

# A Workshop for Case Interviewing

## CONSUMER PRODUCTS & MARKETING

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# Session Goals

- 1. Learn about different types of case questions**
- 2. Walk away with tips on how to respond to various types of questions**
- 3. Learn how to answer questions**
- 4. Provide an opportunity to practice answering case questions and solicit feedback from an industry professional.**

# Agenda

- **Overview of case questions**
- **General Tips for Answering Interview Questions**
- **Case examples**
- **Case Question Practice and Feedback**
- **Q&A / Wrap-Up**

# **Why Case Questions?**

**Case questions provide companies with an opportunity to evaluate your...**

**...strategic thinking/analytical skills**

**...general understanding of marketing concepts**

**...communication skills**

**...ability to think on your feet**

# Types of Case Questions

## 1. Real-life business issue

- Often a real life issue the interviewer is dealing or has dealt with
- Will likely center on one of the 4 P's (Product launch, pricing issue, promotional opportunity, etc.)
- *Example: Tollhouse Chocolate Chips is facing pressure from store brands. You are asked to determine a pricing strategy for the brand. How would you evaluate this issue?*

## 2. Broad business opportunity or analysis

- Will likely cover all aspects of a business situation: 4 P's and 3 C's
- Will take a broader approach to determine cause/effect of declining share or sales, or to evaluate a new growth opportunity
- *Example: You are a brand manager at Del Monte, and your boss stops by to tell you that his kids are crazy over papaya. He wants to know if Del Monte should enter the Papaya business. How do you approach this question?*

## 3. Functional/marketing questions

- May center around advertising or other marketing effectiveness of another brand
- Interviewer will be looking for more creativity
- *Example: Name a brand that does an exceptional job differentiating itself from the competition. What are they doing to drive unique value for their brand?*

# General Tips for Case Questions

## 1) There is no “right answer”

In case questions, the interviewer is looking more to see how you think through a business issue, and how well you communicate your response. There is no one right answer to a case.

## 2) Use structure in your responses

- Be clear and concise and, most of all, complete in your answers. Use techniques to help your interviewer follow your response (“First, Second, Third” or “I did three things: one, two, three”, etc).
- Ensure the interviewer can easily follow your thought process and logic; part of what they are evaluating is your approach and structure in your answer

## 3) Go beyond a textbook answer

Ensure you are demonstrating that you understand the unique question posed to you. Go an extra level deep in cases. You want to demonstrate that you would bring something more than basic Marketing 101 to the business.

## 4) Ask questions and state assumptions as you go

In a case question, don't be afraid to ask questions and let the interviewer know some assumptions you may be making that lead to your responses.

## 5) Be prepared and practice!

Practice handling Case questions.

## 6) Become marketing knowledgeable

Good marketing intuition is key in your responses. Read industry magazines and books. Visit stores, watch TV and read magazines for the ads. Bring your unique marketing knowledge to light within your case answers

## 7) Show your enthusiasm for the position

As most case questions are real life business situations, answering case questions provides an opportunity to demonstrate your passion for the job.

# Learning How to Answer Case Questions

## What we'll do today:

- **Walk through 3 typical cases**
  - **#1 & #2: walk through step by step**
  - **#3: Group participation**
- **Practice with a partner and share learnings**

# How to Answer Marketing Interview Questions: Case Question Examples

- **CASE #1: You are a brand manager and your biggest competitor introduces a new product that directly competes with your #1 selling item. How do you respond?**



# How to Answer Marketing Interview Questions: Case Question Examples

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1. *Assess the threat*

- *Get as much information as possible on the new entry – Product details, pricing, distribution, promotion/advertising plan*
- *Consumer: Does the new product deliver on a key consumer need?*
- *Competitor: How strong is the competitor? Will they spend to support the launch?*
- *Company/brand: how does your brand stack up? Is there a point of differentiation you can still claim?*
- *Where is the volume coming from? Are they targeting you or another competitor?*

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- *Where is the volume coming from? Are they targeting you or another competitor?*

