How To Land A MANAGEMENT CONSULTING JOB
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*Edition: 3.0*

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Introduction

Congratulations on your download of this guide and your interest in a management consulting career!

The work of a management consultant is both noble and rewarding. It is noble because the ultimate goal of the firm is to bring positive impact to corporations, private equity funds, government agencies, and NGOs through advisory services. These organizations often face challenges that they are unable to solve themselves due to lack of resources, lack of competence, or simply because they need an external perspective.

On the other hand, working as a management consultant is also highly rewarding. Aside from being paid very well, the job offers intellectual challenge, a high level of satisfaction, prestige, honor, and endless opportunities for learning. The learning curve will be steep. Though not everybody will make it to the partner level, a few years with a consulting firm is an excellent investment regardless of your plans.

This Guide Will Get You Started

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with an overview of the application process and help you prepare for all phases. You will get actionable advice and we will guide you to further resources and help you dive deeply into areas you need to develop.

Getting a management consulting job will probably be one of the most challenging things you will do in your career. You need to invest time and prepare yourself. Do not make the mistake of neglecting the importance of preparation!

Good luck with getting your dream job in management consulting, from the team behind ConsultingFact.com!
What Management Consultants Do

Management consultants analyze business dilemmas and generate the most practical and effective solutions for their clients.

The fundamental role of a management consultant focuses on providing strategic, substantial, and pragmatic advisory services to private and public businesses and organizations. Consultants utilize their deep industry knowledge, valuable experience, and analytical skills to address their clients’ challenges.

Duties and Responsibilities

The main goal of a consultant is to produce positive change within an organization. In order to do this, consultants work on the assigned project for a period ranging from a couple of weeks to many months; the length depends on the complexity of the issue. Day-to-day duties include the following:

- Defining the problem through management consultations, team meetings, analysis, and other applicable strategies.
- Breaking the problem into small, manageable segments; identifying the factors that affect the problem; deciding how to approach the project.
- Conducting objective research on current market trends, the client’s competitors, product demands, best practices, and other related topics to support critical analysis.
- Checking and analyzing information, such as financial data, salary structure, expenditures, business flows, sales statistics, and other relevant data.
• Summarizing all gathered data and facts; deducing logical conclusions based on valid arguments.
• Attending regular meetings and reporting project progress to management.
• Brainstorming, finalizing, and presenting recommendations for solutions to the business dilemma.
• Developing strategic programs, communication plans, and other attainable change management approaches to implement desired transformations in the organization.

At all times, consultants must maintain and promote the image of their consulting firm through quality output, excellent social interaction with employees, punctuality, and overall professionalism.

Project Team

Usually, a working team of 4-6 consultants is assigned to a project. The team typically consists of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>No. of Staff</th>
<th>Duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Builds the relationship with the client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Expert in a particular domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Handles several projects at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Manager or Engagement Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Has intensive knowledge and experience of a particular domain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Oversees the everyday duties of the other team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Facilitates regular meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Coaches and counsels the other team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Works full-time on the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants or Senior Consultants</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>• Has gained substantial experience in a specific industry or functional skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsible for most client leadership and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Works full-time on the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Consultants, Associates, or Analysts</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>• Rather new to the management consulting industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides support to the consultants and team manager through data collection, analysis, and making presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Works full-time on the project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the team to produce exceptional results, members collaborate and update each other on what they are working on. As a team, they decide how to approach the problem effectively
and efficiently. Every piece of information discovered is analyzed to determine how it affects the team’s plans and goals.

Schedule and Travels

Management consultants work long hours—anywhere between 50 and 80 hours is normal. The complexity of their duties demands a great deal of time, and they struggle with the never-ending issue of maintaining a work-life balance. Exceeding the nine-to-five corporate schedule, consultants work overtime for their deliverables. When they get home (and it might be late), they allot another hour or two for checking and responding to emails in order to lessen their work load the following day.

Many management consultants work in their client’s offices to obtain firsthand information, get a feel for the company’s culture, and convey their motivation and sincerity through their actions. In many consulting firms, consultants work off-site Monday–Thursday and work in their consulting firm office on Fridays. When the client is based in a different state or country, some consultants decide to stay in the client’s location for weeks in order to beat deadlines and avoid traveling back and forth. This can be one of the reasons why consultants complain that they have less quality time for their loved ones.

Services and Industries

Top-tier management consulting firms cater to companies across all industries. The “Big Three,” Bain, BCG, and McKinsey, have Fortune 1000 clients in the fields of transportation, consumer products, private equity, mergers and acquisitions, and technology, among others. They employ thousands of employees based in different parts of the globe.

Experts in boutique consulting firms focus on a few niches. For instance, L.E.K. concentrates on mergers and acquisitions, shareholder value, and business strategy. The Yankee Group is an example of a boutique firm in the telecommunications, media, and entertainment sectors. Boutique firm consultants can master their services easily because they encounter virtually the same challenges on every project.
Recruitment practices vary somewhat from firm to firm, but application processes, as outlined by the image below, are similar.

**Preparation**
This involves research and reconnaissance about the desired position and target firm(s). Spend enough time exploring and networking to learn more about the industry and meet key people.

**Application**
In this phase, you will work on your cover letter, resume, and LinkedIn presence. These are your marketing tools that will pave your way to testing and/or interviews.

**Tests**
Written tests provide an objective assessment of a candidate’s knowledge and skills. The testing policy differs among firms. Some take the results seriously; others do not. Some rely heavily on numerical testing while others focus more on personality testing.
Fit Interviews
A fit interview is conducted based on your job application. You will discuss your experience, skills, and motivation. The interviewer will assess whether or not you are a good fit for the organization.

Case Interviews
The case interview is conducted to determine whether you can handle the actual responsibilities of a consultant. A business dilemma will be presented during the interview, and you will be expected to resolve it in a limited period of time.

Consulting Success Factors

There are six important qualifications that most consulting firms seek in candidates

There are some differences in the ways consulting firms communicate what they look for. For example, McKinsey looks for skills in problem solving, achievement, personal impact, and leadership, while Bain judges candidates based on criteria such as the ability to add value along with client and team skills. However, there are some common important qualifications that most firms seek in candidates.

Structured Thinking
The ability to think in a clear and organized way is useful for problem solving and analysis. Math skills also fall into this category and are often used to exemplify structured thinking skills. Being able to look at a situation, identify and analyze its problematic aspects, and propose solutions in a structured way is the key to doing this job.

Business Judgment
Have the capacity for good judgment of business and strategic issues. This is important for case solving, a key management consulting discipline. A good way of practicing this skill is reading business media and trying to understand the underlying issues behind different news stories and their respective strategic choices.
Personal Impact
A consulting firm is hired to create impact, and you need to demonstrate that you can impact other people. You need to be able to communicate well, persuade others, and make people act on your recommendations.

