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TIPPIE
PROFESSIONAL
MBA
CAREER GUIDE



TIPPIE
MBA

Preparing for the Search

Communicating Your Brand

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.” - Warren Buffett

Once you’ve established your unique brand proposition, the only way to make it relevant to the marketplace is by promoting it. Communication of your brand can occur in multiple channels—one of the most obvious being via your resume and targeted cover letters. However, it is important to be aware that your brand is being communicated **every** day, including spots that may be unintentional—such as the content on your Facebook profile or an email or phone communication to a Tippie alumnus.

Consider the power of negative press. Tiger Woods comes to mind. Revered and respected as the best in his profession. Now: cut to the recent negative communication of his brand that left us all questioning his character—this may fade over time, but do you suppose he’ll ever fully regain his positive brand? Unfortunately, for every positive step you take to promote your personal brand and increase your relevancy to the market, one negative action will set you back five paces. So as you look ahead to promoting and protecting your brand image, be sure to consider the following:

Resume

The most obvious communicator of your brand, but only impactful if you know your audience and make yourself relevant to their needs. Targeted resumes are necessary if you intend to pursue opportunities across more than one function or industry. This requires you to make modifications to your primary version to highlight the skills/experiences that are in closest alignment with the position to which you are applying. Do not attempt to make a “one size fits all” version, as this can cause your brand to be perceived as unfocused.

Targeted Cover Letter

Some companies value the introduction of a cover letter more than others. However, regardless of the emphasis placed on this communication tool by an organization, a poorly written or irrelevant letter will sharply decrease your opportunity for success.

TIP: Identify the 3-5 competency areas that are requested most frequently by the industries/functions you’re interested in pursuing—craft 1-2 examples from your prior experience that demonstrate your skills in each of these areas [see p. 22 for additional information on how to utilize the SMART framework to create your stories].

Email Communication with Recruiters / Thank You Follow Up(s) Post-Interview

Many employers communicate via email, so it is critical that you develop the skills to ensure that any promotion of your brand in this capacity is flawless. Avoid the tendency to favor a casual tone, and be aware that non-verbal cues don’t exist in this format so it is easy for even the best intentions to get lost in translation.

TIP: If you are unsure, get a second opinion before hitting the send button! Your Career Partners are here to provide feedback on any communication that involves the promotion of your brand. You only get one chance to make the RIGHT impression.

Networking Introduction to Alumni & Industry Contacts

Introductions can be intimidating and scary [see p. 53 for additional information on how to make an introduction]. And to further the intimidation factor, the way you present yourself initially will set the stage for how the alumnus will perceive your brand.

TIP: Turn the tables. You are now the alumnus and an email message has just popped up from an unfamiliar name. What would you want a message from a current Tippie student to say? This exercise will help you understand your audience, and then consider ways to make yourself relevant. Remember, even with busy schedules, the majority of individuals genuinely DO want to help!

Elevator Pitch at Career Fairs

[See pp. 20-21 for additional information on MBA Career Fairs & the Elevator Pitch].

Demeanor & Participation at Executive Speakers Professional Engagement During Networking Opportunities

Remember, every touch point is another opportunity to communicate your brand. It is up to you to determine whether this activity will have a positive or negative impact.

Communicating Your Brand in Social Media - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

[See pp. 5-6 for additional information on protecting your personal brand online].

Quick Tip: Search Optimize Your Resume

Virtually every company utilizes a corporate recruiting website to source and hire talent. In most cases, they require (for legal reasons) that all applications be routed through this process—often even in cases where you will have a more direct path to the position of interest (Career Services facilitated lead, networking contact, etc.). These sites include a digital database of resumes, and when sourcing candidates for an open positions recruiters will use key words in resumes to identify individuals with a potential skill fit.

As such, it is important to optimize the chances of your resume being pulled in a search.

How is this achieved?

When applying to a position, review the job description to identify key terms and then find ways to work these terms into your resume. If you are focusing on a specific career path (for example, business-to-consumer marketing with a consumer packaged goods company), one targeted version of your resume may address all firms within your target audience. However, if you are targeting several potential career paths within a function, you should consider having different versions of your resume to target each of these areas.

Additionally, a growing number of companies are utilizing social media outlets such as LinkedIn and Facebook to search for candidates, so ensuring you utilize these same keywords within your profile on these networking sites is another opportunity to optimize your odds of getting a first glance.

For more information on ways to optimize your resume, visit:

Career Rocketeer:

Resume SEO: Get Your Resume to the Top
<http://www.careerrocketeer.com/2009/05/r esume-seo-get-your-resume-to-top.html>

Create a Google Profile:
www.google.com/profiles

The Interview Process

Behavior-Based Interviewing

The most prevalent interviewing style, behavior-based, requires candidates to draw upon past experiences to demonstrate knowledge or skill in a specific area. Potential employers will predetermine the primary skills needed to successfully perform in a role, and then probe with pointed questions to determine if a candidate has the necessary skills. The logic behind this technique is that past behaviors are the best indicators of your future performance. Generally, behavioral questions begin with “*Tell me about a time when...*” and focus on assessing business competencies such as (but not limited to) leadership, strategic thinking, analytical skills, and creativity.

Although some candidates elect to improvise these stories during an interview, we would caution against this approach as unplanned examples tend to lack structure and focus. The ability to develop powerful and concise stories that will showcase your capabilities takes time and practice. To achieve optimal results, we recommend that you utilize the following technique to assist in structuring your examples.

The SMART Framework Begins with the RESULT

Your preparation for this type of interview should include identifying examples of situations from past experience that address the needs of the employer. This will include examples from your resume, as well as experiences that you were unable to include (due to space limitations, etc.). Storytelling is an art and, as such, it requires that you share details in a clear and focused manner. Avoid painting your experience in broad strokes—generalizations give the employer a shallow perspective on who you are, how you possess a needed skill, and why you’re the right person for their team. The SMART Framework, which begins with the RESULT, will enable you to define examples and then ensure you are targeting the most relevant and important details from that specific experience. Remember: examples from your professional experience should be first priority, but you should also consider stories from classes, extracurricular or leadership activities, team involvements, community service, study abroad experiences, and/or past consulting projects or internships.

Result Summarized

Briefly state the result attained to capture and focus the attention of the interviewer.

Situation and Metric

This step should be brief. Identify the situation, task, or challenge that you faced. Use metrics where possible.

Action(s)

Describe the steps involved with this particular situation or challenge.

This is the “meat” of your story. Take the interviewer(s) through the actions YOU took in this situation or challenge. Again, avoid generalizations and be clear on the role you played. Remember: interview stories should take no more than two minutes to complete, and the majority of this time should be spent on describing your actions.

Results

Share the results of your actions and, whenever possible, quantify them. Numbers support your achievements and demonstrate your level of responsibility. Without taking the employer through the outcomes associated with your actions, it leaves them questioning the type of results you delivered. Remember: while it is more enjoyable to share success stories, employers will also ask to hear about situations that challenged you. *When were you NOT successful in achieving a goal?* In these cases, it is critical that your results include what you learned from these situations, and an example (or two) of personal growth that was achieved through this experience.

Tie It Back

State how this example demonstrates the way you can add value to the role you are interviewing for.

Anticipate that follow-up questions by the interviewer are possible. When your story relates to a skill or experience that the employer wants to explore further, they may dig deeper with open-ended questions such as:

What were you thinking at that point?

Tell me more about your interactions with that person.

EXAMPLE: Tell me about a time when you used a new way of addressing a problem.

Result Summarized:

One way of thinking outside the box is to engage other constituents in gleaning the best solution to a situation. An example of this was...

Situation and Metric:

During my internship last summer, I was responsible for managing three large simultaneous projects. One of these projects tasked me with managing an event, and I observed that attendance had been steadily dropping over the past two years by close to 30%. I decided to do something to improve these numbers.

Action(s):

I designed a new promotional packet to go out to local community businesses ahead of our first event. In it I included a rating sheet to collect feedback on our previous events. I further organized internal round table discussions to raise awareness of the issue with our team.

Results:

Upon analysis of the data we utilized several quality ideas we received from the community, made our internal systems more efficient and visible, and raised attendance at the event by 18%.

Tie it back:

This example demonstrates my ability to think outside the box in generating options to solving problems, which would prove beneficial in this role as I would be working with implementing new projects for various constituents.

Source: Susan Britton Whitcomb, *Job Search Magic*, 2006

The Interview Process

Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

The below competency areas represent those you can expect to encounter most frequently during the interview process.

