:</u> Market Entry + Guesstimate</p> <p><u>Structure/ analysis to solve case:</u> Again, the case focused only on estimating the demand for the resort in a typical season.</p> <p><u>Recommendations/ Synthesis:</u> The interviewer showed me a photo to help me understand what a ski slope looks like and gave me the dimension of the slope in terms of length and breadth. I then calculated the area occupied by each person to estimate the maximum number of people that the slope can accommodate at one point. Then, I multiplied this by average occupancy to get the number of people skiing at one point of time. I used this to figure out the number of people skiing every day, and then added some people who only stay at the resort/eat at the restaurant but don't ski.</p>

What went well?	I think what worked well was that I showed genuine interest in understanding how SMC works and how I can contribute to the organization.
What could have been done better?	I got a little stressed during the guesstimate and fumbled in places, but again seeking help from the interviewer helped because he was able to guide me towards the correct approach.

2.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Kriti Jain
Company interviewing for	Siemens Management Consulting
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~50 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	PM
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Questions around a case competition I had won (Rivigo). We went into a lot of details on the approach used. The discussion then rolled into analyzing the Logistics sector and what are the key challenges faced and potential solutions. Some questions on resume and career plans</p> <p><b>Case:</b> Aluminium plates manufacturer. Company wants to close down a factory in India and move the production to China instead. Should they do this?  <b>Framework:</b> Evaluate quantitative and qualitative aspects.  This was mainly a numbers based case and required an understanding of all the things that would get impacted. We talked about cost savings in setting up the new factory, labor union situation, vendor management, quality certifications required for new factory, impact on sales, payoff period, revenue projections for the next 5 years, etc.</p>
What went well?	Went step by step on what all things will get into play when you close down a factory and when you start a new factory.
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2
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Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~35 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	PM
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>General resume questions</p> <p><b>Case:</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Market Entry</p> <p>Problem statement: Siemens healthcare (your client) is considering acquiring a startup in Southeast Asia (Malaysia/Indonesia) that makes a special type of medical devices. They already have invested in this space in India. You are the project manager for this consulting project. How will you structure the project?</p> <p>Structure/ analysis to solve case: Used the market entry framework. Evaluated market potential, financial scenario, synergies &amp; cannibalization effects, risks and execution feasibility. Also talked about the sensitivity analysis on the exit strategy</p> <p>Your Comments (if any): There was no data in the case, I was just asked to layout the structure you would use. Just list down the things you would evaluate</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	3
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	~30 min
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>General PI. Why consulting, Why Siemens, etc. No guesstimate.</p> <p><b>Case:</b></p> <p>Type of Case: Abstract/ Market sizing</p> <p>Problem statement: You have inherited a ski slope and are thinking of making money off the land. What can you do? (Plan a ski resort)</p>

	Structure/ analysis to solve case: Similar to new market entry – looked at market analysis, financial feasibility, risks, etc. Key was estimating market size
What went well?	Giving the initial structure was important. Identified the various revenue streams
What could have been done better?	Numbers

3.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Neeraj Krishna Giridharan
Company interviewing for	Siemens Management Consulting
Number of rounds	2

