Cracking the consulting interview

Select experiences
of Kearney hires

Photo by Axel Heuting
Kearney, Düsseldorf

KEARNEY

Photo by Pietro Alves Kearney, São Paulo

Foreword

If you're reading this, you're smart enough to already know what we're looking for. Insightful, yes. Inquisitive, naturally. Collaborative, of course. But we're also looking for people who think further than that, who don't accept the first thing in front of them, and who are always unapologetically themselves.

This business is fundamentally about making connections—between facts, figures, insights, strategies, tools, technologies, and above all, people. That's why for us, more than any application form or exam score, the interview process is where we place our attention. You don't have to be the loudest or walk into the room with a whiteboard, you just have to show us how you uniquely think and dare we say it, enjoy yourself.

Because we actually are collaborative rather than just stating it on our website, here's an in-depth look at our interview process to show you what's in store.

See you there.

1 Tips on how to succeed in a case interview

The interviewer's side of the story

In general, the best way to approach a case interview is to enter the interview as a consultant would enter a client's office or board room—ready to use your imagination, gather and analyze information, arrive at solid conclusions, and communicate persuasively.

Kearney consultants who have conducted case interviews offered the following tips:

Approach the case logically. Rely on what your education has taught you to do: use your logic and knowledge to identify the essence of the problem and shape a solution that will produce tangible, measurable, and lasting results.

— **Listen and clarify.** The interviewer, like a real client, will offer you an initial set of facts. Be sure you understand those facts. Also be sure you help the client clearly express the objectives his or her hypothetical company expects to accomplish as a result of your recommendations.

— **Think "top down."** As you analyze the information you receive, begin with the big picture. Understand the overriding issues, and use them to prioritize and organize issues that have lesser consequences.

— **Hypothesize.** While you listen and ask questions, begin developing alternative solutions. Continue probing until you are confident which solution offers the greatest potential for impact.

— **Frame.** Test your hypothesis with more questions, and fine-tune your solution based on the answers.

— **Communicate.** Present your solution in a way that is precise, clear, and concise. State your assumptions, and revisit them when the need arises. Be coachable, soliciting feedback and integrating it quickly. At the same time, be firm about the things you believe in. And most importantly, be yourself.

— **Know your limits.** If things aren't going well, don't try to tough it out. Acknowledge that you are stuck, seek more information, or pursue a different logical path. Remember, the simulation is designed to reflect the reality of consulting, including the fact that it can be complex and ambiguous.

Think creatively. In the consulting profession, it is not enough to be logical. You will also need to be creative.

— **Challenge conventions.** Be willing to be different. Step outside the proverbial box. Resist the temptation to rely on frameworks. Instead, engage in free association.

— **Adopt the CEO or shareholder perspective.** Remember, you are not simply solving a problem; you are solving it for someone else's benefit.

Send the right signals. The success of an engagement often rests on the strength of the working partnership that develops between the consultant and the client. The same is true during the case interview. With this in mind, approach your interview not only as an audition but also as an opportunity to build a relationship. Maintain eye contact. Engage in dialogue, not a monologue. Express your ideas in ways that speak directly to the interviewer's concerns or objectives. And be sure that your demeanor sends the right signals, demonstrating the following:

— A passion for learning

— A collaborative nature

— Good business acumen

— Confidence but not arrogance

— Poise under pressure

2 What not to do

Those are some of the "do's" that will help you during your interview. Here are some "don'ts" that will also help you:

- Do not force your solution to fit a standard framework. The only things it needs to fit are the problem, the business, and the objectives.
- Do not speak before thinking carefully.
- Do not search for a silver bullet. Complex problems rarely have simple solutions.
- Do not use buzz words. Be simple and direct.

Ana Petric, Principal

Joined: September 2012

Office: Ljubljana, Slovenia

Education: Master of Engineering (telecommunications); Doctor of Philosophy (electrical engineering), University of Zagreb, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing

Interview experience: I interviewed with Kearney and one other top-tier strategy consulting company in the region. I started the interview process with them fairly late into my Kearney interviewing process, so when I got the offer from Kearney, I simply pulled out of the remaining interviews with the competition.

