MBA Interviewing
What to Expect

David Ohrvall
Founder, MBACASE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AU Cairo</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
<th>McMaster DeGroote</th>
<th>Texas</th>
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<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>Georgia Tech</td>
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<td>Bocconi SDA</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>MIT</td>
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<td>National U Singapore</td>
<td>UCLA</td>
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<td>Notre Dame</td>
<td>Wake Forest</td>
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<td>Owen Vanderbilt</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
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<td>Irvine California</td>
<td>Oxford SAID</td>
<td>William &amp; Mary</td>
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<td>Ivey</td>
<td>Pepperdine</td>
<td>Yale</td>
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<td>Duke Fuqua</td>
<td>IU Kelley</td>
<td>Queen's</td>
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<td>Emory</td>
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<td>Rice</td>
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<td>Georgetown</td>
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<td>Stanford</td>
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participate

think big picture

be serious,

have fun
You’ll face 2 major types of interviews

Behavioral  Technical
You have a lot of choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consulting</th>
<th>Finance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Strategy/ IT/ Operations</td>
<td>• M&amp;A transactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Market entry</td>
<td>• Private equity buy-outs</td>
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<td>• Profit maximization</td>
<td>• Business sell-offs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Declining market</td>
<td>• Time value of money</td>
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<td>• Organizational redesign</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing</th>
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<tr>
<td>• New product</td>
<td>• Airlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lagging product</td>
<td>• Health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New industry</td>
<td>• Internet / telecomm</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Branding remedies</td>
<td>• Internal strategy</td>
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Companies emphasize different behavioral and technical elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show leadership and positive energy</td>
<td>• Can achieve long term goals thru cooperation</td>
<td>• Use insights and savvy to WIN!!!!!</td>
<td>• Show ability to be all things to all people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play well with others</td>
<td>• Get along with others</td>
<td>• Use data to prove points and persuade</td>
<td>• Enjoy and can lead others</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>“Think thru a situation . . .”</td>
<td>• Acct./Finance Basics</td>
<td>• Logic, deal and business sense</td>
<td>• Gen. business knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company and business sense</td>
<td>• Memorized and on the spot analytics</td>
<td>• Logic and business sense</td>
<td>• On the spot analytical prowess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry awareness</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
We’ll discuss skills you can use in all interview situations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Show leadership and positive energy</td>
<td>• Show grit, confidence, and fight</td>
<td>• Show ability to be all things to all people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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Expect to do additional preparation

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Connect to the products</td>
<td>• Know firm differences</td>
<td>• Know office differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Know the role and your fit</td>
<td>• Highlight your victories</td>
<td>• Find client-like examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Embrace the long term career path</td>
<td>• Show you are ready to sacrifice</td>
<td>• Show you can flex and deal with change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<td>• Know the products</td>
<td>• Mental math</td>
<td>• Mental math</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Know recent strategies</td>
<td>• Capex</td>
<td>• Growth rates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Know the industry</td>
<td>• Cash flow</td>
<td>• Present value</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Balance sheets</td>
<td>• Slide reading</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• DCF</td>
<td>• Break-even analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Debt/ equity</td>
<td>• Market sizing math</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Working Cap</td>
<td>• ROI</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Depreciation</td>
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Let’s look at behavioral skills

Behavioral

Technical
Candidates enter the room with a certain level of value . . . .

- We need her!
- What a fit!
- Great story!
- Huh?