Round No.	1
Type of Round	PI+Mini-case Qs
Duration	45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Principal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI and Mini-case Questions</b></p> <p>Walk me through your resume</p> <p>Tell me about your internship at Siemens</p> <p>Why do you want to join Siemens?</p> <p>If you were to introduce Siemens to your friends, what would you say?</p> <p>What are the different divisions of Siemens?</p> <p>Where would you place the different divisions of Siemens in the growth share matrix (BCG matrix)?</p> <p>What are the most important qualities you value in people you work with?</p> <p>Can you give me an example of a situation in which you have NOT exhibited one of these qualities?</p> <p>What are the key metrics you would want to look at if you want to analyze the attractiveness of a division. Can you plot a graph to show the attractiveness?</p>
What went well?	Overall maintained a great rapport. The interviewer helped me from time to time due to this.
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2 – Interview 1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Pratul Shinde, Project Leader
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b>PI Questions</b>  Walk me through your resume.  Tell me about your internship experience at Siemens. Based on this experience, why do you want to work for Siemens (They really want to hear a strong, personal reason for this)?</p> <p><b>Case</b>  <b>Type of Case:</b> Profitability – cost reduction</p> <p><b>Problem Statement:</b> Siemens' electric drives unit is looking reduce costs to increase its profitability. (I had done my internship in the mechanical drives unit and hence Pratul expected me to be able to bring in my knowledge regarding drives manufacturing)</p> <p><b>Framework used:</b> Profitability</p> <p><b>Scoping questions asked:</b>  Where is the Siemens unit located? - Near Mumbai  What kind of products do they manufacture? - Assume one type of Electric Drive  What are the types of clients the products are sold to? - Industrial clients (Cement, Paper etc)  Sales then happens through typical B2B industrial sales channels? – Yes</p> <p><b>Structure/ Analysis to solve the case:</b>  Drew the profitability structure and directly entered costs.  I asked Pratul if I should look at costs from a value chain perspective and mentioned that I could also look at costs in terms of line items or fixed/ variable. Pratul asked me to look at line items.  I drew out the line items: COGS, S&amp;D, Marketing, R&amp;D and others (financial etc).  I checked with Pratul regarding each. Pratul wanted me to look at COGS. I broke down COGS again into direct and indirect costs.  He specifically wanted me to list down all the cost heads pertaining to manufacturing COGS.  He then asked to look at raw material cost.  I had to first identify the major raw materials based on my internship experience. In this case it was the shaft, casing and windings.  He asked me the metal that is used for windings (copper).  He now asked me to identify 5 ways to reduce raw material cost. The 5 ways I mentioned were:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vendor Development (Based on my internship at Siemens, I knew that Siemens had a philosophy of heavily investing in vendors who do not meet their standards to bring them up to their standards. This was hence a way to reduce cost.)</li> <li>2. Better production planning to provide better purchasing power</li> <li>3. Better inventory management to prevent wastage</li> <li>4. Redesigning the production process to optimally utilize raw material</li> <li>5. Redesigning the product so as to use less raw material</li> </ol>
What went well?	Pratul was impressed by my knowledge of Siemens and was smiling throughout the interview. This reinforced my sense of confidence and made me feel comfortable
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2 – Interview 2
Type of Round	PI + Case
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Baiku Datta, Partner
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p><b><u>PI Questions + Case</u></b></p> <p><b><u>PI Questions</u></b></p> <p>Walk me through your resume.      Why do you want to switch to consulting?      You have done your internship at Siemens, how was your experience?      What can you say about Siemens as an organization by your internship experience?      How did you start your first business?      From your business, do you have contacts to help us grow our external clientele at SMC?</p> <p><b><u>Case + Guestimate</u></b></p> <p><b>Type:</b> Revenue estimating (Market sizing)  <b>Problem Statement:</b> You have inherited a ski ramp in the Himalayas and wish to monetize it. How would you estimate the revenue?  <b>Scoping questions asked:</b> Dimensions of the ramp. 2 km in length, 300m wide.      Are there any competitors around? There are in the region but not in vicinity.      How much do competitors charge? Rs. 2000 /day      How is the accessibility to the place? Are there any issues to consider? None      Any specific constraints to be considered. Nothing just want to use the slope to make money. (Hence not considering selling)</p> <p><b>Structure/ Analysis to solve the case:</b></p>

	<p>I started by mentioning that I could look at both the demand and supply side. He said he wanted to estimate revenue potential from the supply side assuming that there was enough demand.</p> <p>He asked me what could be all the sources of revenue. Entry pass, acco, transport, F&amp;D, merchandise.</p> <p>He then asked me to estimate how many people can be accommodated in the ski ramp in a day.</p> <p>Based on the length and width of the ramp, I was able to estimate that approximately 300 people could use the ramp at any point of time. Further, there would be ~400 more people going back up in a cable cart which would be slower than travelling on the ramp. So in a day we would have approximately 700 people. That's Rs. 14,00,000/day in terms of sales of entry passes.</p> <p>Baiku was satisfied and we discussed a bit more about the role and how SMC is planning to transition more into external consulting clientele.</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

