

# McKinsey & Company

"The gold standard of management consulting"

<b>FOUNDED</b> <b>1926, Chicago</b>	<b>EMPLOYEES</b> <b>~40,000 globally</b>	<b>OFFICES</b> <b>130+ cities worldwide</b>	<b>KNOWN FOR</b> <b>Prestige, alumni network, global reach</b>
<b>ROUNDS</b> <b>2 rounds, 2–3 interviews each</b>	<b>CASE FORMAT</b> <b>Candidate-led</b>	<b>BEHAVIORAL FORMAT</b> <b>PEI — deep dive on one story</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b> <b>2–4 weeks from application to offer</b>

## WHO THEY ARE

Founded 1926, McKinsey is the gold standard in management consulting. They own relationships with Fortune 500 boards, governments, and major institutions across every industry and geography. When a CEO needs to make a decision that could define or destroy the company, McKinsey gets the call first. The firm's brand is built on structured problem-solving, rigorous analysis, and the ability to turn messy situations into clear, actionable recommendations that fit on a slide deck.

## WHY PEOPLE WANT TO WORK HERE

The McKinsey alumni network is one of the most powerful career assets on earth. Former consultants run Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and major investment funds. In two years you might handle a healthcare cost reduction in Brazil, a digital transformation in Germany, and a retail strategy in Tokyo. You learn to think in frameworks, communicate with precision, and operate fast in ambiguous conditions. These skills transfer everywhere. McKinsey also has world-class internal training programs that compress years of learning into your first few years.

## INTERVIEW PROCESS

Two rounds, two to three interviews each. Every interview has two parts: a Personal Experience Interview (PEI) and a case. Both are weighted equally. The PEI is behavioral interviewing but harder. They pick one leadership story and drill for 20-30 minutes on context, your specific actions, how you handled resistance, and what you'd do differently. They want depth on one story, not breadth across three. The case is candidate-led. You drive the structure, ask for data, and synthesize as you go. McKinsey rewards hypothesis-first thinking: form a view early and update it as information arrives, rather than waiting for data to speak for itself.

## WHAT THEY'RE REALLY EVALUATING

McKinsey evaluates problem-solving, communication, and personal impact. Cases test the first two; the PEI tests the third. But they assess all three during the case itself. How you communicate under pressure and whether you update your hypothesis gracefully matters as much as the final answer. A candidate who gets the wrong answer but communicates clearly will often score higher than one who meanders to the right answer. On the PEI they look for leadership through ambiguity, driving impact without formal authority, and influencing others. Generic team-lead stories fail. They want moments where you personally changed the outcome in difficult situations.

## STANDOUT QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about a time you led a team through significant uncertainty or ambiguity. What was your approach and what was the outcome?
2. Describe a situation where you had to influence people who didn't report to you. How did you get alignment?
3. Tell me about the most complex problem you've ever had to solve. Walk me through how you approached it.
4. Give me an example of a time you identified a problem that nobody else had seen. What did you do about it?
5. Tell me about a time you failed. What happened and what did you learn?
6. Why McKinsey specifically, not consulting generally, not Bain or BCG?

## INSIDER TIPS

- Lead with your hypothesis, not your framework. Most candidates open a case by listing all the buckets they'll explore. McKinsey wants you to say "my initial hypothesis is X, and here's why" before you've asked a single question.
- In the PEI, they will interrupt and go deeper. Don't treat it like a presentation. It's a dialogue. Pause, give them room to probe, and be ready to go three or four levels deep on a single moment.
- Synthesis matters more than structure. At the end of a case, the candidate who can say "so here's what I recommend, and here's the one thing that would change my answer" will outperform one who summarizes the buckets they analyzed.
- Prepare a specific answer to "why McKinsey." Vague answers ("the prestige," "the learning") are red flags. They want to hear that you've done your research: specific practice areas, offices, alumni you've spoken with.