Your Value

and can destroy it quickly
You know you need to be ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Clear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• You connect easily</td>
<td>• You communicate easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I’d introduce you proudly</td>
<td>• Your are easy to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I could hang out with you</td>
<td>• Your goals are easy to follow and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>attainable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Fit</th>
<th>Ready</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• You seem like “one of us”</td>
<td>• You are ready to jump in and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Our goals for you seem to align</td>
<td>make a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with your trajectory</td>
<td>• You have a history of “making it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your life fits with us</td>
<td>happen”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• You have time for us in your life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
But reality is often different
Stories can seem random and disconnected
Or the stories fail to show the real you
Great candidates show “themes” or layers throughout the interview

Leadership
Organization
Goal Setting
Integration
Communication
Principle 1: Interviewers want themes

**Leadership**
- Reinforce strong attributes

**Organization**
- Shows interviewer that these behaviors will repeat

**Goal Setting**
- Builds value in their eyes quickly

**Integration**

**Communication**
Principle 2:
Interviewers want application to their own situation

Novice  Your Interview Skills  Expert

100%  Undergrad  Executive  MBA  0%

Tell a Story

Apply Your Experience

Tell a Story

Apply Your Experience
Communication is the foundation of every interview

Leadership
Organization
Goal Setting
Integration
Communication
Communicate Effectively

Both pieces are important as you attempt to prepare for your interviews and MBA level communication

Great Communication

WHAT

HOW
You will need these skills in a variety of contexts

- Class Discussion
- Company Meet and Greets
- General Interviews
- Your Next Job
- Case Interviews
- Class Presentations
- Group Projects
What do you want to do with your words? Finish the sentence, “I want . . .”

• to be fluent and quick
• to say the right thing
• to be seen as knowledgeable
• to be understood
• people to follow and admire me
• to drive change
• to make more money
• to care for others
Now, what do you want when you listen to others’ words?

- Get to the point
- Tell me what I need to know
- Please don’t bore me
- Not too much detail
- Tell me something good about me
- Give me information that is vital
- Help me get ahead
Great Communicators
What do they do?

• **Warm-up Exercise:** think of someone you know who communicates well.
  – What does she do in particular?
  – Take 5 minutes and write down specifics.
  – We’ll discuss your thoughts as a group.
What do we notice about her?

• Knows her audience
• Can predict what listeners will like to hear
• Picks up what the other person cares about
• Talks the right amount of time
• Achieves “ping pong” balance; both people “play”
• Uses strong gestures: head nods, eye contact and some hand movements
• Uses positive, encouraging language
• Uses content rather than empty words
Where do people go wrong?
Let’s list some pitfalls.

- Timing:太久
- Content:离开正题
- Voice:太大声
- Body:太多肢体语言
- Level:太抽象
Where do people go wrong? Let’s list some pitfalls.

Timing
- talks too long
- interrupts
- doesn’t balance the conversation

Content

Voice

Body

Level

Class Exercise
Where do people go wrong? Let’s list some pitfalls.

**Timing**
- talks too long
- interrupts
- doesn’t balance the conversation

**Content**
- too off base
- jumps around
- discusses inappropriate topics
- tries to cover too much content

**Voice**
- too fast
- too loud
- too soft
- too close
- too accentuated

**Body**
- jerky movements
- poor eye contact
- sad / tense facial expressions
- too strong hand gestures

**Level**
- too deep
- extra details
- unnecessary specifics
- too high level
- too vague
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Level
• too deep
• extra details
• unnecessary specifics
• too high level
• too vague
Great communication will help you in all types of interview situations.

- Answer questions
- Bring energy
- Interrupt and be interrupted
- Say less
- Be persuasive
- Talk faster than you prefer
- Connect and engage
- Talk at the right level
Techniques for **HOW**

**Great Communication**

- Engage
- Empathize
- Emphasize
- Edit
- End
## Content for **WHAT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Personalities</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Build IMPACT stories</td>
<td>• Role play to push each other</td>
<td>• Present a personal passion</td>
<td>• Discuss ideas logically</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ENGAGE
It’s all about me . . .

Engage
End
Empathize
Emphasize
Edit
What “gift” are you bringing?

• Bring your listener a gift
  – An interesting discussion
  – Knowledge about something relevant
  – An intriguing or funny story
• Don’t come empty handed
• Prepare in advance
Appeal – what’s special about you?

