

So You Want to Be a Consultant?

Public Sector Consulting 101

Mark Brostoff

Director of Career Advising

August 27, 2024

Overview

- What is consulting?
- Public sector consulting recruitment @ Sanford
- Desired skills
- Recruiting timeline
- Types of interviews
- What to do while at Sanford
- Resources

Workshop Zoom Etiquette

- Zoom name = your full name
- Mute yourself
- Turn on your camera
- Type your questions in the chat
- Complete post-workshop survey
- This session is recorded

What is Consulting?



Consultants work on business problems

Consultants primarily work with clients to solve problems



Career Trajectory



Consultants perform many functions, across many different industries



Industries

- Automotive & Assembly
- Media & Entertainment
- Public Sector / Social Sector
- Chemicals
- Metals & Mining
- Consumer Packaged Goods / Retail
- Payer/Provider
- Electric Power & Natural Gas/Petroleum
- Financial Services
- Pharmaceuticals & Medical Products
- Telecommunications
- High Tech
- Private Equity



Capabilities and functions

- Finance & Performance Management
- Process & Innovation Performance
- Talent & Organization Performance
- Strategy
- Customer Relationship Management
- Supply Chain Management
- IT System Development
- Private Equity Due Diligence
- Sales-Force Optimization
- Change Management
- Merger & Acquisition Advisory Services
- Operations Strategy
- Design Thinking

Types of Management Consultants



Strategy
Consultants



Operations
Consultants



Human Resources
Consultants



IT
Consultants



Financial
Consultants



Marketing
Consultants



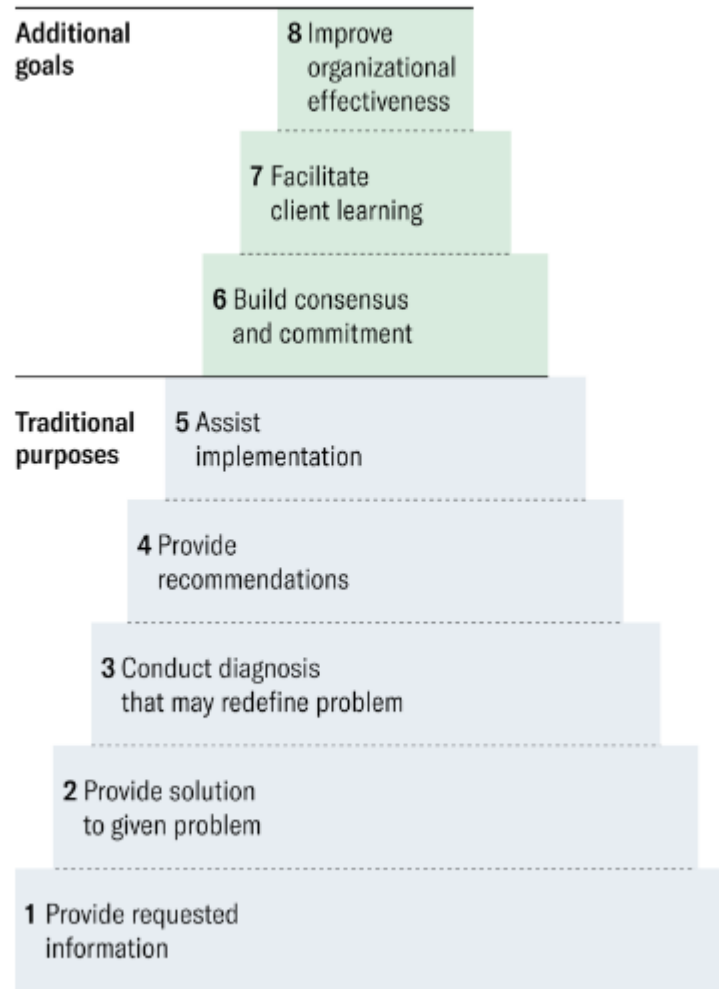
Change Management
Consultants



Environmental and
Sustainability
Consultants

Source: The Knowledge Academy

A Hierarchy of Consulting Purposes



HBR

Source: HBR "Consulting is More Than Giving Advice"



Recruiting Sanford Students

- Generalist recruiting model:
 - work with public sector clients is not guaranteed
 - graduate students may be initially put on private sector projects
 - graduate students may be hired at the same level as undergraduate students (unless they have considerable work experience)