2. *Develop immediate and longer term response plan, including:*

- *Tactical responses such as loading to stock consumers with your product ahead of the launch*
- *Strategic responses like reinforcing your brand equity with advertising; don't give consumers a reason to try the new competitive product*
- *Longer term responses such as a product upgrade to provide a new key consumer benefit; never give consumers a product-based reason to switch*

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  - *Longer term responses such as a product upgrade to provide a new key consumer benefit; never give consumers a product-based reason to switch*
3. *Track new competitor's performance after launch. Watch for consumer response, strengths/weaknesses in the 4 P's, and adjust plans as necessary to continue to respond.*

# How to Answer Marketing Interview Questions: Case Question Examples

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- *Determine where the share is going – to an existing competitor or new entrant*
  - *What are they doing to drive consumers to their brand?*
    - *Product: Is a new consumer need being filled?*
    - *Promotion: Are they doing something to promote their product (price reduction, value-add, etc.)? Is there new effective advertising? Have they increased their overall marketing spending to support the product?*
    - *Pricing: Has there been a price decrease on competitive brands?*
    - *Place/Distribution: Did they get new, incremental distribution? Did the shelving situation change (more facings, better shelf placement)?*

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    - *Pricing: Has there been a price decrease on competitive brands?*
    - *Place/Distribution: Did they get new, incremental distribution? Did the shelving situation change (more facings, better shelf placement)?*
- *Did you do anything to your marketing mix during this time period?*
  - *Product: did you change your formula, scent, etc that may impact consumer acceptance?*
  - *Promotion: Have you made any significant changes to your mix of promotional vehicles? Have you decreased your overall marketing spending to support the product?*
  - *Pricing: Has there been a price Increase on your product?*
  - *Place/Distribution: Did you lose distribution? Did the shelving situation change (less facings, worse shelf placement)?*

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  - *Pricing: Has there been a price Increase on your product?*
  - *Place/Distribution: Did you lose distribution? Did the shelving situation change (less facings, worse shelf placement)?*
- *Determine strategy to reverse share decline (changes to one or more of the 4 P's)*

# How to Answer Marketing Interview Questions: Case Question Examples

**CASE #3: You are considering launching a new product under your brand name. What are the things you will want to explore to determine the opportunity at hand?**



# How to Answer Marketing Interview Questions: Case Question Examples

**CASE #3: You are considering launching a new product under your brand name. What are the things you will want to explore to determine the opportunity at hand?**

- *Start with the consumer: Is this a product that fills a key consumer need?*
- *Assess the business opportunity:*
  - *Size of the market*
  - *Competition*
  - *Estimate of market share and size of prize*
  - *Cost of entry (capital investment, branding, distribution, etc)*
- *Choose a consumer target; understand if it's the same or different from the rest of the brand*
- *Determine positioning. Choose one singular benefit that you intend to deliver to your target consumers. Positioning should be clear and differentiated vs. competition.*
- *Determine marketing strategy for your new product: use 4 P's framework to determine Price, Product Features and Packaging, Promotion, and Placement*

# Interview Practice

- 2 practice cases, 10 min per case
- Work with a partner
- Choose who will answer the 1<sup>st</sup> practice case, and who will evaluate (you'll switch for practice case #2)
- Share feedback with your partner when finished
- We'll discuss as a group after each one

## **Feedback to give your partner:**

- ***Content*** – *did your partner cover all the key business drivers/issues?*
- ***Clarity*** – *could you follow what they were telling you? Did it make sense?*
- ***Conciseness*** – *Was their response structured and not long-winded?*
- ***Meaningfulness*** – *would this be a meaningful response to the Marketing Director of the Cereal category?*

# Interview Practice #1

**You work at an online portal and your company's UK division has developed an online darts game that has been a breakout hit in the UK. Your management wants to see if you can replicate the success in the US. What things should you consider in applying this technology?**

**Reminder: Feedback to give your partner:**

- Content – did your partner cover all the key business drivers/issues?**
- Clarity – could you follow what they were telling you? Did it make sense?**
- Conciseness – Was their response structured and not long-winded?**
- Meaningfulness – would this be a meaningful response to the Marketing Director of the Cereal category?**