4.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Gaurav Pai
Company interviewing for	Siemens
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Mr. Pratul Shinde

Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>PI: (Basically stress interview, trying to contradict with what I was saying)</p> <p>Why SMC?</p> <p>Why Consulting?</p> <p>I understand 'why Siemens' makes sense for you but can't understand why consulting?</p> <p>Why do you want to go into consulting?</p> <p>I see that you have worked on process excellence, name one task where you improved your efficiency?</p> <p>This is something that comes with any job (learning curve). What did you do specially to improve?</p> <p>Case: Siemens India wants to start a fire alarm division Siemens global has capability for fire alarm but has no market presence in India; it wants to enter Any secondary objectives: Yes, Siemens India's revenues if 400 M, want to increase it to 800 M in 5 years</p> <p>Currently in 2018, the fire alarm market is worth 1 B Euros and in 5 years it will be 1.7 B Euros Current market 2018: Commercial 400 M; Residential 200 M; Hospital 300 M; Hotel 100M Future market 2022: Commercial 700 M; Residential 300 M; Hospital 400 M; Hotel 300 M</p> <p>There are three versions: basic, intermediate and advance. Each customer segment can deal with either version: (India price conscious so let's consider only basic)</p> <p>There are two types of players: Local (50% mkt share) and global (50% mkt share) Local is a fragmented industry. Price point of basic fire alarm is Rs. 6000 Global industry has 3 players. Price point of basic fire alarm is Rs. 7500 We do not have information on costs of competitors.</p> <p>Our costs are Rs. 6000. We have decided to import fire alarms from Germany and this cost includes everything including import duty.</p> <p>So my first assessment was that we can not compete with local players. We should be targeting the global segment.</p> <p>I asked about our product characteristics vs competitors. He said that our product is better in functionality however customers are not aware of it. (So probably might need some Marketing spend)</p> <p>What is our target: Market share or revenues? He said that "you are a consultant, so you should advise me what target to set?" This answer baffled me because I had not done target setting before. Usually the interviewer gives information.</p>
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	<p>So I thought about it. 3 players on average have 17% mkt share. We are entering a new market so let us target 5% of mkt share in the next 5 years. Does that sound reasonable? He agreed.</p> <p>So 5% of 1.7 B is around 100 M. So I said that since we are achieving 100M of the target from fire alarm. If we maintain market shares in the other industries the 400 M revenues currently will grow according to CAGR. If needed we could revise our goal.</p> <p>Let's focus on how to enter?          Since we have manufacturing figured out (importing). Let's look at how to create distribution channels          Build, buy or borrow – He said build. And asked me to summarize.</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Mr. Mandar Nadgir
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>PI: (No cross-questioning like R1, this was a very conversational PI)          Why MBA after MS?          Why not grow into Engineering function itself?          Why get into management?</p> <p>Case: HR case cyber security (Role play – interviewer was playing a role)          I am the head of a cyber security division of a huge conglomerate. I want to expand my team size. How would you recommend I do that?</p> <p>Asked him about the company – huge company in a lot of diversified industries.          Cybersecurity division – Since we have a lot of sensitive and government data, we need this division to protect it. However, this division is just a cost center and generates no revenues.</p> <p>Aim: Currently 250 people. Want to expand to 750 people in next 6 months.          (I said that let's assess if we actually need to triple the division size. If yes then we could then get into how would we hire these people)</p> <p>Asked him about how these 250 people are split into teams?</p>

