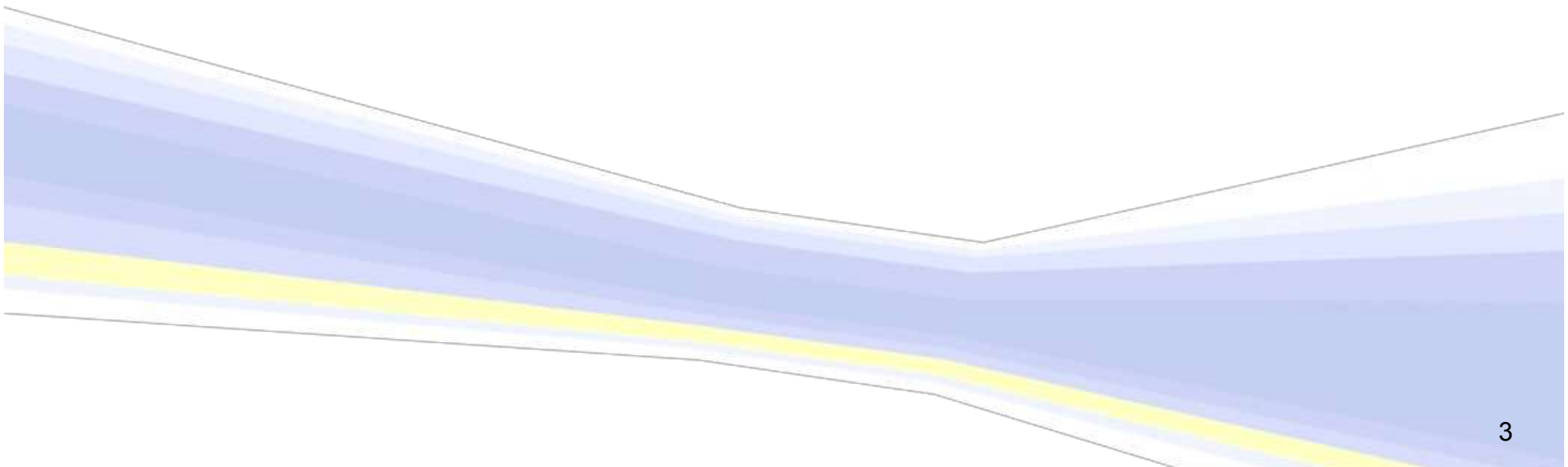


# How to approach a consulting interview

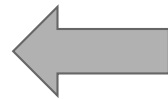


# The consulting interview process is fairly standardized across firms

	Duration	What to expect / What the interviewer expects	Evaluative Area
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-2 min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is your first chance to make an impression</li> <li>• Be enthusiastic, professional and confident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall personal presence, professionalism</li> </ul>
<b>Behavioral questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-10 min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be prepared to “walk through your resume”</li> <li>• Be ready to answer questions about your experience without sounding rehearsed</li> <li>• They may ask you “Why consulting?” type questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork ability</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Record of previous success</li> </ul>
<b>Case portion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30-35 min</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interviewer will tell you about a business problem and ask you to determine a solution</li> <li>• Be prepared to “think like a consultant” and clarify the problem while driving to specific recommendation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving abilities</li> <li>• Analytical skills</li> <li>• Ability to function under pressure</li> </ul>

# The case portion is a realistic representation of the work consulting companies do

Poise,  
communication  
skills



Case portion =  
Solve a business  
problem



Structured  
thinking



Creativity and  
enthusiasm for  
work



*Similar to case work at consulting firms, cracking a case requires you to simplify an ambiguous problem into an easy to communicate recommendation*

# Strong candidates will be professional, enthusiastic, and analytical

## Poise, communication

- Sit up straight
- Keep eye contact
- Maintain a professional presence
- Adapt to cues
- Speak up

## Creativity/enthusiasm

- Have fun
- Don't appear like this is the worst experience of your life
- Show your creative side
- Don't be a "robot"

## Structured thinking

- Don't shy away from numbers
- Use graphs
- Have a structured approach to your problem solving