Companies Who Recruit Sanford Students

Company	Recruiting Timeline
Abt Global	Jobs & Internships: spring
Acumen/Sphere Institute	Jobs & Internships: spring
Alvarez and Marsal	Jobs: early fall; Internships: late fall
Arabella Advisors	Jobs & Internships: spring
Booz Allen Hamilton	Jobs: fall; Internships: late fall
Bridgespan	Jobs: early fall
Chemonics International	As Needed
Dalberg Advisors	Jobs & Internships: fall
Deloitte	Jobs: fall; Internships: late fall
Guidehouse	Jobs & Internships: fall and spring
HR&A	Jobs & Internships: spring
McChrystal Group	Jobs & Internships: fall
Pallas Advisors	Internships: spring
Public Consulting Group	As Needed
Public Impact	As Needed
Rios Partners	Jobs & Internships: fall
Social Impact	As Needed
The Raben Group	As Needed

Additional Opportunities

- Public/Government Relations, Lobbying, and Political Strategy Companies
 - The Advance Group CO2EFFICIENT
 - Purpose Cassidy and Associates
 - SS+K Crowell & Moring International (CMI)
 - The Charles Group Jennings Policy Strategies, Inc. (JPS)
 - Devine Mulvey Longabaugh Hickman Analytics
 - Global Policy Group FGS Global
 - Nueva Vista Group (NVG) Kountoupes Denham Carr & Reid
 - Carmen Group Fountainworks
- Trade Associations
- Government Relations for Companies
 - Mizuho Bank Weyerhaeuser
 - RTI International
- Law Firms
 - Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP Dentons
 - Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck Holland & Knight

Internships Recruiting Timeline*



Jobs Recruiting Timeline*



First Round Interviews



First round interviews generally consist of two parts: case and behavioral

	Behavioral interview	Case interview
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ~10-15 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ~25-35 min
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Questions and answers• Typically deep dives on 3-4 stories rather than series of differing questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “<i>Working interview</i>” where an applicant solves a business problem• Can simulate consultant-client relationship
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluating teamwork, leadership, initiative, ability to deliver results, and personal successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluating structured problem-solving abilities
Ideal response characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structured answers that demonstrate key consulting competencies (analytics, leadership, teamwork, etc.)• Personality & fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structured response• Comfortable with ambiguity• Composed• Command of numbers/analytics• Strong listener and receiver of feedback

Second Round Interviews



Second round interviews can be similar, or feature new formats

Format	Description	Objective
Group Case	Candidates review prompts with individualized information and must work as a team to craft a group recommendation	Understand candidates' ability to work in a high-pressured team setting
Written Case	Candidates review prepared information (slides, graphs, memos) for ~30-45 min and must create a recommendation for interviewers, followed by a Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand candidate's ability to sift through a large amount of data and pull out what is important• Create and structure a presentation for interviewer
Unstructured Case	Candidates receive no formal written prompt ; only directives from interviewer. Interviewer can take case in any direction based on candidate responses	Similar to a typical case, only the candidate must be able to thrive outside of the typical case prompts and stages

Your Story – Tailor to Each Firm



Tailor your story to the needs of the consulting firms

- Well before CAR stories, you'll be asked 3 prompts: "tell me about yourself," "why consulting," "why our firm"?
 - You should be mastering these questions now, as they'll come up in networking chats
- Show your passion/**fit** for consulting and the company
 - Highlight the influences or inflection points that have convinced you that consulting is the natural next step in your career
 - Show that you know what consultants do and will be a good fit
- Demonstrate **structure** to your thinking
 - Man com offers terrific guidance for how to with structure (answer first)

Sample Key Skills



- Problem solving/analytical
- Creativity
- Entrepreneurial
- Client ready
- Curiosity
- Teamwork/team-building
- Project management
- Flexibility
- Ability to ramp up quickly



Behavioral Interviews

The STAR Method



Source: MIT CAPD

Case Interviews



The case interview represents the work consulting firms do

Case portion: working with the interviewer to solve a business problem to show that you:

Solve problems in a structured way

Communicate effectively

Fit well and can work with a team

Like case work in consulting, cracking a case requires you to simplify an ambiguous problem into an easy-to-understand recommendation