Leadership
In consulting, there is a lot of teamwork, and you need to show that you can contribute to the team and lead your own work streams. This involves both your team and your client.

Drive and Motivation
Know what you like and go for it. People should be able to tell that you are motivated for a career filled with challenging assignments and long hours, and that you can maintain drive even when things get tough.

Written Communication
Your career in consulting is going to involve extensive amounts of writing, including presentations, documents, memos, and emails to partners and clients. You will be writing a lot, so you need to be able to do so efficiently and quickly. Your application is your first demonstration of this skill.

Start thinking about these success factors as soon as you begin your application process. Keep them in mind and consider them often when you act. If you attend any events sponsored by your target firms, try to convey these success factors during conversations with other professional consultants. Their impression and judgment of you can help—or harm.

Your Background
Apart from your skills, consulting firms will also evaluate your background, particularly in the following areas:

Education
The minimum educational requirement for this industry is an undergraduate degree, preferably in management, business administration, economics, statistics, or another business-related field. Graduates with alternative degrees can also apply, but they must exert more effort in networking, engaging in extra-curricular activities, and building consulting skills to prove their competency to potential employers. Consulting recruiters often visit prestigious schools for recruitment purposes, and, in many cases, top students are offered entry-level positions at the firm.

Applicants with an MBA degree are at a slight advantage. These two-year post-graduate programs allow them to gain additional knowledge in business, both in theory and in practice. Further, MBA programs enhance business judgment, communication skills, and other applicable abilities.
Experience
Applicants who have no experience are usually employed as analysts or associates, the lowest echelon in a consulting firm. Those with consulting work experience are usually considered for higher positions. Career changers (e.g., lawyers or engineers who want to move into consulting) are also welcome to apply. Most firms consider career changers, as long as they can prove that they have achieved great results in their previous jobs and developed skills necessary for management consulting.

Why Applicants Fail to Land a Consulting Job

Do not give recruiters a reason to reject your job application. Learn how to gracefully deal with your weaknesses in the recruitment process.

People who apply for consulting roles are usually well-qualified from the get-go, making the hiring process more challenging. There are a number of reasons you might not get an interview and by extension not be offered a position after an interview.

Ineffective Job Application
As stated, most applicants are baseline qualified. Once you reach the basic requirements, your downfall might be an ineffective presentation of yourself in your cover letter or resume or not...
using relevant information. In your experience and education background, to be qualified, you will have picked up most of the skills you need to succeed in consulting. However, not effectively communicating the skills you have picked up does not give the firm enough specific tools and information to assess you accurately.

**Poor Communication Skills**
Because structure and communication are the foundation of everything you do in consulting, everything comes down to how you communicate. You may have all the key skills, but if you cannot get this across to the recruiters, none of it makes a difference. For example, you may be a wizard at quantitative analysis and putting the pieces of a puzzle together to provide workable solutions, but this means nothing if you cannot convey your thinking process. Building on analysis is the ability to communicate your analyses to other people, whether you are communicating them to an associate and sharing findings or to the client, to persuade them to buy into your recommendation. Analytics without communication is not useful. The reverse is also true. All these skills go hand in hand, and communication binds them together.

**Insufficient Track Record**
Being conscientious and showing a track record of working hard and sticking to commitments is important. Gaps in work experience are not looked on favorably. You might be eminently qualified but not have consistently driven ahead and sought to gain new experience, which is seen as a red flag.

**Lack of Personal Presence**
Similarly, your own lack of personal presence might also derail you. After the interview phase, the firm wants to be sure that it can put the potential consultant in front of a client with confidence, knowing that he or she will come across well, no matter the audience with which the consultant is working.

As a new grad, especially, you will work with people who are undoubtedly more senior clients, and you will need to prove your skills, capabilities, and polish on the ground, often to people who are older and more experienced. You need to be able to show confidence and hold your ground. If you do not show these kinds of skills in your cover letter, resume, past experience, and interview, this will be grounds for not progressing in the hiring process.

**Low GPA**
Upfront, a low GPA or low testing scores might come into play, especially if you apply without offering any explanation for the low scores. Recruiters are looking for applicants who are well-rounded and offer “the whole package,” so any of these missing pieces could well mean that you will be automatically disqualified from consideration. However, it is possible to land a consulting job with a low GPA. You just need to be aware of your shortcomings and communicate your strengths exceptionally well.
Man is gregarious by nature; he cannot live all by himself. He needs to interact with others for his emotional and physical needs.

This is how the concept of networking started. Nowadays, networking connotes a different meaning in various settings. In computer science, it’s the act of linking two or more units in a specific area for data sharing. In business, it happens when like-minded people build relationships and act on a business together. For management consulting applicants like you, it’s one way of getting your dream job.

Establishing long-term relationships with many contacts allows you to gain perks that you may find useful in your pursuit of a management consulting career.

Recruiters receive piles of resumes for a single position. For instance, in top management consulting firms, candidates have a small probability of getting hired due to the large number of qualified applicants. However, if you get a credible recommendation from somebody in your network, you are halfway there.

Some people in your network might be job providers themselves. If they need your services or expertise, they can simply tap you for help. At times, you find a business partner in your network, too. You can plan for a venture of providing management consulting services to local companies. The possibilities are endless.
Widening Your Network

Every day is an opportunity to add more people to your network. It just depends on how you maximize your time and deal with the people you meet along the way. Below are four proven ways to improve your network for finding a consulting position.

1. Be Friendly
Sociable people tend to have a wider network because it’s in their nature to reach out and befriend others. This characteristic isn’t difficult to develop. It usually begins with the habit of smiling, followed by sincerity and kindness.

2. Join Clubs and Organizations
Being an active member of a club or organization allows you to meet more people and make meaningful connections. As you consistently participate in a club’s activities, you get to know more about your newfound friends, including their hobbies, profession, and even their networking circles. When you start sharing your own world, they will know that you’re particularly interested in management consulting. They might be able to help you land a job in the field.

3. Stay Updated with School Events
Many consulting firms also facilitate on-campus activities to get in touch with potential applicants. Stay updated with your school’s career programs to maximize this opportunity. At these events, make it a point to dress professionally and meet consultants to talk with them. Ask them well thought-out, open-ended questions that can start a discussion. Don’t forget to tell them your name, ask for a business card, and end the conversation with a firm handshake.

4. Communicate What You Need
It’s not enough to count the number of contacts you have in your network. You should also know what they’re into, and they should at least be aware of the consulting career path you wish to pursue. This way, it is easier for them to refer you to any management consulting opportunities that are commensurate with your skills.
Maintain a Quality Network

They say that you should make new friends but keep the old, for one is silver and the other is gold. Here are three ways to do so.

1. **Build stronger relationships**
   Do not use your network as a means to an end for a management consulting position. Your contacts deserve to be treated personally and sincerely. Regardless of the job opportunities they bring in, take time to communicate with them, update whereabouts through chat, phone, or email, and enjoy their company. Have fun listening to their wonderful stories.