Analytical Skills

Ex: Tell me about a time when you had to work with a lot of data.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Leadership

Ex: Tell me about your most significant leadership experience.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Creativity

Ex: Tell me about a time when you utilized a completely new/different approach to a situation.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process

Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

Communication Skills

Ex: How would your former co-workers describe your communication style?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Goal Orientation

Ex: Tell me about two goals you've set for yourself in the last year. Did you achieve them?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Project Management Skills

Ex: Describe a failed project you have been involved with at work, and explain why it was not successful.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process

Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

Team Skills

Ex: Give an example of your involvement in a team that was less than successful. What could you have done differently to make it more successful?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Conflict Management

Ex: Tell me about a situation at work in which you experienced conflict and how you resolved it.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Ethics & Integrity

Ex: Describe a situation in which you faced an ethical challenge in the workplace and how you resolved it.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process

Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

Strategic Thinking Skills

Ex: What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Work Ethic

Ex: Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond what was expected for the benefit of your team or customer.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Passion

Ex: What are you passionate about outside of work? What motivates you?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process

Practice Interview Questions

General

Tell me about yourself.

Walk me through your resume.

If I were to speak with your former supervisor, what would s/he say are your greatest strengths, and what are a few areas of needed improvement?

What would your classmates tell me about you?

What is the biggest risk you've ever taken?

What is unique about you? Convince me you're the right person for this job.

What can you bring to our company that the other candidates can't?

Why Tippie?

Tell me something about you that I wouldn't learn by reading your resume.

Analytical Skills

Tell me about a time when you discovered a more efficient way to do a work task.

Tell me about a task that really tested your analytical abilities.

Tell me about a tricky situation for which you found a simple solution.

Have you ever been in a real dilemma at work? What did you do to get out of it?

Tell me about an assignment you worked on in which you had to amass a huge amount of data and then analyze it.

Can you tell me about a situation where your analysis of a problem was deemed to be incorrect? What would you have done differently?

Leadership

Describe a time when you reprimanded an employee for poor performance. What was the outcome?

How do you balance client needs with company goals?

How do you motivate subordinates?

Tell me about a situation at work in which you led a team well.

Tell me about a time when you mentored someone.

What leader do you most admire and why?

What was your most significant leadership experience?

What five qualities do you feel define great leadership?

Tell me about your most significant leadership experience.

Describe one experience when you had to lead a team.

How do you keep each member of the team involved and motivated while keeping morale high? Describe the steps you take to achieve this.

In what situations do you prefer to use your leadership skills? Can you give me some examples?

Creativity

How often do you discuss and work with colleagues to think up new systems and styles of working?

Have you ever tried a new way of doing things? Did you succeed?

Tell me about one case when you tried to solve a problem with a totally different approach than is normally used. What was the result?

Tell me about a situation when you tried to solve a problem with ideas and methods that had not been tried before.

Imagine you could trade places with anyone for just a week. The person could be famous or not famous, living or from history, real or fictional. With whom would you trade places?

If someone wrote a biography about you, what do you think the title should be?

If you had to be shipwrecked on a deserted island, but all your human needs - such as food and water - were taken care of, what two items would you want to have with you?

If you could have dinner with anyone from history, who would it be and why?

If you won \$20 million in the lottery, what would you do with the money?

Bowling has been banned and all bowling alleys have been shut down. Tell me five interesting new uses for bowling balls.

Communication Skills

How would your co-workers describe your communication style?

Give me an example of a time when you had to sell an idea.

Give me an example that demonstrates your ability to network and, as a result, generate new business for a product or service.

Provide an example of an unpleasant client situation. How did you handle it? What would you have done differently?

Tell me about a time when your opinion was challenged. How did you handle it?

Describe a time when you had to convince a person or group to re-evaluate their decision.

Describe your presentation skills and experience.

Please describe any experience you have with negotiation or financial transactions or with negotiation in general.

Rate your communication skills on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing excellent communication skills. Give me three examples from your past work experiences that demonstrate the selected number is accurate.

Describe five things about the communication within an organization that must be present for you to work most effectively.

When you have entered a new workplace in the past, describe how you have gone about meeting and developing relationships with your new coworkers, supervisors, and reporting staff.

What processes do you use to clarify your written work and verify its accuracy?

Can you tell me about a recent writing assignment, what it entailed, and what steps you took to make sure the assignment was accurate?

The Interview Process

Practice Interview Questions

Goal Orientation

Would you describe yourself as goal oriented?

Describe what you've accomplished toward reaching a recent goal for yourself.

Can you describe your long-term goals and objectives?

What do you expect to be doing in five years? Ten years?

Tell me about initiatives you have taken to improve procedures at work? Were you successful? Would you do anything differently now?

Tell me about a time you succeeded in overcoming a major obstacle. How did it make you feel?

Project Management/Organizational Skills

When it is your responsibility to organize and plan a project, what steps do you take?

How do you accommodate last minute changes that are incorporated into your work?

How do you prioritize tasks to be completed within one work project?

Illustrate how you prioritize daily tasks.

What do you do when a project is not coming to fruition as expected due to inefficient planning?

What steps do you take when the work of a colleague threatens the completion of a project?

Teamwork

Have you ever had a role in a team project where your role was not clearly defined? How do you handle this?

When your team encounters a problem, such as irritation with another co-worker, how do you reach a good resolution?

When you receive positive feedback about the completion of a project, do you give your team any credit?

When you are part of a team that is working exceptionally well, what do you think are the reasons for this success?

When did you last coordinate your work with others in a team project? What was your most successful contribution?

Tell me about a time when you were in a well functioning team, except for one member who was not pulling his weight. How did you handle it?

Conflict Management

Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor or instructor? How did you resolve the conflict?

Tell me about a major problem you recently handled. Were you successful in resolving it?

Tell me how you deal with high pressure situations.

How do you manage to work with people with whom you are not comfortable? What do you do in these situations?

Tell me about a time when you helped to successfully mediate a conflict. How did you feel?

Tell me about a time when you were aware of a serious mistake made by a colleague and what did you do about it?

Describe a time when you had a disagreement with a colleague at work. How did you manage to work it out?

Tell me about a time when you had to work through some negativity to get work done.

Ethics & Integrity

Tell me about a time when you had to make an uncertain decision with the possibility of an adverse public reaction. How did you manage the situation?

Have you ever tried to raise an issue that you thought may have been unlawful or not in accordance with professional principles?

How would you manage a situation where you believed that something was not in compliance with professional ethics?

What would you do if you saw a valued customer behaving in an unethical manner? How about a co-worker?

Strategic Thinking Skills

How would you describe the term 'strategic thinking'?

Outline in very broad terms how you would create a strategy for say, a public interest campaign.

How should you go about identifying partners as part of any good business organizational strategy?

As you develop strategic vision for your organization, what are the five key criteria that you should focus on?

What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?

Work Ethic

Tell me about a time when you had to work through some negativity to get work done.

Would you describe yourself as a self-starter? Can you give recent examples where you displayed this quality?

Passion

There are thousands of possible careers. Why do you want to follow this particular career?

Describe a project you were involved in that really excited you.

What makes you excited to get out of bed in the morning?

Tell me about a hurdle which got in the way of achieving an ambitious goal. How did you go about overcoming it?

Tell me about a time when you willingly volunteered for a task. Why were you so interested in this specific task?

The Interview Process

Getting Technical: Functionally Specific Interviews

At this point, you've started to generate stories from your prior experience that address the various competency/skill areas that are most widely sought by MBA hiring companies. Continue this effort, as it will build your confidence, make you better prepared to navigate the uncertainty that is tied to any interview, and increase your odds of success when opportunity knocks. As you progress through an interview process with a company you should be prepared for the interviews to get more challenging—with far greater emphasis placed on assessing your technical skills and functional expertise. The “technical interview” as it is often referenced, seeks to understand if you have the technical capacity to operate at a high level within a specific career path. This can include questions to assess overall knowledge of a function, as well as questions designed to dig deeper into your problem solving, critical and creative thinking skills, and your passion for the field.

Sample Knowledge Questions

Marketing

Note: They are looking for you to demonstrate both that (1) you understand marketing and (2) you are passionate about it.

