



# ACE THE CASE GUIDE

*Content Inspired By  
Professor Gregory Libitz*





## FOREWORD

If you missed our Ace the Case workshop, check out this guide to acing all of your case based interview questions that you might encounter while recruiting! This event was hosted by Professor Greg Libitz who provided a guide on how to approach 3 different types of case questions, followed by a panel discussion with upper-year Commerce students who have experience in case-based interviews.

We will start off by walking through some examples of Professor Greg Libitz's approach to solving 3 popular question types in an interview.





*Marketing  
Strategy  
Problem*

## MARKETING STRATEGY PROBLEM

### *Scenario:*

- You are interviewing for a job in brand management at Keurig Dr. Pepper

### *Quick facts:*

- \$11 B+ (USD) in annual sales
- 125+ hot and cold beverages

### *Question:*

- How would you grow the Keurig coffee business in Canada?

### *Things to consider when analyzing this question:*

- What is the problem at “big food”?
  - Millennials and Gen Z prefer value-driven products and natural ingredients, they are less loyal to big brands, and are interested in new channels (DTC models)
- What is the problem at KDP?
  - Portfolio is overweight in sugary drinks
  - However, Keurig is dominant in North America in at-home coffee consumption and single-serve coffee pods
  - There are environmental concerns with their packaging
- What is the problem at Keurig?
  - Keurig continues to dominate, but they need to respond to threats from above (ex: Nespresso) and below
  - Nespresso has built a strong DTC business
  - Nespresso is ahead on sustainability



### *Proposed solutions from students:*

- Use social media to attract younger crowds
- Produce 'better for you' products for young consumers (they are missing this demographic opportunity)
- Solve the inaccessibility problem for environmentally-conscious consumer
- Differentiate Keurig from Nespresso through a subscription service

### *What Nespresso actually did:*

- Keurig created a wi-fi enabled smart brewer
  - That's not the only thing they did. The new smart brewer is a good example of competitive dynamics, with pressure from Nestle (via. Nespresso) in this space from above, and pressure from private labels from below. One might also point to the number of brands in KDP has under license for Keurig as a defense as well.
- It is set to be the company's most expensive machine
- The software can recognize every one of the ~800 pod varieties Keurig manufactures, including those under license from companies such as Starbucks Inc.
- This product will challenge Nestle's Vertuo line of big-cup coffee machines in the US

Overall, while solving a marketing strategy problem it is necessary to consider the problems within the industry, the problems at the company, and the problems that the specific brand is experiencing. This will allow you to develop a solution that is carefully created based on the multitude of problems that exist.







# *Marketing Communications Problem*

## MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM

### *Scenario:*

- You are interviewing for a job in marketing communications management at Snag

### *Quick facts:*

- Snag believes that anyone who wants to wear tights should be able to have tights that genuinely fit in comfort, regardless of size, shape, age or gender
- Their value consists of 3 main pillars:
  - Accepting: Snag is not a plus-size brand - they create tights for everyone, not just particular groups
  - Inclusive: Snag is for everyone, regardless of size, shape, race, gender - they believe every person is fabulous and beautiful just the way they are
  - Sustainable: Snag is passionate about making everything they do as sustainable and environmentally responsible as possible

### *Question:*

- Given what you know about consumer attitudes and preferences and what you know about Snag, develop a high-level brief for Snag in Canada

### *Proposed solutions from students:*

- Target Millennials and Gen Z - they are value driven consumers
- Put an emphasis on how they are targeting all genders
- Target pregnant women who are looking for maternity clothing - the quality will hold and not stretch
- Their branding must reflect their consumers - they should represent people of all shapes, sizes, ages, genders, and races to create an inclusive environment
- Proposed messaging: buy from Snag because we are inclusive



### *What Snag actually did:*

- Snag used a mixture of paid-for campaigns, customer-generated content, and influencer collaborations to inject some colour and personality back into tights
  - They gained thousands of loyal customers in the process
- They made their beautiful and diverse customers at the heart (and face) of their social community
  - They invited their real customers to star in their advertising to share their testimonials
- Their unique sizing matrix (by height, dress size, and body shape) has helped many people wear tights with total comfort, without compromising on style
  - This has also converted into impressive sales figures

While answering marketing communications questions, it is important to consider how the target market, media, and message will all work together. Create a high-level plan that touches on these three areas and talk about how they will impact and support each other. Be sure to think about how you want to achieve each communication objective: cognitive (what do you want them to think?), affective (what do you want them to feel?), and behavioural (what do you want them to do?). The example used in the workshop, SNAG has done a great job of using social media and brand communities and their messaging -- which is genuine -- is absolutely consistent with the brand's core values.