Candidate-led vs. Interviewer-led interviews

	Candidate-led case interviews	Interviewer-led case interviews
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">In candidate-led interviews, the candidate is expected to drive the case from start to finish. This means they are responsible for structuring the problem, asking the right questions, and leading the discussion towards a solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The interviewer takes a more active role in guiding the discussion. They may present information in chunks and ask the candidate to solve specific problems or answer <u>particular questions</u> at each stage.
Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The candidate is in the driver's seat. They must proactively identify issues, prioritize them, and decide on the next steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">While the candidate still needs to showcase their problem-solving skills, the direction of the case is largely determined by the interviewer.
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There's often more room for creativity and exploration. If the candidate decides to explore a particular area of the case in depth, they have the freedom to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The interviewer might direct the candidate to specific areas they want to test, which can make the case feel more structured and segmented.

CareerInConsulting.com

All consulting firms look for three key things during case interviews with candidates

1. Structured Problem Solving

“Can this candidate solve a problem using business intuition and creativity while maintaining a structured approach?”

- Quickly develop a structure applicable to the problem
- Solve simple math problems quickly under pressure

2. Communication

“Can I put this candidate in front of a client?”

- Candidate is confident, conversational, and passionate
- Communicates succinctly, answer first then justify

3. Fit & Teamwork

“Would I want this candidate on my team? Would I want to be stuck in an airport with this person?”

- Comfortable chatting, connects with others easily

Strong candidates will be poised, creative, and analytical

Poised

- **Be present** (keep eye contact, sit up straight, etc.)
- **Adapt to cues and hints** from the interviewer, listen carefully
- **Look excited and be interested** – this actually should be fun!
- **Feel relaxed and be yourself**, this is often as important as “cracking the case”

Creative

- **Add unique ideas** based on your previous experience (or not!)
- Show your **creative** side and don't be afraid of throw new **ideas**
- Don't be a “robot”

Analytical

- **Embrace what** the numbers tell you
- **Focus on the insights** not the actual numerical values
- Show a **structured approach** to your problem solving
- Always ask yourself “**so what?**”

It's easy to focus exclusively on the analysis. Poise and enthusiasm are just as important.

Common case pitfalls can be mitigated and avoided with the right preparation

Potential mistake	Mitigation strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probing for information without reason, asking for too much before structuring problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rely on your framework Ask a few contextual questions before building your framework Provide rationale for asking; what will you do with the data/information?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignoring interviewer clues and cues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice with live casers Be flexible and respond to changes in direction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting lost in numbers, doing math silently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice with live casers Drill math on your own (RocketBlocks) Structure and explain your approach before diving into the numbers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being too rigid/mechanical, not showing creativity or comfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read WSJ and Bloomberg and practice mental frameworks Ask casers for presentation feedback

Case structure

	What is it?	What should I do?
Prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewer will read / tell you the business problem you are going to work in the next ~30min 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen carefully and take notes (don't interrupt!) Ask clarifying questions, and express interest/enthusiasm
Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your "game plan" or structure for the problem with all possible solutions / activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it structured and MECE (~2min) Explain it to the interviewer and suggest where to start
Exhibits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information for you to solve the problem Could be tables, graphs, insights, etc. (1 or many!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear the information structured + out loud Structure findings and "so what"
Public Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solving simple / basic math problems based on the exhibits information (they could also give you additional info you need) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a plan first and agree with interviewer on it Walk interviewer through solution Produce a CLEAN "slide" with answers + tell "so what"
Brain-storming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured alternatives to solve a punctual problem embedded in the case Like the framework, but straightforward question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it structured (boxes) and MECE FAST! Have case-specific and creative ideas Not present in all cases
Market sizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calculation of the size of a market (usually in \$) making different and coherent assumptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a plan first and agree with interviewer on it Walk interviewer through solution and ask on assumption's information or sanity-check Not present in all cases
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final recommendation on all your previous work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a concise recommendation on the initial business problem framed Add two / three risks and next steps (1:1) mitigating those risks

Public Sector Consulting 101: International Development

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GENERAL FRAMEWORK



Types of Positions

- Project/program management
- Accounting and finance
- Logistics
- Procurement
- HR
- Recruitment
- Communications



Funding Sources

- Government aid agencies
- Banks/other multilaterals
- Foundations
- NGOs
- Charities
- Private sector/for-profits (Vodafone, Unilever, Mars...)