- Life experience – language, country, lifestyle
- Perspective – different or similar
- Work – experience, connections
- Values – beliefs you hold strongly
Delivery – are you ready to change the way you deliver the gift?

• Try out your thoughts and stories on many people
• Learn what is interesting and not so interesting
• Be ready to adjust your content
Engagement – when someone completely engages us what do we think?

- He’ll do this with clients, team members or other “customers”.
- She’ll be persuasive. People will listen to her.
- He’ll be easy to work with, bring energy every day and be effective.
IMPACT
Story Development

- Individual Contribution
- Manage or Lead
- Persuasion
- Analytical
- Challenge or Failure
- Team
I persuaded management to invest $2M
Assessed Option A better for employees
Presented, but not convinced about A
Developed user experience strategy
Re-presented and execs chose A
Stepping stones on your paper

**Persuasion**

- I persuaded mgmt. to invest $2M
- Assessed Option A was better for employees
- Presented but not convinced about A
- Developed user experience strategy
- Re-presented and execs chose A

**For good things**

+ built comparison model
+ qual and quant analysis

**For bad things**

- didn’t go deep enough
- concerns I didn’t consider
Explain the **YOU** machine

What did I Hear?

See?

Think?

What did I Say?

and Do?
Personal Exercise 1
Use IMPACT

• Select 1 category that appeals to you
• Use the stepping stone approach to form the key pieces of each story
• 5 minutes
• Add in detail to each key step:
  – People
  – Places
  – Funny events
  – What you did well or not so well
Partner Exercise 1
Tell an IMPACT story

• Give and receive one IMPACT story with your partner. Take 5 minutes for each story.
• Feedback
  – What you liked
  – What caught your attention
  – What you did not understand
Be Answer First

Result
Data
Insights
Headline
Your stories need an Answer First

**Persuasion**

- I persuaded mgmt. to invest $2M
- Assessed Option A was better for employees
  - + for good things
  - + built comparison model
  - + qual and quant analysis
- Presented but not convinced about A
  - - didn’t go deep enough
  - - concerns I didn’t consider
- Developed user experience strategy
- Re-presented and execs chose A
  - - for bad things

+ for good things
- for bad things
Personal Exercise 2
Weave in Answer First

• Go back to your story
• Find the Answer First
• Think about results that you want to highlight:
  – Achievement
  – Financial target
  – Time
  – People’s response
Partner Exercise 2
Use Answer First, Story #2

- Give and receive the second story now using Answer First
- Get feedback from your partner on whether the Answer First was clear
- Edit where necessary
Content for **WHAT**

- **Experience**
  - Build IMPACT stories

- **Personalities**
  - Role play to push each other

- **Interest**
  - Present a personal passion

- **Business**
  - Discuss ideas logically
ENGAGE
Recap

• Concepts learned
  – My conversation should be a gift
  – My profile has appealing features
  – I may need to change my delivery
  – My ability to engage signals future skills and work

• Actions to take
  – Build IMPACT stories and use them often
  – Fill out “stepping stone” approach for each one
  – Practice being Answer First in stories and day to day conversation
EMPATHIZE

It’s all about me . . . or is it?

Great Communication

Engage
Empathize
End
Emphasize
Edit
Anticipate and gauge your audience

• How much time do they have?
• Where is their mind right now?
• What is their body language saying? Are they leaning in and listening intently or moving around or ready to bolt?
• What about their head and eyes? Are they showing full listening or disinterested eye glances?
• How can you be more in tune with the listener?
Empathize with your audience

**EMOTIONS**
- how will he feel talking about this?

**APPEAL**
- does it appeal to him overall?

**APPROACH**
- how would he talk about it? Clinical approach or emotional style?

**CONTENT**
- will this further his knowledge, cause or connection with others?
Partner Profiles

**GRUMPY**
- Seems irritated
- Interrupts often

**CHATTY**
- Very talkative
- Difficult for you to talk

**ANALYTICAL**
- Wants precision
- Asks a lot of how much, why and when questions

**CONFUSED**
- Seems to get lost
- Asks you to repeat often

**TANGENT**
- Participates almost too much
- Takes the conversation off track

**FOCUSED**
- Very interested in you
- Speaks at appropriate times
Partner Exercise 3

• **Listener**
  – Review your assigned character profile.
  – Think through the attributes that you need to display.
  – Consider how you can play up those parts.

