

# Welcome

⚡ **Lightning Lesson**

## How to Ace Product Sense 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)

# Today's agenda

- ⚡ Product Sense Evaluation Areas & Advice
- ⚡ PS Example & Links (including template)
- ⚡ Q&A

# Product Sense

## Evaluation Areas\*

+

## My Suggested Time Allocation

★ Succinct + Structured

### Product Motivation (2-3 min)

*What's the product's reason for existing*

### Target Audience (<10 min)

*Who this is for, including segmentation*

### Problem Identification (<10 min)

*Identify problems for the chosen segment and prioritize one*

### Solution Development (<10 min)

*Brainstorm creative solutions to the prioritized problem, pick one*

# **Example to keep in mind during this session**

You're a PM at Meta.

**Build a product for gardening.**

## Advice

# 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.

## Advice

# 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.

Anecdote

## Advice

# 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.*

## Advice

# 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.

As an interviewer, it's more fun when an interview goes well. It's less work and makes the time go by faster. Do the heavy lifting that makes the interview easy for the interviewer.

Example

## Advice

# 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

## Advice

# Rule of 3s and 2s

When in doubt, I suggest 3 for exploration, 2 for prioritization.

Examples:

3 segments (pick one by scoring on 2 dimensions:  
reach + underserved degree relative to mission)

👉 3 problems (pick one by scoring on 2 dimensions:  
frequency + severity)

👉 👉 3 solutions (pick one by scoring on 2  
dimensions: impact + effort)

## Advice

# A game of chess / a house of cards

Where you land in each section of the interview sets up the next section.

Before speaking, consider whether you're about to trap yourself into a corner with any decisions.

Pick the path of highest optionality.

You'll need to tie it all together at the end.

Anecdote

## Advice

# 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

# Basic Approach For PS Interviews

*thinking/writing pause*

## **① Review the motivation & mission for the product**

*share with interviewer and ask if makes sense*

*thinking/writing pause*

## **② Describe audience & craft unique segment**

*share with interviewer and ask if makes sense*

*thinking/writing pause*

## **③ Define segment problems & prioritize one**

*share with interviewer and ask if makes sense*

*thinking/writing pause*

## **④ Brainstorm solutions to the problem & pick one**

*share with interviewer and ask if makes sense*

1

# Product Motivation

⏰ 2-3 min

1. Describe the product/experience by providing an overview of its basic elements.
2. Touch on how it ties to the company's mission.
3. Connect to something deep: why is this meaningful in the world.
4. Define a placeholder mission statement for the feature/product (you'll use it later).

2

## Target Audience

⌚ < 10 min

1. Identify the key players in the ecosystem. These are groups with incentives / skin in the game.
2. Divide selected ecosystem group into mutually exclusive sub-groups based on primary motivations for the product/experience. (*note: motivations groupings are more useful for brand new product / consider skipping for existing product*).
3. Define segments based on heuristics such as lifestyle, behaviors, usage patterns (can combine with demographics if helpful).
4. Prioritize segment by scoring on: **reach** (segment size) and **underserved degree** (how poorly served is the segment relative to the mission statement)
5. Define segment persona for the next part.

3

## Problem Identification

⌚ < 10 min

1. Outline key steps of the user journey.
2. Identify problems at different stages of the journey to demonstrate breadth.
  - a. Note: ***problems get in the way of realizing the value of the product / realizing the mission.*** Needs are not problems.
3. Prioritize by scoring high / med / low on:
  - a. Severity (how much does the problem hurt the chosen segment when it happens)
  - b. Frequency (how often the problem occurs)

4

## Solution Development

⏰ < 10 min

1. Demonstrate creativity by thinking of different ways of solving the problem.
  - a. *Moonshots don't count more than practical solutions. The key is solving the problem. Where it makes sense, apply the latest technology.*
2. Prioritize one by scoring high / med / low on:
  - a. Impact (how well does it solve the problem)
  - b. Effort (how realistic/feasible is it to get to market).
3. If you have time... 3. Describe MVP in compelling but not overly granular language. Paper sketches are great.
4. Identify a couple key risks w/ the MVP.

# Links

1. [Filled out PS Interview Template](#) (build a product for gardening)
2. [PS Interview Template](#) (you can copy)
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  
 **best practice questions** 

# Extra Practice

Work through this question:

**You're a PM at Meta.  
Build a product for volunteering.**

# **Q&A**

**(please drop questions in chat)**

**And in the meantime...**

**Want more practice?**  
Join my next cohort 



10% off with promo code

**LIGHTPS**

## Product Sense & Analytical Thinking PM Interview Bootcamp



**Ben Erez**

Former Product Manager @ Meta



Learn directly from Ben



★★★★★ 4.6 (18) · 2 WEEKS · COHORT-BASED COURSE

Build confidence for structured interviews through live case-style discussions and interactive practice sessions with a former Meta PM



This course is popular

4 people enrolled last week.

HOSTED BY



**Ben Erez**

Former Product Manager at Meta, Attentive (100s coached)

PREVIOUSLY AT



[maven.com/ben-erez/pm-interview](https://maven.com/ben-erez/pm-interview)

Want to learn how to ace **Analytical Thinking** PM interviews?

⚡ Join next week's lightning lesson!

## How to Ace Analytical Thinking PM Interviews

• LIVE Hosted by Ben Erez

### WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

#### ⚡ AT Evaluation Areas

Walk through evaluation areas for Analytical Thinking interviews

#### ⚡ AT Time Management Tips

How to give the signals to interviewers within the limited time

#### ⚡ AT Interview Template

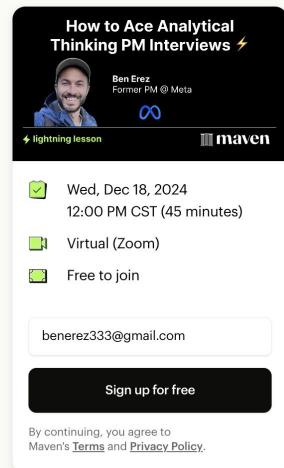
I'll share an interview template you can use to structure your responses and practice

#### ⚡ AT Take Home Project

I'll leave you with an AT question to work through after the lesson by following my template

### WHY THIS TOPIC MATTERS

Big tech companies offer a world-class product culture paired with some of the highest compensation packages in tech. From ICs to VPs, candidates generally need to pass Analytical Thinking interviews to get hired. This lesson will better prepare you to ace these interviews and land a great role.



Open to sharing feedback on this talk?

Take 2 minutes to complete my NPS survey 



# **Q&A**

**(please drop questions in chat)**