

SECRETS OF THE PRODUCT MANAGER INTERVIEW

**FORMER GOOGLE INTERVIEWER REVEALS
HOW TO GET MULTIPLE JOB OFFERS**

LEWIS C. LIN

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Former Google Interviewer Reveals How to Get Multiple Job Offers

LEWIS C. LIN

ALSO BY LEWIS C. LIN

Case Interview Questions for Tech Companies

Decode and Conquer

Five Minutes to a Better Salary

Interview Math

PM Interview Questions

Rise Above the Noise

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Chapter 1 Introduction

About My Work

Over the last decade, I've traveled the world, teaching thousands of product management (PM) professionals on how to conquer product management interviews.

During this time, I've perfected the interview preparation process so that success could be repeated for anyone, not just those who went to the right schools or worked at the right companies. My clients reported offers from Google, Facebook, Uber, Amazon...and the list goes on. Here's what one of my clients said about my work:

I used your books, recorded classes, and 1:1 coaching to get offers at Amazon and Google earlier this year. I am currently a PM at Google in Mountain View. I just saw your school tour dates, and would love to meet you when you visit Stanford, if possible. I want to shake your hand, and thank you in-person for the tremendous impact you made on me .

What this Book is All About

PM interview candidates have no shortage of questions about the interview process. And it's with good reason: the process is hard!

Secrets of the Product Manager Interview is a compilation of the most popular questions that I've answered over the years. Some questions are company-specific:

- What should I expect at the Google PM interview? And how should I prepare?
- How is the Facebook PM interview different? And what's the best way to prepare for product sense and execution interviews?

Other questions are more general :

- Can I Google answers during the phone interview? For example, if I need to know Seattle's population?
- Is it better to choose a Monday time slot, Friday, or some day in between?

And some questions are for the curious:

- How competitive is it to get into LinkedIn as a product manager?
- Which is tougher to crack, a Google interview or a Facebook interview?

- What are the best tech companies to have on a product manager's resume?

How to Use this Book

I've packed this book with lots of secrets, tips, and tricks. I don't expect you to read it cover to cover.

Instead, approach this book as you would approach a buffet: pick, choose, and sample the sections that are most relevant to you. Don't slog through any sections that don't pertain to you or your situation.

How this Book is Structured

The bulk of the book is focused on how to prepare for product manager interviews at particular companies:

- Google, including Google's technical program manager role
- Facebook
- Amazon
- Uber
- LinkedIn
- Microsoft

The last chapter contains tips and advice that's not specific to a particular company; in other words, these are the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the PM interview process. These FAQs have been divided into ten sections:

1. Your First Product Manager Job
2. Interview Process
3. Candidate Evaluation
4. Preparation
5. General Interview Approach
6. Approach for Specific Questions
7. Interviewer Feedback
8. Take Home Assignments
9. Salaries
10. Other Career Advice

Other Resources to Consider

You may also want to consider other PM interview prep books I've written:

Decode and Conquer

Perfect for those who are looking for frameworks on how to approach PM case questions including product design, analytical, technical, metrics, and strategy.

PM Interview Questions

Ideal for candidates who are looking for a large bank of 160+ practice questions, taken from real interviews at Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Uber.

Case Interview Questions for Tech

Best for business-oriented candidates who are also considering roles outside of PM, including product marketing, operations, finance, and strategy. Over 160+ case questions to practice. All real. All with sample answers.

One Last Thing

I'm about to reveal all my secret interview tips that, until today, have been hidden in :

- My emails
- One-on-one conversations with my clients
- Select PM interview communities and groups
- Exclusive half and full-day interview workshops for Stanford, Berkeley, Chicago, and Kellogg

I would love to hear your feedback, comments, and even typos. Email me at lewis@impactinterview.com.

*Lewis C. Lin
February 2017*

Chapter 2 Concepts Mentioned in the Book

AARM Method™

Acquisition: Tracking customer signups for a service. The bar for signing up for a service has gotten lower and lower, thanks to the popularity of free signup and pay later “freemium” models. The typical metric to track here is lazy registrations.

Activation: Getting users that have completed a lazy registration to fully register. For a social networking site like LinkedIn, this may include uploading a photo or completing their profile page.

Retention: Getting users to use the service often and behave in a way that helps the user or business. Key metrics include adding more information to their profile page, checking the news feed frequently, or inviting friends to try the service.