At Kearney I had a standard pre-screening interview followed by a full-day second round at the office, which was made up of a test and three interviews. In my third and final round, I had a joint interview with the whole leadership team. I most enjoyed the pre-screening interview—after the official part ended, I stayed and chatted with the interviewer for another half hour about what it was like to work in Kearney.

The overall process was quite lengthy—I applied in December 2011 and finished interviewing the following May.

Case interview tip

Preparation really helps. I prepared thoroughly for my interviews and practiced a lot of cases. This helped me become familiar with all the frameworks and compensated for the fact that I had no economic background.

Personal interview tip

I think the most important thing was that I was really myself; I didn't pretend to be anything or anybody else. Be true, open, and honest: interviewers hear a lot of different answers to their questions. Listening to well-trained answers, where the candidates are simply saying what they believe the interviewer wants to hear, is not a recipe for success.

Selected personal interview questions

I usually ask people about their second-favorite thing in their CV. Most candidates have a well-prepared answer about their favorite thing, so asking about this allows you to see more easily how well they cope with unexpected situations. I also very often ask people how they prepared for the interview—if they didn't bother to prepare for the interview, they probably won't be motivated to do the job when things get tight on the project.

Case example

Summary: Does it make sense to open a taxi company in Ljubljana?

Case type: A classic combination of market sizing and cost assessment to calculate the profitability of the new company

Background: I think this was a standard case that the interviewer was giving to the candidates. Since I started recruiting, I can see the advantages of that approach—you have a good benchmark and it's easy to spot the best candidates. I actually avoid giving candidates cases that are related to their background. Seeing how someone reacts in a new situation is much more valuable than seeing how they react in a familiar environment.

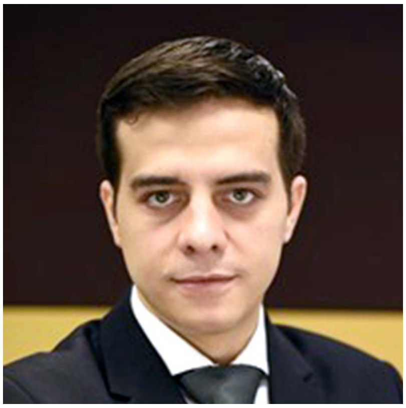
Approach: I performed a standard market sizing exercise to determine the potential revenues, then a standard cost assessment for the estimated number of cars and rides needed for profitability.

What went well: Thanks to my preparation, I knew roughly how long it would take me to do the case. This allowed me to balance how much detail to go into.

Favorite or best interview moment

I use it in interviews myself, so I don't want to give it away!

"Be true, open, and honest: interviewers hear a lot of different answers to their questions."



Silviu Ciocianu,
Manager

Joined: December 2014

Office: Bucharest, Romania

Education: Bachelor of Science (computers and IT), Oil and Gas University of Ploiești; Master of Science (project management), The Open University

Interview experience: I only interviewed with Kearney and had a very good experience—my colleagues were very kind and welcoming during the main test and the three following interviews. We got to know each other even though I wasn't an employee at the time—just a candidate.

Each interview was no more than an hour long. I really enjoyed the informal discussions with the interviewers at the end of each interview—having the chance to ask for feedback on my performance and about the culture at Kearney.

Myth busted
You're always advised to ask questions to make sure you fully understand the requirements of the case study and told that if you follow this rule, you stand a good chance of solving it.

Case interview tip
Patience was key to my success—I didn't get nervous when asked to provide solutions for a case study that was completely out of my area of expertise.

Anything funny you remember about the interview process?
I kept telling myself before each case study: how do you fit a big thing in a kitchen fridge? You need to tear it apart into small pieces until it fits.

Personal interview tip
Chit-chat during the parts where you are not solving a case! It works in every case interview. I also like to ask a few questions at the end of each discussion—for example, feedback for my performance or what my next steps should be.

Selected personal interview question
Which actions have been taken to prepare the pilot?

Most unique question you were asked
Several examples come to mind, but they are all related to brainteasers. For example, one related to market calculations: how many tennis balls are sold in the United States on a yearly basis?