	<p>5 teams within the cyber security division (Forgot the names of those divisions) Let's call them:</p> <p>D1 – 120 people, D2 – 30 people, D3 – 20 people, D4 – 40 people, D5 – 40 people</p> <p>I said I would look at each division carefully and assess if the utilization of people is appropriate. As in the number of people required are optimal or they are understaffed. He told me to go on.</p> <p>I wanted to look at D1. So asked him more information about D1.</p> <p>D1 is a team that looks at the company's 100,000 devices and performs two things: 1) software updates 2) software patches.</p> <p>I said I would look at each device. How much of daily work is required for each device. Calculate man hours required daily. Divide it by 8 manhours. Come to the optimal number of people required. If this is more than 120, then hire more people, else we could have excess capacity and these people could be moved to different divisions.</p> <p>He said that people can not move around due to different software packages in each division.</p> <p>And he said he did not like the idea of dividing devices into people (hinting at something).</p> <p>I said probably we could specialize people into update vs patches. (He liked this idea) and then I repeated the same process. I said later I would also look at the future incoming projects in the next 6 months and decide on how many people are required for each team and division.</p> <p>Later I wanted to dive a little bit into the company's HR policies and how, where and when to recruit these individuals.</p> <p>Time was running out, so he told me to wrap the case up.</p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	
Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Mr. Zubin Charniwala
Round Summary	PI: (He was not showing much emotions) Why did you want to come back to India?

(questions asked and your responses)	<p>Case: Steel manufacturer new market entry          Your client is a global steel manufacturer. It is present predominantly in the developed markets. Wants to enter emerging markets. What would you suggest?</p> <p>I asked questions regarding the client. Present in almost all developed economies. Recently entered in Turkey and Mexico (emerging economies).</p> <p>Asked about objective: Is market entry into emerging market our only objective (yes).</p> <p>Which countries are we looking at in the emerging markets. He asked me to give a laundry list of countries. I mostly spoke about South east Asian, African and South American countries.</p> <p>He told me to focus on BRICS countries.</p> <p>How would you thinking about which country to enter?          I asked for the following data: Market size, CAGR, competitive landscape, barriers to entry.</p> <p>He said assume that I give you all this information. How would you think of doing an Excel-based analysis of this situation?          I made up a formula:  <math display="block">(\text{Mkt size}) \times (\text{CAGR}) \times (\text{Market share}) - \text{Initial investments} - \text{variable costs} = \text{Profits}</math></p>
What went well?	
What could have been done better?	

# Samagra

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Aayush Kedia
Company interviewing for	Samagra Governance
Number of rounds	4

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Informative Webinar and Concept Note Written Assessment
Duration	75 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Webinar with the Founders – Gaurav Goel and Ankur Bansal
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>After my application was shortlisted, we had an informative webinar. Just after the webinar, we were given an assessment.</p> <p>In this assessment, a sample problem statement was shared from one of engagements. I was required to write 1-2 page summary about the problem statement and email them back. It was a timed assessment and I was provided a maximum of 75 minutes to complete this assessment.</p> <p>I took the initial 5-10 minutes to understand the problem statement and structure my thoughts. I created sections in a two-page document and thereafter created points for each of the sections by doing section specific timed research. During the process, I kept an eye for detail and ensured that the report is structured properly.</p>
What went well?	I got to a good start by creating an outline and timing my work properly.
What could have been done better?	My write-up could have been more innovative but given the time constraints, I think that is a bit difficult.

Round No.	2
Type of Round	Telephonic Interview
Duration	30 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Anish Choudhury – VP, Samagra
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Samagra tests for two things – Skill and Will. The telephonic round was more to assess my will.</p> <p>The objective of this step was to understand my work experience, academic background and concept note in detail.</p>