# Interview Practice #1

**You work at an online portal and your company's UK division has developed an online darts game that has been a breakout hit in the UK. Your management wants to see if you can replicate the success in the US. What things should you consider in applying this technology?**

- *Start with the consumer: Is this a technology that fills a key consumer need? Are there similarities between the core consumer in the UK with the US consumer? What differences do you need to keep in mind?*
- *Assess the business opportunity:*
  - *Size of the market*
  - *Competition*
  - *Estimate of market share and size of prize*
  - *Cost of entry (capital investment, branding, distribution, etc)*
- *Choose a consumer target; understand if it's the same or different from the rest of the brand*
- *Determine positioning. Choose one singular benefit that you intend to deliver to your target consumers. Positioning should be clear and differentiated vs. competition.*
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# Interview Practice #2

**You are the brand manager for Del Monte canned fruit. Usage of fruit in plastic cups is substantially increasing, which is causing canned usage to decline. What should you do?**

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- Content – did your partner cover all the key business drivers/issues?***
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- Meaningfulness – would this be a meaningful response to the Marketing Director of the Cereal category?***

# Interview Practice #2

**You are the product manager for Del Monte canned fruit. Usage of fruit in plastic cups is substantially increasing, which is causing canned usage to decline. What should you do?**

1. *Assess the threat*

- *Get as much information as possible on plastic cups – Product details (upgrades, new products, new brands, new attributes?), pricing, distribution, promotion/advertising plan*
- *Consumer: Who is using plastic cups? Is there a new segment? Does the new product deliver on a key consumer need for this group?*
- *Competitor: Is this a category increase or a particular brand? How strong is the brand/competitor? Will they spend to support the launch?*
- *Company/brand: how does your product/brand stack up? Is there a point of differentiation you can still claim?*
- *Where is the volume coming from? Is this currently impacting your sales or is it just something to watch?*

2. *Develop immediate and longer term response plan, including:*

- *Tactical responses such as price incentives or loyalty programs to keep consumers in your category and franchise*
- *Strategic responses like reinforcing the category benefits (canned fruit) and your brand equity with advertising; don't give more consumers a reason to try the new competitive product*
- *Longer term responses such as a product upgrade to provide a new key consumer benefit; never give consumers a product-based reason to switch to a different category*

3. *Continue to track canned fruit usage and consumer targets. Watch for consumer response to your activity, strengths/weaknesses in the 4 P's, and adjust plans as necessary to continue to respond.*

# Q & A

# Appendix



# Specific issues to consider within a case

- For pricing questions consider 4 things:
  - Your product/brand positioning
  - The elasticity of demand
  - Your cost structure
  - Relativity to your key competitors
- For share decline questions look primarily at the 4 P's for both you and your competition; ensure your definition of competition is broad enough to capture where the share truly may be going
- For sales decline questions, also look at the 4 P's but determine up front if this is a category issue or a brand issue.
- For market expansion/growth questions, use the 4 P's and the 3 C's. Be sure to consider production as well.
- For Private Label competition questions, think about equity building, the role of loyalty programs, how to manage the price gap, and whether it makes sense to introduce a value brand
- For advertising/marketing knowledge questions, remember that key success factors are quick thinking, creativity and good marketing intuition

# Other sample questions

- You are the brand manager of Yoplait yogurt and in the past two years, your volume has been decreasing. Please tell me some of the issues you would explore.
- You are the brand manager of Ritz Crackers and your sales have been flat for the last five years. However, the brand's market share has been growing at about 3% a year. What may be going on with the brand, and what should you do about it?
- You are launching a premium video gaming system and you need to determine your pricing strategy. What are some things you will need to consider to do this?
- You are the brand manager of Fresh Step Cat Litter. You learn that 2 new competitors are entering your category: Arm & Hammer Cat Litter and EverFresh Activated Charcoal Cat Litter. What should you do to respond?
- You are the brand manager of Del Monte Vegetables. Currently, your only competition is private label, and you command a healthy category share advantage. You learn that a competitor with a strong brand name is looking to enter the category with a value price. What should you do to defend your long-standing share advantage?