

## SPECTRUM CONSULTING GROUP

# Recruiting Guide

## Behavioral, Market Sizing, and Casing

This guide covers what you need for SCG recruiting. If you have never done a case interview, that's normal; most first-time candidates haven't. Work through it in order.

## Recruiting Process Overview

SCG recruiting has three rounds. Each one tests something different and builds on the last.

| Round                         | What We're Evaluating                                 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Round 1: Behavioral Interview | Communication, motivation, fit                        |
| Round 2: Case Interview       | Structured thinking, quantitative reasoning, judgment |
| Round 3: Group Case           | Collaboration, listening, leadership under pressure   |

- Interviewers want to see how you think, not a perfect answer.
- Talk out loud. Silence is the hardest thing to evaluate.

## Round 1: The Behavioral Interview

This round is about why you want to be in SCG and how you've handled real situations. It's conversational, but your answers should still be structured.

### The STAR Method

STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result, a simple structure that gives your story a clear beginning, middle, and end.

| Part      | What It Covers                                               |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Situation | Brief context, one or two sentences.                         |
| Task      | Your specific responsibility or goal.                        |
| Action    | What YOU did, step by step. The longest part of your answer. |
| Result    | The outcome, quantify if possible.                           |

## Common Question Categories

Prepare stories that can flex across categories, rather than a new story for every question:

- Leadership: leading a project or motivating a group.

- Teamwork or conflict: working through friction with a teammate.
- Failure: something that didn't go as planned, and what you learned.
- Initiative: fixing a problem without being asked.
- Why consulting, why SCG: a real, specific reason.

## Tips

- Keep each story to 90 seconds to 2 minutes.
- Quantify the result: percentages, dollars, time saved, people involved.
- Practice out loud. Stories sound different once you actually say them.
- Be specific: "I built a shared spreadsheet that cut planning meetings from an hour to 20 minutes" beats "I helped the team."

## Round 2: The Case Interview

A case presents a business problem, profits are down, or a company is weighing a new market, and asks you to work through it like a consultant would. There is rarely one right answer. Interviewers care about your structure, your questions, and your judgment.

### The Basic Case Structure

| Stage          | What You Do                                                                         |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Opening        | Restate the problem. Ask 2–3 clarifying questions.                                  |
| Structure      | Take 2-3 minutes to build a framework, then share it before diving in.              |
| Analysis       | Work through your framework out loud, asking for data as needed.                    |
| Synthesis      | Summarize what you've learned periodically, not just at the end.                    |
| Recommendation | Provide a direct answer, 2–3 supporting reasons, risks/mitigations, and next steps. |

### Common Case Types

- Profitability: profit is down, find out why.
- Market entry: should the company enter a new market.
- Growth strategy: new products, customers, or geographies.
- M&A: should the company acquire or merge with another.
- Operations: fixing an inefficiency like wait times or defect rates.

### A Simple Framework: Profitability

Profit = Revenue – Cost. Revenue = Price x Quantity (has price, volume, or mix shifted?). Cost = Fixed + Variable (have input costs, volume-driven costs, or one-time expenses changed?).

## Tips

- Take notes in a structured grid or tree, not a running paragraph.
- A short pause to organize your thoughts beats thinking out loud in circles.
- Always end with a clear recommendation.

## Round 3: The Group Case

A small team of candidates works one case together, then presents a recommendation. This round is less about your individual answer and more about how you work with others under time pressure.

### What's Different

- You're watched for how you listen as much as what you say.
- There's no single "leader" role to grab. The strongest candidates build on others' ideas and bring in quieter teammates.
- Time management becomes a group responsibility.

### Tips

- Agreeing with a good idea and building on it is as valuable as generating your own.
- Make sure every team member has something to say during the presentation.

### Market Sizing

A market sizing question asks you to estimate a number, usually a market size or quantity, using logic instead of memorized statistics. Interviewers are testing whether you can break down an ambiguous question into a sensible structure.

### The Six-Step Approach

1. Clarify the question (annual or one-time, which country, retail or wholesale price, etc.).
2. Lay out your approach out loud before doing any math.
3. Choose a method: top-down (start big, narrow down) or bottom-up (build up from smaller pieces).
4. Make reasonable assumptions and state them clearly.
5. Do the math out loud, rounding to clean numbers.
6. Sanity check your answer and give a final number with a takeaway.

### Worked Example

**Question:** How many golf balls are sold in the US each year?

Bottom-up: US population ~330M. Assume 10% play golf (~33M golfers), split evenly into regular, occasional, and rare players (~11M each). Regular players buy ~36 balls/year, occasional ~12, rare ~3.

Total:  $(11M \times 36) + (11M \times 12) + (11M \times 3) \approx 560$  million golf balls per year. Landing in the right order of magnitude matters far more than the exact number.

### Tips

- Round tricky numbers. 327 million becomes 330 million, or even 300 million.
- Keep a running total on paper so you don't lose track of the math.

## General Prep Tips

- Practice out loud with a partner, not just alone.
  - Working through YouTube cases out loud is beneficial too
  - [RocketBlocks](#) can be used for casing practice (Reach out to **Adam Merrill** for login: **merri143@msu.edu**)
- Do a few mental math reps each week so it doesn't slow you down in a case.

- Use [RocketBlocks](#) Mental Math drills
- Schedule time with a Broad Palmer Peer Coach for mock interviews (behavioral & case).
- Ask a current SCG member for a mock interview before your real one.

---

Questions? Reach out to any current SCG member, we were all first-time candidates once.