2. **Be grateful**
   Never forget to drop by and express gratitude for any favor they do for you. Avoid the mistake of disappearing like a bubble once you get a referral or recommendation. If you get the job, update them from time to time about how things are going. This will send them the message that you value their assistance.

3. **Treat kindness as a two-way street**
   The golden rule prevails. If you want assistance, you should extend some as well. If you hear about vacancies and opportunities that suit any of your contacts’ personalities, inform them. They will certainly appreciate the effort.
LinkedIn Guidelines

LinkedIn is a platform that allows you to connect with professionals, share work-related updates, and come across various job opportunities.

With the advent of social media, LinkedIn has become an outstanding tool for finding job opportunities and has attracted hundreds of millions of members. LinkedIn is important for you as an aspiring consultant. The recruiters might research you online and have a look at your LinkedIn profile. Follow these ideas to ensure you make a good impression:

Complete Your Profile
The first step is completing your profile. Write pertinent details related to your experience, education, skills, and other achievements. Leaving out too much information can drive the opportunities away. A recruiter will think whether you are not detailed-oriented, or whether you did not take your time to complete your profile. Both options would be bad for you.

Make Connections
Because LinkedIn has an interactive platform, you have the opportunity to reach out to people who can help you on your way to a career in management consulting. Your online reach might include friends and colleagues with advice or consulting industry experts who have real-life experience in the career field you seek to work in.

It is important to note that LinkedIn is by no means the only resource to tap, but if you do not know a lot of people in consulting, you can definitely explore this networking site to find out who you can talk to and discover facts that are relevant to the firm to which you want to apply. This kind of information is often very hard to come by without knowing someone who has worked at your target firm, and LinkedIn helps give you an “in.” You should take the time to reflect on your skills and whether a firm, or consulting overall, is right for you—there is no better way to do this than to get your feet on the ground and talk to people who work in the industry. Frequently, these online connections are the way to do it.

Consulting firm websites offer a lot of information about consulting firms and what they look for, but, in essence, what they look for boils down to the same things. Thus, it is very hard to
see the many nuances of each company and its cultural differences. It is very hard to find the facts until you speak to someone who works at the firm, someone who walked in those shoes and can tell you the pros and cons of the company without trying to sell you on it. LinkedIn can facilitate this kind of dialogue.

Nurture Your Network
All your contacts are potential sources of management consulting opportunities; hence, you should try to nurture your ties with them as much as you can. This isn’t a difficult task at all. It’s basically like maintaining your account on other social media websites. The only difference here is that you can’t be too casual. LinkedIn is where you establish your online brand, so practice professionalism by doing the following:

• Commenting on posts substantially.
• Sharing articles on business topics or personal development.
• Introducing contacts to someone in your network, if requested.
• Contributing relevant answers to questions posed about your expertise.
• Giving testimonials or endorsements of the performance and capabilities of your contacts.

Join Groups Actively
Participating actively in groups on LinkedIn provides you a few benefits as well. First, it gives you an avenue to share your opinion, which is an excellent way of manifesting your depth and competence. The more you share, the more people will have confidence in you. Second, you can also send InMails to other club members for free, and this becomes more favorable if there are recruiters in the group. Third, you learn from others, and you can make use of their insights to improve your knowledge and skills in the industry.
Be Recommended

A recommendation is a testimonial to your previous performance in the workplace. For recruiters, reading a testimonial can aid their hiring decision because it tells them something about your past behavior. For them, past performance predicts future performance, so your accomplishments are taken into serious consideration. If you don’t have a testimonial yet, approach contacts who can genuinely describe your capabilities. They’d be glad to help you in this very simple way. If you have spare time, give a recommendation to some of your contacts, too.

Follow Your Target Firm
Most consulting firms have a LinkedIn page. This is good because if you follow them, you’ll get consistent updates on their vacancies, goals, and activities. Reading this substantial information is necessary because it guides you in crafting your resume and cover letter. If you are called for an interview, your knowledge about the firm will help you answer questions in a manner relevant to the interviewer. Moreover, by following a firm, you are able to identify whether somebody in your network has worked for or is working for them. If there is such a person, you can ask him or her to introduce you to a recruiter or give you effective application tips.

Consider In-person Networking
LinkedIn is a great resource, but having so much information at your fingertips is not a substitute for meeting people in person. This is particularly true in the consulting industry, where your presence and “face time” are going to be a big part of what you do in client relations and teamwork; the ability to make real-life, face-to-face connections is invaluable. Likewise, making those connections in person really makes you memorable.
Go out of your way to meet. Hands-on experience provides the best information you can get. For example, when having a meeting in the firm’s offices, you can tell a lot about their culture by walking through the offices and meeting the people who work there. One place has a more open layout, people are lively and talkative. Another office is closed, quiet. Every place has a different culture and feels very different. Online networking is a great foot in the door, but there are no substitutes for real life.

Consulting Job Academy will teach how to map your network and tap contacts who can help you land a job in the consulting industry.

[Check out what this online course is all about.](#)
Application

While each reviewer has his or her own review style, most recruiters tend to look at your resume for less than a minute. If they do not find what they are looking for, they may never read your cover letter at all. It is very important to make sure they see your key information and skills at a glance. Likewise, and as simple as this may sound, be sure your formatting is professional. Give recruiters no reason to throw your resume in the garbage right away.

Your application package, regardless of your connections, networks, and references at your target firm, speaks for you. It needs to be as close to perfect as you can get it. To reach this level of perfection, make your skills (those related to consulting) absolutely clear.

Your application should reflect what the consulting firm is looking for (and how you fit that ideal), not your personal skills and hobbies. It may be difficult to exclude things from your history that you are particularly proud of, but the application process, being as important as it is, demands that you set your ego aside. The application gives you limited space, so use it wisely and focus on your accomplishments and achievements that are directly related to the skills the firm is seeking.

At the same time, being yourself is important and can set you apart. Uniqueness comes from the individual, and it can be demonstrated by reflecting your personality and voice in your cover letter and resume. In a field of highly qualified people with extremely impressive backgrounds, your written voice may be one of the most powerful tools you have to reach out to recruiters.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to tend toward being comprehensive rather than relevant.
Recent Graduates and Internship Applicants
Recent graduates and internship applicants have a bit of a mixed blessing when they apply to consulting firms. The application process is about the same as for any aspiring consultant, but you can emphasize educational and extracurricular accomplishments in your application. In some ways, this makes you stand out more easily among the other applicants. On the other hand, because you lack professional experience to distinguish you, you may be at a disadvantage. Learning how to put together a balanced application can get your foot in the door.

Experienced Professionals
Experienced professionals have been there before and have landed a job (or jobs) after graduation. That said, there is plenty you can learn about harnessing all your skills and experience into a streamlined and targeted application. You will most likely follow the same process you used for your previous positions. Highlight what makes you stand out most of all.