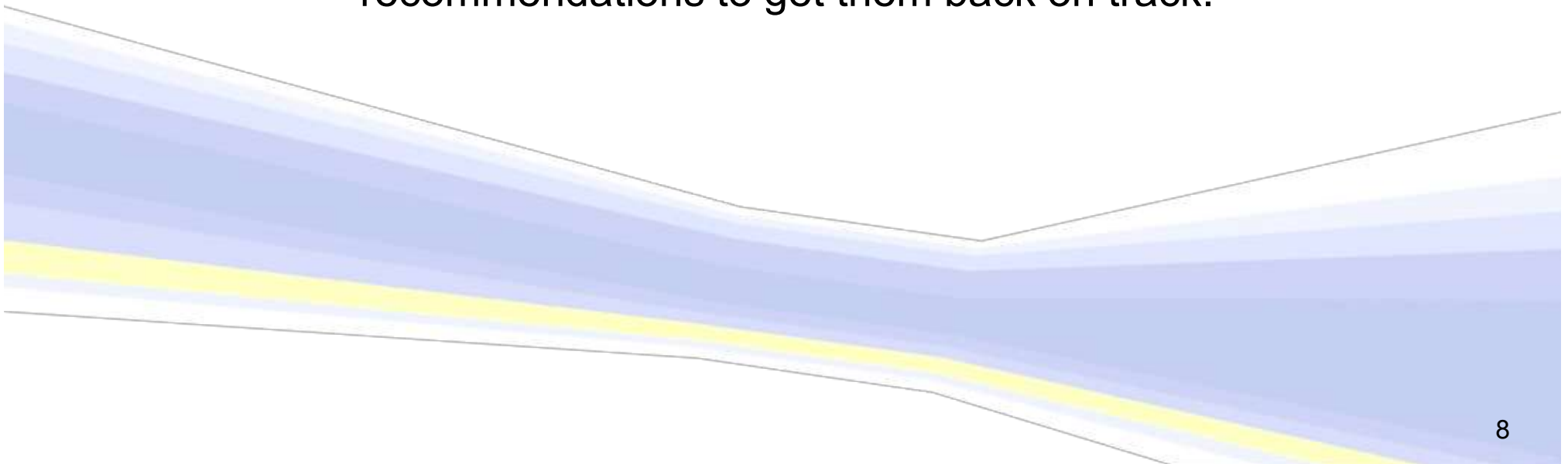


*Often, people focus exclusively on the analysis. A candidate's poise and enthusiasm is just as, if not more, important*

# The case interview process is fairly standardized across firms

	Interview Stage	Duration	What to expect / What the interviewer expects
1	<b>Case question introduction</b>	1-2 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviewer will tell you about the business problem and what your objective is</li> <li>You should be taking notes and ask clarifying questions to ensure you heard the question correctly before moving on</li> </ul>
2	<b>Structure creation / Approach development</b>	1-2 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is where you lay out how you will solve the problem (Quiet time is expected here, but feel free to talk through your reasoning if you are comfortable)</li> <li>You will be expected to come up with an approach fairly quickly, but will be able to adjust throughout</li> </ul>
3	<b>Case Analysis</b>	20-25 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expect to drive the case, focusing only on what is relevant and high impact</li> <li>Ask questions that will help you address your hypothesis</li> </ul>
4	<b>Case Summary / Recommendation</b>	2-5 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize the case by giving a recommendation backed up by insights discovered in the case</li> </ul>

Hammerjack is a regional chain of local hardware stores located in numerous neighborhood strip malls and shopping centers. They have enjoyed excellent performance for the past 15 years and have experienced declining profits in the past two years. They are concerned about their profitability and have hired you to explain their situation and provide recommendations to get them back on track.



