

Welcome

⚡ Lightning Lesson

How to Ace Analytical Thinking PM Interviews




Ben Erez


Former Product Manager at Meta


Housekeeping


 This talk will be recorded and emailed to you afterwards

 You can turn off your video if you prefer

 To optimize for recording quality, participants are muted

 Hold questions until the end please (and use the chat)

 There's a lot to cover so we will go pretty quickly. I don't expect you to absorb all of this immediately – there's a reason my course is spread over 2 weeks. It takes time. You should re-watch the recording on a slower speed once you get the link to absorb better.

 My materials will give you the right foundation to practice, but there's no substitute for actual practice. Practice, Practice, Practice.

Today's agenda

- ⚡ AT evaluation areas & interview flow template
- ⚡ AT template filled out for example question
- ⚡ AT Interview advice
- ⚡ Surprise...
- ⚡ Q&A

Analytical Thinking

Evaluation Areas*

+

My Suggested
Time Allocation

“How would you measure success for...?”

1 Product Rationale (<5 min)

Problem it solves and why it's important

2 Measuring Impact (<15 min)

Set of metrics that represent all players in the ecosystem

3 Setting Goals (<5 min)

Reasonable goals that a team can impact directly

4 Evaluating Tradeoffs (<10 min)

Make tradeoff decisions with a clear framework

[AT Interview Template](#)

**Let's see
what this
looks like
with real
content**

**How would you measure success
for Instagram Reels?**

[Filled out template](#)

AT Interview Flow Summarized

thinking/writing pause

① Review the product rationale

share with interviewer and ask if makes sense

thinking/writing pause

② Describe ecosystem players, set health metrics

share with interviewer and ask if makes sense

thinking/writing pause

③ Define north star metric, critique it, define guardrails, set goal to focus on

share with interviewer and ask if makes sense

thinking/writing pause

④ Evaluate a tradeoff

share with interviewer and ask if makes sense

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Advice

Don't lean on "insider" knowledge of metrics

Interviewers are evaluating your thought process and rationale; not domain knowledge.

Be cautious not to rely on your knowledge of other organization's metrics: you must walk the interviewer through it from square 1.

If they can't follow your thinking, you fail.

What makes for a good counter metric

The counter metric should be an actionable and measurable balance to the NSM.

It's a way of ensuring you grow what matters without hurting something important.

Some examples from [ProductHQ](#)

North Star Metric	Counter Metric
Ad revenue	NPS
Traffic	Conversion rate
Number of signed accounts (B2B)	Average deal size
Session time	Average number of tasks completed
Development velocity	Number of bugs found
Customer lifetime value	Customer acquisition costs

Trade offs are often about breadth vs depth or real estate

Trade off questions can revolve around **breadth vs depth** situations or about **real estate priority**.

E.g.

- Is it better for Reels to have 100 reels with 1MM views or 1MM reels with 100 views?
- Is it better for IG to have Reels at the top? Or Stories?

There's no right answer. It's just about your ability to frame the tradeoff and walk through why one is better for the product/company given where it sits along the maturity lifecycle, mission, and strategy.

Also – it's good to mention what would need to be true in the future for you to switch your stance.

You're driving structure and managing the clock

After the question is asked, do not dive right in. This is not a regular conversation.

This interview is a meeting you own. Do not lean on the interviewer to drive agenda or structure.

You can state assumptions, and then walk the interviewer through your plan for spending the time together. You don't need to ask clarifying questions.

You will not get dinged for showing that you prepared.

Be assertive but not aggressive.

Embrace awkward silences to think

Pause to think & write at each transition point in the interview.

Pausing for 1–2 min is generally no problem.

Don't fill the space by thinking out loud; it can only hurt you.

I caution against sharing your screen for the same reason; it's a distraction.

There's no "right" answer

If you make reasonable assumptions and the interviewer follows your rationale, you can take the interview in any direction. There are no right answers.

