AI in Strategy Consulting

Interview preparation summary · SC track

INT.XS.1.a · AI in Strategy Consulting

Use an AI assistant to scan and summarise client interviews, reports and filings for a first view, and verify the summary against the source before anything reaches a slide.

A consulting team uses an AI assistant to get a first view of a long report, a pile of interview notes or a data room, because it is fast. The summary is a lead, not evidence. Ask for page or table references beside every claim, then open the source and check the claims that will carry weight: figures, dates, units, names and quotations. Fluent text can contain invented numbers, citations that do not exist, a percentage point turned into a percent, millions turned into billions, and an expert opinion presented as fact. Summaries also drop the caveat that matters, such as a base case that sits beside a high case. Ask what the document does not say, for example whether it covers competitor pricing at all, and then search the document yourself, because an assistant may fill a gap with plausible text. Count survey and interview answers yourself: most means more than half. Never paste client, deal or personal data into a public tool. Use only what your firm approves and check its policy. The usual mistake is trusting a clean paragraph.

WORKED EXAMPLE: CHECKING AN AI SUMMARY OF A FREIGHT MARKET REPORT

Your manager asks for a first view of the Northgate Freight Outlook, an invented 60-page market report. An AI assistant gives three claims: the top three operators hold 58 percent of the market; freight volumes will double by 2030 from 52 million tonnes in 2024; the market is worth EUR 3.4bn. The report's operator table shows shares of 24, 19 and 13 percent. Its forecast gives 2030 volumes of plus 18 percent in the base case and plus 40 percent in the high case. The market table is headed EUR m and shows 3,400. Which claims survive?

Answer: Only the EUR 3.4bn market size survives. The top three hold 56 percent, not 58, and volumes in 2030 are 61.4 million tonnes in the base case (72.8 in the high case), not 104 million.

> **Interview tip:** Say: I use the assistant to get to a first view fast, then I check every figure that will go on a slide against the page it came from. In the last case one claim of three survived, so I quoted the report directly.

INT.XS.1.b · AI in Strategy Consulting

Use an AI assistant to review and build analysis, and test its formulas, arithmetic and suggestions independently before you rely on them.

An assistant can help you build a market model, write a spreadsheet formula, suggest a framework or review your logic, but it predicts plausible text and does not calculate reliably, so every number it gives needs an independent check. Test any formula or code it writes on a case where you know the answer: if 100 grows at 10 percent for two years, a growth-rate formula should return 10 percent from 100 and 121. Do a quick order-of-magnitude estimate for any total, which catches slips of ten or a thousand. Reconcile outputs to the client source: totals, missing lines, units and periods. Beware of arithmetic that looks right, such as a simple average of growth rates where a compound rate is needed, and of a neat story that was fitted to the data after many tries, which a small sample cannot support. Use the assistant to challenge your assumptions and list what could be wrong, then judge each point yourself, because it can raise false alarms. Keep a note of what was AI-assisted and what you tested.

WORKED EXAMPLE: AN AI ANSWER THAT GETS A GROWTH RATE WRONG

An AI assistant analysing an invented market says the Brindle Packaging market grew from GBP 2.5bn in 2019 to GBP 3.6bn in 2024, a growth rate of 8.8 percent a year. Is that right?

Answer: The compound growth rate is 7.6 percent a year, not 8.8. The assistant averaged the total growth instead of compounding it, and the error would overstate 2024 by about GBP 0.2bn.

> **Interview tip:** Say: the assistant gave 8.8 percent. I tested the formula on 100 to 121 over two years, saw it was wrong, and used the compound rate of 7.6 percent. I do not accept any AI number until I have checked it.

INT.XS.1.c · AI in Strategy Consulting

Use an AI assistant to draft emails, notes and slide text in the team's house style, then own the content: structure, accuracy, tone, prompt hygiene and honesty about AI use.

Drafting is where an assistant saves the most time and where it is easiest to be careless. The structure and the recommendation must come from you: decide the answer, the supporting points and the order, then ask for a first draft in the house style, such as an action title that states the so-what and a pyramid of support. Edit for accuracy against your exhibits, because fluent text hides weak support. Check for over-confidence, such as guarantees, words like clearly or all, and a single number where the analysis gives a range. Watch for bias, such as treating the views of a few selected interviewees as the market. Use prompt hygiene: no client names or confidential figures in a tool your firm has not approved, and a clean prompt that says only what is needed. Keep an audit trail of the prompt, the output and your edits in the team folder, say honestly to your manager where AI helped, and do not delegate the judgement a junior is accountable for. In an interview, say what you used it for and where you did not trust it.

WORKED EXAMPLE: EDITING AN AI-DRAFTED SLIDE MESSAGE AGAINST THE EXHIBIT

An assistant drafts the action title for a slide: 'The pilot cut service cost per customer by about a third in every region.' The exhibit for the invented client Tarn Utilities shows cost per customer of GBP 48 before the pilot and GBP 41 after it, in two of the six regions. Edit the title.

Answer: The pilot cut cost per customer by GBP 7, which is 14.6 percent, in two of six regions. The draft's 'about a third in every region' was wrong on both size and scope.

> **Interview tip:** Say: I own the message. The assistant gave me a fluent draft, I checked it against the exhibit, corrected the size and the scope, and told my manager which parts were AI-assisted.

Summary of the Charta interview-preparation topic. Companies and figures in the examples are invented. Draft content, not yet expert reviewed.