Case example

Summary: Pilot versus full rollout having different results in a sales effectiveness engagement with one of the top banks in the market

Case type: Sales effectiveness

Background: My experience in operations is what caused the interviewers to choose this specific case study.

Approach: I started by asking several questions to ensure I understood the case's background—what had happened during the engagement and what the results were. After this, I built a list of solutions and prioritized the presentation based on the impact I expected from each one.

What went well: Even though it was from a different industry, my experience in operations helped a lot with building the case solution.

Even better if: It's useful to have a basic understanding of the industries Kearney is currently most focused in before coming to the interview.

"I really enjoyed the informal discussions at the end of each interview—having the chance to ask for feedback on my performance."

Vasily Khramov,
Manager

Joined: November 2010

Office: Moscow

Education: Diploma (physics), Moscow State University; Master of Arts (economics), New Economic School

Interview experience: I had been through five interviews with two other consulting firms before getting an invitation from Kearney. The Kearney office had a very pleasant atmosphere—friendly, open, and straightforward. In just two weeks I had four case interviews, each about an hour long, with a manager, principal, and two partners. I guess it was the professional attitude, focus on results, and comfortable environment created by interviewers that made me feel welcome and allowed me to demonstrate my best. I received the offer straight after.

Myth busted

"Every interviewer has just one case." I was surprised when both partners asked me which industry I would prefer and offered problems that would help me demonstrate my best.

Case interview tip

Structured thinking differentiates you better than anything else, especially if you are interviewed for the junior position. So take the time to draw nice appealing chevrons.

Personal interview tip

We are not reflecting enough on our growth needs, team experience, and failures and leadership, especially when we are young. This is why it's important to practice interviews with somebody. Ask their opinion on how it sounds. How do they feel about you?

Selected personal interview question

Please provide an example of when you failed at something, and when your leadership helped to improve the team.

Case example

Summary: One Russian oil and gas company (company A) considers acquiring another Russian oil and gas business (company B). How would you approach the decision-making process?

Case type: Mergers and acquisitions

Background: I have a physics background and studied finance courses during my economic master's degree, which may have defined the case selection.

Approach: I first clarified where those companies were along the value chain. I outlined exploration and production, transmission, and refining and retail chevrons to map out an answer: company A was vertically integrated and company B was a downstream player. That looked like a capacity expansion framework rather than a fit framework to me, so I took another minute to outline the demand, supply, and cost of acquisition boxes in my notebook. It appeared to be a conceptual case, so we talked through target market shares in key regions, potential synergies, and approach to deal valuation.

What went well: Outlining the industry value chain and asking the right questions from the beginning saved time and helped me gain a lot of trust from the interviewer.

Even better if: I should have demonstrated a practical understanding of the acquisition process and talked through the implementation challenges: cultural risks, brand value impact, and stringent synergies realization from day one.

"The professional attitude, focus on results, and comfortable environment created by interviewers made me feel welcome and allowed me to demonstrate my best."

Dawid Krzysiak,
Manager

Joined: September 2011 as intern and May 2012 full-time

Office: Warsaw

Education: Master of Science in Management (logistics), Poznań University of Economics

Interview experience: I started participating in case studies and interviewing with consulting companies while studying. For my Kearney internship, I had a test followed by two interviews with managers over the course of a morning. I liked the culture and immediately felt a connection with the people I talked with, so when both the firm and I decided to give it a go I started the internship. Three months later, when it was clear I wanted to continue my professional career within Kearney, I had my final interviews with a principal and partner. What I liked about the interviews was the focus of the consultants on understanding my line of thinking: how I structure problems and how my previous experience shapes the decisions I am about to make on the project. Very different (albeit more stressful) from the "standard" consulting interview described on multiple web pages that includes surreal situations, brainteasers, and testing of stress levels.

Myth busted

Consulting interviews were marketed as ones full of surreal brainteasers. In fact, we talked about real business situations instead of guessing how many eggs one-and-a-half chickens lay in an hour.

Case interview tip

Be authentic. Share your passions. Ask questions of the interviewer. And, of course, practice the case studies.

Personal interview tip

You should be prepared to tell your story and explain each step of your CV. What did you learn and how did it shape your core values? And ask the interviewer about theirs. In the end, feeling good in the organization is about shared values and beliefs and there is no better screening than the first interview.

