



“Look” Over My Shoulder Read This First

Hi there, it's Victor Cheng here and I wanted to give you a few suggestions on how to get the most out of my Look Over My Shoulder Case Interview Training Program.

To start, I want to mention that while this program includes a lot of “how to” information regarding how to do well in case interviews, it is really intended as a training program to help you build good case interview **habits**. The kind of habits that result in getting consulting offers.

The difference between participating in the final round interview versus participating in the final round interview **and** getting an offer is quite small. The difference in performance between candidates is typically less than 20%--in some cases less than 10%.

With this in mind, let elaborate on how I created this program and how I recommend you use it.

There are 3 ways to learn something:

1. Learn by listening
2. Learn by observing
3. Learn by doing

To get really good at cases, it's useful to learn and practice using all three methods. You learn the concepts by listening (e.g., lecture, presentation). You appreciate the behaviors by observing. You hone the skills by doing.

The “Look Over My Shoulder” program sits between learning by observing and learning by doing – provided you use it in a particular way.

The most obvious way to go through the program is as a passive observer. This is **NOT** the recommended approach.

This would typically involve playing the audios (or reading the transcripts) and listen to my commentary – much like you might watch a DVD movie with the director's commentary sound track turned on.

While this is useful and you will learn a lot about what to do / not do in a case interview, I think there's a different approach that will be significantly more useful to you.

The alternative approach that I suggest is to be **actively engaged** in looking for the errors and good habits each candidate is demonstrating as they are demonstrating it.

Here is how to do this.

First, listen to the audio version of the program. It's fine to follow along in the transcripts BUT resist the temptation to read at a rate *faster* than the candidate is speaking.

Second, you will quickly notice that before I make a comment about the candidate's performance, you will hear a very distinctive audio signal – indicating that we are taking a break from the live interview for me to comment on something specific the candidate just did.

When you hear that audio signal I recommend that you hit the <pause> button on your mp3 player and try to figure out what the candidate did in the last 30 seconds that was either a mistake, or an example of a good habit.

The reason I suggest you pause the recording and go through the recording in a stop and go fashion is it forces your brain to **THINK** (rather than just observe) about the case. You want to ask yourself questions like:

- Did the candidate make a mistake?
- If she did, what was the specific mistake?
- If it was a mistake, how would I have done it differently?
- If it was a good habit, why was it a good habit?

Third, for those situations where the candidate made a mistake that you did NOT notice, in all likelihood it means you would have likely made a similar mistake in a real live interview.

It is important to take note of these moments... say to yourself, "Crap... what the heck did I miss?" And then listen very carefully to my commentary and explanation.

After you hear my explanation, I encourage you to **rewind** the recording and see if you can now **HEAR** the mistake now that I've explained what to look for. Once you have clearly hear the mistake, then refer to the transcript and re-read the section where the mistake and **SEE** the mistake and how it is made.

Then, (very important), I encourage you to say **out loud** what the candidate should have said instead based upon your new found understanding of the situation. While there is value in replaying silently in your head how you would have done the case instead, your skills will get much better, much faster if you say it **out loud**.

I know this sounds a little crazy, but it really works. The action of speaking out loud is a form of “doing” that reinforces a particular habit. The act of doing stimulates a different part of the brain, the part of the brain that will be called upon when under the pressure of a real interview.

If you only practice silently in your head, your performance under the stress of a real interview will not be as good period. **I strongly recommend you practice out loud** with this program. You will get more offers if you do.

Here's why.

Mastering the case interview process requires developing a new way of thinking and a new way of communicating (to CEO level clients). What I've come to discover is that how you speak reflects how you think.

In other words, its impossible to SPEAK clearly while thinking unclearly. How you speak reflects how you think. How you think reflects how you speak. The two are very much related. If you become an exceptionally strong case interview COMMUNICATOR, I promise you it's impossible to do so without also becoming a strong case interview THINKER.

Practice the SPECIFIC PHRASING used in the best practice case interview examples, and do it OUT LOUD. After each case, try synthesizing or closing out the case yourself (out loud).

See if you get it perfect. If not, do it again. Record yourself. Analyze it. Do it Again. Get it perfect. Trust me on this.

Now you made be wondering why I suggest re-listening to the audio and then re-reading the transcripts, and then saying the correct approach out loud – isn't that extremely redundant? Actually, no it is not.

Here's why.

Auditory knowledge is stored in one part of the brain. Visual knowledge is stored in a different area. And as you might expect, experiential knowledge (learning by doing) is stored in yet a 3rd part of the brain.

To accelerate the development of good habits and reduce your practice time, the most effective to learn a particular skill is learning by sight, sound, **and** experience. The interconnections between visual, audio, and experiential memory make it much more like that in a pressure situation, like a real case interview, you would automatically use these habits.

Now, let's circle back to the "oh crap" moment when you perhaps were not able to spot the mistake the candidate made. Consider yourself **lucky** that you had your "oh crap" moment during this training program and **NOT** during an actual interview.