• **Presenter**
  – Look over your IMPACT story.
  – Consider what your Answer First is.

• Take 5-7 minutes for each person’s story.
Content for **WHAT**

- **Experience**
  - Build IMPACT stories

- **Personalities**
  - Role play to push each other

- **Interest**
  - Present a personal passion

- **Business**
  - Discuss ideas logically
EMPATHIZE
Recap

• Concepts learned
  – I need to anticipate my listener’s interest
  – I can empathize on several levels: emotion, appeal, approach and content
  – Adjusting to personality types will take practice

• Actions to take
  – List personality types where empathy is difficult
  – Outline actions you can take to relate better
  – Talk with a variety of people
EDIT
Block, Break & Discuss any topic

Great Communication
What do you think about Uber?

Class Brainstorm
Uber
Block, Break, Discuss

Better Customer Experience

Flexible

Clean, safe, better car

You can get a ride from any location using your smartphone.

Competition has forced the drivers to try harder.
What do you think of Uber?

“I think it’s a good idea . . . “
Personal Exercise 4
Should we get a pet? Dog, cat, fish

• Block out several key areas of the discussion.
  – Don’t worry if you got it “right” or not.
  – Just think about the main things to consider.
• Break your blocks into an “A” and a “B”.
  – You may or may not use them in the discussion.
  – But it’s a good habit to be ready to show depth of thinking.
• Discuss pieces below each A and B.
  – These pieces may trigger a thought or question.
  – What are you curious about? How can you connect?
Dogs are great!
Block, Break, Discuss

Do you think I should get a dog?
“Oh definitely! Dogs are great . . . “
Experience
- Build IMPACT stories

Personalities
- Role play to push each other

Interest
- Present a personal passion
  - Hobby
  - Sport
  - Entertainment
  - Food & Drink
  - Travel
  - Pet Peeve

Business
- Discuss ideas logically
Personal Exercise 5
I think everyone should . . .

• Watch more movies
• Learn how to play the piano
• Be a (favorite team) fan
• Skydive!
• Visit China
• Stop using plastic bottles
Your Editing Toolkit

**Block Break Discuss**
- Structure with 2 to 3 good points

**Be Answer First**
- It’s always appropriate, unless you are telling a joke with a punch line

**Timing**
- Stay under 2 minutes
- Brief is better

**Flexibility**
- Adjust as you go along
EDIT
Recap

• Concepts learned
  – Block, Break, Discuss
  – To connect, structure and edit
  – BBD works with business or casual conversation

• Actions to take
  – Practice BBD on business articles
  – Twitter: davidohrvall, #BlockBreakAsk
  – Try time limits: 30, 60 and 90 seconds
Let’s talk about case interviews

Behavioral

Technical
What do cases really test?

- C: Communication
- L: Logic
- A: Analytical
- SS: Social Skills
- IC: Integration & Creativity
Be Answer First!

Answer First!

- Communication (C)
- Logic (L)
- Analytical (A)
- Social Skills (SS)
- Integration & Creativity (IC)
Show breadth and depth
NYC Chocolate Store

Our client wants to open a chocolate store.