Selected personal interview question

What was the most innovative, non-work-related thing you did recently and why?

Case example

Summary: How a Polish soft drinks company, #3 in the market, should enter the Ukrainian market

Case type: Market entry strategy

Background: Not at all.

Approach: I started with the analysis of potential segments of the soft drinks market and matched it with the product portfolio of a company we were analyzing together, with quick market sizing. For each segment I then provided key differences I saw between the Polish and Ukrainian market and what potential risks and opportunities should be considered to address the said value pool. I finished by talking about different options on the go-to-market (export, setting up local production, M&A).

What went well: Starting with clear segments helped to pinpoint the specific value propositions and products and later provide the structure for opportunity and risk assessment for each segment basis.

Even better if: I practiced more, so I could feel more comfortable and be less stressed. My answers were correct but the nervousness with which I delivered them did not help to push them through.

“Feeling good in the organization is about shared values and beliefs, and there is no better screening than the first interview.”

Karolina Leśkiewicz,
Manager

Joined: December 2014 (after 6-month internship)

Office: Warsaw

Education: Bachelor of Science (international economics; management and finance), University Bocconi; Master of Science (international management/ CEMS), Vienna University of Economics and Business.

Interview experience: Close to the end of my university degree I interviewed not only with consulting companies, but also with an FMCG giant and a real estate operator. I even considered diplomacy for a while! However, only during Kearney interviews did I feel like I belonged—I had the impression that the consultants who interviewed me were interested not only in my skills and what I could do for the company, but also in knowing me, my experiences, and passions. I had a great feeling after the interviews—the certainty that I would like to work in such an environment.

My interviews with Kearney lasted almost two months—I needed some flexibility, because at the time I was in the Netherlands and interviewed to join the Warsaw office. Apart from the analytical test, I had two rounds of interviews, each with two consultants—a fairly standard recruitment process.

Myth busted
Nobody wants to increase your stress level on purpose. Although you'll certainly be asked tough questions, they're only to test your fit, not to purposefully stress you.

Case interview tip
Practice, practice, practice! Only if you're well prepared will you be able to make proper use of frameworks and approaches, tailor them to specific cases, and add your touch to show your personality and creativity.

Personal interview tip
Be authentic. Trying to remember and use all tips during the interview is impossible. Rather, remember to prepare and be yourself!

Selected personal interview question
We discussed my experience in India—I was there on a volunteering project while at university and was asked how it developed me and how it would help me with my work in the future.

Case example

Summary: The client was a mining company. They had an additional line of business—several spa locations. The company was considering whether to exit the side business to focus on their core activities or grow it, and if yes, how.

Case type: Market sizing, growth strategy

Background: Not at all. I think the consultant chose it to test how I would deal with a completely unknown problem.

Approach: The first part was about getting to know in detail the specificity of both the core business and the additional line of business. Secondly, I focused on market sizing and assessment—quantifying the stream of revenues from the spa business as well as its future potential. However, the most important part of the case was the third and last—a discussion about opportunities and synergies with core (if any)—brainstorming which resulted in a structured list of opportunities for the client to test.

What went well: The structured approach at the beginning and good preparation for market sizing allowed me to relax and be more creative in the last part of the discussion.

Even better if: I had been thinking out loud more—this would have allowed me to avoid the nervous silence and resulted in more discussion with the interviewer.

Most unique question I was asked
I was asked to think of as many ways to use a pencil as possible, other than the traditional one, of course, in 30 seconds. It was a different company, but the question was surely an interesting one, to test creativity under the pressure of time.

"Remember analytics and structure is important, but be natural—show your personality and take the time to ask about our experiences and the company—you'll get the real feeling of how it is to work at Kearney."

Serban Stoica, Manager

Joined: March 2016

Office: Bucharest, Romania

Education: Bachelor of Science (finance and banking); Master of Science (corporate finance), Academia de Studii Economice din București.

