

# Interview Preparation Workshop

*McKinsey & Company*

February 18, 2003

# AGENDA

**Introductions & overview**

**10 minutes**

Structured case

15 minutes

Personal experience interview

15 minutes

Q&A

15 minutes

# WHAT MCKINSEY DOES DRIVES WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN CANDIDATES

## How McKinsey serves clients

- Help clients develop strategies and make decisions in challenging situations
- Work with client management to overcome obstacles and achieve outstanding results
- Bring the best expertise to our clients through effective teamwork, including experts from around the world

## What McKinsey looks for in our people

- Ability to **solve** tough **problems**
- Ability to **set and achieve** challenging goals
- Ability to **impact outcomes** and **influence others**
- Ability to **build long-term relationships** with clients and colleagues

# McKINSEY ASSESSES CANDIDATES' ABILITY AND POTENTIAL IN FOUR BROAD AREAS

## *Problem-solving*



- Structure complex problems
- Think creatively
- Demonstrate quantitative comfort
- Reason logically
- Exercise good business judgment

## *Achieving*



- Set high aspirations
- Achieve outstanding results
- Overcome obstacles
- Demonstrate willingness to take personal risks

## *Impacting others*



- Influence others positively
- Behave with Integrity
- Have self-confidence
- Listen actively

## *Building relationships*



- Take on leadership roles
- Demonstrate presence and personal impact
- Build highly effective teams
- Seize opportunities

# TWO TECHNIQUES ARE USED IN ASSESSING CANDIDATES IN THE FIRST ROUND OF INTERVIEWS

Today's focus

## ***Structured case***

- One-on-one verbal case
- Focus on real-time problem solving

## ***Personal experience interview***

- Background interview
- In-depth exploration of candidate's experience, focused on the individual's contributions in 1-2 situations

## ***McKinsey day 1***

- Written case based on client studies
- Longer format with last ½ hour an interactive discussion with a McKinsey interviewer
- Simulates the first day of a study

## ***Team meeting***

- Cooperative exercise in which a group of candidates discuss a specific topic and come to consensus
- Candidates are evaluated individually
- Does not require business knowledge

# THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS WILL INVOLVE TWO ROUNDS



**Format**

3 x 45 minute interviews

All-day event

**Assessment techniques**

- Structured cases
- Personal experience interviews

- Several structured cases
- Personal experience interview
- Potentially:
  - McKinsey Day 1
  - Team meeting
  - Role plays

**Purpose**

- Tests all four capability clusters

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# WHAT IS A 'STRUCTURED CASE INTERVIEW'?

## *What is a case interview?*

- A problem to be solved in the context of a real-world business situation
- Using logical reasoning and creativity, candidates are asked to arrive at a reasonable solution

## *Why give a case?*

- To evaluate the way you deconstruct a problem and communicate with others
- To observe real-time “thinking on your feet”
- To gain insight into how you handle ambiguity
- To assess your comfort with numbers

# WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR IN CASE ANSWERS?

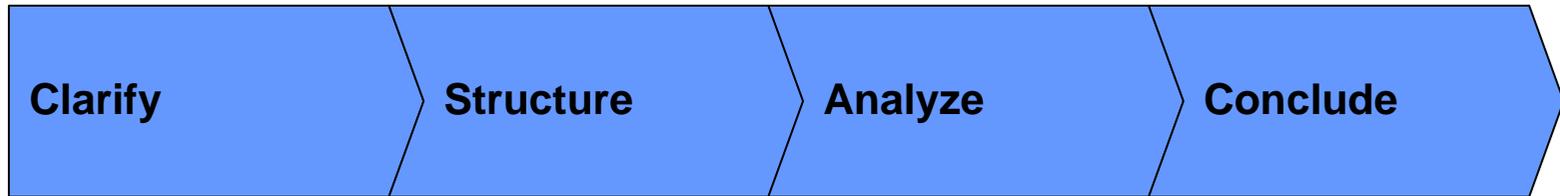
## Ability to think through problems

- Ability to ask *good questions*
- Ability to *structure* unclear *problems*
- Clear, *logical reasoning*
- Curious, *probing mind*
- *Creativity* in generating options
- Basic *numerical agility*/comfort with numbers
- Practical *business sense*, common sense
- Ability to *synthesize*
- Ability to see the *big picture*