Cover Letter Guidelines

A cover letter opens your door to the management consulting industry. Make sure it merits the attention of recruiters.

A cover letter is a vital marketing tool that summarizes your suitability for a vacant position. It presents your unique selling proposition, voice, and competencies to the firm to which you are applying. Below are some tips you should remember to be one step ahead of the competition.
Use Structure
Use the structure below to organize the information in your cover letter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of Cover Letter</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Details</td>
<td>Include your address, phone number, email address, and the date. This way, the hiring manager can contact you even without referring to your resume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting Firm’s Contact Information</td>
<td>Include the addressee, his or her position title, and the name and address of the firm. When possible, use the full name of the addressee (not just “Dear HR Director”) to convey your interest and sincerity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and Salutation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Paragraph</td>
<td>Explain why you are writing, how you learned about the vacancy, or how an existing employee has encouraged you to give consulting a try.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Paragraphs</td>
<td>Summarize your relevant qualifications, such as number of years in a specific field, an MBA degree from a top-tier university, and vital accomplishments. Among your previous jobs, choose one that is closely related to the qualities mentioned above. Elaborate on it in two or three sentences and then explain how your experience will help you carry out the responsibilities of a strategy consultant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paragraph</td>
<td>Thank the recruiter for reading your cover letter. State that you will get back to them in a week or two or that you wish to be scheduled for an interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary Closing and Signature</td>
<td>Use “Sincerely,” “Respectfully,” or any other formal, complimentary closing. Do not forget to attach your written signature to boost your integrity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mention a Consultant’s Name
Applicants who have networked have an edge over the competition. If you have interacted with a consultant at a school or social event, mention that person in the letter and how the encounter inspired you to pursue a job with the firm. This unique and interesting experience tells the screening committee that you’ve taken your research one step further.
Other Cover Letter Information
Your cover letter should also explain potential issues recruiters may detect from your resume. For instance, if there is a major gap in your work history, explain your activities while you were unemployed. Did you leave your previous employer because you wanted to pursue a graduate degree or because your spouse was relocated to a different city?

This is also applicable to those who want to make a career change into a management consulting career. Elaborate on the reasons that influenced such a major decision and include the soft skills you possess that will enable you to carry out all consulting responsibilities.

Resume Guidelines

**Summarize your education, experience, and other qualifications in a way that convinces recruiters you deserve to fill the vacant consulting position.**

Your one- or two-page resume should summarize your education, experience, skills, and other qualifications relevant to management consulting. If the content is too superficial or commonplace, this can suggest that you won’t be able to make a valuable contribution to the consulting firm. You should craft it with quality, value, and uniqueness to convince recruiters to schedule you for a further assessment.

A consulting resume has about five parts:

**Contact Information**
This section is comprised of your full name, home and email addresses, contact numbers, and a link to your online portfolio. Your name should be written in a larger font than the rest of the text in order for the recruiters to easily remember you. Double check your contact numbers to ensure accuracy. This may seem like an unnecessary reminder, but some applicants are rejected because the applicant cannot be contacted.
Objective or Summary
It is advised that recent graduates write a career objective and experienced applicants summarize their expertise in a few lines. The objective of a strategy consultant resume should contain your specific professional goals. It should avoid statements that are too general because this reflects a lack of direction. A summary should state your professional experience, key competencies, and other relevant qualifications.

Education
This section should immediately follow the objective if you recently graduated from a college or university. Enumerate the courses you’ve taken that can serve as your foundation for the strategy consulting position. Also include a list of achievements, awards, extra-curricular activities, and your GPA, if impressive. If you have previously worked for several companies, this section need not be elaborated on, as your professional experience is more important.

Experience
This section should include a short description of your previous job and a few bullet points highlighting your quantitative achievements, such as, “Created and implemented new sales strategies that increased annual revenue by 12%.” The number of accomplishments you have conveys how you concretely contributed to your previous company.

Other Qualifications
You may allocate a section for other details that are relevant to strategy consulting. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Professional affiliations (e.g., Vice President, International Association of Facilitators—Florida Chapter)
- Personal interests (e.g., songwriting, marathon running, reading)
- Community involvement (e.g., Facilitator, Special Needs Camp)

Consulting Job Academy offers a detailed module for writing an effective cover letter and resume. Register for our online consulting course now, and get access to effective and practical tips that will help you land a job in the consulting industry.
Common Job Application Mistakes

Much has been said about the common mistakes many applicants make. The challenge is not to repeat them in your own cover letter and resume.

Review the typical mistakes below to ensure you don’t make them yourself.

Recent Graduates
With less experience, recent grad and intern applicants are more likely to blow up their resume and put too much detail into describing experiences that do not warrant it; this is not necessary. It can even be an application killer. Be concise and targeted. Be sincere. Do not go overboard.

In putting together their resumes and cover letters, people often forget smaller, less significant jobs, like the waiting tables example above, thinking they have no value for these applications. But listing these smaller jobs shows that you did it, that you put in very hard work and learned a lot of new skills. You can draw comparisons and show learning from these things. While consulting and waiting tables both involve stress and communication, you might be able to do one and not the other, but the skills gained are nevertheless the same.

Drawing meaning from your experiences and how you communicate that meaning says a lot. You can draw meaning and relevance from almost any experience; younger people often overlook this, but it can be applied effectively to your resume and cover letter.

Experienced Applicants
Experienced applicants can fall into the same traps as inexperienced ones. With an abundance of experience and achievements to draw on, the temptation to overdo it on the details and not listen to the keen internal editor who wants to keep things sharp and targeted is very strong.

One big mistake many applicants at all experience levels perpetrate is having a vague reason for wanting to go into consulting. Why do you actually want to work in consulting? The same concept applies to having a non-specific reason for wanting to work for that specific firm. The
recruiter needs to read your letter and believe that you want this career and to work with this firm so badly that you can feel and taste it. Don’t be vague about this desire.

On the other side of the coin, however, it is unnecessary and insulting to the reader to go too far in weaving together unrealistic stories about how you have been preparing your entire life for a consulting career, really reaching into the distant past to string together connections. These stories ring hollow. You can write genuinely and concisely; you do not need to ice the cake, so to speak.

Again, the biggest tendency to avoid is the desire to be comprehensive rather than relevant. This could be simply including too much information; it could be rehashing the resume, which is a highly ineffective use of limited space. Experienced applicants should keep this in mind for everything they include in their letters and resumes.

Proofread Your Application

Proofread your cover letter and resume to ensure that they contain no blunders that will derail your application.

After writing your application, proofread it to perfection. You may be able to think of better ways to represent yourself the second time you go over it. Never send out a resume without checking the content and form; your candidacy is at stake.

