The McKinsey PST

The McKinsey Problem Solving Test is a written case. Written cases are a recent development in the management consulting industry and McKinsey was the first to use them to efficiently assess whether a candidate should be invited to live cases or not. Instead of wasting precious hours with hopeless candidates, they started using the McKinsey Problem Solving Test (PST) as a pre-selection method.

McKinsey Problem Solving Test

Basically, the PST is a case interview on paper, with multiple-choice answers. Though it features some quantitative questions (no calculator allowed), it is designed to be solvable by both Physics and Art majors. To increase your stress levels, there's also a strict time limit: you'll only get 60 minutes to solve all 26 questions, which is a very short time considering the amount of text and charts thrown at you.

Basic PST Structure

The PST consists of 26 questions, divided into four 'mini-cases'. Every 'mini-case' has an introduction, in which the company (anything from a fish restaurant to a personal electronics manufacturer) and its problems are introduced. Often with some numerical information and possibly with a quote from the CEO or director.

The introduction is followed by the first series of questions, after which a new piece of information (a chart, a new problem) is introduced. This new information is then followed by another set of questions and then it's on to the next 'mini-case'.

Below, we will share the essential tips on what you should do before and during the PST.

Before the PST

If you know you are going to apply to McKinsey, start practicing now. Do not wait for that invitation, because then you will only have a few days to prepare for both the PST and any other interview rounds. Read this guide and make the included practice test, as well as the test found on McKinsey.com. Pay special attention to your mistakes, use the answer guide to determine *why* you made that specific error.