	<p><b>PI Questions</b></p> <p>Question 1: Run me through your resume?</p> <p>Question 2: Why Consulting?</p> <p>Question 3: Why Samagra?</p> <p>These were some basic HR questions that were asked. Along with these questions, I was grilled on the concept note.</p> <p><b>Concept Note</b></p> <p>There was a short discussion around what I had written in the concept note and then I was asked a basic mini case type question.</p> <p><b>Question</b> – What parameters would you look at when taking a go/no go decision for a project?</p> <p><b>Answer</b> – After giving it some thought, I start putting in ideas such as public need, existing programs, funding, acceptance levels, etc. Anish asked me to simplify my answer. The final answer that we boiled down to was the Ease of Implementation and Impact.</p> <p><b>Question</b> – How do you measure the collective performance of various initiatives and compare them across states?</p> <p><b>Answer</b> - I said we can use an index. He seemed satisfied with the answer.</p>
What went well?	I was confident, genuine and displayed curiosity during the interview.
What could have been done better?	I fumbled during the HR questions even after having prepared for them. I could have kept my calm better in that situation.

Round No.	3
Type of Round	In-person Interview
Duration	45 mins
Interviewer Name/Designation	Ankur Bansal – Co-founder
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>There were two in-person rounds that happened at Samagra's Delhi Office.</p> <p>After a brief 5 minute discussion, Ankur straightaway gave me a case. The case was from one of their workstreams.</p>

	I took 2 minutes to structure my approach and thereafter took to the usual case solving process i.e. scoping and then started explaining to him what my solution was. There were certain follow-up questions but I handled them well.
What went well?	Already having read up on their workstreams and projects helped me be prepared for the case interview.
What could have been done better?	I could have communicated my thoughts with more conviction as I feel I was constantly being tested if I was confident about the solutions I proposed and if I had thought them through.

Round No.	4
Type of Round	In-person Interview
Duration	75 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Gaurav Goel – Founder and CEO
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<p>Gaurav, straightaway, made me do a case.</p> <p><b>Case</b></p> <p>Again, the case was from one of their workstreams but this time it was a bit guided. Gaurav asked specific questions, answers to which I had to give. The main takeaway from the case was to give as practical and implementable solutions as possible. At the same time, as mentioned before, my confidence and conviction were being constantly checked.</p> <p><b>PI</b></p> <p>After the case, I was grilled on my interest level and inclination to work for a firm such as Samagra. There was special emphasis on “Why did I want to work for Samagra?”.</p>
What went well?	I kept going and I didn't give up.
What could have been done better?	Gaurav was trying to play the role of a politician/government employee and as a result, the interview became very stressful, I lost confidence in what I was saying midway. Feedback given to me was also to communicate with conviction.

ZS Associates

ISB Consulting Club Class of 2019

## 1.

Candidate Information	
Candidate Name	Sayantan Nandi
Company interviewing for	ZS Associate
Number of rounds	3

Round No.	1
Type of Round	Case
Duration	30-45 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Manager
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	<b>Round 1:</b> It was a market entry case wherein I was shown slides with certain charts and tables. I was asked to provide insights by looking at the slides. The case was about a small pharma company entering a certain drug market. I had to think quick to come up with as many insights as I could. I was also asked to suggest headlines for each slides. Since, I had experience doing this kind of work, the round went smooth for me. Practicing the IR section of GMAT will help you in this.
What went well?	Consulting experience came in handy.
What could have been done better?	I felt I was well-prepped for the interview but for others I would recommend going through a lot of Pharmaceutical industry cases as that's what ZS' focus is.
Round No.	2
Type of Round	Case+PI
Duration	1 hour to prepare + 45 min interview
Interviewer Name/ Designation	Senior Manager and Vice President
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	Round 2: I was given printouts for a case about a multiplex company planning to expand their market. There was a lot of material and I had 1 hour to go through everything and make 4-5 slides and present it to the interviewing team. The material basically spoke about the industry and had information about different segments of the market and customer behavior. It was quite a lot of information to digest in 1 hour so I had to scourge through the documents and only focus on what made immediate sense. My focus was on the objective of the presentation (which was market expansion) and I stuck to that. After the 1 hour prep time, there was a 45 min long discussion about my presentation with the interviewing team. They probed all my recommendations and