Below is a short checklist to ensure that your application is perfect:

- Does it communicate the message you want to convey?
  Ensure that it proves you will be an asset to the firm. If you miss this part, the answers to the rest of the questions are pointless.

- Is it tailored to the goals and requirements of the management consulting firm?
  It is critical that the recruiter sees that your qualities and personality match the position and the firm’s corporate culture.
Is the data accurate?
Some recruiters validate your information online. They sometimes enter your name in the search box, check your LinkedIn profiles, or call your previous supervisors to confirm what you’ve written.

Is it free of typos and grammatical mistakes?
These embarrassing blunders reflect poor communication skills and a lack of attention to detail. Don’t give the impression that you don’t possess these basic qualities that every consultant must have.

Is the text legible?
Don’t use a small font to accommodate everything on one page, but don’t make it too large either, because then it will occupy too much space. Fancy fonts are highly discouraged. Arial, Tahoma, Times New Roman, Calibri, and other conventional font styles are recommended.

Does it use the correct margins?
A proper amount of white space around the text and in between categories makes your document reader-friendly.

If possible, ask a friend or professional to proofread your application. Sometimes, a fresh set of eyes can give you objective feedback.
Pre-employment Tests

The practice of conducting tests differs among firms. Some firms place a great deal of stock in these tests; some do not. Some firms rely heavily on numerical testing while others focus more on the verbal aspect. The tests are often very similar to what you would see on the GMAT. Be aware that many firms do not allow you to use any electronic devices (e.g., calculators or computers) when performing calculations.

Below are the qualifying tests you may be required to take:

**Verbal Reasoning Test**

This test measures how well you comprehend, analyze, and interpret complicated written information. This is relevant for any management consulting position because you’ll be dealing with piles of reports, policies, research, and other printed materials. Most test questions come in the form of a text passage followed by statements that must be evaluated as “true,” “false,” or “cannot say due to insufficient information.”

Below are some tips on how to prepare for this type of test:

**Enhance Your Reading Comprehension Skills**

Read a book, newspaper, magazine, or any other type of reading material during your free time. After reading an article, page, or chapter, ask yourself what you have understood. Answering questions like “What are the main arguments of this article?”; “Who are the characters in the story, and what are their roles?”; and “What was the issue and how was it resolved?” encourages you to analyze details. Jotting down notes is preferred for better comprehension and recall.
Exposé Yourself to Different Reading Topics and Levels
Verbal reasoning tests usually start with easy questions and end with difficult ones. Further, the questions may contain different topics to cater to the differing knowledge and verbal reasoning skills of applicants. Hence, you shouldn’t limit your reading only to easy topics that are in line with your interests. Explore the behavior of ants, the possible existence of aliens, and everything in between. By doing this, you’ll also enrich your vocabulary.

Be a Quick Reader
Verbal reasoning tests for management consulting are time-limited. You are only given about a minute to understand the text and evaluate the statements. To prepare for this, practice quick reading beforehand. With a stopwatch, give yourself a few minutes to read a passage and answer the questions that follow. Repeat this activity until you’re confident enough to take the test.

Numerical Reasoning Test
This test measures your ability to interpret graphical presentation and generate logical solutions based on the digits and charts. This usually forms part of the screening process since you’ll be dealing with a large amount of numbers every day once you get hired for the position. You will encounter arithmetic questions in the test, but the bulk of the questions will focus on analysis of numerical data.

To prepare for this test, do the following:

Practice Reading Graphs and Tables
Familiarize yourself with different kinds of graphs, charts, and tables. Know when they are used and how they are usually interpreted. Read the description for each figure carefully and check the footnotes and legends as well. This ensures accuracy of assumptions and answers. Many questions are related to this because it’s one of the main responsibilities of management consultants.

Improve Your Mental Math
Sharpen your mental math to prepare your brain for dealing with quantitative data; avoid time-consuming manual calculations, and learn to spot numerical mistakes easily. You can do this by being mindful of your daily activities. For instance, when you’re grocery shopping, calculate the total price first before going to the checkout counter. Other practical exercises you can try are currency conversion, monthly budgeting, and the breaking down of daily expenses.

Reinforce Your Mathematical Concepts
Questions on addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division can be readily answered by anyone. However, for more complicated items, you need to review and master the basic rules.
Borrow some textbooks from the library and get yourself familiarized with them again. The most important skills you should practice are percentages, ratios, and fractions.

**Logical Reasoning Test**

Logical reasoning tests are also called diagrammatical, abstract reasoning, or inductive reasoning tests. These may have slight differences, but they all work along the same lines—they tell recruiters whether you are capable of thinking logically and methodically. The results of this test indicate your ability to solve complex problems and perform decision-making in complex situations. In this test, you might need to resolve visual puzzles or text-based questions with the use of logic.

Here are some ways to improve your score on this test:

**Practice Answering Logical Tests**
There are tons of free resource materials on the Internet. If you go over them, you’ll notice that websites offer exercises on different underlying rules and levels of difficulty. Most of them provide answers with clear explanations to guide you in the process. The more questions you try, the greater the likelihood of encountering familiar patterns on the actual test.

**Answer Puzzles**
Rubik’s cubes, Sudoku, jigsaw puzzles, and other types of puzzles are not intended only for leisure. They also encourage you to figure out relationships between colors and objects, which results in a sharpened mind. Furthermore, you improve your logical reasoning capabilities because your answers have to be logically deduced, not just guessed at. At times, you have to try so many options that you must think outside the box.
Draw and Visualize
Whenever you get a text-based logic question, always try to sketch out and visualize the problem as soon as possible. Let’s say you get a text puzzle with some seating arrangements around a table and you have to figure out exactly who is sitting where. If you draw a table and start to draw the different people around it, it will be much easier for you to visualize the situation and therefore solve the problem.

Solve the Problem Step by Step
Analyzing each element will simplify things for you. If you get a visual puzzle, then find a connection between each of the figures instead of getting an overall picture. If you get a text question, try to understand logical relationships sentence by sentence. In general, when you have visual puzzles, you should write down relationships, and when you have text puzzles, you should draw them.

Personality Test
This test measures whether your values, interests, and attitudes fit the company culture and job requirements. Recruiters don’t only assess applicants based on what’s explicitly written on the resume, but also make assessments based on their social interaction level, enthusiasm, and other personality indicators.

If you feel anxious about this test, you may want to try answering various other personality tests. This will familiarize you with the types of situational questions that will appear in the questionnaire.

Here are some tips for how to take this type of test:

Be Honest
If you believe you possess the skills and personality for a consulting role, your personality test results will confirm it.
A personality test loses its purpose if you try to project yourself as someone else. It is much better to stay truthful. After all, you’re not just complying with the company’s pre-employment requirements, you’re also helping them assess you for the position in a practical manner. Be proud of your personality.