## Ability to build working relationships

- Effective *communicator*
- Self-*confidence*
- *Open mind*

# A GOOD APPROACH TO CASE INTERVIEWS INVOLVES FOUR STEPS



Ensure complete understanding of the question/problem

- Listen closely to problem definition
- Ask questions to improve understanding
- Paraphrase to confirm problem statement
- Some information may be less important

Develop a plan to solve the problem

- Describe your overall approach
- Break the problem into discrete pieces/issues
- State crisp hypotheses
- Use framework only if appropriate

Request information and test hypothesis

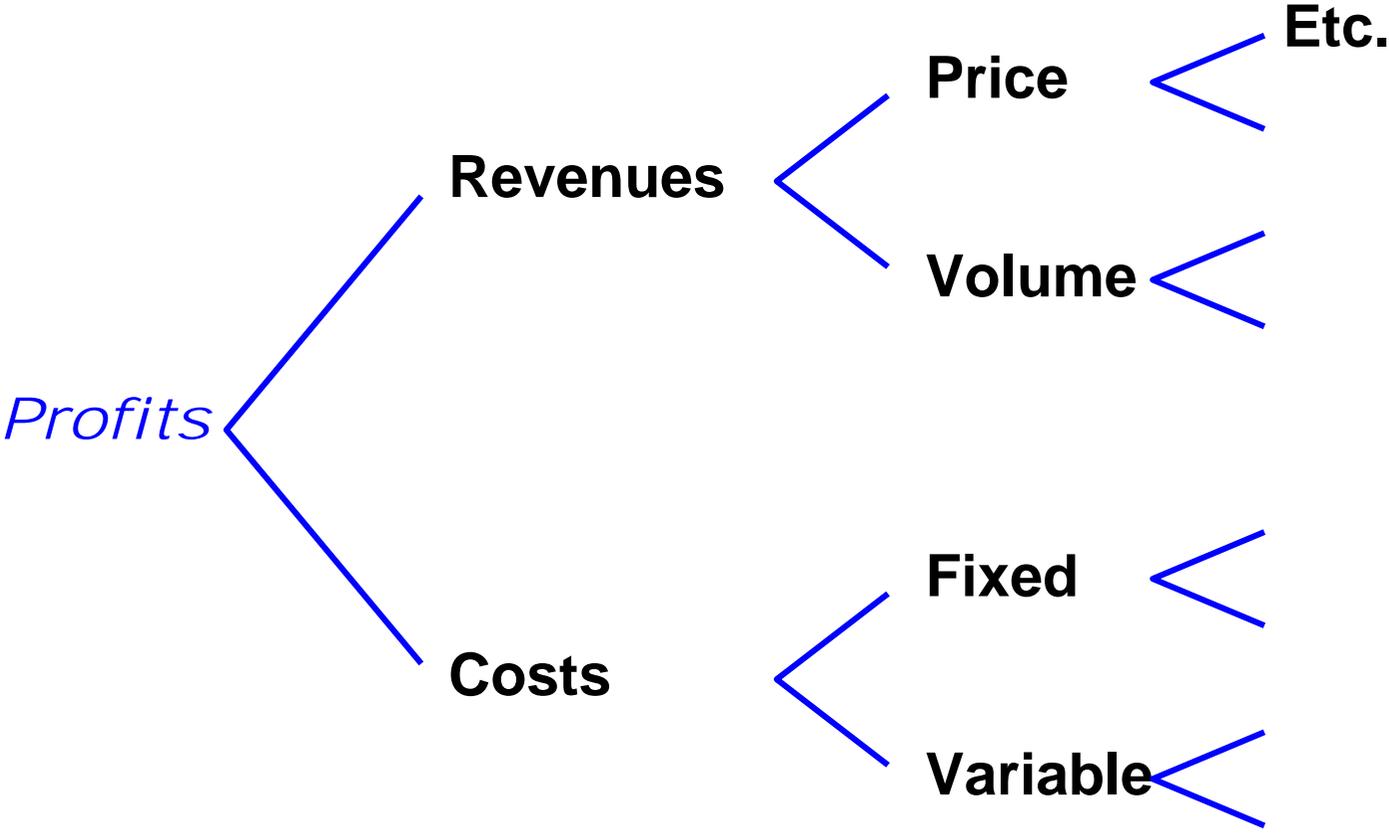
- Walk the interviewer through your thinking
- Prioritize issues
- State your hypothesis
- Ask for a few relevant facts
- State findings for your analysis
- Refine your hypothesis
- Probe further if necessary