Monetization: Collecting revenue from users. It could include the number of people who are paying for the service or the average revenue per user (ARPU).

Big Picture Framework

A model that provides an effective way to answer interview questions about marketing plans and campaigns. There are three parts to the framework: Goals, STP (segmentation, targeting, and positioning), and the 4P's (product, place, promotion, and price).

Goals : State the overall business objective and intermediate marketing objectives that contribute to it.

Segmentation : Group buyers by attributes to identify customers that would benefit from the product .

Targeting: Choose segments that would appreciate and seek out the product's benefits.

Positioning : Create a product image for customer segments through the 4P's.

CIRCLES Method™

Comprehend the Situation: Avoid miscommunication by asking clarifying questions ('5 W's and H') and/or stating assumptions.

Identify the Customer: List potential customer personas, and choose one to focus on.

Report the Customer's Needs: Provide a user story that conveys their goals, desires, and potential benefits. *As a <role>, I want <goal/desire> so that <benefit> .*

Cut, Through Prioritization: Showcase your ability to prioritize, assess tradeoffs, and make decisions. Create a prioritization matrix that estimates valuable metrics (revenue, customer satisfaction, etc.)

List Solutions: Brainstorm at least three BIG ideas that exploit future trends in technology and customer behavior. Use the following frameworks for inspiration: 1) Reverse the situation to uncover new possibilities. 2) Mix and match product attributes to get new combinations. 3) Challenge the status quo.

Evaluate Tradeoffs: Define your tradeoff criteria and analyze the solution through a pro and cons list.

Summarize Your Recommendation: Specify which product or feature you'd recommend, recap its benefits to the user and/or company, and explain why you preferred this solution compared to others.

DIGS Method™

Dramatize the situation: Provide context and details that emphasizes the importance of your job, project, or product.

Indicate the alternatives: Be thoughtful and analytical by listing three different approaches to a problem.

Go through what you did: Convince the listener that you were the driving force in the action and results.

Summarize your impact: Provide numbers and qualitative statements that validate your impact in the organization or

task.

Root Cause Analysis Tree

A hierarchical diagram that identifies the root causes of a problem and provides potential corrective actions to benefit the outcome or prevent recurrence. Also known as an issue tree.

Rule of Three

A communication principle that suggests responses bundled in threes are more effective and satisfying.

Pro and con analysis

A communication principle that a particular point of view is more readily accepted if the speaker provides a balanced view, in other words both the advantages and disadvantages.

Chapter 3 Google PM Interview



What to Expect

Product Design

Google PMs put users first. PMs are zealous about providing the best user experiences. It starts with customer empathy and always includes a passion for products, down to the smallest details. They can sketch a wireframe to convey an idea to a designer.

Sample questions include:

- How would you improve Google Maps?
- How would you reduce Gmail storage size?
- How would you improve restaurant search?
- What's favorite Google product? What do you like or not like about it?
- If you were to build the next killer feature for Google, what would it be?
- You're part of the Google Search web spam team. How would you detect duplicate websites ?

Analytical

Google PMs are fluent with numbers. They define the right metrics. They can interpret and make decisions from A/B test results. They don't mind getting their hands dirty. Sometimes they write SQL queries; other times, they run scripts to extract data from logs. They make their point by crisply communicating their analysis.

Some examples of analytical questions:

- How many queries per second does Gmail get?
- How many iPhones are sold in the US each year?
- As the PM for Google Glass 'Enterprise Edition' PM, which metrics would you track? How do you know if the product is successful?



Screenshot / Google

Cultural fit

Google PMs dream of the next moonshot idea. They lead and influence effectively. They have a bias for action and get things done. If Google PMs were working anywhere else, they'd probably be CEOs of their own company .

Sample questions to assess cultural fit:

- Why Google?
- Why PM?

Technical

Google PMs lead product development teams. To lead effectively, PMs must have influence and credibility with engineers. During the final round (aka onsite) interview, a senior member of the engineering team will evaluate your technical competence. Be prepared for whiteboard coding questions at the onsite interview.

Example questions include:

- Write an algorithm that detects meeting conflicts.

Strategy

Google PMs are business leaders. As a result, they must be familiar with business issues. It's not necessary for PMs to have business experience or formal business training. However, they do expect you to pick up business intuition and judgment quickly.