However, you need to be clear and logical. Don't contradict yourself.

Note: If an interviewer has a preconceived notion of a right answer, that's not something you can anticipate. It's weather conditions.

Nudging is meant to help you

It's generally on the interviewer to get the signals they need from a candidate.

When interviewers feel that they're not getting the signals they need, they might "nudge".

Nudging is when interviewers try to help by pointing you towards the signals they need.

Example:

- "Can you help me understand why weekly vs daily?"

Use your time to provide signals to the interviewer

Focus on providing the interviewer with the signals they need to evaluate you.

The flow you follow for the interview should be designed to provide the signals that the interviewer needs.

If it doesn't provide signals, cut it.

Example: talking about problems and solutions.

Backtracking is okay, but mind the clock

Is it okay to go back and “redo” a previous section of the interview?

If you reach a point where you feel that you’ve made a mistake or taken a wrong turn, it’s better to backtrack and correct it than continue down a path you don’t believe in.

The key is doing so thoughtfully while being mindful of time.

Example

Links

1. [Filled out AT Interview Template](#) (measure success for IG Reels)
2. [AT Interview Template](#) (blank)
3. [Meta's](#) published interview guide – covers evaluation areas and showcases quick mocks between Meta PMs (90 min video)
4. [Lewis Lin's question bank](#) – new questions continually added from real interviews
 - a. ^ **best practice questions** 🔥

Supplemental Learning

- [Product Life Cycle Stages](#)
- [Defining Product Success: Metrics and Goals](#) (Sequoia Capital)
- [How do you set metrics?](#) (Julie Zhuo)

Extra Practice

Work through this question in a copy of my template:

How would you measure success for Facebook Events?

Q&A

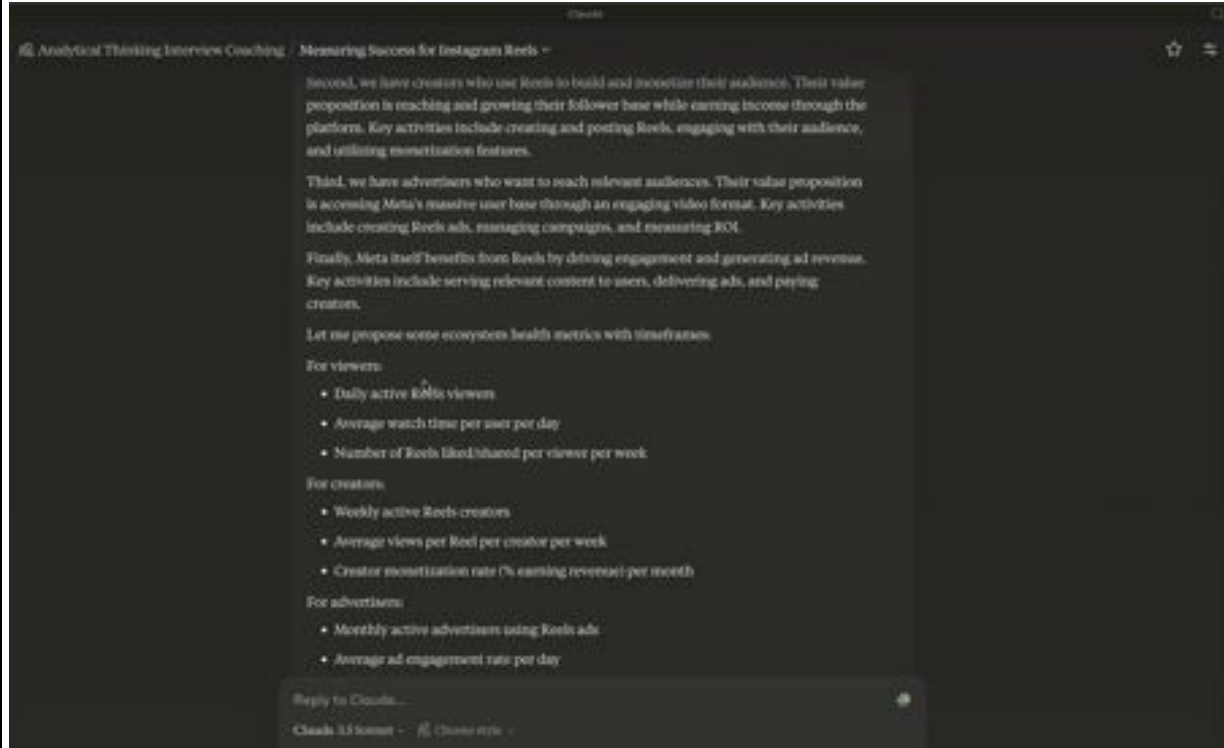
(please drop questions in chat)