- What is your favorite brand/ad/new product/retail store promotion in the market right now? Why?
- How do you calculate market share?
- How would you determine if a given product is successful?
- What is the difference between primary and secondary research? When would you use one vs. the other?
- What is market segmentation?
- How would you as a brand/product manager think through and prioritize growth opportunities for your brand/product?
- What are the different ways a brand/product manager could learn about their consumer's unmet needs?
- How would you go about analyzing a market as the first step of developing a sound brand/product strategy?
- If you were a brand/product manager, how would you:
 - determine the appropriate promotional plan for your brand/product?
 - determine the appropriate pricing strategy for your brand/product?
 - determine the appropriate distribution strategy for your brand/product?
- If you had to advise a new Brand Manager about the pros/cons of the new digital marketing promotional options, what would they be?
- How familiar are you with the product development process?
- How familiar are you with the AIDA model of consumer behavior?
- How familiar are you with product lifecycle management?
 - STP framework? The 4Cs framework?

Finance

- Why might a company choose debt over equity financing, or vice versa?
- How will a decrease in financial leverage affect a company's cost of equity capital, if at all? How will it affect a company's equity beta?
- What are the different ways to value a company?
- What is the difference between a DCF and comps?
- What is the difference between enterprise value and equity value?
- Which of the three financial reporting statements (balance sheet, income statement, statement of cash flows) is most important and why do you believe this is so?
- How does depreciation affect each of the three financial statements?
- What is your best investment idea right now?
- If I gave you a million dollars, how would you invest the proceeds?
- What is your investment style?
- What sources of information would you use to analyze a company?
- What's the difference between IRR, NPV, and Payback?
- What's the difference between I-banking and Private Equity?
- More questions can be found on the Finance Academy ICON site.

Strategic Innovation

Strategy

- How would you describe the term 'strategic thinking'?
- Outline in broad terms how you would create a strategy for say, a public campaign. As part of this strategic campaign, why should you carry out a SWOT analysis?
- How should you go about identifying partners as part of any good business or organization strategy plan?
- As you develop a strategic vision for your organization, what are the five key criteria that you should focus on?
- Discuss the importance of establishing an appropriate basis for comparison in assessing strategic capability.
- What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?

Operations and Supply Chain

- What factors would you consider in determining the location of a distribution center?
- How would you improve the utilization of a process?
- You have to process 50 units and have two options. In the first, you can start 2 lines with 1% defect rate and a capacity of 7 units an hour. In the second option, you can start 3 lines with fewer people but a higher defect rate and a higher capacity. Looking at overall picture, which process is more efficient and why?
- It costs \$200 to train a new person, and a training session has an overhead cost of \$2000. You have 220 people to process in the coming months. Given the normal attrition rate, you expect to lose 40 of the trained employees. Does it make sense to call for overtime or add new folks?
- You have a fixed budget, and heat in the building is causing increased attrition. Also, as your productivity targets are revised upwards each year, you want to buy a couple of machines, which would dramatically improve productivity. In particular, the machines would improve the productivity of the best associates by at least 20%, but these are the same folks who are threatening to walk out if something is not done about temperature. What would you do?

Continuous Improvement Leadership

- Have you ever had to balance multiple priorities? How did you handle this?
- If you were placed in a situation where you had to lead a team in an area that you were very unfamiliar, how would you approach solving their problem?
- If you are working on a project where leadership is not engaged, what would you do to make sure the project was successful?
- Please describe to me the DMAIC process and the tools used at each step.
- How would you determine what samples should be used in a Gage R&R study, and how do you interpret the results?
- Can you describe when you have taught classes with leadership and the difficulties you encountered?
- If you were working on a transactional project with very little data, how would you determine the root causes of the problem?
- Can you describe your past experiences with leading process improvement teams?
- Could you describe your most successful project? Why do you define this as your most successful?
- Tell me about a time when you had a coworker come to you with a problem that you thought was trivial. What did you do?
- What are acceptable reasons for missing a deadline?
- Describe your experience in solving a particularly difficult problem. Why was it difficult?
- Have you ever deviated from expected policy or procedure? If so, what happened?
- Give me an example of when you found a way to make your job easier or more rewarding.
- Tell me what each S stands for in 5S and how you have addressed each one.
- What tools/software do you feel comfortable working with on a daily basis? i.e. MS Office, MS Project, Minitab, etc.

Consulting

- What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?
- What background do you have that would be helpful in consulting?
- Why consulting?
- How do you think the consulting industry is structured?
- What are some differences among the consulting firms that are important to you?
- What were the sales of your last employer? What was its profitability?
- Are you a generalist or specialist? Where do you see yourself specializing?
- Are you competitive?
- How are you going to make your decision if you get more than one offer?

The Interview Process

Case Interviewing Technique: Assessing Your Problem-Solving Skills

Case interviewing can be more broadly defined as problem solving. This technique is used to assess your skills in fields requiring strong analytical and quantitative skills, the ability to demonstrate structured problem solving skills, as well as other less obvious but equally important competencies such as active listening, interpersonal and communication skills, business acumen, performance under pressure, creativity, ability to navigate change, address problems in a logical way, synthesize the findings, and articulate these results in a concise manner to the interviewers. Case interviewing has historically been reserved for large consulting firms. However, in recent years many companies have started to adopt this style of questioning in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of your ability to assess a problem (typically a specific issue facing a particular company), analyze the situation, identify key issues, and articulate how you would address the problem.

Your Goal:

- Identify a problem
- Recommend a solution
- Not necessarily a “right” answer

Company is Assessing:

- Ability to determine what information is needed [needs assessment]
- Ability to problem solve within restricted/defined time period
- Quantitative skills
- Thought process
- Ability to function under pressure
- Self confidence
- Creativity
- Fit for the company
- Interest in problem solving
- Ability to navigate ambiguous situations
- Strong communication skills

Structure:

- Sent in advance [Written Case]
- On the spot [Verbal Case]

Recommendations:

- Practice
- Take it seriously
- Restate
- Ask questions
- Take your time
- Think out loud
- Determine assumptions
- Check calculations
- Consider alternatives
- Don't let it unravel you
- Take a deep breath and relax

Expert Insight:

David Ohrvall

Author, *Crack the Case System* & Founder of MBACASE

“What’s the point of the case interview? Why do I have to spend so much time mastering these random skills for some interviewer?” I hear these questions all the time. It’s easy to miss the benefits when you’re stressed out and buried in case interview books, but I think there are three key reasons to master these skills: **Knowledge Integration** - case interviews are the ultimate chance to pull together your work experience and academic training. You’ll test, reinforce, and build your business knowledge; **Senior Management Presence** – solving problems quickly with crisp logic and practical analytics is what business leaders do all the time; **Holistic Thinking** – case interview prep teaches you to think about how to solve problems in a broad way, pulling in strategic, operational, organizational, and financial elements. Invest time in cases and you’ll accelerate your holistic understanding of how a business works and ultimately you’ll be prepared for a variety of roles.”

Sample Questions

Case expert David Ohrvall visits campus in the fall to present a comprehensive workshop on how to approach and practice the case interviewing format. Additionally, many consulting firm websites give sample cases as well as practical advice on surviving their interview process. Included in this section are a few additional case question examples to get you moving in the right direction.

Brain Teasers

- How would you move Mount Fuji? [Creative]
- Estimate the market for light bulbs in Australia. [Market Sizing/Estimating]
- You have a 3-liter bucket and a 5-liter bucket. How will you measure out exactly 4 liters of water? Assume you have an endless supply of water and no markings on the bucket. [Logic Problem]
- How many barber shops are there in Seattle? [Logic Problem]

Business Problems & Strategy

- Your client is a company who makes specialist batteries for mobile homes [motor homes] in the United States. The battery is very powerful, long-lasting, and of high quality. New industry conditions are occurring and motor home dealers are starting to use a cheaper battery as the ‘factory standard’ in an attempt to lower the overall price of motor homes. Your client’s product is now only offered as an added feature for which the customer must pay an extra \$500 to get. How should your client go about maintaining profits given these new market conditions?

“Invest time in cases and you’ll accelerate your holistic understanding of how business works and ultimately you’ll be prepared for a variety of roles.”



Recruiter Insight

Derek Drahn

Director, Leadership Development
Transamerica

Leadership in the insurance industry requires people with strong potential in both the technical and people skill sets. Technical ability or capability to learn the key technical concepts of the business are the ante to leadership. Emerging leaders must meet and continue to enhance their technical knowledge sets as they move into greater roles even though they become less engrained in the detail. Mistakes of a technical nature in the insurance industry have to be lived with for years.

On the other hand, the ability to manage and empower people, to excel as both individual contributors as well as leaders of groups of people, is the skill set that determines how effective leaders are in driving company success. Leaders' influence on their organizations is magnified exponentially if they manage the business through their key people. Lastly, leadership is a journey, not a destination. We look for leaders who are in it for the long haul, not only for their careers, but for the careers of their lieutenants, as well.

