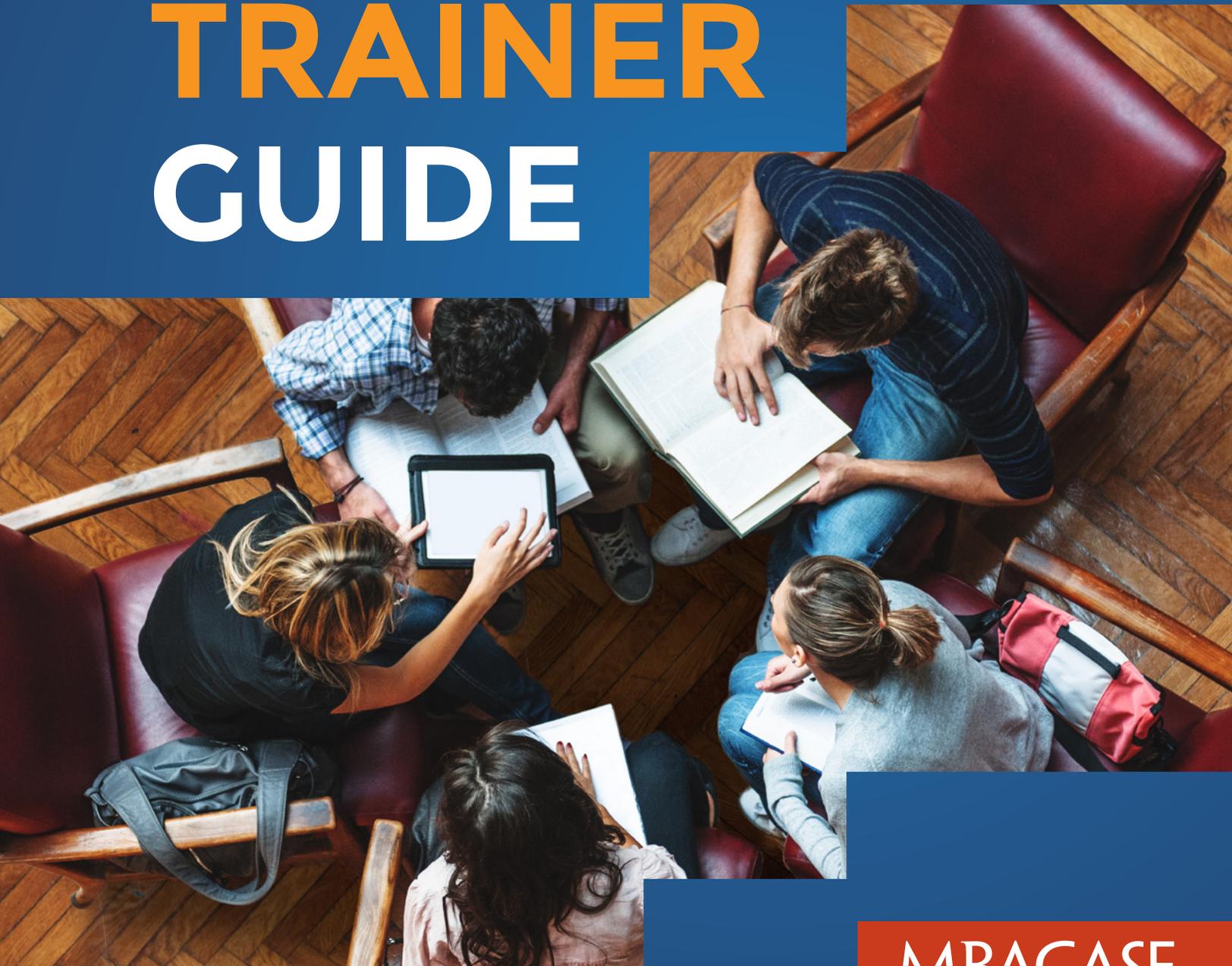


CASE INTERVIEW TRAIN THE TRAINER GUIDE



MBACASE

7 Steps to Giving a Great Case Interview*

MBACASE Path



Qualitative

Tip 1 A good case will test both qualitative and quantitative skills. Ask questions that push the candidate in both areas. Even if you are more comfortable with qualitative questions, try adding an equation or calculation after you get to know the case. Remember, you don't have to do the math. You already have the answer key!



2 Warm-up Warmth & Client Ready

Tip 2 Look for strong communication skills. Could this candidate present to a wide variety of audiences? Test for the candidate's fit by asking a tough question or two about his experience. Listen for an "answer first", direct approach tone. Answering questions directly is highly correlated to moving through cases quickly.