Hiring Timelines

- Variable: some seasonal, just-in-time based on funding cycles/proposal prep/awards
- The above is why you need to keep on top of searches
- Alum advice: work with a consulting organization before you think about becoming an independent consultant!

Understand the Market

- Follow organizations and sign up for job alerts
- Regularly consult Devex and ReliefWeb and attend employer events and trade meetings, conferences
- Keep up-to-date and read/review current events
- Consulting organization websites
- Donor websites (USAID, AusAid, KOICA, JICA, China Int'l Development Cooperation Agency, UK Dept. for Int'l Dev., Indian Agency for Partnership in Development, Financial Institutions, NGOs
- Society for International Development (SID)
- InterAction (DC consortium)



How to Jumpstart Your Search?

- Search in Handshake and follow employers on LinkedIn
- Attend consulting information sessions
- Attend consulting workshops
- Network with Duke and Sanford alumni
- Have application materials ready early
- Perfect elevator speech
- Join relevant clubs, attend events and conferences
- Meet with Sanford Career Services Advisor for resume, cover letter, & LinkedIn review and behavioral interview prep
- **NOTE: Sanford Career Services does not provide individual consulting case study preparation; resources for consulting case studies preparation are on the next slide**

Upcoming Events

- Booz and Deloitte next week
- Check Handshake to RSVP

Consulting Prep Resources

- Websites

- [Duke Career Hub resources](#)
- [Management Consulted](#)
- [Crafting Cases](#)
- [Strategy Simplified Podcast](#)
- [Duke Consulting Case Prep Partners](#)
- [Case Interview Partners Practice Group](#)
- [LinkedIn Nicholas School resources \(in folders: Career Skills/Interviewing/Case Interviewing\)](#)
- [Master The Case](#) (over 60 casebooks)
- [Big Interview](#) (to complete practice interviews; Duke students have a free account)
- The [Department of Economics \(DFE\)](#)
- [IGotAnOffer's Top 7 Case Interview Frameworks \(and How to Create Your Own\)](#)

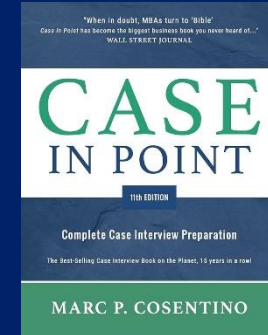
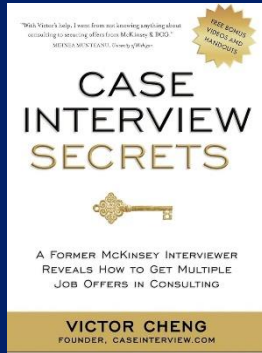
Duke Consulting Club
UNIVERSITY

Think. Grow. Accelerate.



ManagementConsulted
Resumes. Interviews. Case Studies. Job Offers

Practice, Practice, Practice



- The Case in Point by Marc P. Cosentino
- Hacking the Case Interview by Taylor Warfield
- The Ultimate Case Interview Workbook by Taylor Warfield
- Case Interview Secrets by Victor Cheng
- Interview Math by Lewis C. Lin

ATTENTION GRADUATE STUDENTS:
Go global with the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service!

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Explore a career in international trade. Apply now for an opportunity to live and work abroad in Summer 2025 at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.



Applications due by 9/7/24



INTERNATIONAL
TRADE
ADMINISTRATION



8/28/2024
12:00 PM –
1:00 PM EST

U.S. and Foreign Commercial
Service Fellowship:
Information Event 3

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)
[Join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 230 519 604 806
Passcode: bNTxwK

Dial in by phone
[+1 253-372-2016,,213518877#](#) United States, Tacoma
[Find a local number](#)
Phone conference ID: 213 518 877#

RSVP to CSFellowship@trade.gov to confirm your selection.

Join Public Consulting Listserv

Sanford Career Services Public Consulting listserv (Sanford_sector_consulting)

- Send a message to sympa@duke.edu from your Duke email address
- In the subject line of your message, type in:
- **subscribe sanford_sector_consulting Firstname Lastname**
 - *(replace 'Firstname' and 'Lastname' with your first and last names). For example, if your name is John Doe, it would be: subscribe sanford_sector_consulting John Doe*
- Leave the message body blank