Sample interview questions include:

- If you were Google's CEO, would you be concerned about Microsoft?
- Should Google offer a StubHub competitor? That is, sell sports, concert, and theater tickets?

Also be prepared for behavioral interview questions such as Tell me a time when you had to influence engineering to build a particular feature. Out of all the name brand PM interviews, Google PM interviews tend to emphasize behavioral interview questions the least. However, Laslo Bock, Google's former VP of Human Resources, implored interviewers to ask more behavioral interview questions; his influence may remain, despite Bock not being at the company anymore.



Screenshot / Graphasel

What Not To Expect

Brainteasers, such as logic puzzles, are rarely used in today's Google PM interviews. Google's HR department found a low correlation between job performance and a candidate's ability to solve brainteasers.

Examples of brainteasers include

- I roll two dice. What is the probability that the 2nd number is greater than the 1st?
- What's 27×27 without using a calculator or paper?

However, hypothetical questions have not been banned at all. Hypotheticals are imaginary situations that ARE related to the job. Contrast hypothetical questions with brain teasers, which ARE NOT related to the job. Here's an example of a hypothetical: *How would you design an algorithm to source data from the USDA and display on Google nutrition?*

How to Prepare

Product design

Practice leading design discussions using a framework. (Need a framework? I'd recommend the CIRCLES Method™. Start with possible personas and detail use cases. Prioritize use cases and brainstorm solutions. Many PM candidates (wrongly) suggest solutions that are incremental or derivatives of a competitor's feature set. The Google interviewers are evaluating your creativity, and they place a big emphasis on big ideas (aka "moonshots"). Inspire them with unique, compelling ideas. Draw wireframes on a whiteboard to illustrate your ideas. To practice, download a wireframing tool like Balsamiq. Also study popular web and mobile design patterns for inspiration.

Technical

Coding questions are unlikely during phone interviews. But if you are invited to an on-site interview, you must prepare for programming interviews. The technical interviewer does not expect your programming syntax to be perfect. Pseudo-code is okay. You should have sufficient mastery of technical concepts so that you can participate in technical discussions and help make technical trade-offs. I would recommend going over computer science fundamentals and practicing a couple coding questions. One of my favorite resources is *How to Ace the Software Engineering Interview* : <http://bit.ly/ace-sw-eng-int> . Also be prepared to describe key technologies including search engines, machine learning, and MapReduce .

Analytical

Prepare for estimation questions such as *How many queries per second does Gmail get?* Get well-versed in product launch metrics and A/B testing, including interpretation of results.

Strategy

Use a framework to structure your strategy discussions. If you're not familiar with strategy or frameworks, Porter's Five Forces is a good start.

Cultural Fit

Understand what it means to be Googley by reading Google's corporate philosophy: <http://bit.ly/goog-philosophy>. Review Google's Android design principles: <http://bit.ly/android-design-rules>.

Optional readings: Google's visual asset guidelines (<http://bit.ly/googvisual-assets>) and Steven Levy's 2007, but still useful, article on the Google APM program (<http://bit.ly/levy-goog-apm>). Another optional, but more in-depth perspective, read Steven Levy's *In the Plex: How Google Thinks, Works, and Shapes Our Lives*.



Screenshot / Google

Additional Resources

How to Ace the Google Product Manager Interview : <http://bit.ly/acegoog-pm-int>

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I prepare for a product manager interview at Google in six months?

Start with my 30-day Google PM interview study guide: <http://bit.ly/GOOG-PM-Int-Study-Guide>

Spend the extra time focusing on areas where you find challenging such as product design, strategy or technical.

30-Day Google PM Study Guide

Day 1. Getting familiar with Google's PM Interview

Tasks

- Read Google's official preparation note to its PM interview candidates: bit.ly/GOOGPMIntNote
- Search Google for Lewis' Quora answer and read: "What should I expect in a product manager interview at Google, and how should I prepare?"

Goal

Know the scope and nature of the Google PM interview.

Day 2. Getting familiar with the product design interview

Background Reading

- Read about the CIRCLES design method in *Decode and Conquer*.
- Review the product design examples from *Decode and Conquer* to see how CIRCLES is applied.

