Management Consultant interview questions

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What to expect

Management consulting interviews mix standard behavioural questions with case-style problem-solving, because firms need to see how you think under pressure with incomplete information, not just what you've done before.

- **Process:** How you structure and scope an ambiguous problem before you have full data
- **Case/scenario:** A short business problem you work through live, thinking aloud as you go
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of leading workstreams, handling pressure or revising a recommendation
- **Client-facing:** Handling pushback or resistance from a client stakeholder or executive
- **Technical:** Financial modelling and business case fundamentals

Expect an initial screening interview on background and motivation, then one or more case interviews, often 30 to 45 minutes, where you work through a business problem with an interviewer. Behavioural questions are usually woven through the conversation rather than kept in a separate block.

1. Walk me through how you'd approach a case where a client wants to know why their profits have fallen, with limited data available.

Why they ask

Structuring an ambiguous problem before diving into analysis is the core skill consulting firms test for, more than any single right answer.

How to structure your answer

Framework walkthrough: state the objective clearly, break the problem into components such as revenue versus cost or product versus region, list your hypotheses, name the data you'd want to test each one, then explain what you'd do if that data isn't available.

> **Example answer**
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> *“I'd start by clarifying what 'fallen' means, over what period, compared to what baseline. Then I'd split the problem into revenue and cost drivers. On revenue I'd hypothesise volume decline versus price or mix shift, and on cost I'd look at input costs versus operating inefficiency. I'd ask for whatever financials and sales data exist, even at a rough level, and prioritise the hypothesis most likely to explain the size of the drop. If the data isn't there, I'd say so directly and propose a quick way to proxy it, for example using industry benchmarks, rather than guessing.”*

2. Tell me about a time you had to change a recommendation after new information came to light.

Why they ask

Tests whether you follow the evidence rather than defend a position, which matters when a client engagement moves fast.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

> **Example answer**
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> *“On an operational review, I'd initially recommended consolidating two client teams based on early cost data. Partway through, I found the two teams served different client segments with different service level requirements, which the initial data hadn't captured. I flagged this to the engagement lead straight away, reworked the analysis to reflect the segment difference, and revised the recommendation to a partial consolidation instead. The client implemented the revised version, and it*

avoided a service disruption the original plan would have caused."

3. A senior client executive challenges your numbers in front of the board. How do you handle it?

Why they ask

Consultants present to executives regularly, and composure under direct challenge is something interviewers specifically probe for.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure structure: acknowledge the challenge without getting defensive, verify or clarify the specific figure in question, respond with the underlying logic or data source, and commit to a follow-up if you can't resolve it on the spot.

Example answer

"I'd acknowledge the question and ask them to point to the specific figure they're querying, so I'm responding to the actual concern rather than guessing. I'd walk through the assumption or data source behind that number calmly. If I'm not certain on the spot, I'd say so and commit to confirming it after the meeting rather than improvising an answer I'm not sure of. Board credibility comes from being straight about what you know and don't know, not from having every number memorised."

4. How would you build a business case comparing two options for a client, for example insourcing versus outsourcing a function?

Why they ask

Tests financial modelling and business case fundamentals, which sit underneath most consulting recommendations.

How to structure your answer

Technical walkthrough: define the comparison criteria, set out the cost and benefit structure for each option, state the key assumptions, and explain how you'd stress-test them with sensitivity analysis.

Example answer

"I'd first agree with the client what matters most, cost, control, quality or speed, since that shapes how I weight the comparison. For each option I'd map out the cost structure, including one-off transition costs and ongoing run costs, and the qualitative factors like loss of control or knowledge risk. I'd build a simple model in Excel comparing net cost over a few years, then run sensitivity on the assumptions most likely to be wrong, such as transition timeline or volume growth. The output would be a clear recommendation plus the conditions under which that recommendation would flip."

5. Describe a time you led a workstream on a tight deadline.

Why they ask

Long hours and compressed timelines are routine on client engagements, so interviewers want evidence you can lead under that pressure without the work quality slipping.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"On a client engagement, I was given a workstream to deliver findings in under two weeks alongside two analysts. I broke the workstream into daily milestones so we'd catch problems early rather than at the deadline, and I checked in with each analyst individually rather than just running one big team meeting. When one analysis stream hit a data quality issue, I reallocated a day's buffer I'd built in rather than letting it push the whole deadline. We delivered the findings on time, and the client used them directly in their board paper."

6. Describe how you'd handle a stakeholder who disagrees with your recommendation and isn't engaging constructively.

Why they ask

Client-facing resistance is common in consulting, and firms want to see you can manage it without escalating unnecessarily or backing down on sound analysis.

How to structure your answer

Approach description: listen for the underlying concern rather than just the stated objection, adjust how you frame the recommendation to address it, and explain when and how you'd escalate if the disagreement persists.

> **Example answer**
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> *“I'd try to understand what's actually driving the resistance, whether it's the analysis itself, how the change affects their team, or something political I haven't seen. Often reframing the recommendation around what matters to them specifically resolves it without changing the substance. If they still aren't engaging after that, I'd raise it with the engagement lead rather than let it stall the workstream, since some disagreements need a level above me to resolve.”*