3 Start Logic & Breadth

Tip 3 Now it's time to test for strong structuring skills. Present the case question succinctly and listen for a concise recap of the situation, complication and key task. Typically the candidate will take a minute and put together a plan to solve the case. As the candidate presents be sure to listen for a natural, but very logical tone (e.g. 1st, 2nd and 3rd). Pressure test the approach by asking specific questions about a few areas. Ask about omissions or unclear areas. Don't rush through this step as it is often considered the most important.



6 So what? Integration & Creativity

Tip 6 To solve the case the candidate needs to fully integrate his findings from the data pool in Step 4 with other parts of the discussion. A good candidate will naturally refer back to his structure in Step 3 and comment on what he has found with his analysis. His comments will center on what part of the original structure has been covered and what else he would like to do. If the candidate cannot find any insights, prompt with a question like, "What are the implications of these findings?"



Quantitative

Tip 4 Did the candidate "jump in" the data pool or did you have to push? As you transition from the qualitative to the quantitative, how ready was he to look at data, discuss numbers and do computations? Make sure your case has some kind of a data test, whether it is a quick computation or simple handout. You are looking for his comfort with numbers and a degree of accuracy with calculations. Don't feel pressured to correct any math errors after the case. Prepare a handout that shows the answer and the calculations. Give it to him at the end of your practice session.



4 Data Dump Chart/Table Equations Estimate Solve for X Depth & Numbers

Tip 5 Before leaving the data pool completely, the candidate needs to give some insights related to the numbers. Whether it's identifying the main point of a slide or calculating a break-even or profit percentage, the candidate needs to bring the numbers to life. Expect the candidate to explain how the data proves or disproves something about the case. More complex cases may have multiple insights, but plan to have at least one. If he has no insights, prompt with an open ended question like, "What does the data say to you?"



5 Insight



7 End Data

Tip 7 A candidate ends a case well when he brings together his initial plan and his analysis of the facts into a succinct recommendation. Check for a full understanding of all the pieces and the ability to prioritize a solution (e.g. short and long term). The final answer should be based on data found in the case and not on what the candidate knows from everyday experience. At the very end, test for creativity by asking, "If you had more time, what else would you do?"

*For more details, please see Chapter 9 in *Crack the Case System*

7 Steps and Tips at a Glance

- 🎯 **Qualitative & Quantitative** – challenge the candidate with questions in both areas.
- 🎯 **Warm-up** – look for client ready skills and the ability to communicate to a variety of audiences.
- 🎯 **Start** – candidates need to show sound logic and breadth of thinking. Test the plan!
- 🎯 **Data Pool** – prepare some kind of chart, table or computation to check comfort and accuracy with numbers.
- 🎯 **Insight** – can the candidate bring the numbers to life and show how they tie to his plan?
- 🎯 **So what?** – prep a few integration questions like, “What are the implications of these findings?”
- 🎯 **End the Case** – expect to hear a well integrated recommendation supported with data from the case.

Skills to Test = FRAME

- F**orm a Plan—can the candidate structure a plan that is easy to explain and follow?
- R**ead the Audience—does he follow your lead and speed up and slow down where appropriate?
- A**nchor a Hypothesis—is the candidate trying to use the data to prove or disprove a hunch?
- M**ine for an Answer—are you hearing questions that tie to the structure and are designed to find data?
- E**nd the Case—does the candidate present a complete, persuasive and well integrated solution?

Tip 1

1. Use cases with an answer key. There should be data and a logical structure to follow. Check out mbacase.com for free ones!

Tip 2

2. Test a limited set of skills. Your case can emphasize one area like structuring, analytics or integration. It will help you focus and be a better coach.

Tip 3

3. Build a case around a topic you enjoy. Borrow the structuring and math from one of our cases, but change the topic to something you know well. You'll have more fun and keep it fresh!



David Ohrvall is the global expert on the topic of case interviews. A dynamic and sought-after speaker, his legendary Crack the Case Workshops have trained over 50,000 MBAs and undergraduates at elite business schools around the world, including the Wharton School, Harvard Business School, Stanford GSB, Chicago Booth, INSEAD, Oxford and Cambridge. David also has an extensive private coaching practice that has launched over 1,200 clients into consulting, venture capital and other industries. David is a former management consultant (Bain & Company) and a graduate of the Wharton School (MBA and undergrad). Learn more about David at www.mbacase.com