# *Market Sizing Problem*

## MARKET SIZING PROBLEM

### Things to Consider:

- These problems are designed to test critical thinking
- The interviewer will be interested in your **quantitative skills**, your **overall reasoning skills** and your **ability to handle ambiguity**

### Question 1:

- What is the dollar value of pumpkins sold in Kingston for Halloween?

### Proposed solution (although there are many ways to tackle this type of problem):

- Here is approach #1 by Professor Greg Libitz:

	KINGSTON	QUEEN'S	RMC	SLC	OTHER	
Population - Individuals	120,000	20,000		1,000		
Population - Households (/4)	30,000	5,000		250		
% Recognizing Halloween (X .9)	27,000	4,500		225		
% Decorating for Halloween (X .6)	16,200	2,700		135		
% With Children < 12 (X .4, X .05)	6,480	135		7		
% With Children < 12 Buying Pumpkins (X .6)	3,888	81		4		
# of Pumpkins Per Household (X 1.5)	5,832	122		6		
\$ Per Pumpkin (* \$6)						
Total (1)	\$34,992	\$729		\$36		
% With Children > 12 or With No Children (X .6, X .95, X .95)	9,720	2,565		128		
% With Children > 12 or With No Children Buying Pumpkins (X .3)	2,916	770		38		
# of Pumpkins Per Household (x 1)	2,916	770		38		
\$ Per Pumpkin (\$6)						
Total (2)	\$17,496	\$4,617		\$231		
Pumpkins in Residence Rooms (.05 X \$6)		\$1,500	\$300	\$300		
Pumpkins for Commercial/Institutional Decorating (1000 @ \$6)					\$6,000	
TOTAL	\$52,488	\$6,846	\$300	\$567	\$6,000	\$66,201





## Question 2:

- What was the market in dollars for hot dogs sold in the MLB stadiums in 2019, for baseball only and not including playoffs? MLB teams play 81 home games.

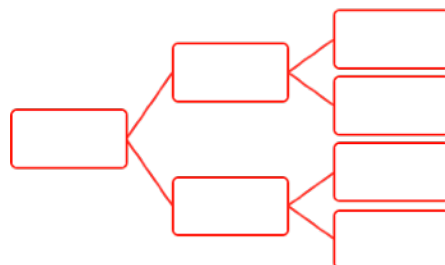
### Proposed solution:

- Using approach #2 by Professor Greg Libitz: which builds on a model from Professor Roger Best:

Market Potential	=	Maximum Consuming Units	X	Buying Ceiling	X	Purchase Rate	X	Purchase Quantity	X	Average Price
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- Maximum consuming units:
  - = # teams X average stadium capacity X number of home games X average demand to capacity X proportion that likes hot dogs
  - = 30 X 40,000 X 81 X 0.65 X 0.75
  - = 47,385,000
- Buying ceiling = 0.95
- Purchase rate = 0.75
- Purchase quantity = 1.05
- Average price = \$5
- Therefore, market potential:
  - = 47,385,000 X 0.95 X 0.75 X 1.05 X 5
  - = \$177,249,516

When solving a market sizing problem, it is strongly recommended to consider **building a decision tree** to structure your solution (such as the one below). Expect to show your tree to support the discussion of your reasoning. Be sure to ask clarifying questions where it makes sense to do so.





# *Panel Discussion*



## PANEL DISCUSSION

The next portion of the Ace the Case workshop was dedicated to a panel discussion moderated by Professor Greg Libitz. The panel included 3 fourth year commerce students who have a variety of experience in case-based marketing role interviews. They provided valuable advice on what to expect for these interviews and how to prepare for them. We have outlined some key questions and answers below.

