

# The (“Dreaded”) Case Interview

## Caltech Consulting Club

1. Organizing the remaining sessions
2. What is the case interview?
  - Purpose
  - Types
3. Tips from McKinsey & others
  - How to do well
4. Practice Case

# What is a Case Interview?

*an interview in which "you are introduced to a business dilemma facing a particular company. You are asked to analyze the situation, identify key business issues, and discuss how you would address the problems involved."* -MIT's Careers Handbook

# What Interviewers Are Looking For

- Logical and organized reasoning
- Analytical ability
- Creativity
- Quantitative skills
- Business judgment (not business knowledge)
- Ability to structure problem solving
- Intellectual curiosity & enthusiasm
- Poise, self-confidence and communication skills under pressure

# Suggested Method

1. Shake hands, smile, show your confidence
2. Listen to the question
3. Take **notes**
4. Summarize the question
5. Verify the objective
6. **Ask** clarifying questions
7. **Organize** your answer
8. Walk through your entire structure
9. Identify key areas
10. Dig deeper
11. Find key results
12. Synthesize

# Tips

1. Practice
2. Listen to the interviewer's hints
3. Be creative and brainstorm
4. Don't force a framework
5. Exude **enthusiasm** and a positive attitude
6. Make good use of case facts
7. Bring **closure** and summarize

- Case in Point

# Types of Case Questions

## Case in Point

- Entering a New Market
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Developing a New Product
- Pricing Strategies
- Growth Strategies
- Starting a New Business
- Competitive Response
- Increasing Sales
- Reducing Costs
- Increasing the Bottom Line: Profits
- Turnarounds

## Crack the Case

- Strategy
- Operations
- Organization, Systems and Process
- Finance
- External Forces

# From Bain's Website

- Don't get thrown by the interviewer's questions
  - The interviewer is your ally and uses questions to get a better understanding of your thought process, not to stump you.
- Be concise
  - If asked for the top two issues, confine your response to two items.
- Provide logical backup for your answers
  - Be sure to explain what case facts led you to a conclusion and how you reasoned from those facts to your conclusion.
- Don't be afraid to ask clarifying questions
  - If you don't understand the case facts, it will be tough to ace the interview.
- Relax and have fun
  - You should learn a lot about yourself through the case interview process.

# Practice Session Logistics

- Find meeting time and place
- Arrive on time, Find a partner, Grab two cases
- (20 min case, 5 min feedback) x 2
- Practicing consultant administered practice, lectures, workshops
- Other suggestions?



# The Case Interview Practice

- Shake hands, introduce yourself
- Small chat for 20 sec
- Introduce case, read prompt
- DO CASE
- Conclude (synthesize or CEO encounter)
- Feedback

# A Practice Case

Noble Line Travel

-Crack the Case

# Noble Line Travel – Data Page 1

## Overview

- Noble Line Travel is a travel agency with three divisions: corporate travel and two others
- Corporate travel agencies have two types of sites: offices at their customers (e.g. IBM travel department) and reservation sites throughout the world
- Noble Line is ranked fifth in terms of revenues but they do not know how their profits compare to their competitors
- Several employees have discussed starting a union, but only in certain regions
- ✓ • Customers like Noble Line's quality and service but perceive them to be expensive
- Airlines are considering eliminating the commission structure on ticket sales, a trend that makes Noble Line uncertain about its future



