Cracking the PM interview 🚀

Types of interview questions asked in PM interviews

8 main types of questions asked in any product interview

1. Product design questions

2. Product improvement questions

3. Product growth questions

4. Product metrics questions

5. Root cause analysis questions

6. Guesstimates questions

7. Go-to-market strategy questions

8. Behavioral questions

Product design questions (1/2)

Why **Product design questions?**

Product design questions are asked to evaluate if you can create a product from scratch. As a PM, you often have to think of products/features considering the user pain points and build products from first principles.

Sample **Product design questions**

➔ How would you create a mentorship product on AmbitionBox?

➔ Design an app where people can track all their subscriptions.

➔ Design a feature to suggest safe/unsafe roads in Google Maps.

➔ Design a product through which people can sell courses on Linkedin.

➔ Design a book-sharing app where people living in the same vicinity can meet and share books with each other.

➔ Design a gamification engine for users on Netflix to increase engagement.

➔ How would you design a data and insights-related product for restaurants leveraging the data that Zomato has?

Product design questions (2/2)

Why product design questions carry the highest significance? 🤔

1/ It helps the interviewer in understanding if the candidate can think from the first principles.

2/ If you have to create a product that is industry-first, would you be able to do it? Imagine having no competitor to get inspired from.

3/ 360-degree assessment: All other types of questions can be built on this - product growth, product metrics, guesstimates, go-to-market, etc.

4/ Assess your understanding of product fundamentals at multiple levels - user journeys, funnel analysis, frameworks, etc.

Product improvement questions (1/2)

Why product improvement questions?

How would you improve your favorite product? The rationale behind this question is to understand your attention to detail and your ability to identify scope of improvement in existing products.

No matter how good a product is, it will always have scope of improvement.

Sample product improvement questions?

➔ How would you improve Google Maps?

➔ What improvements do you want to see in Amazon?

➔ What do you think should Gmail improve?

➔ What feature do you think is Flipkart lacking right now?

➔ What additional feature(s) would you want to introduce in Amazon?

➔ How would you want to improve LinkedIn?

➔ What improvements do you want to make in Instagram?

➔ What changes would you want to make to your favorite product?

Product improvement questions (2/2)

How to answer product improvement questions?

9 out of 10 aspiring PMs struggle to answer this question. There are 3 ways to identify improvements:

1) **Bugs** - These are also areas of improvement. No product in the world is free of bugs. However, you don't get any brownie points by sharing bugs as the answer.

2) **Enhancements in the existing products** - These are usually minor enhancements that you propose in the product. These are good points to share in your interview but not great. Examples - UI/UX related changes, Introducing basic things such as filters, search bar, etc.

3) **Introduction of new features** - Launch new features that can add significant value to your users. Examples:
- Google Maps introducing a feature to identify safe routes (instead of shortest route or least time consuming route)
- LinkedIn introducing new insights for content creators (analysis and slice-dice of data at various cuts)

Now, the question is how do you identify these improvements?

1) **Observation** - Whenever you are using a product, think what aspect of the product is irritating you or pushing you away from using the product. That could be a possible area of improvement.
2) **Research** - Look at what the industry is doing; what the competitors are doing. This can give you good ideas around areas of improvement.
3) **Talk to users** - This is possible if you are working as a PM and you want to look for ideas for your own product.

Product growth questions (1/2)

Why product growth questions?

In a lot of companies, PMs own the growth part of their product as well. Building a product from 0 to 1 is the easiest part. If you already have a good enough user base, the journey from 1 to 10 is also not difficult.

Hardest part is growing from 10 to 100 and then beyond. Can you think of ideas to scale up your product?

Sample product growth questions

➔   How would you increase the number of reviews contributed on AmbitionBox on a daily basis?

➔   How will you increase the number of daily mutual fund transactions on INDmoney?

➔   Identify ways to increase the watch time on Netflix by users.

➔   How can Meta increase the adoption of Threads?

Product growth questions (2/2)

The most important things that the **interviewer evaluates** from these questions are:

1/ User-centricity and user journey
Are you able to think from a user's lens? If you are not able to resonate with users, you will never be able to scale up your product.
Example: At INDmoney, we had to think of a lot of nudges that would push users to invest more in mutual funds, and that too, invest through us.

2/ Out-of-the-box thinking
Almost everyone will be able to think of the obvious things such as emails, notifications, etc. Are you able to think beyond the obvious to grow your product?
Example: Partnerships with unconventional platforms

3/ Understanding of the company and the industry
Without a decent understanding, you will not be able to suggest anything fruitful that could have a needle-moving impact on the growth.
Better to spend some time to understand the industry and the company before your interview.

Product metric questions (1/2)

Why product metric questions?

"If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." Identifying the right metrics for your product is essential to improving your product's performance.