Trust me, I had many "oh crap" moments when I went through the interview – fortunately all of them were **BEFORE** my real case interviews began.

Basically, it's my firm belief that it is impossible to get good at case interviews without having a certain number of "oh crap" moments when you realized you made a mistake. The precise number of mistakes one needs to make before the good habits get solidified will vary from person-to-person.

With this program, you will hear my voice over commentary nearly 300 times. You will have plenty of "uh oh" moments when there is absolutely no consequence to making a potential mistake. So if you need to make 30 mistakes before you get rid of the bad habits, this program allows you get through those attempts.

It is certainly easier than trying to find someone to give you 30 different mock case interviews. That either gets absurdly expensive (\$7,000) to hire a coach for that much practice, or you need to find 30 friends willing to give you 30 mock interviews. That's a lot of favors you're going to have to owe someone assuming you even know someone who is qualified to do this for you.

I designed this program for the express purpose of getting rid of those bad habits without having to "waste" any real-life practice opportunities fixing mistakes that are easy to fix in a self-study situation like this one.

It is precisely these "ah crap... I missed that one..." moments that this program is designed to engineer out of your habits.

Do not worry if you do not catch many mistakes (or even any mistakes) in the beginning of the program. There are hundreds of opportunities to try again!

You **WILL** eventually notice the mistakes and be able to anticipate my commentary. Like I've mentioned before, with enough practice you will find the mistakes are entirely predictable.

You will also notice how many candidates make similar mistakes but in their own style. You will be able to see through the style differences and notice the actual habit—good or bad. By actively engaging, putting yourself in the "hot seat" and forcing yourself to "think on your feet" on hundreds of different occasions, you will very quickly "internalize" these skills – turning your case interview knowledge into case interview habits.

Before I wrap up, let me finish by pointing out something very important about this program. If you are somewhat advanced in your case interview skills and you rush through

the program (ignoring all my advice above) looking for that new “secret mistake” to avoid, you may be disappointed.

At first glance, you might even be tempted to say that there’s no new information in this program. And if your knowledge is extremely advanced, this is a possibility. However, the important thing to remember is **this program is NOT primarily a “How To” educational program.**

Instead, **this program is designed to build your habits** – even if intellectually you already “know” what you’re supposed to do.

Here’s why.

When you look at all the people who make it to the final round that **did not** get the offer, All 100% of them, without exception, possessed the knowledge of what to do in a case interview – but they did not actually do it under pressure.

In short, knowledge without the habit does not get you the offer. This program is all about building the habits that lead to consistent case interview performance. It is that consistency that gets you offers.

And that developing that consistency in your habits is the goal of this program. With that in mind, lets get started.

Case Example Overviews

There are 8 cases included in this program.

- **Cases 1 - 5 were given in the candidate-led interview format used by most consulting firms.** (Case 1 is the easiest case. Case 5 is the hardest)
- **Cases 6 - 8 were given in the interviewer-led format used by McKinsey.** (All 3 cases are of similar difficulty level. All cases include handouts for exhibits. All cases require extensive math computations. I recommend listening to these cases with paper and pen handy.)

For each case, you will hear 1 to 4 different candidates and how they approached the interview. Typically the first candidate for a given case was the worst performer, the last candidate the strongest.

If you are in a rush for time (say only 1 - 2 days to prepare), I recommend jumping to the LAST candidate for each case. This is the best practice example and will give you a role model to emulate in your cases.

If you have more time (at least a week), then I recommend going through all the cases and all the candidates. By hearing the difference between how poor, average, good, and exceptional candidates perform, you will develop a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of exceptional case interview performance.

Note - Despite interviewing over 30 candidates for the preparation of this program (not all were included in the final edits); there were many cases that I gave where nobody gave an exceptional answer.

For those cases, I ended up interviewing myself. So if you hear me acting as both the candidate and interviewer, you'll know why. I should also point out that several of the people who did not deliver an exceptional performance in these recordings, did in fact get offers from McKinsey and Bain.

One note, case 4 and 5 turned out to be extremely difficult for the candidates I interviewed. In fact, out of 15 people I interviewed, nobody got case #4 and #5 right. So I actually had to "interview" myself for those cases to get a good example of a best practice approach.

It is interesting to note that of the people I interviewed that did not get my toughest cases right, several weeks after I interviewed them they got offers from McKinsey and Bain. I'd like to think that feedback I gave them on those cases that you will soon be able to hear for yourself, contributed to them ultimately getting those offers.

One final note, amongst the success story field reports I get from users of this program, the consistent theme seems to be using this program in its entirety 5 times. That works out to 90 hours of repetition and reinforcement. After the first time through, most people just play these audio recordings while driving, walking, or exercising. I've even have people who listen to the audios while on plane flights to final round (and ended up with an offer I might add).

On that note, let's go ahead and get started.