**How can Noble Line Travel increase profitability in this changing industry?**

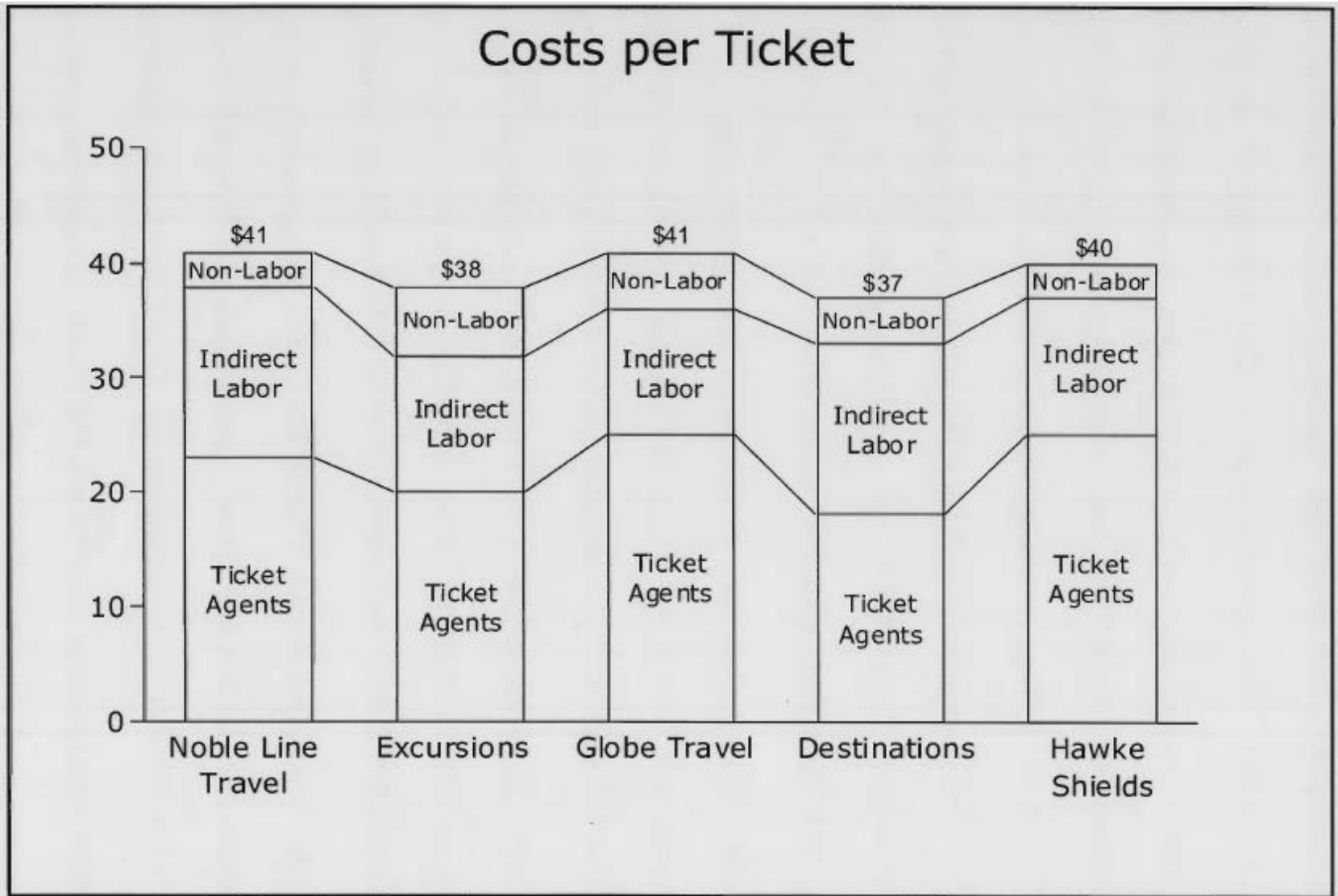
# Noble Line Travel – Data Page 2

## Sales by Competitor

	<u>Noble Line Travel</u>	<u>Excursions</u>	<u>Globe Travel</u>	<u>Destinations</u>	<u>Hawke Shields</u>
<b>Transactions Per Year</b>	1.5 MM	2MM	1MM	3MM	2MM
<b>Average Ticket Price</b>	\$500	\$600	\$800	\$450	\$550
<b>Commissions Per Ticket</b>	10%	12%	11%	10%	9%
<b>Override / Fee Per Ticket</b>	1MM/\$5	1.9MM/\$7	900K/\$5	3.5MM/\$6	1.8MM/\$5
<b>Management Fee</b>	\$55	\$43	\$45	\$48	\$50

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# Noble Line Travel – Data Page 3



# Noble Line Travel – Data Page 4

## Market Focus and Image by Competitors

	<u>Noble Line Travel</u>	<u>Excursions</u>	<u>Globe Travel</u>	<u>Destinations</u>	<u>Hawke Shields</u>
<b>Regional, short flights</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>National Domestic</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>International</b>	Rarely	Yes	Yes	Rarely	Rarely
<b>Public Perception</b>	High Priced	Sophisticated, experienced	International expert	Quick service	Mid-priced
<b>Industry Inside Perspective</b>	Good with service, technically behind	Premium player with great client list	Leader in global alliances	Gets the job done, no frills	Average on all dimensions

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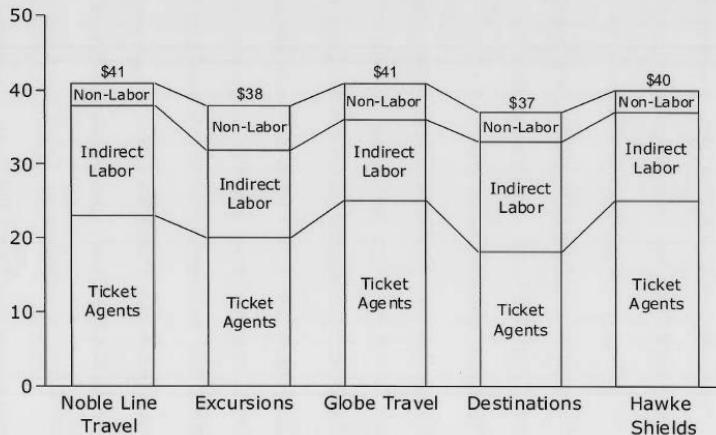
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## Costs per Ticket



# List Of Resources

- Books in SFL
  - Case in Point by Marc Consentino
  - Crack the Case by David Ohrvall
  - Vault Books
  - Wet Feet Books
- Websites
  - <http://www.consultingcase.com/>
  - <http://www.mckinsey.com/aboutus/careers/applyingto/mckinsey/interviewing/casestudytips/index.asp>
  - <http://www.bain.com/bainweb/pdfs/acethecase.pdf>
  - [http://www.bcg.com/careers/interview\\_prep/interview\\_prep\\_splash.html](http://www.bcg.com/careers/interview_prep/interview_prep_splash.html)