Interview experience: I interviewed only with Kearney. I knew about the firm from a close friend and university colleague who had already worked there for five years while I had been working in banking, so I was interested when my friend asked me if I would consider taking the first step of the interview process: the test. I passed the test and started the case interviews several months later; everything went quickly and smoothly. There were two rounds of interviews; the final round was with the partner. I liked the people a lot (this is also a major factor keeping me going in the firm) and their friendly, open approach. The overall experience was highly interesting.

Myth busted
"The partner interviews are the hardest."

Anything funny you remember about the interview process?
I had the same Star Wars Moleskine notebook and the same fitness tracker as one of the interviewers! This made it easy when they asked: "What kind of person would you think I am?"

Personal interview tip
Be genuine. The most important thing for both the interviewer and the interviewee is to be yourself. Try not to fake any of the responses. In addition to this, have the courage to ask questions and don't be too afraid to make mistakes. This will play an important role in your performance and how the interviewer perceives you.

Case example

Summary: I had to evaluate the opportunity of renting and operating a hotel at the mountains in a popular ski resort.

Case type: Market entry

Background: My background probably wasn't a decisive factor in picking the case as I had been working in trade finance for the previous five years.

Approach: I went for the traditional revenue and cost approach, structuring the issue accordingly and topping it up with additional factors that might have had an impact on the business.

What went well: The analytical skills that I had from my previous job played an important role in helping me quickly calculate percentages and margins. My affinity for skiing also helped me better understand the dynamics of the potential market, seasonality issues, and typical customer behavior.

Even better if: I should have tried to better explain the reasoning behind my thinking, emphasizing the cost and revenue aspects of each component.

"Be yourself. Have the courage to ask questions and don't be too afraid to make mistakes."

Tilen Erman, Associate

Joined: June 2018

Office: Ljubljana

Education: Master of Science (management), University of Mannheim; Bachelor of Science (economics), Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana

Interview experience: I interviewed with Kearney and one more top strategy consulting firm in the region. Overall, the recruitment process at Kearney was a pleasant, albeit intensive experience. It consisted of a session writing a GMAT-like test and five one-hour interviews, of which four included solving a case study. The final interview was with the local partner and focused more on my past experience and ambitions for the future.

Myth busted

I expected case interviews to be a bit of a hostile environment where the interviewer did not want you to succeed. The exact opposite was true. Although the case was not simple and it did take some time to solve, the interviewer wanted me to arrive at the solution and had no interest in seeing me fall short.

Case interview tip

Preparation is key. I cannot stress this enough. Before you decide to start the application process, make sure you are well prepared. Most people underestimate how strict the criteria for the case study interviews are and consequently enter the recruitment process ill prepared. One of the case studies required me to imagine I was a 19th-century advisor to the king of a made-up country that was considering annexing another country—this was quite an amusing and unexpected experience.

Selected personal interview question

What motivated you to switch from industry to consulting?

Favorite or best interview question

How would you describe to your grandmother your "best day" at Kearney? What happened and what specific tasks did you do that day?

Case example

Summary: Does it make sense to open a restaurant in Ljubljana?

Case type: Classical market entry case study that included market sizing and estimating the potential profitability of such a venture

Background: The interviewer noticed I had M&A experience and as an add-on question to the case proceeded to probe me on how I would value such a company.

Approach: For the profitability part I used a classic cost-benefit framework, tweaked for the specifics of the case. For market sizing I proceeded to solve the case top-down and conducted a quick check through a bottom-up analysis.

What went well: I structured the case so that I had a clear road map to solve it.

Even better if: I had been able to relax and enjoy the recruitment process.

"Preparation is key. I cannot stress this enough."

Helena Krbilova,
Associate

Joined: July 2016

Office: Prague

Education: Master of Science (financial economics), Maastricht University

Interview experience: I originally planned to pursue a career in investment banking or valuation. After gaining some work experience in these areas, I decided to diversify a little, and tried Kearney based on the recommendation of a former university fellow student. After a few weeks with Kearney, I knew I wanted to stay and pursue my career. The interview process was very smooth. The interviewers made me feel comfortable and I felt they had a genuine interest in getting to know me.

Myth busted
"10 practice cases is absolutely not enough!" Yes, practice is important; however, everyone has their own needs and areas to focus on while preparing for an interview.

