

Kearney

"Consulting with operational depth"

FOUNDED 1926, Chicago	EMPLOYEES ~4,500 globally	KNOWN FOR Operations, supply chain, procurement	STRUCTURE Partner-owned since 2019 buyout
ROUNDS 2–3 rounds	CASE STYLE Operations, supply chain, strategy	BEHAVIORAL WEIGHT High	CULTURE FIT Actively evaluated — partner-owned firm

WHO THEY ARE

Kearney (rebranded from A.T. Kearney in 2019) was founded in 1926 when Andrew Thomas Kearney left McKinsey to start his own firm. A 2019 management buyout returned it to partner ownership with no external investors, a structural fact that shapes culture and incentives throughout the organization. The firm's core strength lies in operations, supply chain, procurement, and manufacturing, where it has built decades of differentiated expertise. It also does strategy and transformation work in industrial, consumer, and public sector contexts. Kearney operates in the middle ground between pure strategy boutiques and implementation firms, sitting at the intersection of strategic decisions and operational reality.

WHY PEOPLE WANT TO WORK HERE

Kearney attracts people who care about the full problem: not just what to do, but how to do it. The firm's supply chain and procurement heritage means work carries operational specificity that generalist strategy shops can't match. If you want to understand how manufacturing, logistics, or procurement create or destroy value at scale, Kearney's depth in those areas is substantial. Partner ownership eliminates quarterly earnings pressure and IPO preparation cycles, aligning incentives toward long-term client relationships and junior consultant development. Senior leaders stay for 15+ years, and mentorship is structural, not accidental. For candidates seeking analytical rigor plus career stability in a firm where you build something rather than just collect credentials, Kearney is worth considering seriously.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

Kearney's interview typically runs two to three rounds combining behavioral and case-style questions. Cases lean operational: supply chain restructuring, procurement optimization, manufacturing footprint decisions. The case bar is rigorous but not as speed-focused as MBB or L.E.K. Interviewers assess structured thinking, business judgment, and communication quality. Candidates with operational familiarity (production constraints, supplier economics, logistics networks) will find cases more intuitive than those from purely financial backgrounds. Behavioral interviews are substantive, probing initiative, collaborative problem-solving, and ability to work through ambiguous problems. The partner-ownership culture means they're evaluating whether you're someone they'll want to develop over the long term.

WHAT THEY'RE REALLY EVALUATING

Kearney weights analytical ability, operational intuition, and cultural fit roughly equally. The analytical bar is high and cases require structured logic and quantitative confidence, but the firm doesn't optimize solely for case speed. Well-rounded, intellectually curious candidates interested in operational problems score well. Long-term orientation matters heavily: because the firm is partner-owned and invests in development, they assess whether you'll grow with the firm over time, not just perform immediately. Evidence of commitment, follow-through, and depth over breadth in your background will resonate. They're selecting people who think like operators, not just analysts.

STANDOUT QUESTIONS

1. Walk me through how you would restructure the procurement function of a large manufacturer facing significant cost pressure.
2. Tell me about a time you identified an operational inefficiency and drove a change to fix it. What was the result?
3. Describe a situation where you had to make a recommendation without all the data you wanted. How did you proceed?
4. Why Kearney, and what specifically about operations or supply chain consulting draws you here?
5. Tell me about a time you worked on a team where the approach wasn't working. What did you do?
6. Walk me through a complex project you've led or been a core part of. What was hard and how did you manage it?

INSIDER TIPS

- Understand what Kearney does. Many candidates interview without realizing the firm's core strength is operations and supply chain, not pure strategy. If you're applying, develop a clear perspective on operational consulting: why that type of work appeals to you beyond just 'I want to do consulting.'
- Operational intuition matters. You don't need to be a supply chain expert, but showing you understand how physical businesses work (production costs, supplier relationships, inventory trade-offs, logistics networks) will make your case answers more grounded and credible.
- The behavioral interview carries significant weight here. The partner-owned culture means interviewers are thinking about whether they want to invest in your development. Stories that show initiative, resilience, and long-term thinking will land better than stories optimized for quick impact.
- Research the partner-ownership structure and be ready to speak to why it matters to you. Kearney takes pride in this model: a candidate who references it and explains why it resonates with how they want to build their career will immediately stand out.