Alumni Insight

Eliot Weiner

Director
Levy Group of Companies

Broad knowledge develops strength and versatility. Being able to understand (or learn quickly) the financial drivers, the logistical and process elements, marketing prowess, etc. allows a GM the ability to focus on the appropriate levers. As a GM, you need to competently manage multiple cross functional teams.

Early & Often: Whether you're a career changer or advancer, you came to Tippie to improve your career path so make certain that you focus on the long-term goal and avoid getting caught in the weeds. At this level, you're expected to have the technical skill for the job to which you apply. More times than not, the intangibles land you the job.

The Interview Process

Closing the Interview

"So what questions do you have for us?"

This statement—or something similar—heard from the interviewer(s) typically signifies that you're nearing the end of the interview. Although it's natural at this point to breathe a sigh of relief, don't lose your momentum just yet! Equally important to a strong first impression and well-crafted interview stories is your ability to provide a strong closing. Before you jump from your seat and head to the door, be sure to address the following:

3-5 Questions for the Interviewer(s)

- These should be thoughtful and demonstrate your interest and fit for the organization. This should not include a regurgitation of information you've gleaned from their website. Review your company info worksheet and identify a few questions that address *current* issues facing the business.
- Don't over think it. If you're considering working for this organization, what is it that you'd like to learn about the company and role?
- Consider your audience. If you are meeting with HR, they are not as likely to know specifics about the role for which you're interviewing, but they would be well positioned to answer questions about corporate culture and other "big picture" company issues. If you're meeting with the hiring manager, this is your opportunity to dive deeper into the specifics of the role, the team, how they measure success, etc.
- Utilize their responses as an opportunity to reiterate your passion and fit for the business. This is your last chance to make a positive impression!
- DO NOT use this time to ask questions about benefits, salary, or other HR-related questions. At this point you are still a prospect—these questions are appropriate once you have an offer in hand.
 - Demonstrate passion. Without question, ending an interview with low energy, irrelevant questions or—the worst case scenario—responding that you "have no questions at this time" can be deal breakers. So be sure you've done your research in advance of the interview to avoid this scenario.

Reiterate Your Personal Brand Statement

- It will feel natural after the Q&A portion of the interview to head for the door. Not just yet! Do not miss the opportunity to reiterate your personal brand statement (what makes you unique?), your passion for the role, and why you are the right person for the job. People want to hire people they like AND people that share their passion for the company. If you don't reiterate your interest and fit, rest assured that the interviewer before or after you will.

Ask for Business Cards, Shake Hands, Smile

- Following up after the interview (see below) is also critical, so if you do not already have contact details for those you met, be sure to ask for business cards at this time.
- Don't underestimate the power of a smile. Thank them for their time, be genuine, and end with a confident hand shake. Seemingly a small and obvious detail, but you'd be surprised how many people will miss this step. Don't be one of those people.

Following Up

"Oh, I forgot to get business cards so I wasn't able to send a thank you note."

I wish I could say that I've never heard this out of the mouths of Tippie MBAs, but unfortunately this mishap occurs on a fairly regular basis. At this stage in the process, you've worked incredibly hard to get the interview, and even harder to prepare for success in the interview. Don't allow this effort to be tarnished by neglecting to follow up. People enjoy acts of kindness, and a formal thank you following an interview is not only a great way to add a bright spot in someone's day, but it's an invaluable opportunity to reiterate your interest and fit for an organization. Few quick tips:

Pick a Talking Point & Make Yourself Relevant

- If pressed for time, ANY thank you is better than none at all. However, the most impactful follow ups emphasize a specific talking point from the interview. Reiterate a topic from your conversation that will be a positive reminder of your time together.
- Hand written thank you notes offer a personal touch that is rarely seen anymore, so it can set you apart. Email is also appropriate and provides more immediacy. Whichever you choose, just be sure to send it within 1-2 days following the interview. Also, be sure to have someone else [e.g. Career Services] review it before sending for accuracy and tone.

Relationship Management

“Whether you like it or not, people decide how they feel about you within the first two seconds of seeing you, or hearing you, if it’s on the phone. If they like you, they will unconsciously tend to see the best in you and look for opportunities to say ‘yes.’ If they don’t like you, the opposite is true.” - Harvard School of Health Sciences



Alumni Perspectives

Jafar Azmayesh

Private Investment Management
Barclays Capital

One seeks an MBA as a means of gaining a competitive advantage in the workplace. You learn very quickly that relationships are one of the few truly sustainable and irreplaceable competitive advantages one has in business. Networking is the grease in the engine of business, as nothing of significance is ever accomplished without enlisting the help and assistance of others. The sooner you begin building and nurturing new relationships, the sooner those relationships will translate into business success for you. Today business success for you means landing a job, tomorrow it will mean a promotion, and ultimately your legacy and reputation.

John Mickelson

Associate Managing Director
The Private Bank

When a start-up I was working on ran into unfavorable macro-economic conditions in the spring of 2007, I found myself staring into the abyss of not having a job at graduation in a few short months and, because of my attention on the start-up, not having taken advantage of Tippie’s strong career service capabilities.

Luckily, I had made a concerted effort throughout my time at Tippie to connect with fellow students, faculty/staff, and alumni and had developed deep and meaningful relationships with these individuals that were more than topical and superficial.

In my time of need, these contacts stepped up to help because of our professional friendship that we had established when I did not “need” them. Ultimately, one of these connections led me to a great job with several weeks to spare before graduation.

Importance of Networking

The word “networking” elicits many responses, many of which are negative, but the fact remains that it is the foundation of not only a successful job search but a life skill that directly correlates to an individual’s personal and professional success over their lifetime. The proof is in the numbers and the numbers suggest that nearly 75% of all jobs are found through networking. So regardless of your current perception of “networking,” if you want to be successful in your MBA career search you need to embrace its power, put it into practice, and continue to hone your skills. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Making the Introduction

Whether you realize it or not you currently have an active social and professional network and you are building upon it daily. By making the choice to attend Tippie, not only did you open the door to a network of cohorts, but also the door to a network of faculty, staff, and alumni. This is a tremendous opportunity and a great place to start. Be advised that networking at its core is relationship development, and relationships take time, so be patient. That said, you need to be prepared to do the work. Technologies like email, LinkedIn, and Facebook have made it easier than ever to identify and reach out to alumni and professionals within your target organizations and industries. Make these technologies part of an integrated approach that utilizes the phone and face-to-face engagements when possible to further develop the relationship. There is no substitute for the value gained from personal interaction so take advantage of those opportunities when you have them.

Treat the initial engagement as you would any first interaction. Spend some time getting to know the other person, but be respectful of their time and only ask for a small amount early on. Ask open-ended questions, listen, and be interested and genuine. People love to give advice, share their experiences, and for the most part help others. As such, ask questions that will help you obtain the information you are seeking and be prepared, if asked, to share the same information with them, including how they may be able to help you. Be careful here though, because the response to that question is NOT “get me a job.” Your goal should be to learn about and meet as many new people as you can. One way they can help is to share or recommend other individuals from their own network that they feel may be able to provide additional value and insight in your quest to learn. If you are fortunate enough for them to pass along a referral, follow up immediately, and circle back to let them know you did and what, if anything, came of it.

Maintaining Connections

As mentioned above, this process takes time, so don’t expect immediate results, and in general, don’t expect anything in return outside of the time and insight they are willing to provide. A core tenet of a good networker is the mindset that they give more than they will get. If you don’t currently have that mindset, you need to develop it.

Stay in touch with the individuals in your network on a regular basis. It doesn’t have to be daily or even weekly to be effective. It does have to be relevant though. If you come across an article that may be of interest to them, pass it along with a short note. Set up a schedule to follow up monthly or quarterly with an update on what is going on in your world and inquire the same. Obviously, certain instances may require more frequent or less frequent interaction so gauge that accordingly and be respectful of their time. Keep an open mind and remember that everyone you meet regardless of the situation has the potential to become part of your network if you allow them to.

One approach that can be useful in both making the initial connection and the subsequent follow-up is to take the time to look at it from the other person’s view. Before you reach out, take the time to ask yourself, “If I received this communication, how would I respond?” Demonstrating empathy through this process will enable you to consider this question and adjust accordingly. Networking is very much about the golden rule: treat others as you would like to be treated.

Networking takes time, it takes work, and it takes persistence and patience. If you embrace it with a positive attitude and an open mind you will find it to be a very fulfilling and rewarding process.