Case interview tip
As I didn't want to be distracted by imprecise or slow calculations, I practiced quick "in my head" calculations. Soon, I noticed quite a difference in both my speed and my personal comfort level.

Personal interview tip
I personally went through the values of Kearney and tried to match them with what I believed I was looking for. It helped me to identify the overlaps and be more authentic throughout the interview.

Selected personal interview question
Tell me what you became passionate about in the past six months.

Case example

Summary: How to double the revenues of a Czech sparkling wine producer

Case type: Market sizing, assessment of investment opportunities

Background: None

Approach: First, I investigated the current position of the company on the Czech market and analyzed the potential within the current field of operations. Second, I looked at other market entry and product diversification opportunities.

What went well: The interviewer appreciated the variety of options I provided. I ended up creating both a short-term and long-term plan for the producer, combining multiple initiatives.

Even better if: I had simplified my calculations, made them more high-level, and gone into greater detail only when requested by the interviewer.

"Be creative, and don't be afraid to test any of your ideas. A fresh point of view is always appreciated."

Carmen Martincu, Associate

Joined: December 2017

Office: Bucharest, Romania

Education: Bachelor of Science (international business and economics), Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies; Master of Science (international trade and transport), London Metropolitan University

Interview experience: I only interviewed with Kearney. It was my only choice at the time.

The interview process started with a test before I went through a set of five interviews. The first interview was a behavioral one, the following three were case interviews, and the last one was a discussion with the head of our office. The whole process lasted four months from application to offer, which helped me a lot since I was able to prepare even though I was working full time. What was interesting for me (and what I really liked) was how every interviewer had put their own mark on the flow of the discussion and on the way they treated the case. For instance, two of the case interviews had very little quantitative focus, while they required intensive brainstorming, which I found was a good way of testing my creativity. Also, going through the process, you're somewhat in a demo version of your future work environment. It helps you get a notion of the great people that you may work with.

Myth busted

"Leaving a lasting impression on your interviewer is about having the standard approach or applying the right framework." There's more to it than that. It can also be about having that one great idea that is uniquely yours, the idea that's not listed on a standard case solution sheet but that distinguishes you as an innovative thinker.

Case interview tips

Practice stating your structure and voicing your train of thought—it helps your interviewer see that you've thought things through, and it helps you identify any misguided assumptions you may have because you are hearing them outside your head.

Don't despair if you've made a mistake or if your interviewer doesn't agree with one of your statements—acknowledge and move on with your analysis. You can still prove yourself further on.

Personal interview tip

I aimed to give real answers to the interviewers so they could get an idea of my personality, but it did help to think a bit beforehand about what I could bring to the table and how I fit with Kearney

Case example

Summary: An airport wanted to invest in a new luggage handling machine.

Case type: Adding capacity and growth

Background: I had done two projects in the transport sector and had mentioned that I would be keen on working in the aviation industry.

Approach: I started by asking a few clarification questions to see what the new equipment would bring and what the benefits might be. I laid out my framework: I wanted to develop the business case by calculating a net present value for the investment and needed to look at the costs, benefits, and timeline of the investment. I received some data for costs, while for benefits I had to brainstorm before being given the data.

What went well: I felt that I had a good structure for approaching the issue and was pretty quick in identifying the benefits. It also helped that the topic was familiar to me, as I could come up with more creative answers.

Even better if: I shouldn't have rushed through the calculations instead of taking my time. If I'd slowed down I would have avoided the small, silly mistakes.

Selected personal interview question
Tell me about a time you had to overcome a challenge.

Most unique question you were asked
What would you do if you had to work with someone you didn't like?

"Practice stating your structure and voicing your train of thought—it helps your interviewer see that you've thought things through."

Martin Benroth, Senior Business Analyst

Joined: November 2017

Office: Prague, Czech Republic

Education: Master of Science (molecular analytical and physical chemistry), University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague

Interview experience: As a candidate with a non-business background, I did my homework and practiced case-solving during numerous mock interviews. Mock interviews allowed me to gain confidence and gave me a great opportunity to get a sense of the culture and working style at different management consulting firms. I interviewed with several companies but dropped out of the other interviews after I got my Kearney offer. It was my first choice and the first offer I received—an easy choice.