	insights. Additionally, they gave me hypothetical situations and needed to me come up with possible scenarios. There were a few PI questions regarding my work experience.
What went well?	Case preps helped me immensely but like I said I already had work ex in consulting so it was easier for me.
What could have been done better?	Do as many cases as you can for the interview especially related to market entry or market expansion.
Round No.	3
Type of Round	HR
Duration	15 mins
Interviewer Name/ Designation	HR VP
Round Summary (questions asked and your responses)	Round 3: Simple HR round. Many of ZS' employees move to Novartis and vice-versa. It was a simple chat around my work experience and general stuff. Nothing probing.
What went well?	My Novartis pedigree
What could have been done better?	

# Personal Interview Question Bank

## **I. Personal**

### ***A. Background***

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What would you like me to know about you that is not on your resume?
3. What are the three most important events of your life?
4. What were you doing during this gap of time I see here on your resume?
5. Where did you grow up? What are your three major accomplishments?
6. What was an experience in your life that you would want to go back and change?

### ***B. Self Description***

1. How would your friends describe you?
2. Give me three words to describe yourself.

### ***C. Goals***

1. What new goals have you established for yourself recently?
2. What are your five to ten year career goals?
3. What are your career and educational goals?
4. What are the attributes of an ideal job for you? If you could do “it” all over again, what would you do differently?
5. What are you looking for?
6. How long a commitment do you plan to give me?
7. What is your ideal job?
8. What other types of positions are you considering?
9. What kind of boss would you prefer?
10. Why are you pursuing this field?
11. What would you like your lasting impression to be?
12. Do you have a final statement?
13. What are your career options right now?
14. How could you have improved your career path?
15. What salary are you expecting? In addition to salary, what benefits would most interest you?

**D. Values**

1. What does “success” mean to you?
2. What does “failure” mean to you?
3. Which is more important to you: money or the type of job?
4. Who do you admire? Why?
5. What do you get passionate about?
6. Who is your hero, and why? *Try quoting a family member or friend; try to stay away from celebrities.*

**E. Previous Bosses**

1. Did you get an offer from the firm you worked for this summer?
2. Do you have other offers? Why would/wouldn’t you take our offer over one of the others?
3. What can you tell me about your past bosses?
4. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?
5. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
6. How did you find your summer jobs?
7. Describe the job or the activity, which has had the greatest impact on your career goals.

**II. Management / Leadership Style**

1. What is your management philosophy?
2. Define leadership
3. Tell me about a time when you successfully resolved a conflict.
4. Give me an example of a leadership role you have held when not everything went as planned.
5. What qualities should a successful manager possess? Do you have these attributes (of a good manager)?
6. What two attributes are most important in your job?
7. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to an employer.
8. Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
9. Name a point in your life where you turned a negative into a positive.
10. Tell me about a decision you have made that you later regretted.
11. How do you feel about working overtime?
12. Give me an example of how you manage multiple projects.
13. What would you say to a boss that has a sub-par idea?

### **III. Strengths / Weaknesses and Skills**

1. Are you creative? Give me an example. What have you done that you consider creative?
2. What are your strongest abilities?
3. What is your biggest weakness? *Never say that being a perfectionist is your biggest weakness. Some applicants think that this makes you look better, but it seems that you not secure.*
4. Why should we hire you?
5. Give me an example of something that you have done that shows initiative.
6. What makes you stand out among your fellow students?
7. What makes you different from the other candidates for this position?
8. What can you do for us that someone else cannot do? What was the most important thing you learned from your previous experience/internship?
9. How do your skills relate to our needs? What can you offer us?
10. What have you disliked in your past jobs?
11. How long before you can make a contribution? In the past year, what have you been dissatisfied about in your performance?
12. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
13. Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
14. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
15. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
16. In what kind of work environment do you do your best work?
17. What kinds of tasks and responsibilities motivate you the most?
18. What has been your greatest challenge?

