

Interview Questions by Industry

Following are a sampling of questions by industry, logic questions, and case interview questions to assist you in preparing for industry specific interviews. Obviously, we don't know what you will be asked so treat this as a **guide only**, in your preparation. Check with Portfolio for suggestions as to where you may find other sources of these types of questions.

Accounting

- What is the most complex function you've used in Excel?
- What is your favorite Excel formula to use and why?
- What steps do you take to solve a problem?

Finance

- If you have a 70 percent free throw average, what's the probability that you'll make three free throws in a row?
 - Though it sounds a bit complicated, all you'll need to know is how to multiply 0.70 by 0.70 by 0.70. Or, easier yet, 70 by 70 by 70. Or, even easier, 7 by 7 by 7 which equals 343. Then, place the decimal point three places to the left and you have 0.343, which means: 34.3 percent.
- If you owned the only tire company in America, what would your production capacity need to be to meet demand?
 - This is more or less a classic guesstimate question, which tests your ability to figure out the size of a market by talking through your reasoning aloud. That is, your interviewer isn't looking for an exact answer, but wants to know how you *think* about estimating the size of a market/coming to an answer. So, in this case, you might want to first estimate how many new cars and trucks are manufactured each year (which all require new tires). Then maybe estimate how long tires last (the life span of a tire/when each tire needs to be replaced). And then perhaps estimate how often tire flats/accidents occur (which necessitate buying new tires), etc.

Banking

- Without having a company's financial statements, what is something you should know in order to evaluate whether or not they should receive a loan?

Marketing

- Name a product that you think is marketed well and why?
- Name a product that you think is marketed poorly and why?
- What are the main strengths of our company's brand?
- Name a time when you had to market a product that a customer initially did not want.

Sales

- Sell me something in this room.
- When selling a product or delivering customer service, what is your technique?

Business Analytics/Marketing Research

- Describe research methodology you have experience with.
- When a clock reads 3:15, how many degrees has the hour hand moved? (JPMorganChase)
 - At 3:15, the clock's minute hand will be pointing at 15 minutes, exactly 90 degrees clockwise from vertical. At 3:15, the clock's hour hand will exactly one quarter of the distance between 3 O'clock and 4 O'clock. Each of the 12 hours on the clock represents 30 degrees (360 degrees divided by the 12 hours on the clock). Consequently, one quarter of an hour is exactly 7.5 degrees. So there is a difference of **7.5 degrees** between the hour hand and minute hand at 3:15.
- Any Excel Questions (see above accounting section)

Management

- Is the customer always right?
- How would you go about formulating a strategic plan?
- How would you develop an under-performing employee?
- What makes a good leader? What is your leadership style?

Project Management

- In order of priority what are most important aspects- people, processes, and communications.
- How do you deal with various personality types?
- What do you look for in a manager/supervisor?

Logic Questions

1. **There are 23 rugby teams playing in a tournament. What is the least number of games that must be played to find a tournament winner?**

In a tournament, every rugby team except the winner is eliminated from the tournament after being defeated just once. Hence, the number of games required to find a tournament winner is going to be one less than the number of teams or 22 in this case.

2. **Why are manhole covers always round, instead of square?**

A square manhole cover can be dropped down the hole if turned diagonally to the hole, where round covers can't be dropped down manholes.

3. **There are three boxes, one contains only apples, one contains only oranges, and one contains both apples and oranges. The boxes have been incorrectly labeled such that no label identifies the actual contents of the box it labels. Opening just one box, and without looking in the box, you take out one piece of fruit. By looking at the fruit, how can you immediately label all of the boxes correctly?**

Open the box that is labeled "Apples and Oranges." You know that since none of the labels are correct, the box must either contain only apples, or only oranges. Suppose that you remove an apple from that box. Therefore, that box must be the "Apples Only" box. One of the two remaining boxes must be the "Oranges Only" box. However, one is labeled "Apples Only," and the other is labeled "Oranges Only." Therefore, the one labeled "Apples Only" is the box that contains only oranges, and the box labeled "Oranges Only" is the box that contains both kinds of fruit.