Preparing for the Search

Communicating Your Brand

"It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently." - **Warren Buffett**

Once you've established your unique brand proposition, the only way to make it relevant to the marketplace is by promoting it. Communication of your brand can occur in multiple channels—one of the most obvious being via your resume and targeted cover letters. However, it is important to be aware that your brand is being communicated **every** day, including spots that may be unintentional—such as the content on your Facebook profile or an email or phone communication to a Tippie alumnus.

Consider the power of negative press. Tiger Woods comes to mind. Revered and respected as the best in his profession. Now: cut to the recent negative communication of his brand that left us all questioning his character—this may fade over time, but do you suppose he'll ever fully regain his positive brand? Unfortunately, for every positive step you take to promote your personal brand and increase your relevancy to the market, one negative action will set you back five paces. So as you look ahead to promoting and protecting your brand image, be sure to consider the following:

Resume

The most obvious communicator of your brand, but only impactful if you know your audience and make yourself relevant to their needs. Targeted resumes are necessary if you intend to pursue opportunities across more than one function or industry. This requires you to make modifications to your primary version to highlight the skills/experiences that are in closest alignment with the position to which you are applying. Do not attempt to make a "one size fits all" version, as this can cause your brand to be perceived as unfocused.

Targeted Cover Letter

Some companies value the introduction of a cover letter more than others. However, regardless of the emphasis placed on this communication tool by an organization, a poorly written or irrelevant letter will sharply decrease your opportunity for success.

TIP: Identify the 3-5 competency areas that are requested most frequently by the industries/functions you're interested in pursuing—craft 1-2 examples from your prior experience that demonstrate your skills in each of these areas [see p. 22 for additional information on how to utilize the SMART framework to create your stories].

Email Communication with Recruiters / Thank You Follow Up(s) Post-Interview

Many employers communicate via email, so it is critical that you develop the skills to ensure that any promotion of your brand in this capacity is flawless. Avoid the tendency to favor a casual tone, and be aware that non-verbal cues don't exist in this format so it is easy for even the best intentions to get lost in translation.

TIP: If you are unsure, get a second opinion before hitting the send button! Your Career Partners are here to provide feedback on any communication that involves the promotion of your brand. You only get one chance to make the RIGHT impression.

Networking Introduction to Alumni & Industry Contacts

Introductions can be intimidating and scary [see p. 53 for additional information on how to make an introduction]. And to further the intimidation factor, the way you present yourself initially will set the stage for how the alumnus will perceive your brand.

TIP: Turn the tables. You are now the alumnus and an email message has just popped up from an unfamiliar name. What would you want a message from a current Tippie student to say? This exercise will help you understand your audience, and then consider ways to make yourself relevant. Remember, even with busy schedules, the majority of individuals genuinely DO want to help!

Elevator Pitch at Career Fairs

[See pp. 20-21 for additional information on MBA Career Fairs & the Elevator Pitch].

Demeanor & Participation at Executive Speakers Professional Engagement During Networking Opportunities

Remember, every touch point is another opportunity to communicate your brand. It is up to you to determine whether this activity will have a positive or negative impact.

Communicating Your Brand in Social Media - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

[See pp. 5-6 for additional information on protecting your personal brand online].

Quick Tip: Search Optimize Your Resume

Virtually every company utilizes a corporate recruiting website to source and hire talent. In most cases, they require (for legal reasons) that all applications be routed through this process—often even in cases where you will have a more direct path to the position of interest (Career Services facilitated lead, networking contact, etc.). These sites include a digital database of resumes, and when sourcing candidates for an open positions recruiters will use key words in resumes to identify individuals with a potential skill fit.

As such, it is important to optimize the chances of your resume being pulled in a search.

How is this achieved?

When applying to a position, review the job description to identify key terms and then find ways to work these terms into your resume. If you are focusing on a specific career path (for example, business-to-consumer marketing with a consumer packaged goods company), one targeted version of your resume may address all firms within your target audience. However, if you are targeting several potential career paths within a function, you should consider having different versions of your resume to target each of these areas.

Additionally, a growing number of companies are utilizing social media outlets such as LinkedIn and Facebook to search for candidates, so ensuring you utilize these same keywords within your profile on these networking sites is another opportunity to optimize your odds of getting a first glance.

For more information on ways to optimize your resume, visit:

Career Rocketeer:

Resume SEO: Get Your Resume to the Top
<http://www.careerrocketeer.com/2009/05/resume-seo-get-your-resume-to-top.html>

Create a Google Profile:
www.google.com/profiles

The Interview Process

Behavior-Based Interviewing

The most prevalent interviewing style, behavior-based, requires candidates to draw upon past experiences to demonstrate knowledge or skill in a specific area. Potential employers will predetermine the primary skills needed to successfully perform in a role, and then probe with pointed questions to determine if a candidate has the necessary skills. The logic behind this technique is that past behaviors are the best indicators of your future performance. Generally, behavioral questions begin with “*Tell me about a time when...*” and focus on assessing business competencies such as (but not limited to) leadership, strategic thinking, analytical skills, and creativity.

Although some candidates elect to improvise these stories during an interview, we would caution against this approach as unplanned examples tend to lack structure and focus. The ability to develop powerful and concise stories that will showcase your capabilities takes time and practice. To achieve optimal results, we recommend that you utilize the following technique to assist in structuring your examples.

The SMART Framework Begins with the RESULT

Your preparation for this type of interview should include identifying examples of situations from past experience that address the needs of the employer. This will include examples from your resume, as well as experiences that you were unable to include (due to space limitations, etc.). Storytelling is an art and, as such, it requires that you share details in a clear and focused manner. Avoid painting your experience in broad strokes—generalizations give the employer a shallow perspective on who you are, how you possess a needed skill, and why you’re the right person for their team. The SMART Framework, which begins with the RESULT, will enable you to define examples and then ensure you are targeting the most relevant and important details from that specific experience. Remember: examples from your professional experience should be first priority, but you should also consider stories from classes, extracurricular or leadership activities, team involvements, community service, study abroad experiences, and/or past consulting projects or internships.

Result Summarized

Briefly state the result attained to capture and focus the attention of the interviewer.

Situation and Metric

This step should be brief. Identify the situation, task, or challenge that you faced. Use metrics where possible.

Action(s)

Describe the steps involved with this particular situation or challenge.

This is the “meat” of your story. Take the interviewer(s) through the actions YOU took in this situation or challenge. Again, avoid generalizations and be clear on the role you played. Remember: interview stories should take no more than two minutes to complete, and the majority of this time should be spent on describing your actions.

Results

Share the results of your actions and, whenever possible, quantify them. Numbers support your achievements and demonstrate your level of responsibility. Without taking the employer through the outcomes associated with your actions, it leaves them questioning the type of results you delivered. Remember: while it is more enjoyable to share success stories, employers will also ask to hear about situations that challenged you. *When were you NOT successful in achieving a goal?* In these cases, it is critical that your results include what you learned from these situations, and an example (or two) of personal growth that was achieved through this experience.

Tie It Back

State how this example demonstrates the way you can add value to the role you are interviewing for.

Anticipate that follow-up questions by the interviewer are possible. When your story relates to a skill or experience that the employer wants to explore further, they may dig deeper with open-ended questions such as:

What were you thinking at that point?

Tell me more about your interactions with that person.

EXAMPLE: Tell me about a time when you used a new way of addressing a problem.

Result Summarized:

One way of thinking outside the box is to engage other constituents in gleaning the best solution to a situation. An example of this was...

Situation and Metric:

During my internship last summer, I was responsible for managing three large simultaneous projects. One of these projects tasked me with managing an event, and I observed that attendance had been steadily dropping over the past two years by close to 30%. I decided to do something to improve these numbers.

Action(s):

I designed a new promotional packet to go out to local community businesses ahead of our first event. In it I included a rating sheet to collect feedback on our previous events. I further organized internal round table discussions to raise awareness of the issue with our team.

Results:

Upon analysis of the data we utilized several quality ideas we received from the community, made our internal systems more efficient and visible, and raised attendance at the event by 18%.

Tie it back:

This example demonstrates my ability to think outside the box in generating options to solving problems, which would prove beneficial in this role as I would be working with implementing new projects for various constituents.

Source: Susan Britton Whitcomb, Job Search Magic, 2006

The Interview Process

Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

The below competency areas represent those you can expect to encounter most frequently during the interview process.