### **IV. Interpersonal Skills**

1. How competitive are you?
2. How do you work under pressure?
3. Give me an example of a time when you successfully worked within a team.
4. What types of people seem to rub you the wrong way?
5. Define cooperation.
6. What kinds of people do you enjoy working with?
7. What kinds of people frustrate you?
8. Have you ever managed a conflict? How?
9. Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
10. With what kind of people do you like to work?

## **V. Education**

1. Why did you decide to get an MBA?
2. Why this Institute?
3. What made you decide to major in \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What have you learned at this B school that will help you on this job?
  
5. Do you hold any leadership positions?
6. What electives have you taken? Which did you enjoy the most?
7. What college classes did you like the least? Why?
8. Why didn't you attend (another school)?
9. How do you balance the different priorities MBA student life presents?
10. Did your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why/Why not?
11. Describe the course that has had the greatest impact on your thinking.

## **VI. Extra Curricular**

1. What extra-curricular school activities are you involved in? *While it is a good idea to show that you are well rounded, it is a good idea to stress those activities, which show team involvement and leadership.*
2. What have you learned from your activities?
3. Were your extracurricular activities worth the time you put into them?
4. How did you become involved in your extracurricular activities?
5. What do you enjoy doing outside of work-in your free time?
6. What is your favorite book/movie/song/painting-or author/actor/singer/artist?
7. Which magazines/newspapers do you read regularly? Which books have you read recently?
8. Have you ever done volunteer activities?

## **VII. Job / Company / Industry**

1. Why are you interested in \_\_\_\_\_? / Why do you want to work for us?
2. What makes you want to be a \_\_\_\_\_?
3. What makes you think you would be successful in \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What do you think this job requires?
5. Given that you have no background in this field why are you interested in it?
6. What do you predict is going to happen in this industry in the next 5 years?

7. How would you go about evaluating a business?
8. What do you know about our company?
9. Do you know who are competitors are?
10. What interests you most about this position? What parts of the job do you think you would find the least satisfying?
11. You have five minutes to describe the most relevant and specific items in your background, which show you are uniquely qualified for this position.
12. What would you add to our firm?
13. What particular expertise do you have that would lend itself well to this position?
14. Demonstrate/illustrate skills that you can transfer from past experience.
15. What concerns you about our company?
16. What do you believe are the key issues and problems in our industry today?

### **VIII. Location**

1. Why do you want to relocate to\_\_\_\_\_?
2. Are you willing to relocate every two years or so?
3. How do you feel about travel?
4. Are you familiar with how taxing travel can be?

### **IX. Functions**

#### ***A. General***

1. Tell me a joke. Ha haha ha haha haha
2. What if I told you that you'd work very hard, but recognition of your contributions would be nil?
3. What stocks do you recommend? Why? Should I buy stock in X?
4. Where are interest rates going in the next 3 months?
5. How many new highs did the Dow reach last year?
6. If you could make a major policy change this B school, what would it be?
7. If you had six months ahead with no obligations and no financial constraints, what would you do?
8. If you could invite anyone you would like to a dinner party (famous or historical figures, dead or alive), which ten people would you invite?
9. If you could trade places with someone for a week, who would it be?
10. Sell me the desk.
11. Rate me as an interviewer.

**B. Consulting**

1. Why consulting? Why this firm?
2. What does a consultant do? What are the three most important qualities of a successful consultant? How is our practice different from other consulting firms?
3. How do you rank in relation to your peers?
4. Imagine we are reviewing your performance at our firm after working with us for six months. What do you think our evaluation would be?
5. Highlight your top achievements/accomplishments?
6. What has been your biggest setback?
7. With whom are you interviewing? How have you fared?
8. What is the most important thing that you have learned in the past year?
9. Give me an example of a situation in which you had a problem, how you identified the problem, the methods you used to solve the problem and discuss the resolution. If given an offer, how will you decide whether or not to accept it?