# The prompt will contain many details; be sure not to miss early hints

1.a) Our client, a manufacturer of lawn mowers, is considering selling lawn mowers in China

1.b) Our client, a manufacturer of lawn mowers, is considering manufacturing lawn mowers in China

2.a) Our client is looking for suggestions on how to increase sales of copper

2.b) Our client is looking for suggestions on how to increase sales of laptop computers



*LISTEN to the prompt, and ask clarifying questions about any parts of the prompt that are unclear*



# Small differences will have a big impact on the case

1.a) Our client, a manufacturer of lawn mowers, is considering selling lawn mowers in China

*External opportunity: revenue growth, market size, competitors, demand*

1.b) Our client, a manufacturer of lawn mowers, is considering manufacturing lawn mowers in China

*Internal opportunity: cost cutting, profit margins, quality issues*

2.a) Our client is looking for suggestions on how to increase sales of copper

*Undifferentiated product: pricing, customer expansion, market dynamics*

2.b) Our client is looking for suggestions on how to increase sales of laptop computers

*Differentiated product: new features, new segments, bundling*



*The topics will all be covered in future DMCC sessions*



# Hammerjack hardware: prompt dissection

Small, local player. How do they compare to Home Depot?

Retailer – let's look at number of customers & \$/visit

Are there other areas they could be in?

Hammerjack is a regional chain of local hardware stores located in numerous neighborhood strip malls and shopping centers. They have enjoyed excellent performance for the past 15 years and have experienced declining profits in the past two years. They are concerned about their profitability and have hired you to explain their situation and provide recommendations to get them back on track.

Profits = revenue - costs

Task: diagnose and suggest

*Balance active listening w/ pre-planning*

# Candidates should use a hypothesis driven & M.E.C.E. approach to develop a structure

## Hypothesis Driven Approach

- Establish a hypothesis/answer/hunch first
- Follow with the steps needed to assert whether the answer is true
- If constructed correctly, proving the hypothesis wrong should be just as valuable as proving it right

## M.E.C.E.

- Mutually Exclusive, Collectively Exhaustive
- Approaches should explore disparate areas (mutually exclusive) while covering all of the options (collectively exhaustive)
- Demonstrates a thorough/systematic approach to reviewing all of the options

• *Our client should acquire company X ...*

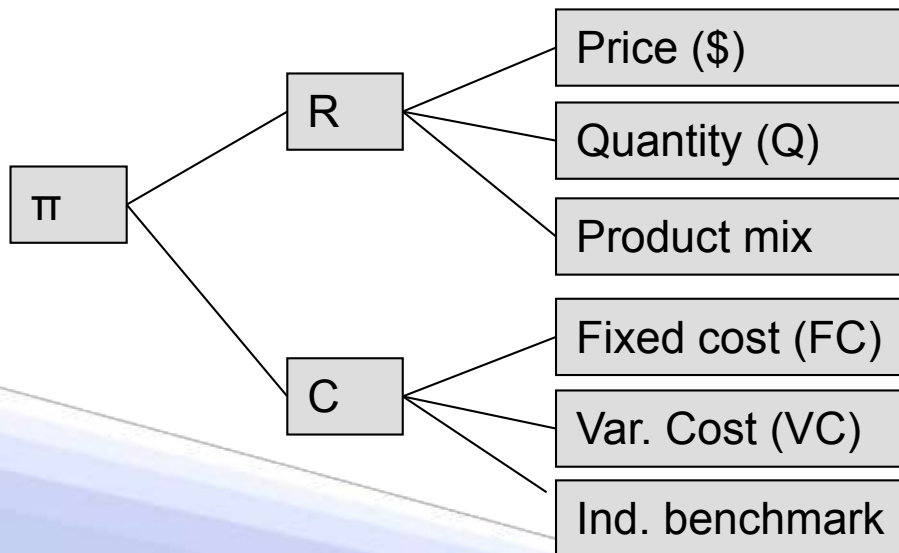
• *... because the market for X has room for growth, the competitive landscape is not set, & X has a sustainable advantage (3 Cs)*



*The best answers start with a hypothesis, and use a set of M.E.C.E. assertions to prove whether the hypothesis is true or not*