At Kearney I had three rounds of interviews. The first two rounds consisted of four interviews and covered a mix of behavioral questions and problem-solving cases with four consultants and managers. My last interview was with a partner and was more of a discussion covering our past decisions and future goals.

Myth busted
"All your answers need to be pure gold." Well, they should at least be silver. But remember that the answers you give are only part of the full picture. Your personality, the passion you show, and the questions you ask are just as important.

Case interview tip
When practicing with others, analyze how various people solve your favorite case. Chances are that you will find out yourself what is (and what is not) the right way to crack the case.

Personal interview tip
Make it a discussion. The interview is your opportunity to get to know people you might end up working with for quite some time, and the people are our greatest asset.

Selected personal interview question
"Tell me who you are and why should I hire you." Sounds simple and easy now, but imagine a partner looking at you while you're trying to convince her that your school project had a major impact on humanity!

Most unique question you were asked
What is your least favorite interview question?

Case example

Summary: Evaluate the business performance of a new company selling premium strollers on the Czech market; the problem included multiple sourcing options.

Case type: Market entry and profitability

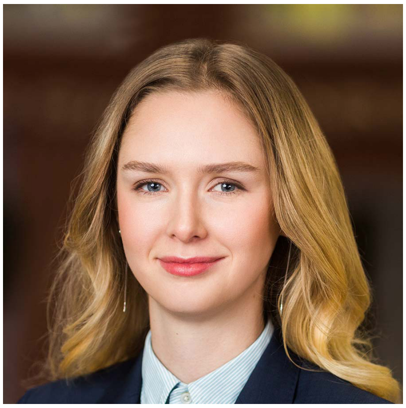
Background: I found out there was a real background for this case weeks later: The interviewer wanted to buy a new stroller for his kid, but he found them overpriced and used this opportunity to assess the profitability of stroller resellers.

Approach: I began by estimating the size of the Czech stroller market using demographic data and evaluated the profitability of the business using approximations and data provided by the interviewer. I followed the quantitative part with a qualitative assessment, identifying further opportunities for the business.

What went well: It was brilliant how far we could get using simply estimations and common logic. I especially enjoyed the second part, where we discussed what we could achieve if we ran such a business and how we could make it grow. The key to success in this case was in focusing on the main drivers of revenues and costs—the interviewer was ready to overwhelm me with data if I asked for it.

Even better if: I should have used more drawings to illustrate my thoughts. It makes the discussion easier and it helps with the structure of your answer.

"The answers you give are only part of the full picture. Your personality, the passion you show, and the questions you ask are just as important."



Ilnara Garipova, Senior Business Analyst

Joined: September 2013 (full time); March 2013 (internship)

Office: Moscow

Education: Master of Science (economics), Plekhanov Russian University of Economics

Interview experience: I had applied to several firms. However, Kearney's recruitment process was so fast and intense that I received an offer before I was even invited to interviews with other firms.

I really enjoyed the interviews with Kearney. When I was applying for the internship, I had three one-hour interviews with my potential team members: a senior business analyst, a manager, and a partner. All the interviews had a similar structure and included behavioral questions and a case.

Myth busted

"Good preparation will guarantee you pass the interview successfully." Preparation is important, but if solving cases doesn't come naturally to you, or there is no chemistry between you and the interviewer, there's no guarantee that you'll pass the interview.

Case interview tip

When you solve the case, it's very important to develop the appropriate structure. Try to avoid using standard frameworks without adjustment as they don't always fit cases perfectly.

Personal interview tips

Take the personal interview seriously—it's as important as the case part. Think about potential questions you could be asked and prepare examples from your personal or professional experience. Be prepared for the in-depth discussion of your experience and challenging questions.

Most unique question you were asked

During the final interview, the interviewer asked if I played cards. He put a deck of playing cards on the table and started taking out cards one by one, asking different probability questions—for example, what is the chance that the next three cards I draw will be spades?

Case example

Summary: The Russian original equipment manufacturer is struggling with a development cycle for new car models compared to its peers. Why?

Case type: Operation improvement

Background: This case was not at all related to my background.