**Be Consistent**

As you fill out the questionnaire, you will notice that some items seem to have similar questions. The purpose of this is to check the consistency of your answers. When you take the test, focus on being quick and choosing the first best option that comes to your mind. Avoid spending too much time analyzing the question or situation. Personality tests are normally not time-based, but if you wait for too long, you might second-guess your choices, and this can lead to inconsistent answers.

**Be Mindful**

Personality tests usually ask you to answer a long list of questions. You might get tired or bored of going through each question carefully. If you reach this state, stretch your patience a little longer and read the questions mindfully. If you answer carelessly, you’ll lose your chance of being evaluated appropriately.

If you get a chance to find out which kind of tests you will take, make the extra effort to do some exercises. There are tons of free test samples and guides on the Internet and at the bookstore. The more familiar you are with the process and the more confidence you exhibit, the less stress you will feel on the day of the examination.

Consulting Job Academy has videos that will help you prepare for written consulting tests. Links to free exercises are also provided for your convenience. Try out this practical career course now to get started.
In the fit interview, recruiters will probe your competencies and past experience to determine whether you’re the right person for the vacancy. They will base their questions on the application you sent and the requirements of the position. They will clarify gaps in your work history, assess whether your personality matches the company culture, and further evaluate how you can be of help to them.

**Personal Background**
You will be asked to share general details about your life. The most common question under this category is “Please tell me about yourself.” When you answer this question, include only those bits of information that are relevant to your application. You don’t have to mention unnecessary details, such as the awards you received in high school or your academic achievement back in elementary school. Always ask yourself, “What does the interviewer want to hear from me?”

**Education**
Especially when you are a fresh graduate, interviewers will spend a few minutes digging for information about your education. They might ask about your major to get an idea of your understanding of management operations. You will also be asked to describe your extra-curricular activities, since they indicate your commitment, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills.

**Skills and Professional Experience**
Interviewers will also go into detail about your relevant past experience. This includes how you resolved a major problem, how you maintained work-life balance despite your busy
schedule, and other queries related to the daily life of a management consultant. Answers to these behavioral questions are believed to predict your future reaction to similar situations in the workplace.

Rehearse Your Answers

Before the fit interview, make sure you’ve read your cover letter and resume many times. Identify what the recruiters might ask from you and rehearse your answers until you’re confident enough to give them at the actual meeting. It also helps if you know the frequently asked questions during fit interviews. Here are some typical questions:

1. Tell me something about yourself.
2. What was your biggest accomplishment at school or your previous job?
3. What is the most difficult decision you have made at school or in the workplace?
4. How do your friends describe you as a person?
5. What motivates you to do a good job?
6. What is your greatest strength and how will it help you do the job?
7. What was your biggest frustration in life and how did you overcome it?
8. What was the reason you left your previous job?

If you will be asked situational questions, always structure your answer by starting with the situation or task. Then briefly narrate how you acted on it and what the result was. See to it that you refer to different experiences so the interviewer will get a wider picture of your innate competencies and natural tendencies.
How to Land a Management Consulting Job

Case Interviews

The case interview is a classic in management consulting. The purpose of this interview is to test candidates’ ability to demonstrate problem-solving skills and effectively communicate and present findings. It includes real-life business scenarios that require judgment, quantitative skills, creativity, logical reasoning, and the ability to structure an analysis. These are skills that are highly useful to a management consultant. In real-life consulting, the client often puts you on the spot by asking a question that requires problem-solving skills.

The case interview format is a great way to test how a person performs under pressure, i.e., whether he or she easily gets frustrated when challenged. Management consulting firms are very diligent in their recruiting, so expect two to three interview rounds equivalent to five or six separate interviews.

Types of Cases

There are three types of case interview questions, as presented below. The interviewer may use any or all three of the available case interview types.

**Business Case**
- Real-life business problem

**Estimation Case**
- Market sizing
- Volume and weight estimation

**Brain-teasers**
- Various puzzles
- Trick questions
In a business case interview, you will be presented with a business situation on either an industry level or a firm level. A business case can cover all practice areas within a management consulting firm.

### Business Case Examples

- **Company A** produces refrigerators. The company is a private equity owned company and wants to double its revenue within 3 years. What do you recommend the company do?

- **Company B** produces wind turbines. The company is the global market leader but has recently experienced declining market shares. What do you recommend Company B’s management do?

- **Company C** produces pumps. Due to increasing global competition, the company needs to expand its manufacturing capacity. The company is in doubt about how to do this—should they expand their existing facilities or build a new plant? What do you recommend?

A business case is sometimes combined with an estimation case. An estimation case allows an interviewer to test your logical and quantitative reasoning skills. The aim of an estimation case is to estimate a quantity of some sort. This could be a market size measured in USD or a volume unit. Common to all estimation questions is the fact that the interviewee needs to use a structure to get to a reasonable answer.

### Estimation Case Examples

- **How many hairdressers are there in the USA?**

- **How many dogs live in the UK?**

- **What is the market size in USD for iPads in Japan?**

A third type of case interview is the brainteaser. Brainteasers are very seldom the sole case type in an interview. A management consulting brainteaser is hard to define, since the category includes a wide range of different questions.
Brainteaser Examples

- Imagine a 6x6x6 Rubik’s cube. How many cubes can be touched?
- Before Mt. Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world?
- A farmer has five haystacks in one field and four haystacks in another. How many haystacks would he have if he combined them all in one field?

At the last part of the interview, you’ll be given a chance to ask the interviewers some questions. This is the perfect opportunity for you to prove that you can ask relevant questions, another characteristic that a management consultant must acquire. If you get as far as this stage, make sure that every question counts. See to it that the answers will give you additional information about the firm you are applying to. Do not ask questions with answers that can be read on their job advertisement or website. Doing so will imply that you haven’t conducted intensive research about the company.

Preparation for Interview Rounds

Consultancy interview rounds can be rather demanding. It is likely that you will need to work on several different development areas to reach your potential for the interviews. Depending on your current level, we recommend 2-6 weeks of daily practice to learn to apply all necessary concepts in real interview situations. It is crucial that you prepare the four areas listed below for your interview rounds:

- Case frameworks
- Case-cracking practice
- Mental math
- Communication skills

We will go through these different areas in the following sections. The best way to practice these is to ally yourself with a friend or management consultant who can practice case interview tests with you.

Case Frameworks

Frameworks are helpful for the case interview solving process, as they allow you to quickly get an idea of how to approach a case problem. Be aware that you will often not be able to find a framework that fits the case problem exactly, so you should always try to use your common sense in combination with one or more frameworks. If you have studied business or economics, then you are probably already familiar with some of the necessary frameworks, like the ones enumerated on the next page.
• Company analysis
• Market analysis
• Strategic options
• Ventures
• Mergers and acquisitions
• Pricing
• Revenue growth
• Cost reduction

During the interview process, you need to be aware that you should not communicate that you are using a framework. The interviewer would like you to use your own problem solving skills, so it won’t help you to say something like “I will use Porter’s Five Forces to analyze this market.”

