

Tips for Talking about Strategy

Class participation

1. After you have prepared the case and perhaps discussed with your study group, **you are ready for class!**

- If you are lucky, you will be called to start class; open with your best shot
- Early in a class, you can usually use your prepared analysis; later, topics may evolve

2. Ask for a chance to speak:

- Avoid raising your hand while someone else is speaking
- The instructor will call on people as he thinks is best for the conversation and for students' learning
- Your hand will be passed over sometimes; be persistent if you have an important and relevant point

3. When you get the floor:

- Try to connect (build, debate) to what was said before, or to the issues "on the floor"
- Debating ideas is expected – challenge each other, and challenge the instructor
- Try to explain your idea and argument, using facts to back it up, and be ready to elaborate
- Don't be concerned about your speaking skills or accent: We will listen!

4. Various kinds of contributions:

- Elaborate on a major issue or segment of the case or a solution or piece of analysis
- Add evidence, reasoning, or concepts to "fill out" an issue on the floor
- Explain an issue or concept to others, showing how you did a calculation or arrived at a conclusion
- Give alternatives to the point of view of another – respectfully
- Introduce a new topic or major question (tricky – may get deferred, which is OK too)
- Help the class draw conclusions or put perspective on a discussion (usually at the end)
- Ask analytical questions that help the group focus on an issue or clarify an issue
- Ask clarifying questions, to be sure you understand an important point (others will learn from it!)
- Fill in gaps in analysis, answer factual questions, simple case facts
- Bring in "outside knowledge" – your expertise, comparable situations you know, research you did

5. After class, jot down what you learned, including

- New insights about the topic or about how to approach the subject next time
- Tips to yourself about case analysis and preparation

Strategy conversations at interviews and on the job

- Try to frame the issues and questions systematically – use simple frameworks to guide you
- Step back to look at an issue from various perspectives ("big picture" or "out of the box")
- Try to ask good questions that open up major perspectives or help decide a question
- Fill in gaps in your knowledge before jumping to conclusions ("ask to learn, not to reply")
- Use history, analogues, and metaphors to help people see a point, not as justification or evidence
- Don't believe company PR – look for actions and evidence to "test" their statements
- Before deciding a major issue, turn every stone (due diligence)
- Don't ignore implementation issues – they will often constrain strategic choices