**Time**
- Short Term
- Mid Term
- Long Term

**Financial Goals**
- Break Even
- ROI
- Profit Margin

**Competitors**
- Boutiques
- Gift Shops
- Ice Cream

**Product Quality**
- Organic
- Cocoa
- Consistency

**Distribution**
- Central
- Regional

**Questions**
- Does our client have a deadline?
- What is our ROI goal?
- Do you have data on competitors?
- What are the product standards?
- Will we make on site or distribute it?
Most Common Business Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Ops &amp; Org</th>
<th>External Forces</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merge, Acquire, JV</td>
<td>✅ Maximize Profit</td>
<td>Competitor Attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Growth Strategy</td>
<td>Change Price</td>
<td>✅ Market Shift</td>
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<tr>
<td>✅ New Product/ Bus</td>
<td>New Processes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Market (Geo)</td>
<td>Restructure Team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most cases follow a similar pattern
MBACASE Path

Qualitative

Warm-up → Start

So what? → End

Quantitative

Insight!

Chart/Table → Data Dump → Estimate

Equations → Solve for X
1. Warm-up

2. Move Into the Case

![Diagram with steps and labels]

- **Qualitative**
  1. Warm-up
  2. Start
  3. Logic & Breadth
  4. Depth & Analytics

- **Quantitative**
  1. Equations
  2. Solve for X
  3. Data Dump
  4. Chart/Table

- **Integration & Creativity**
  5. Insight!
  6. So what?
  7. Data

**Warmth & Client Ready**

1. Warm-up
2. Start

**Logic & Breadth**

1. Equations
2. Solve for X

**Data**

1. Data Dump
2. Chart/Table

**End**

1. Insight!
2. So what?
2. Pet Power Concept

2. Pet Power Question

3. Recap: Situation, Complication, Task

Watch the Pet Power videos at [www.mbacase.com](http://www.mbacase.com).
3. Clarify, Ask for Minute, Plan

3. Create Your Plan

Qualitative

1. Warm-up
   Warmth & Client Ready

2. Start
   Logic & Breadth

3. Integration & Creativity
   So what?

Quantitative

1. Depth & Analytics

2. Insight!

3. Data Dump
   Chart/Table
   Equations
   Solve for X
   Estimate
What’s your objective with every case?

Maximize the Value of the Company
You will develop methods for thinking through the business drivers
Use your plan to connect and explain

**Plan**

- **Main Idea**
- **Group A**
  - Why?
- **Group B**
  - Data?
- **Group C**
  - Questions?
- **Group D**

**Facts**

**Data**
3. Present Your Plan

3. What about your PLAN?

3. What do you MEAN?

3. What about your DATA?

http://www.mbacase.com/videos/full-length-cases/
4. Dive Into Data

**Qualitative**

1. Warm-up

2. Warmth & Client Ready

3. Start

**Integration & Creativity**

6. So what?

**Quantitative**

1. Depth & Analytics

4. Chart/Table

5. Insight!

7. End

**Data**

2. Logic & Breadth

3. Equations

5. Solve for X

6. Estimate

**So what?**

7. End

**Dive into Data**
4. Talk Thru the Data

http://www.mbacase.com/videos/full-length-cases/
5. Find Insights

- Warm-up
  - Warmth & Client Ready

- Start
  - Logic & Breadth

- Integration & Creativity
  - So what?

- Data
  - End

- Depth & Analytics
  - Insight!

- Quantitative
  - 1
  - Equations
  - Solve for X
  - Estimate
  - Data Dump
  - Chart/Table

- Qualitative
  - 1
  - Equations
  - Solve for X
  - Estimation
5-6. Use Data

7. Integrate and Wrap-up

**Qualitative**

1. Warm-up
2. Start
3. Integration & Creativity

**Warmth & Client Ready**

- Logic & Breadth
- So what?

**Quantitative**

1. Depth & Analytics
2. Insight!
3. So what?
4. Data End
5. Data Dump
6. Chart/Table
7. Solve for X
8. Equation

Integrate and Wrap-up
7. What would you do?

http://www.mbacase.com/videos/full-length-cases/
7. End the Case with Data

http://www.mbacase.com/videos/full-length-cases/
MBA Interviewing
What to Expect

David Ohrvall
Founder, MBACASE