Mastering Case Interview Questions

According to Marc P. Cosentino, author of casequestions.com & the book *Case In Point*, the following commandments should be followed when answering a case interview question.

1. Listen to the Question

Listening is the most important skill. The case isn't about you; it's about the company or client. What are they really asking for? Pay particular attention to the last sentence one word can change the entire case.

2. Take Notes

Taking notes during the case interview allows you to check back with the facts of the case. As someone once said, "The palest ink is stronger than the best memory." If you blank out, all the information is right in front of you.

3. Summarize the Question

After you are given the question, take a moment to summarize the highlights out loud:

It shows the interviewer that you listened

It allows you to hear the information again

It keeps you from answering the wrong question

It fills the otherwise awkward pause when you're trying to think of something intelligent to say

4. Verify the Objective(s)

Professionals always ask the supervisor or client to verify their objective(s). Even if the objectives seem obvious, there could be an additional underlying objective. When the objective seems apparent, phrase the questions differently: "One objective is to increase sales. Are there any other objectives I should know about?"

5. Ask Clarifying Questions

You ask questions for three main reasons:

To get additional information that will help you identify and label the question

To demonstrate to the interviewer that you are not shy about asking probing questions under difficult circumstances.

To turn the question into a conversation. Nothing turns an interviewer off quicker than a five-minute monologue.

6. Organize Your Answer

Identify and label your case, then lay out your structure. This is the hardest part of a case and the most crucial. It drives your case and is often the major reason behind whether you get called back.

7. Hold that Thought for "One Alligator"

The interviewer wants you to think out loud, but think before you speak. If you make a statement that is way off-base in an interview, the interviewer will wonder if he can trust you in front of a client.

8. Manage Your Time

Your answer should be as linear as possible. Don't get bogged down in the details. Answer from a macro level and move the answer forward. Stay focused on the original question.

9. By the Numbers

If possible, try to work numbers into your answer. Demonstrate that you think quantitatively and that you are comfortable with numbers.

10. Be Coachable

Listen to the interviewer's feedback. Is she trying to guide you back on track? Pay attention to her body language. Are you boring her or is she enthralled?

11. Be Creative and Brainstorm

Employers like candidates with intellectual curiosity who can "think outside the box" and offer up a new and interesting perspective.

12. Exude Enthusiasm and a Positive Attitude

Recruiters want people who are excited by problem solving and can carry that enthusiasm throughout the entire interview.

13. Bring Closure and Summarize

Create a sense of closure by summarizing the case. Review your findings, restate your suggestions, and make recommendations.

Case Interview Questions

Remember, there is usually no single correct answer to standard case interview questions. As long as you're able to prove your case, using sound analysis and by demonstrating an understanding the main case issues, you're likely to do well. Below are some common standard case interview questions that provide great practice for case interviews.

1. Company X sells hardware, software and services. Over a 5 year period they have declining revenues and flat gross profit. What would you recommend they consider to fix the problem?
2. What would be your approach for introducing a product into a foreign market? What are the risks and benefits to consider i.e. producing in your own country vs producing in the new country, etc.?
3. Company ABC is struggling, should it be restructured? Identify the three main problems it's facing. What is the most important problem the company is facing? How would you recommend the company address this problem? How would you turn this company around? Provide your reasoning for your recommendation(s).
4. A toy company has been experiencing decline sales for the last two seasons. Research suggests that introducing several new product lines is the solution. Develop a marketing strategy for the company's largest product line, including pricing, product packing, etc.
5. A large chain of retail clothing stores is struggling with profitability. Based on your review of the company's financial statements, what problems can you identify? Can this company be turned around? How would you go about deciding?
6. You are working directly with a company's management team. It is organizing a project designed to significantly increase revenue. If you were provided with data and asked to supervise the project, what steps would you take to ensure it's successful?