**C. Marketing**

1. Why ISB? Why not IIM?
2. What is marketing? Define the difference between marketing and advertising.
3. What does it take to be successful in marketing?
4. What are the attributes of a successful marketing campaign? How do you motivate others, particularly those over whom you have no direct authority?
5. How have you developed your interpersonal skills?
6. Give me a specific example of a time you solved a problem creatively?
7. What is the most important thing that you've learned about managing people from your previous work experience?
8. Rank order characteristics important for brand management.
9. Scenario: Create a plan to market Brand X in Bangalore.
10. What did you dislike about your former employer?
11. Give me a 30 second commercial about yourself.
12. Pick a good and bad ad campaign and discuss them.
13. Give an example of a well/managed product.
14. Pick a product and position it.
15. Give me an example of a leadership role you have had.

**D. Corporate Finance (Investment Banking)**

1. Why investment banking? Why this bank?
2. Why corporate finance as opposed to sales and trading? What are your outside activities? Why would you be willing to give them up for such a demanding job?
3. What role do you play in group situations?
4. What would you do if offered drugs as part of the deal? (or other ethically focused questions.)
5. How smart are you? How do we know how smart you are?
6. Sell us on your quantitative skills.
7. If we made you an offer today, would you take it?
8. What did the Dow, S&P or NASDAQ close at yesterday?
9. What stocks do you follow and why?

**E. Sales And Trading**

1. What other firms have you talked to?
2. What makes you think you can sell?
3. Would you like to do sales or trading? Why?
4. Tell me what you think a trader (or salesperson) does.
5. Why selling debt vs. selling equity?
6. Why not corporate finance?
7. What do you think having an MBA does for you in this field?
8. What particular markets or instruments are you interested in?
9. Describe an instance where you persuaded someone to do something they initially didn't want to do.
10. What about your personality will make you a good trader?
11. How will you motivate yourself to make the calls you hate to make?
12. What are your grades? (yes, they know about the grade referendum.)
13. Tell me a joke.

**F. Strategic Planning & Corporate Finance**

1. What do you hope to gain by working for our firm?
2. Where do you see yourself five years from now?
3. How do you see your career progressing in our firm?
4. What do you know about our industry?

5. Our division is thinking of introducing a (such and such) new product. How would you go about determining if this is a good idea?
6. How does M&A activity in banking affect our industry?
7. We are having trouble managing our (division.) What do you think the key performance metrics might be and how might you go about improving them?
8. How would you go about valuing our (division) for a potential sale, spin-off, and liquidation?

#### **X. Questions to Ask**

##### **A. *Company***

1. What are your company's strengths and how do you capitalize on them?
2. What are your company's weaknesses and how are you dealing with them?
3. How have you strategically responded to the competition?
4. Where will the major sources of your business be in the next 5 years?
5. What challenges are facing this company? Do you think your company is reacting to them?
6. Do you have plans for expansion?
7. What are your growth projections for the next year?
8. Have you cut your staff in the last three years?
9. What is the largest single problem facing your staff/department right now?

##### **B. *Industry***

1. What changes do you anticipate in the industry?
2. What risks will your company face due to industry changes?
3. What legislation is pending that will affect your firm?

##### **C. *Career Opportunities / Path / Training***

1. What are the best opportunities at your firm for new hires?
2. How is worker performance measured and reviewed?
3. Do you have a mentor program? How about formal training programs?
4. Why do people leave?
5. Why have you stayed with the company?
6. Describe my initial assignments?
7. If you hire me, what are the three most pressing issues you need resolved?
8. What kinds of assignments might I expect during the first six months on the job?

9. Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?
10. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
11. Please describe the duties of the job for me.
12. Does your company encourage further education?
13. How often are performance reviews given?
14. What is the usual promotional time frame?
15. Has there been much turnover in this job area?
16. Is there a lot of team/project work?
17. Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?
18. Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?
19. What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
20. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
21. Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
22. What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you, or should I contact you?

#### ***D. Culture***

1. What is your company's management style?
2. How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
3. What do you like best about your job/company?
4. What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share

**All the best!**

**- The consulting club of Co'19**