Analytical Skills

Ex: Tell me about a time when you had to work with a lot of data.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Leadership

Ex: Tell me about your most significant leadership experience.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Creativity

Ex: Tell me about a time when you utilized a completely new/different approach to a situation.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process

Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

Communication Skills

Ex: How would your former co-workers describe your communication style?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Goal Orientation

Ex: Tell me about two goals you've set for yourself in the last year. Did you achieve them?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Project Management Skills

Ex: Describe a failed project you have been involved with at work, and explain why it was not successful.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process



Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

Team Skills

Ex: Give an example of your involvement in a team that was less than successful. What could you have done differently to make it more successful?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Conflict Management

Ex: Tell me about a situation at work in which you experienced conflict and how you resolved it.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Ethics & Integrity

Ex: Describe a situation in which you faced an ethical challenge in the workplace and how you resolved it.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process

Artful Storytelling

Crafting Your Interview Stories for Optimal Results

Strategic Thinking Skills

Ex: What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Work Ethic

Ex: Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond what was expected for the benefit of your team or customer.

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

Passion

Ex: What are you passionate about outside of work? What motivates you?

Result Summarized

Situation and Metric

Action(s)

Results

Tie It Back

The Interview Process

Practice Interview Questions

General

Tell me about yourself.

Walk me through your resume.

If I were to speak with your former supervisor, what would s/he say are your greatest strengths, and what are a few areas of needed improvement?

What would your classmates tell me about you?

What is the biggest risk you've ever taken?

What is unique about you? Convince me you're the right person for this job.

What can you bring to our company that the other candidates can't?

Why Tippie?

Tell me something about you that I wouldn't learn by reading your resume.

Analytical Skills

Tell me about a time when you discovered a more efficient way to do a work task.

Tell me about a task that really tested your analytical abilities.

Tell me about a tricky situation for which you found a simple solution.

Have you ever been in a real dilemma at work? What did you do to get out of it?

Tell me about an assignment you worked on in which you had to amass a huge amount of data and then analyze it.

Can you tell me about a situation where your analysis of a problem was deemed to be incorrect? What would you have done differently?

Leadership

Describe a time when you reprimanded an employee for poor performance. What was the outcome?

How do you balance client needs with company goals?

How do you motivate subordinates?

Tell me about a situation at work in which you led a team well.

Tell me about a time when you mentored someone.

What leader do you most admire and why?

What was your most significant leadership experience?

What five qualities do you feel define great leadership?

Tell me about your most significant leadership experience.

Describe one experience when you had to lead a team.

How do you keep each member of the team involved and motivated while keeping morale high? Describe the steps you take to achieve this.

In what situations do you prefer to use your leadership skills? Can you give me some examples?

Creativity

How often do you discuss and work with colleagues to think up new systems and styles of working?

Have you ever tried a new way of doing things? Did you succeed?

Tell me about one case when you tried to solve a problem with a totally different approach than is normally used. What was the result?

Tell me about a situation when you tried to solve a problem with ideas and methods that had not been tried before.

Imagine you could trade places with anyone for just a week. The person could be famous or not famous, living or from history, real or fictional. With whom would you trade places?

If someone wrote a biography about you, what do you think the title should be?

If you had to be shipwrecked on a deserted island, but all your human needs - such as food and water - were taken care of, what two items would you want to have with you?

If you could have dinner with anyone from history, who would it be and why?

If you won \$20 million in the lottery, what would you do with the money?

Bowling has been banned and all bowling alleys have been shut down. Tell me five interesting new uses for bowling balls.

Communication Skills

How would your co-workers describe your communication style?

Give me an example of a time when you had to sell an idea.

Give me an example that demonstrates your ability to network and, as a result, generate new business for a product or service.

Provide an example of an unpleasant client situation. How did you handle it? What would you have done differently?

Tell me about a time when your opinion was challenged. How did you handle it?

Describe a time when you had to convince a person or group to re-evaluate their decision.

Describe your presentation skills and experience.

Please describe any experience you have with negotiation or financial transactions or with negotiation in general.

Rate your communication skills on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing excellent communication skills. Give me three examples from your past work experiences that demonstrate the selected number is accurate.

Describe five things about the communication within an organization that must be present for you to work most effectively.

When you have entered a new workplace in the past, describe how you have gone about meeting and developing relationships with your new coworkers, supervisors, and reporting staff.

What processes do you use to clarify your written work and verify its accuracy?

Can you tell me about a recent writing assignment, what it entailed, and what steps you took to make sure the assignment was accurate?

The Interview Process

Practice Interview Questions

Goal Orientation

Would you describe yourself as goal oriented?

Describe what you've accomplished toward reaching a recent goal for yourself.

Can you describe your long-term goals and objectives?

What do you expect to be doing in five years? Ten years?

Tell me about initiatives you have taken to improve procedures at work? Were you successful? Would you do anything differently now?

Tell me about a time you succeeded in overcoming a major obstacle. How did it make you feel?

Project Management/Organizational Skills

When it is your responsibility to organize and plan a project, what steps do you take?

How do you accommodate last minute changes that are incorporated into your work?

How do you prioritize tasks to be completed within one work project?

Illustrate how you prioritize daily tasks.

What do you do when a project is not coming to fruition as expected due to inefficient planning?

What steps do you take when the work of a colleague threatens the completion of a project?

Teamwork

Have you ever had a role in a team project where your role was not clearly defined? How do you handle this?

When your team encounters a problem, such as irritation with another co-worker, how do you reach a good resolution?

When you receive positive feedback about the completion of a project, do you give your team any credit?

When you are part of a team that is working exceptionally well, what do you think are the reasons for this success?

When did you last coordinate your work with others in a team project? What was your most successful contribution?

Tell me about a time when you were in a well functioning team, except for one member who was not pulling his weight. How did you handle it?

Conflict Management

Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor or instructor? How did you resolve the conflict?

Tell me about a major problem you recently handled. Were you successful in resolving it?

Tell me how you deal with high pressure situations.

How do you manage to work with people with whom you are not comfortable? What do you do in these situations?

Tell me about a time when you helped to successfully mediate a conflict. How did you feel?

Tell me about a time when you were aware of a serious mistake made by a colleague and what did you do about it?

Describe a time when you had a disagreement with a colleague at work. How did you manage to work it out?

Tell me about a time when you had to work through some negativity to get work done.

Ethics & Integrity

Tell me about a time when you had to make an uncertain decision with the possibility of an adverse public reaction. How did you manage the situation?

Have you ever tried to raise an issue that you thought may have been unlawful or not in accordance with professional principles?

How would you manage a situation where you believed that something was not in compliance with professional ethics?

What would you do if you saw a valued customer behaving in an unethical manner? How about a co-worker?

Strategic Thinking Skills

How would you describe the term 'strategic thinking'?

Outline in very broad terms how you would create a strategy for say, a public interest campaign.

How should you go about identifying partners as part of any good business organizational strategy?

As you develop strategic vision for your organization, what are the five key criteria that you should focus on?

What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?

Work Ethic

Tell me about a time when you had to work through some negativity to get work done.

Would you describe yourself as a self-starter? Can you give recent examples where you displayed this quality?

Passion

There are thousands of possible careers. Why do you want to follow this particular career?

Describe a project you were involved in that really excited you.

What makes you excited to get out of bed in the morning?

Tell me about a hurdle which got in the way of achieving an ambitious goal. How did you go about overcoming it?

Tell me about a time when you willingly volunteered for a task. Why were you so interested in this specific task?

The Interview Process

Getting Technical: Functionally Specific Interviews

At this point, you've started to generate stories from your prior experience that address the various competency/skill areas that are most widely sought by MBA hiring companies. Continue this effort, as it will build your confidence, make you better prepared to navigate the uncertainty that is tied to any interview, and increase your odds of success when opportunity knocks. As you progress through an interview process with a company you should be prepared for the interviews to get more challenging—with far greater emphasis placed on assessing your technical skills and functional expertise. The “technical interview” as it is often referenced, seeks to understand if you have the technical capacity to operate at a high level within a specific career path. This can include questions to assess overall knowledge of a function, as well as questions designed to dig deeper into your problem solving, critical and creative thinking skills, and your passion for the field.

Sample Knowledge Questions

Marketing

Note: They are looking for you to demonstrate both that (1) you understand marketing and (2) you are passionate about it.