### *Question 1: What does your preparation look like for case-based interviews?*

Answers:

- As commerce students, we already have lots of background information on cases from our classes and at any conferences or events you may have attended in the past
- Identify and understand the areas of cases that you typically struggle with the most and place an emphasis on these areas while you prepare
- Focus on information about the company itself that will help you answer case questions based on the company's practices
- Timelines for preparation vary by student - some students like to do one case per week while they are recruiting, while others like to treat interviews as final exams and take a couple days to prepare if possible

### *Question 2: What does your prepare for behavioural interview questions?"*

Answers:

- Create a document with different behavioural questions (you can find some examples on the Career Advancement Centre website under the Interview section) and build a story around each of your answers. Update this document after every interview you have with any new behavioural questions that you were asked. This will be a great resource while preparing for future interviews since you will already have many answers prepared!

- Use the IMPACT model from the Career Advancement Centre and create 1-2 stories for each category.
  - I: individual contribution
  - M: manage or lead
  - P: persuade, influence, negotiate
  - A: analytical
  - C: challenge or failure
  - T: team
- When asking behavioural questions, it is common for interviewers to ask about your weaknesses or a time that you experienced failure. It is important that you establish well-thought out answers that speak to something personal - your passion will shine through. It is also good to follow up with another event that went well as a result of your learning from this failure or weakness.

*Question 3: What do you look for when you do research for cases and behavioural questions prior to an interview?*

Answers:

- Research something you're genuinely interested about from the company - your passion and authenticity will come through. This is especially beneficial when you are asking questions at the end of the interview; ask something personalized that you are genuinely interested in, rather than asking them a generic question.
- Focus on one area of the company that interests you
- Look at where the company is going - <https://strategyonline.ca/> is helpful for this. Become knowledgeable on what products and programs they are launching as a result of the current industry trends





*Question 4: For case-based interviews, what types of questions do you recommend preparing for?*

Answers:

- Refresh your memory on financial metrics such as ROI; a possible question could ask the ROI of a new initiative or it could ask about the initiative's margins.
- Familiarize yourself with P&L statements (profit & loss) and the common revenues and expenses that you might find on these statements - they might ask what contributes to the bottom line.
- Familiarize yourself with ROAS (return on advertising spend), which is a marketing metric that measures how many dollars you will receive for every dollar spent on advertising. They might give you multiple advertisements and ask you which ones were more successful.
- Practice your basic math skills (double digit multiplication, long division, etc.) in case you aren't allowed to use a calculator during your interview.
- Examples of some questions:
  - Can you develop a marketing plan?
  - How would you segment this group?
  - You are launching this product; who would you target?
  - How would you approach this innovation?
  - You just launched a campaign and revenue is down - why?
- Focus on one area of the company that interests you
- Look at where the company is going - <https://strategyonline.ca/> is helpful for this. Become knowledgeable on what products and programs they are launching as a result of the current industry trends





# *Practice Questions*



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### *Marketing Strategy*

Questions:

1. How would you attract the young female demographic to drink more beer?
2. What is your favourite marketing ad and what do you believe the strategy behind it was?

### *Marketing Communications*

Questions:

1. (Telecom) Your competitor offers a discounted price for a plan for one week. You match their offer that week. What marketing promotion plan do you have to increase the number of customers who sign up for a plan that week in order to have the same revenue as previous weeks?

**Hint:** For this, think about cheap marketing methods that won't spend too much budget and will bring in enough new customers to arrive at the same revenue, even when selling at a discounted price. (Ex: email marketing to previous and existing customers who might switch their plans to the discounted price)

2. How would you set a communications strategy for \_\_\_\_\_ (Fill in the blank with one of the following companies: Nike, Patagonia, Apple, Starbucks), and what are the most important components?

**Hint:** Consider what marketing problem they are trying to address, the target audience they are trying to reach, the communication objectives they are trying to achieve, and what the creative strategy should be.

### *Market Sizing*

Questions:

1. How many people own airpods in Canada?
2. How many alcoholic beverages are consumed in Kingston during Homecoming?