Product metric questions are not just theoretical interview questions but an important aspect of a Product Manager's life.

If you aren't able to measure any product's performance, you will never be able to improve it. It will be like shooting an arrow in the dark hoping that it hits in the right direction.

Can you think of metrics that a PM at your favorite app would track?

Sample product metric questions

➔   What metrics should PMs at LinkedIn track?

➔   What metrics would you, as a PM, track for Zomato delivery product?

➔   What metrics do you think PMs at WhatsApp be tracking?

➔   What metrics should matter to PMs at Myntra?

➔   On the seller side, what are the relevant metrics for PMs at Flipkart?

Product metric questions (1/2)

From an interview standpoint, this question type helps **interviewers evaluate** the candidates at the following parameters:

1/ Has the candidate put in effort to understand the product?
I usually ask the metrics to be tracked for AmbitionBox. If the candidate is blank or answers at 10,000 ft, then it means the candidate hasn't bothered to check out the website.

2/ Analytical approach
If you are able to identify the right metrics for a product, then half the battle is won. If you can't identify the right metrics, then you will most likely make the wrong decisions for your product.

3/ Structured approach
Are you able to answer in a structured manner? The way you answer this question tells a lot about your thought process.

How should you answer these questions?
1/ Do NOT blindly follow the frameworks to answer this
The moment you say AARRR or HEART framework, consider yourself out of the game.
Use these frameworks only as guiding principles to your solution, not the solution.

2/ Create your own framework
Think of the business and try to classify metrics into different buckets. Example: LinkedIn or Quora could be content creators and content consumers. Try to identify metrics for these categories.

3/ Think of different types of users of the product
Example: Airbnb has hosts & customers; Amazon - sellers & buyers; Swiggy - restaurants & customers. This is another way to classify your metrics.

Root cause analysis questions (1/2)

Why **root cause analysis questions?**

Oftentimes, your product metrics would show abnormal trends. You may end up getting 200% more users on a given day or you may get only 20% of your usual traffic.

As a PM, how adept are you at identifying these abnormalities and then fixing them?

Sample **root cause analysis questions**

➔ DAU of YouTube suddenly increased by 30%. Could you figure out why?

➔ Number of daily posts on LinkedIn dropped by 40% on a given day. You, as a PM at Linkedin, need to identify the reason(s) behind this and fix it.

➔ Conversion funnel on Amazon from 'Add to Cart' to 'Order successful' dropped from 3% to 1% overnight. How will you bring it back to 3%?

➔ Organic traffic for Quora dropped by 30% in a week. Why?

➔ Direct traffic for The Times Of India increased 100% in a week without any marketing. Overall traffic remained the same. Is it even possible? Can you figure out the possibilities?

➔ While I was with INDmoney, one fine day the number of users opening accounts with us went up by 500% without doing anything. WHy? (Real-life situation)

Root cause analysis questions (2/2)

Why RCA questions are important?

1/ It helps interviewers evaluate you on multiple concepts - user journeys, funnel conversions, etc.

2/ Structured thought process - you need to have a structure in place to solve these questions, or else you will be all over the place.

3/ Quantitative ability - can you think quantitatively? Or you rely on guesswork to solve problems.

How do you solve these questions?

1/ **Start somewhere from the middle of the journey.**
It will give you a direction on whether to move upstream (top of the funnel) or downstream (bottom of the funnel) to identify the issue.

2/ **Evaluate the user journey and funnel conversion numbers for pre and post-scenario.**
This will help you identify what part of the journey to focus on.

3/ Look carefully at **absolute numbers and percentages, together**. Do not ignore any aspect.

4/ **Look at all possibilities** - marketing, technical, copy, UI/UX, seasonal, regulatory, etc. that could have caused the anomaly.

Guesstimates questions (1/2)

Why guesstimate questions?

I am sure you must have come across this type of question - how many balls can you fit in a Boeing 747? 😲

You may ask what these types of questions have to do with a Product Manager. 🤔

Guesstimates, as these are called, are really important for a product manager. They will definitely not be estimating balls that can fit in Boeing 747 (who knows? 😉) but they do a lot of guess-estimates for their products and features in real life.

For any product/feature that you launch, you need to estimate the value (DAU/MAU/transactions/referrals/etc.) that the feature will bring.

This becomes a really important part of the prioritization exercise for any PM. You will always have plenty of projects to choose from, the key will be choosing the one that really moves the needle. And, you won't be able to do this without estimating the impact.

Sample guesstimate questions
➜ What could be the potential conversion of a marketing email sent by Zomato with a unique coupon code?
➜ How much traffic can a new page on AmbitionBox bring?
➜ How many polls will be created on LinkedIn daily? (Assume it's the pre-launch phase for 'polls')
➜ If Netflix launches podcast, how much time will users spend listening to it?
➜ How many daily sessions can topmate.io expect to have after 1 year of launch?
➜ If you were to launch a mentorship platform and scale it to 50,000 sessions/month, how many mentors would you need?
➜ If YourStory Media introduces a widget on the right side of an article page, how many clicks will the widget get?