- What is your favorite brand/ad/new product/retail store promotion in the market right now? Why?
- How do you calculate market share?
- How would you determine if a given product is successful?
- What is the difference between primary and secondary research? When would you use one vs. the other?
- What is market segmentation?
- How would you as a brand/product manager think through and prioritize growth opportunities for your brand/product?
- What are the different ways a brand/product manager could learn about their consumer's unmet needs?
- How would you go about analyzing a market as the first step of developing a sound brand/product strategy?
- If you were a brand/product manager, how would you:
 - determine the appropriate promotional plan for your brand/product?
 - determine the appropriate pricing strategy for your brand/product?
 - determine the appropriate distribution strategy for your brand/product?
- If you had to advise a new Brand Manager about the pros/cons of the new digital marketing promotional options, what would they be?
- How familiar are you with the product development process?
- How familiar are you with the AIDA model of consumer behavior?
- How familiar are you with product lifecycle management?
 - STP framework? The 4Cs framework?

Finance

- Why might a company choose debt over equity financing, or vice versa?
- How will a decrease in financial leverage affect a company's cost of equity capital, if at all? How will it affect a company's equity beta?
- What are the different ways to value a company?
- What is the difference between a DCF and comps?
- What is the difference between enterprise value and equity value?
- Which of the three financial reporting statements (balance sheet, income statement, statement of cash flows) is most important and why do you believe this is so?
- How does depreciation affect each of the three financial statements?
- What is your best investment idea right now?
- If I gave you a million dollars, how would you invest the proceeds?
- What is your investment style?
- What sources of information would you use to analyze a company?
- What's the difference between IRR, NPV, and Payback?
- What's the difference between I-banking and Private Equity?
- More questions can be found on the Finance Academy ICON site.

Strategic Innovation

Strategy

- How would you describe the term 'strategic thinking'?
- Outline in broad terms how you would create a strategy for say, a public campaign. As part of this strategic campaign, why should you carry out a SWOT analysis?
- How should you go about identifying partners as part of any good business or organization strategy plan?
- As you develop a strategic vision for your organization, what are the five key criteria that you should focus on?
- Discuss the importance of establishing an appropriate basis for comparison in assessing strategic capability.
- What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?

Operations and Supply Chain

- What factors would you consider in determining the location of a distribution center?
- How would you improve the utilization of a process?
- You have to process 50 units and have two options. In the first, you can start 2 lines with 1% defect rate and a capacity of 7 units an hour. In the second option, you can start 3 lines with fewer people but a higher defect rate and a higher capacity. Looking at overall picture, which process is more efficient and why?
- It costs \$200 to train a new person, and a training session has an overhead cost of \$2000. You have 220 people to process in the coming months. Given the normal attrition rate, you expect to lose 40 of the trained employees. Does it make sense to call for overtime or add new folks?
- You have a fixed budget, and heat in the building is causing increased attrition. Also, as your productivity targets are revised upwards each year, you want to buy a couple of machines, which would dramatically improve productivity. In particular, the machines would improve the productivity of the best associates by at least 20%, but these are the same folks who are threatening to walk out if something is not done about temperature. What would you do?

Continuous Improvement Leadership

- Have you ever had to balance multiple priorities? How did you handle this?
- If you were placed in a situation where you had to lead a team in an area that you were very unfamiliar, how would you approach solving their problem?
- If you are working on a project where leadership is not engaged, what would you do to make sure the project was successful?
- Please describe to me the DMAIC process and the tools used at each step.
- How would you determine what samples should be used in a Gage R&R study, and how do you interpret the results?
- Can you describe when you have taught classes with leadership and the difficulties you encountered?
- If you were working on a transactional project with very little data, how would you determine the root causes of the problem?
- Can you describe your past experiences with leading process improvement teams?
- Could you describe your most successful project? Why do you define this as your most successful?
- Tell me about a time when you had a coworker come to you with a problem that you thought was trivial. What did you do?
- What are acceptable reasons for missing a deadline?
- Describe your experience in solving a particularly difficult problem. Why was it difficult?
- Have you ever deviated from expected policy or procedure? If so, what happened?
- Give me an example of when you found a way to make your job easier or more rewarding.
- Tell me what each S stands for in 5S and how you have addressed each one.
- What tools/software do you feel comfortable working with on a daily basis? i.e. MS Office, MS Project, Minitab, etc.

Consulting

- What are the three most common reasons why change in management fails in most organizations?
- What background do you have that would be helpful in consulting?
- Why consulting?
- How do you think the consulting industry is structured?
- What are some differences among the consulting firms that are important to you?
- What were the sales of your last employer? What was its profitability?
- Are you a generalist or specialist? Where do you see yourself specializing?
- Are you competitive?
- How are you going to make your decision if you get more than one offer?

The Interview Process

Case Interviewing Technique: Assessing Your Problem-Solving Skills

Case interviewing can be more broadly defined as problem solving. This technique is used to assess your skills in fields requiring strong analytical and quantitative skills, the ability to demonstrate structured problem solving skills, as well as other less obvious but equally important competencies such as active listening, interpersonal and communication skills, business acumen, performance under pressure, creativity, ability to navigate change, address problems in a logical way, synthesize the findings, and articulate these results in a concise manner to the interviewers. Case interviewing has historically been reserved for large consulting firms. However, in recent years many companies have started to adopt this style of questioning in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of your ability to assess a problem (typically a specific issue facing a particular company), analyze the situation, identify key issues, and articulate how you would address the problem.

Your Goal:

- Identify a problem
- Recommend a solution
- Not necessarily a “right” answer

Company is Assessing:

- Ability to determine what information is needed [needs assessment]
- Ability to problem solve within restricted/defined time period
- Quantitative skills
- Thought process
- Ability to function under pressure
- Self confidence
- Creativity
- Fit for the company
- Interest in problem solving
- Ability to navigate ambiguous situations
- Strong communication skills

Structure:

- Sent in advance [Written Case]
- On the spot [Verbal Case]

Recommendations:

- Practice
- Take it seriously
- Restate
- Ask questions
- Take your time
- Think out loud
- Determine assumptions
- Check calculations
- Consider alternatives
- Don't let it unravel you
- Take a deep breath and relax

Expert Insight:

David Ohrvall

Author, *Crack the Case System* & Founder of MBACASE

“What’s the point of the case interview? Why do I have to spend so much time mastering these random skills for some interviewer?” I hear these questions all the time. It’s easy to miss the benefits when you’re stressed out and buried in case interview books, but I think there are three key reasons to master these skills: **Knowledge Integration** - case interviews are the ultimate chance to pull together your work experience and academic training. You’ll test, reinforce, and build your business knowledge; **Senior Management Presence** – solving problems quickly with crisp logic and practical analytics is what business leaders do all the time; **Holistic Thinking** – case interview prep teaches you to think about how to solve problems in a broad way, pulling in strategic, operational, organizational, and financial elements. Invest time in cases and you’ll accelerate your holistic understanding of how a business works and ultimately you’ll be prepared for a variety of roles.”

Sample Questions

Case expert David Ohrvall visits campus in the fall to present a comprehensive workshop on how to approach and practice the case interviewing format. Additionally, many consulting firm websites give sample cases as well as practical advice on surviving their interview process. Included in this section are a few additional case question examples to get you moving in the right direction.

Brain Teasers

- How would you move Mount Fuji? [Creative]
- Estimate the market for light bulbs in Australia. [Market Sizing/Estimating]
- You have a 3-liter bucket and a 5-liter bucket. How will you measure out exactly 4 liters of water? Assume you have an endless supply of water and no markings on the bucket. [Logic Problem]
- How many barber shops are there in Seattle? [Logic Problem]

Business Problems & Strategy

- Your client is a company who makes specialist batteries for mobile homes [motor homes] in the United States. The battery is very powerful, long-lasting, and of high quality. New industry conditions are occurring and motor home dealers are starting to use a cheaper battery as the ‘factory standard’ in an attempt to lower the overall price of motor homes. Your client’s product is now only offered as an added feature for which the customer must pay an extra \$500 to get. How should your client go about maintaining profits given these new market conditions?

“Invest time in cases and you’ll accelerate your holistic understanding of how business works and ultimately you’ll be prepared for a variety of roles.”



Recruiter Insight

Derek Drahn

Director, Leadership Development
Transamerica

Leadership in the insurance industry requires people with strong potential in both the technical and people skill sets. Technical ability or capability to learn the key technical concepts of the business are the ante to leadership. Emerging leaders must meet and continue to enhance their technical knowledge sets as they move into greater roles even though they become less engrained in the detail. Mistakes of a technical nature in the insurance industry have to be lived with for years.

On the other hand, the ability to manage and empower people, to excel as both individual contributors as well as leaders of groups of people, is the skill set that determines how effective leaders are in driving company success. Leaders' influence on their organizations is magnified exponentially if they manage the business through their key people. Lastly, leadership is a journey, not a destination. We look for leaders who are in it for the long haul, not only for their careers, but for the careers of their lieutenants, as well.