Approach: I used a top-down approach. I broke down the entire process of car model development into stages and built up an understanding of which departments were involved and what roles they played. From there, I analyzed each of the stages individually.

What went well: I asked the right questions. The answers I received helped me identify the problem area.

Even better if: I had checked with the interviewer which area to focus on before deep-diving into details.

"Take the personal interview seriously—it's as important as the case part."

Tips and tricks to get to the top

1. Ask questions to make sure you have data to support your responses
2. State any assumptions and/or hypotheses
3. Don't lose sight of the objective or the question to be answered (prioritize!)
4. At turning points, or before moving to new topics, summarize and test that you both have the same understanding
5. Take time to explain your logic—be thorough
6. Use diagrams to explain your thinking where appropriate
7. Take suggestions if offered
8. Make it your own
9. Be confident and breathe!
10. Be prepared to give an elevator pitch about your recommendation and the main reasons behind it
11. If all else fails, make sure you've ironed your shirt

Notes

Notes

Kearney sees big ideas through to working realities, helping you move from keeping up to breaking through. A global consulting partnership in over 40 countries, our people make us who we are.

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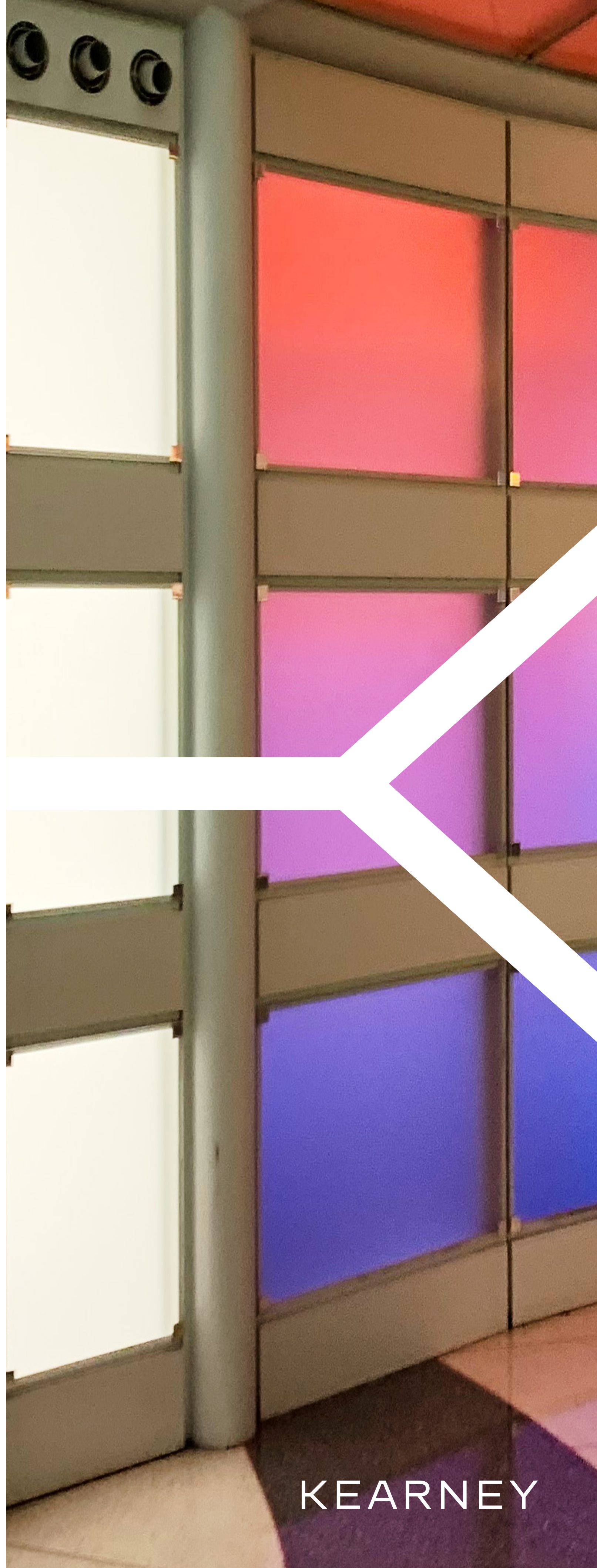
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