Guesstimates questions (2/2)

How do these questions help the interviewer?

1/ Understand if you will be able to do your job well - as I said, you will have to do these estimations very frequently.

2/ Prioritization - if you can answer these questions, prioritization becomes much easier (A lot of PMs face a lot of challenges in prioritization. It's easier said than done.)

3/ Analytical and structured thought process - are you able to break the problem statement into the right set of components to come up with the answer?

There are two approaches to solving the problem:

1/ Top-down approach - you start with a high-level or top-of-the-funnel number and then drill down by excluding segments that are irrelevant to your scenario.

2/ Bottom-up approach - you start with a low-level or bottom-of-the-funnel number and move up by extrapolating to reach the desired stage.

Go-to-market questions (1/2)

Why go-to-market questions?

In large organizations, you would usually have separate go-to-market teams. However, in startups you don't have that luxury. PMs often own the go-to market strategy and the entire ecosystem around it.

This basically evaluates if you are good enough to sell your own product.

Sample go-to-market questions

➔ What will be your go-to-market strategy for a B2B data product for Zomato?

➔ How will go about launching mentorship product on AmbitionBox?

➔ If LinkedIn were to allow content creators to sell their courses, what will be your suggestion for pricing strategy?

➔ Uber wants to leverage its driver & delivery network to enter in to grocery delivery market. How would you help Uber enter this market?

Go-to-market questions (2/2)

Go-to-market (GTM) strategy is basically your plan to launch your product so that it reaches the target users.

It could be entering a new market, launching a new product or creating a new variant of an existing product.

GTM strategy is relevant for both B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer) businesses.

In the B2B context, it may get a bit tricky since the ticket sizes are high and companies want extremely high value proposition. Also, you need to identify right stakeholders in the organization.

Your GTM plan encompasses your launch strategy, pricing, target customer group, value proposition, distribution strategy and everything else related to the product.

How does this question type helps the interviewer in assessing you?

1/ **Understanding of user personas** - Understanding your users and their pain points is the core of the GTM strategy.

2/ **Market understanding** - For a good GTM, you need to have knowledge of the market. Without it, you won't be able to create the right offering for your customers.

3/ **Out-of-the-box thinking** - Are you able to think of innovative ways to launch your product? Everyone can do usual stuff, can you think of something creative?

Behavioral questions (1/2)

Why behavioral questions?

One of the most important parts of a product manager's job is to coordinate and collaborate with hundreds of people in the organization - be it engineering, marketing, design, legal, sales, clients, users, anyone and everyone.

Do you have the right behavioral skills to handle so much coordination and collaboration calmly?

Sample behavioral questions

➔ What have been some of your biggest learnings from your product journey so far?
➔ How would handle a situation wherein a developer refuses to work with you?
➔ Tell me about a product or a feature you are most proud of. Why?
➔ Talk about a situation when you and your manager were not aligned about launching a particular feature. How did you resolve the situation?
➔ How would you handle a situation where a developer in your team keeps missing deadline frequently?
➔ Talk about a situation where you said no to an idea or a project.
➔ What has been the hardest part of working as a PM for you?
➔ Did you ever regret working as a PM?
➔ Why do you want to get into the product management?
➔ Tell us about a time you faced failure and how you bounced back.
➔ If you are already swamped with work and your manager gives you another project to work on, how would you react?
➔ Can you walk me through a time when you had to plan a product launch? What were you responsible for and what did you accomplish?

Behavioral questions (2/2)

This could be a **deal-breaker question** in any product management interview! 😲

Product management is a **game of communication, collaboration and coordination**. These three attributes are among the most important pillars of a product manager's daily life.

Why would I say so?

A PM needs to **work with a lot of teams** - engineering, marketing, sales, clients, legal, finance, vendors, partners and many more.

The culture, style of working and objective of all these teams vary a lot. It is the **PM who needs to align himself/herself** according to the expectations of all these teams.

That's why almost all product interviews have a **round dedicated for behavioral questions**.

These behavioral questions helps interviewer **evaluates you on softer aspects** - whether you will be able to handle the rigor of product management?

No matter how good you are technically and analytically but if you are not able to perform well on softer aspects, you may be in a tight spot.

Don't just focus on building the technical aspects of a PM role, focus on the softer aspects as well.

Technical aspects may help you crack the interview, softer aspects will help you grow in your product management career.

All **modules**

➔ Types of questions asked in PM interviews

➔ Questions asked by various companies in PM interviews

➔ How to get into product management?

➔ Product management case studies

➔ Cracking the email products

➔ Product metrics

➔ And, many more!

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