Oh and one more thing...

I'll teach you how to build your own **mock interview prep AI copilot** in my course. It's magic.

Role play as **experienced interviewer** (it helps to see what great looks like)

Role play as **candidate** (submit responses with my template and get scored against my rubric and identify growth areas.



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Q&A

(please drop questions in chat)

1

Product Rationale



< 5 min

1. Describe the product and key use cases. Touch on the maturity of the product and how the product makes money.
2. Talk about why the product/experience matters, touching on the ecosystem, users and company.
3. Review the main current alternatives/competitors and key gaps with these options.
4. Describe why your company is uniquely positioned to deliver the best product/experience.
5. Define a placeholder mission statement for the product. If it's a [company] product, talk about how it rolls up to the mission of the company. You might need this for a trade off question later.

2

Measure Impact



< 10 min

1. Identify main ecosystem players and the primary value proposition the product has for each player.
2. List the key actions taken by each ecosystem player in order to unlock the value of the product.
3. Package the key actions into metrics paired with relevant timeframes (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly).
4. Identify a north star metric that captures value creation for the largest number of ecosystem players. Critique this metric by mentioning strengths and drawbacks.
5. List 1–2 guardrail metrics (aka countermetrics) to address drawbacks of the NSM. These metrics should stay within a healthy range as the NSM grows.



Avoid vague/generic “metrics” (e.g. engagement) and vanity metrics (e.g. installs/visits).

3

Goals



< 10 min

Approach as an altitude shift from company and product goals to a single team's goals. This is all about your ability to identify 1-3 leading metrics that a single product team can aim at directly in the near term.

1. Start by picking an ecosystem player to focus on. I suggest anchoring this to which ecosystem player would unlock the biggest growth based on the current state and maturity of the product?
2. Work backwards from the action the chosen ecosystem player takes to contribute to the NSM to identify leading actions. These are your potential leading metrics.
3. Based on the potential leading metrics, identify 1-3 goals the team could focus on for the next 3-6 months.
4. Prioritize one of these goals based on ability to influence and potential impact.

4

Evaluating Tradeoffs



< 10 min

This is meant to showcase your ability to create an apples-to-apples comparison from an apples-to-oranges scenario while being decisive and principled.

1. Start by clarifying the trade off.
2. Identify the common goal/mission for both [things] being discussed.
3. Frame the tradeoff by outlining the pros and cons of each [thing].
4. Summarize the fundamental tradeoff by boiling it down.
5. Determine which [thing] you believe aligns better to the company/product goal and articulate your rationale for the final decision.

There are three types of AT questions

1. **Setting a goal for a product (covered today)**
 - a. *E.g. "Set a goal for Spotify" or "measure success for Spotify"*
 2. **Making a tradeoff (covered today)**
 - a. *E.g. "How would you decide between increasing reactions/item on newsfeed vs increasing number of items viewed in newsfeed?"*
-
3. **Debugging / root cause (not covered*)**
 - a. *E.g. "You're a PM at DoorDash and noticed orders were down 10% last week. What happened?"*
 - b. **NOTE: root cause q's being phased out.*