Synthesis findings

- Summarize the discussion
- Develop overall recommendations
- Discuss trade-offs
- Relate back to problem statement
- Suggest next steps

- 
- Relax!
  - Think – don't rush to a formulaic answer
  - Prioritize – pick out the key points

# EXAMPLE- STRUCTURING A “PROFIT” QUESTION



# OTHER EXAMPLE ISSUES TO THINK ABOUT IN UPFRONT STRUCTURE

## *Customers*

- What segments exist?
- How do they make purchase decisions?
- What specific product or service features/benefits do they look for?

## *Competition*

- What substitutes exist?
- What is the level of competitive intensity in the industry?
- How do competitors differentiate themselves?

## *Cost*

- What are costs compared to competitors?
- How do they vary with volume?
- What are they likely to be over time?

# **THERE ARE SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN PREPARING FOR YOUR STRUCTURED CASE INTERVIEWS**

- **Practice several cases to get comfortable with the format**
- **Relax!**
- **Listen (take notes if you wish)**
- **Organize your thoughts, structure your ideas**
- **Explain your thought process**
- **Work from hypotheses (guess a little; be creative)**
- **Gather and analyze key facts – don't be afraid of the numbers**
- **Be flexible with your approach if the interviewer wants to explore other areas**
- **Push for a conclusion**
- **Don't let yourself get frustrated**

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# WHAT IS A MCKINSEY 'PERSONAL EXPERIENCE INTERVIEW'?

*During the 'Personal Experience Interview' you will be asked to describe examples from your past that illustrate your skills in one or more of the following broad areas:*

- *Leadership*
- *Impact on others*
- *Achieving*



The key to a successful PEI interview is to describe **in detail** what **you** did

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THE PEI?

*During the ‘Personal Experience Interview’ you will be asked to describe examples from your past that illustrate your skills in one or more of the following broad areas:*

## ***Leadership***

- Ability to provide leadership and direction to others
- Does not necessarily mean you were the “official” leader



- **Good Example:** You were a team member that was able to guide the group to overcome significant challenges
- **Bad Example:** You were elected into a position but never faced any obstacles

## ***Impact on others***

- Having an impact on others through influencing them



- **Good Example:** It was a challenge to successfully influence one or more people to adopt a particular agenda
- **Bad Example:** People already essentially agreed with your point of view

## ***Achieving***

- Set and achieve a challenging goal



- **Good Example:** You both set and achieved a challenging goal
- **Bad Example:** You achieved a goal set by others or set and achieved a goal that was an expected part of your job

# THERE ARE SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN PREPARING FOR YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE INTERVIEWS

- Prepare, prepare, prepare (have more than one experience that you could talk about for each of the three attributes)...
- ...but avoid reciting “canned” examples (answer the specific question asked)
- Focus on what you did, not what your team as a whole did
- Speak in the first person
- Provide some structure for your answer
- Be thoughtful and self-reflective
- Be prepared for the interviewer to interrupt and redirect you through your story

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