Alumni Insight

Eliot Weiner

Director
Levy Group of Companies

Broad knowledge develops strength and versatility. Being able to understand (or learn quickly) the financial drivers, the logistical and process elements, marketing prowess, etc. allows a GM the ability to focus on the appropriate levers. As a GM, you need to competently manage multiple cross functional teams.

Early & Often: Whether you're a career changer or advancer, you came to Tippie to improve your career path so make certain that you focus on the long-term goal and avoid getting caught in the weeds. At this level, you're expected to have the technical skill for the job to which you apply. More times than not, the intangibles land you the job.

The Interview Process

Closing the Interview

"So what questions do you have for us?"

This statement—or something similar—heard from the interviewer(s) typically signifies that you're nearing the end of the interview. Although it's natural at this point to breathe a sigh of relief, don't lose your momentum just yet! Equally important to a strong first impression and well-crafted interview stories is your ability to provide a strong closing. Before you jump from your seat and head to the door, be sure to address the following:

3-5 Questions for the Interviewer(s)

- These should be thoughtful and demonstrate your interest and fit for the organization. This should not include a regurgitation of information you've gleaned from their website. Review your company info worksheet and identify a few questions that address *current* issues facing the business.
- Don't over think it. If you're considering working for this organization, what is it that you'd like to learn about the company and role?
- Consider your audience. If you are meeting with HR, they are not as likely to know specifics about the role for which you're interviewing, but they would be well positioned to answer questions about corporate culture and other "big picture" company issues. If you're meeting with the hiring manager, this is your opportunity to dive deeper into the specifics of the role, the team, how they measure success, etc.
- Utilize their responses as an opportunity to reiterate your passion and fit for the business. This is your last chance to make a positive impression!
- DO NOT use this time to ask questions about benefits, salary, or other HR-related questions. At this point you are still a prospect—these questions are appropriate once you have an offer in hand.
 - Demonstrate passion. Without question, ending an interview with low energy, irrelevant questions or—the worst case scenario—responding that you "have no questions at this time" can be deal breakers. So be sure you've done your research in advance of the interview to avoid this scenario.

Reiterate Your Personal Brand Statement

- It will feel natural after the Q&A portion of the interview to head for the door. Not just yet! Do not miss the opportunity to reiterate your personal brand statement (what makes you unique?), your passion for the role, and why you are the right person for the job. People want to hire people they like AND people that share their passion for the company. If you don't reiterate your interest and fit, rest assured that the interviewer before or after you will.

Ask for Business Cards, Shake Hands, Smile

- Following up after the interview (see below) is also critical, so if you do not already have contact details for those you met, be sure to ask for business cards at this time.
- Don't underestimate the power of a smile. Thank them for their time, be genuine, and end with a confident hand shake. Seemingly a small and obvious detail, but you'd be surprised how many people will miss this step. Don't be one of those people.

Following Up

"Oh, I forgot to get business cards so I wasn't able to send a thank you note."

I wish I could say that I've never heard this out of the mouths of Tippie MBAs, but unfortunately this mishap occurs on a fairly regular basis. At this stage in the process, you've worked incredibly hard to get the interview, and even harder to prepare for success in the interview. Don't allow this effort to be tarnished by neglecting to follow up. People enjoy acts of kindness, and a formal thank you following an interview is not only a great way to add a bright spot in someone's day, but it's an invaluable opportunity to reiterate your interest and fit for an organization. Few quick tips:

Pick a Talking Point & Make Yourself Relevant

- If pressed for time, ANY thank you is better than none at all. However, the most impactful follow ups emphasize a specific talking point from the interview. Reiterate a topic from your conversation that will be a positive reminder of your time together.
- Hand written thank you notes offer a personal touch that is rarely seen anymore, so it can set you apart. Email is also appropriate and provides more immediacy. Whichever you choose, just be sure to send it within 1-2 days following the interview. Also, be sure to have someone else [e.g. Career Services] review it before sending for accuracy and tone.

Relationship Management

“Whether you like it or not, people decide how they feel about you within the first two seconds of seeing you, or hearing you, if it’s on the phone. If they like you, they will unconsciously tend to see the best in you and look for opportunities to say ‘yes.’ If they don’t like you, the opposite is true.” - Harvard School of Health Sciences



Alumni Perspectives

Jafar Azmayesh

Private Investment Management
Barclays Capital

One seeks an MBA as a means of gaining a competitive advantage in the workplace. You learn very quickly that relationships are one of the few truly sustainable and irreplaceable competitive advantages one has in business. Networking is the grease in the engine of business, as nothing of significance is ever accomplished without enlisting the help and assistance of others. The sooner you begin building and nurturing new relationships, the sooner those relationships will translate into business success for you. Today business success for you means landing a job, tomorrow it will mean a promotion, and ultimately your legacy and reputation.

John Mickelson

Associate Managing Director
The Private Bank

When a start-up I was working on ran into unfavorable macro-economic conditions in the spring of 2007, I found myself staring into the abyss of not having a job at graduation in a few short months and, because of my attention on the start-up, not having taken advantage of Tippie’s strong career service capabilities.

Luckily, I had made a concerted effort throughout my time at Tippie to connect with fellow students, faculty/staff, and alumni and had developed deep and meaningful relationships with these individuals that were more than topical and superficial.

In my time of need, these contacts stepped up to help because of our professional friendship that we had established when I did not “need” them. Ultimately, one of these connections led me to a great job with several weeks to spare before graduation.

Importance of Networking

The word “networking” elicits many responses, many of which are negative, but the fact remains that it is the foundation of not only a successful job search but a life skill that directly correlates to an individual’s personal and professional success over their lifetime. The proof is in the numbers and the numbers suggest that nearly 75% of all jobs are found through networking. So regardless of your current perception of “networking,” if you want to be successful in your MBA career search you need to embrace its power, put it into practice, and continue to hone your skills. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Making the Introduction

Whether you realize it or not you currently have an active social and professional network and you are building upon it daily. By making the choice to attend Tippie, not only did you open the door to a network of cohorts, but also the door to a network of faculty, staff, and alumni. This is a tremendous opportunity and a great place to start. Be advised that networking at its core is relationship development, and relationships take time, so be patient. That said, you need to be prepared to do the work. Technologies like email, LinkedIn, and Facebook have made it easier than ever to identify and reach out to alumni and professionals within your target organizations and industries. Make these technologies part of an integrated approach that utilizes the phone and face-to-face engagements when possible to further develop the relationship. There is no substitute for the value gained from personal interaction so take advantage of those opportunities when you have them.

Treat the initial engagement as you would any first interaction. Spend some time getting to know the other person, but be respectful of their time and only ask for a small amount early on. Ask open-ended questions, listen, and be interested and genuine. People love to give advice, share their experiences, and for the most part help others. As such, ask questions that will help you obtain the information you are seeking and be prepared, if asked, to share the same information with them, including how they may be able to help you. Be careful here though, because the response to that question is NOT “get me a job.” Your goal should be to learn about and meet as many new people as you can. One way they can help is to share or recommend other individuals from their own network that they feel may be able to provide additional value and insight in your quest to learn. If you are fortunate enough for them to pass along a referral, follow up immediately, and circle back to let them know you did and what, if anything, came of it.

Maintaining Connections

As mentioned above, this process takes time, so don’t expect immediate results, and in general, don’t expect anything in return outside of the time and insight they are willing to provide. A core tenet of a good networker is the mindset that they give more than they will get. If you don’t currently have that mindset, you need to develop it.

Stay in touch with the individuals in your network on a regular basis. It doesn’t have to be daily or even weekly to be effective. It does have to be relevant though. If you come across an article that may be of interest to them, pass it along with a short note. Set up a schedule to follow up monthly or quarterly with an update on what is going on in your world and inquire the same. Obviously, certain instances may require more frequent or less frequent interaction so gauge that accordingly and be respectful of their time. Keep an open mind and remember that everyone you meet regardless of the situation has the potential to become part of your network if you allow them to.

One approach that can be useful in both making the initial connection and the subsequent follow-up is to take the time to look at it from the other person’s view. Before you reach out, take the time to ask yourself, “If I received this communication, how would I respond?” Demonstrating empathy through this process will enable you to consider this question and adjust accordingly. Networking is very much about the golden rule: treat others as you would like to be treated.

Networking takes time, it takes work, and it takes persistence and patience. If you embrace it with a positive attitude and an open mind you will find it to be a very fulfilling and rewarding process.