# Candidates should develop a “structure” to tackle the issue

## Tree based



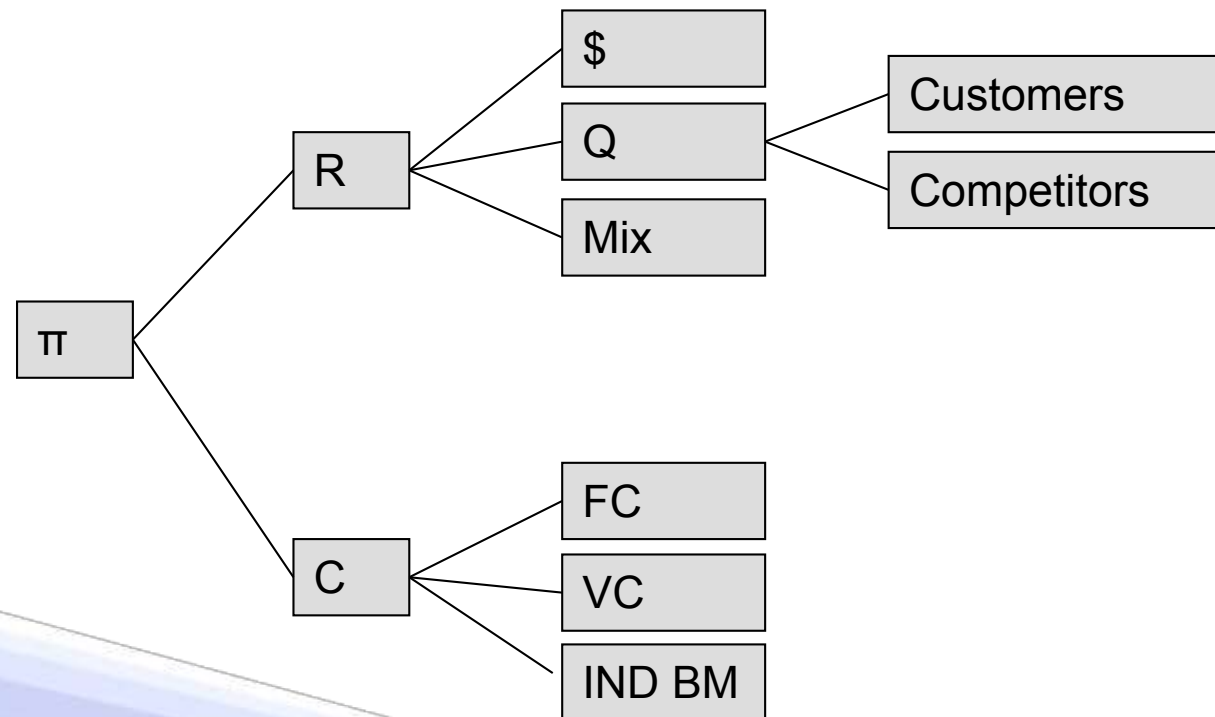
## Descriptive

1. Cost – look at main FC & VC cost drivers
2. Revenue – examine pricing, sales levels, and product mix
3. New opportunities – acquisitions or JVs



*Take the time to read some case books to find out what works for you*

# Hammerjack example, cont.



*I'd like to examine Hammerjack's revenue and cost structure. While examining revenue I'd especially like to examine how our different types of customers and our competitors effect the total number of goods we're selling. When examining cost I'll be sure to look our fixed and variable costs and see if we have any information on the cost structure of similar companies.*

# Candidates should use a hypothesis driven & M.E.C.E. approach to develop a structure

3

## Case Analysis

- Try to drive the analysis, but look for cues from the interviewer
- Use your framework!
- Use tables / graphs / diagrams to display complicated information

4

## Summary / Recommendation

- Distill your summary/recs to a few sentences highlighting the most important findings
- Have a definite answer, don't hedge
- Refer to numbers/findings from the analysis
- If time permits, suggest a few areas for further exploration/review after you have given your recommendations

## Conclusion:

*Hammerjack's is losing revenue because the maintenance segment is going to big box retailers; however, we still have a loyal contractor segment because they only shop once a year*

## Recommendation:

*I recommend that we offer training to improve our employees understanding of the local communities and work to align our products to our loyal contractor segment's needs*

# Beware of common behavioral and case interview pitfalls

## Behavioral interview

- Not being prepared because of too much case focus
- Being vague/not specifying the impact
- Not discussing skills that support candidacy (i.e. core consulting competencies)
- Not having a good answer for “why consulting” & “what would you do if you couldn’t do consulting”

## Case interview

- Not having a clear plan/structure (Probing for information without reason)
- Drilling too deep into unimportant information
- Not picking up on interviewer cues
- Getting lost in the numbers
- Being too rigid/structured/mechanical (i.e. not demonstrating that you can think on the spot)