Case Practice

Practice structuring your process analysis to be able to resolve business cases logically and comprehensively.

It is actually quite easy to structure the case solving process. During our careers, we have met many bright candidates with good business sense and excellent mental math skills—but many of them did not make it through the interview process due to a lack of basic structure.

Follow these 10 steps when solving the case:

1. Take notes while the interviewer presents the case.
2. Repeat the key case question to the interviewer to ensure that you understand the objective.
3. Ask any clarifying questions.
4. Ask the interviewer for a little time to structure your thoughts.
5. Draw the case framework and think about the information you need to make a recommendation.
6. Present the framework.
7. Discuss the topics and ask for further clarifying questions for any relevant parts of the framework.
8. Present the solution and answer the case question based on the discussion.
9. Ask for the interviewer’s solution.
10. Ask for feedback.

When the interviewer presents the case, listen carefully and take any necessary notes. The interviewer will expect you to remember any information or numbers that he gives you. It will create a negative impression if you repeatedly ask for information that the interviewer has already provided.

Try to involve the interviewer as much as possible in the solving of the case. Often, you will receive helpful hints, and you can present yourself as able to receive input and being able to present clear recommendation based on the discussions. It is easy to get off-track if you insist on “running the show” entirely.

Once you have found the required information about a specific framework, you should draw it and try to remember the visual details. Visuals are usually far easier to remember than trying to remember specific word contents of a framework. Below is an example of the pricing framework.

### Price determination framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost-based pricing</th>
<th>Competitor pricing</th>
<th>Value-based pricing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current costs</td>
<td>Competitors’ prices vs. features</td>
<td>Perceived value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added profit margin</td>
<td>Price of substitutes</td>
<td>Willingness to pay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The framework above is really simple and very important. For the price determination, we could have made a framework taking up a few pages. However, you have limited time in a case interview, both to solve the case and to communicate the answer. Therefore, it is important that you ask yourself: What are the key questions I need to answer using this framework? And for pricing, the different points above are the most important ones to mention.

Once you have found and illustrated the key frameworks, you will need to memorize them. A good way to do this is to draw them all every few days. By doing this, you are forced to think about the specific content of the frameworks. This method will quickly give you results, and you should feel more confident in a case solving situation when you can “see” the framework in your mind and focus on filling in the different answers.
Mental math
During the case interview, you will need to do a good amount of mental math for market size estimation, case calculations, brain teasers, or outright math questions. For this, you will need to practice the following areas:

- Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division on paper and mentally
- Percentage arithmetic
- Fraction arithmetic
- Currency conversion
- Chart reading

Of course, the interviewer will not expect you to be able to solve complex math problems mentally, but you should be able to perform more simple calculations such as 17 x 22, 229 + 128, and 450 / 25 without using paper. In addition to this, practice your paper math skills for more complex math questions.

Practice doing mental calculations before the interview to help yourself deal with quantitative data efficiently.

Percentages and fractions are important, and you will almost certainly need them during the interview. There might be questions requiring you to estimate a growth in percentage or divide some numbers. In the latter case, knowing the decimal result of most common fractions is important. You should memorize the results of the fractions from 1/5 to 1/20. It is very likely that you will be presented with some charts during the interview, either as part of solving a case or as a very specific question about what you can read from a chart. On the next page you can see examples of some of the different types of charts that you should be able to read quickly.

There are many situations in your everyday life where you can practice math skills. The key is to get into a mindset where it feels more natural for you to work with numbers mentally. Below are some examples of real-life situations where you can practice:
• When shopping – Add the numbers in your shopping cart in your head and see if you can find the correct result
• When getting gas – Look at your gas meter and calculate what the price would have been if you had chosen another type of gas
• When travelling – Practice currency conversion

You can learn all the necessary frameworks and practices for several types of cases in our online course. Claim your spot now and start your prep anytime, anywhere, and at your own pace.

Communication Skills

Communication skills are one of the most important success factors for a management consultant. It is crucial that you show the interviewer that you are a true communicator. Your ideas must be presented in an organized manner. Try to be as eloquent as possible. Avoid using filler when you can’t think of the right word to say.

Make sure that you remember to smile no matter how the interview goes or who the interviewer is. This sets the mood and is usually contagious. Also, remember to display confidence by using slow gestures while you speak, sitting straight, and keeping good eye contact. The confidence part is really important during case interviews.

Another important factor is to dress correctly for your interviews. Recruiters often say that candidates should stand out based on their qualifications and not their wardrobe, but proper attire is doubly important in the management consulting world. As a management consultant you will be dealing with executives from high-ranking companies, so the interviewer will want to make sure that you can put forth the company image in how you act and dress. Forgetting this for the interview may mean you could forget it in a client meeting.
How to Dress for an Interview

**Skirts, Dresses, and Suits**
Pastels, print patterns, and other designs are great for the weekend when you are with friends. Keep them out of your wardrobe choices for your first management consulting interview. In fact, the standard black or charcoal suit from a mid- to upper-level menswear designer may seem like an uninspired choice, but you want to create a canvas that the firm sees as able to meet their goals. Pair it with a sedated white or light-blue shirt and a blue, yellow, or red tie.

Women will likely benefit from pant or dress suits that are conservative in cut and allow them to work without discomfort. Shoes should not look like they came from “Sex and the City,” either.

Even more important than the clothes themselves is the attention to detail in preparing them. Have your clothes professionally cleaned and pressed prior to the interview. Make sure that all footwear is polished and free of dirt. Above all, make sure that there are no rips or stains on any items you plan on wearing.

**Hygiene and Haircuts**
Nail biting, long haircuts, and poor skin quality are not necessarily signs of traits that management consultants aspire to hold. Make sure that your hair does not cover your ears or come close to touching your collar if you are male.

For grooming, focus on the things that interviewers will notice first, nails that are free from excessive nail polish for women and not bitten down to nubs for men. Males who need to shave infrequently should time it so there is neither stubble nor razor burn.

**Jewelry**
Family heirlooms and gifts from friends or relatives may have a personal meaning to you. This can also be the case for class rings and other signs of membership in a group. If the jewelry seems gaudy or ostentatious, however, you will set off warning signals. Keep the jewelry to watches for men, perhaps a ring, and simple earrings for women. Large gemstones can also be a bit overpowering in making a first impression.

With all these aspects checked off on your checklist, you can be sure that your responses to questions will be what the recruiter remembers most, not the striped shirt that belongs in a nightclub or the high heels that belong in “Sex and the City”!
Greystone Partners, a North America-based private equity firm, is considering the acquisition of Deluxe Cane, the leading manufacturer of walking canes for the elderly in the United States. Greystone Partners has engaged your team to help determine whether to proceed with the investment.

Here is the data we have.

**Case 1: Private Equity Acquisition**

**Market Situation and Attractiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KPIs for Key Market Players in the Walking Canes Industry (2011)</th>
<th>Deluxe Care</th>
<th>Competitor 1</th>
<th>Competitor 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Share (US Dollars)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Share (units)</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Margin</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Margin</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Market Share (2006)**

- Deluxe Care: 25%
- Competitor 1: 45%
- Competitor 2: 30%

**Case Questions**

1. Estimate the market size for walking canes in the United States. Is the market attractive?
2. How is the financial performance of Deluxe Cane?
3. You have just run additional competitive analyses and found that Deluxe Cane’s two largest competitors operate as part of larger organizations that sell related mobility devices. Using all the information you have collected thus far, do you believe Deluxe Cane is competitively positioned?

4. What other issues would you want to analyze before making an investment decision?

5. Should Greystone Partners invest in Deluxe Cane?

Case Solution
We will now walk you through the solutions to the five questions above. You can solve these cases in many ways, so this solution is in no way comprehensive. The process of getting to the solution is more important than the exact solution itself.

Question 1: Estimate the market size for walking canes in the United States. Is the market attractive?
First, you need to establish the structure you will use for estimating market size:

Second, you will make the estimations. You can either make your own assumptions or ask for input.

- United States population: 300 million
- Population over 70 years: 15%
- Percentage of >70-year-olds needing a cane: 40%
- Average life of cane: 5 years

Now you can make the actual calculations. The population over 70 years is 45 million, and 40% of this population needs a cane. That comes to 18 million people. Assuming that the average life of a cane is 5 years, one-fifth of this 18 million buys one cane every year. That is 3.6 million canes annually.

The second part of the question asks you to discuss whether the market is attractive. When looking at market attractiveness, remember to use the framework. According to this framework,
market performance, competition, suppliers, and customers drive market attractiveness. You don’t have any information about suppliers and customers, so you would have to make your analysis based on the remaining two drivers.

**Market performance:** you already know the size of the market, and you can see that at least Competitor 1 and Competitor 2 have solid operating margins. You should also make a comment about market growth, which is typically population-driven at about 3% per year. Aging populations will likely cause market growth to increase.

**Competition:** the competition is limited to 3 large players, each with about 1/3 of the market share. It would be hard for customers to find substitute products, and the fact that there are only 3 players indicates that the market is difficult to enter for new players. This is a good competition situation.

Based on this analysis, the market seems attractive. You would want to comment that an analysis of suppliers and customers is also necessary in order to make a sound recommendation.

**Question 2: How is the financial performance of Deluxe Cane?**
Discuss the fact that revenues are larger than the share of volume. The prices of Deluxe Cane’s canes are higher than the prices charged by the competition. Does this matter? Yes. Walking canes are largely a commodity product, and the elderly, living on fixed incomes, are price-sensitive.

You should also comment that the gross margin is significantly lower for Deluxe Cane than for its competitors. This means that Deluxe Cane has much higher production costs. Don’t be fooled by the fact that they are able to charge slightly higher prices.

The financial performance of Deluxe Cane is quite bad compared to its competitors.

**Question 3: Do you believe Deluxe Cane is competitively positioned?**
Knowing that Deluxe Cane’s competitors are a part of larger organizations selling mobility devices should worry you. Both competitors will be able to benefit from economies of scale,
and they have already priced their walking canes lower. This allows them to win market share. Deluxe Cane has lost 9 percentage points of market share in the last 5 years to these competitors. As discussed earlier, Deluxe Cane’s cost structure is high relative to its peers, and it has a significant materials procurement disadvantage.

The conclusion is that Deluxe Cane is not competitively positioned—although it is in an attractive market.

**Question 4: What other issues would you want to analyze before making an investment decision?**

This is an easy question to answer if you look at the framework for M&A. You need to analyze the target company, market performance, strategic fit, and deal economics. A private equity fund does not need to have a strategic fit (as it is not a market player), but it does need an exit strategy.

You have already discussed market performance and done some analysis of Deluxe Cane. So the two major issues left for analysis are the deal economics and exit strategy. Here are some questions you will want to analyze before making an investment decision:

- What is the likely pricing?
- Will Greystone be able to meet its return hurdles (about 20% IRR)?
- Does Greystone have related portfolio companies that might allow for procurement synergies along the lines of what the competition is able to achieve?
- Can the transaction be financed?
- What is the exit strategy?

**Question 5: Should Greystone Partners invest in Deluxe Cane?**

This should be a pretty easy conclusion to make.

No, Greystone Partners should not invest in Deluxe Cane, primarily due to a difficult competitive position. Deluxe Cane is losing share to two competitors that are lower-priced and have significant built-in cost advantages.
One of the sad realities that management consulting applicants have to face is not always getting what you dream of. It’s impossible for consulting firms to accommodate all interested candidates. Just as in a game, some will win and some will lose. That being said, it’s important for you to have options B and C, or what we call backup plans.

More often than not, management consulting firms such as McKinsey, Bain, and Boston Consulting Group receive huge numbers of applications. The competition is so high that it causes frustration for numerous applicants. There are exceptional candidates to beat, challenging tests to take, and thought-provoking consulting case study interviews to pass.

While waiting for your big break in management consulting, make use of your backup plans. Explore LinkedIn and the classified ads. Try out other jobs that fit your qualifications. There are two reasons for doing this. First, you need to make ends meet. Times are hard and you need to independently address the basic necessities of life. Second, it’s also a great way for you to build up your resume. Being hired to perform various duties and responsibilities gives you a chance to enhance your analytical, leadership, communication, and social skills in different settings. These are valuable for an aspiring consultant.

Whatever job you land in, be it investment banking, finance, marketing analysis, or business development, treat it as an opportunity to meet people and expand your network. Your colleagues can always refer you to their contacts in management consulting firms. Also, though it may not be your ultimate dream, always keep up the good work. Never take it for granted. You’ll get more recommendations from your new network if they can attest to your commitment and ability to do your job well.
If you get hired at a part-time job, there’s one thing you should be grateful for: flexibility. While you’re off-duty, you can go job hunting at job fairs, join clubs and organizations to enhance your competencies, and learn to comply with recruitment requirements. If you prefer, you can also work double time and save up for further studies to push your resume to the top of the pile. While you still own your time, make the most of it. Spend it in a way that will prepare you for your dream job.

You might not get a consulting job immediately, but regardless of what happens, you should keep focused and pursue this opportunity. Sure, you might first have to work in some other role, but you might later transfer to a consulting role in a smaller consulting firm, and then you might break into a top-tier consulting firm. Isn’t that worth your continued focus and determination?

Good luck and stay positive!

Many years of experience as well as interviews with several experts went into creating Consulting Job Academy. This online course teaches you everything you need to know to break into consulting. If you tried to obtain the same knowledge from books, coaching, and talking to consultants, you would spend many hours and hundreds of dollars.

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