Exercises

Screenshot / *PM Interview Questions* by Lewis C. Lin

What is the best way to prepare for the technical round of Google's on-site interview for a Product Manager role?



I've worked with many candidates preparing for their Google PM interview. Here's what I would recommend for technical preparation.

Background Reading

Read How to Approach a Technical Question

See page 88 of *Decode and Conquer* .

Review Big O notation

Check out the Big-O Algorithm Complexity Cheat Sheet:

<http://bigocheatsheet.com/>

Review data structures: arrays

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Array_data_structure

Review data structures: linked lists

<http://bit.ly/1POPNBS>

Review data structures: stack & queues

<http://bit.ly/1LzIdXW>

Review data structures: trees

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tree_\(data_structure\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tree_(data_structure))

Review data structures : heap

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heap_\(data_structure\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heap_(data_structure))

Review data structures: trie

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trie>

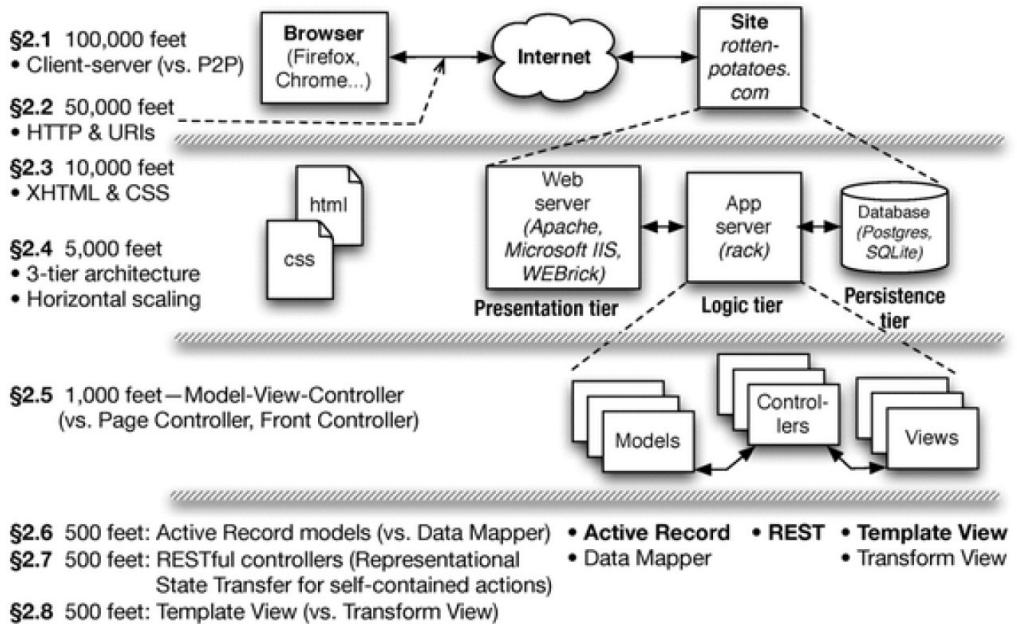
Review data structures: graph

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graph_\(abstract_data_type\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graph_(abstract_data_type))

Review data structures: hash tables

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hash_table

Review how a webapp works (see diagram below)



Review how TCP/IP works

<http://bit.ly/how-tcp-ip-works>

Review recursion

<http://qr.ae/RkN62o>

Review concurrency

<http://bit.ly/con-pm-in-t>

Exercises

How would you design a blogging application?

Answer on page 96 of *Decode and Conquer*

You're part of the Google Search web spam team. How would you detect duplicate websites?

Answer on page 98 of *Decode and Conquer*

Design an elevator control system .

Answer on page 100 of *Decode and Conquer*

Write an algorithm that detects meeting conflicts .

Answer on page 99 of *Decode and Conquer*

Brainstorm as many algorithms as possible for recommending Twitter followers .

Answer on page 89 of *Decode and Conquer*

What happens when you type a URL into a browser and hit ENTER?

Answer here, *What really happens when you navigate to a URL* : <http://bit.ly/URL-nav>

How does your college affect your chance of becoming a Google APM?

Having a brand name university can definitely help your candidacy stand out, but there's no reason that the schools you mentioned stand out less than others.

Does Google only hire PMs from top-ranked MBA programs? I attend a business school ranked in the 30s, and I'm worried it'll affect my chances to get an interview.



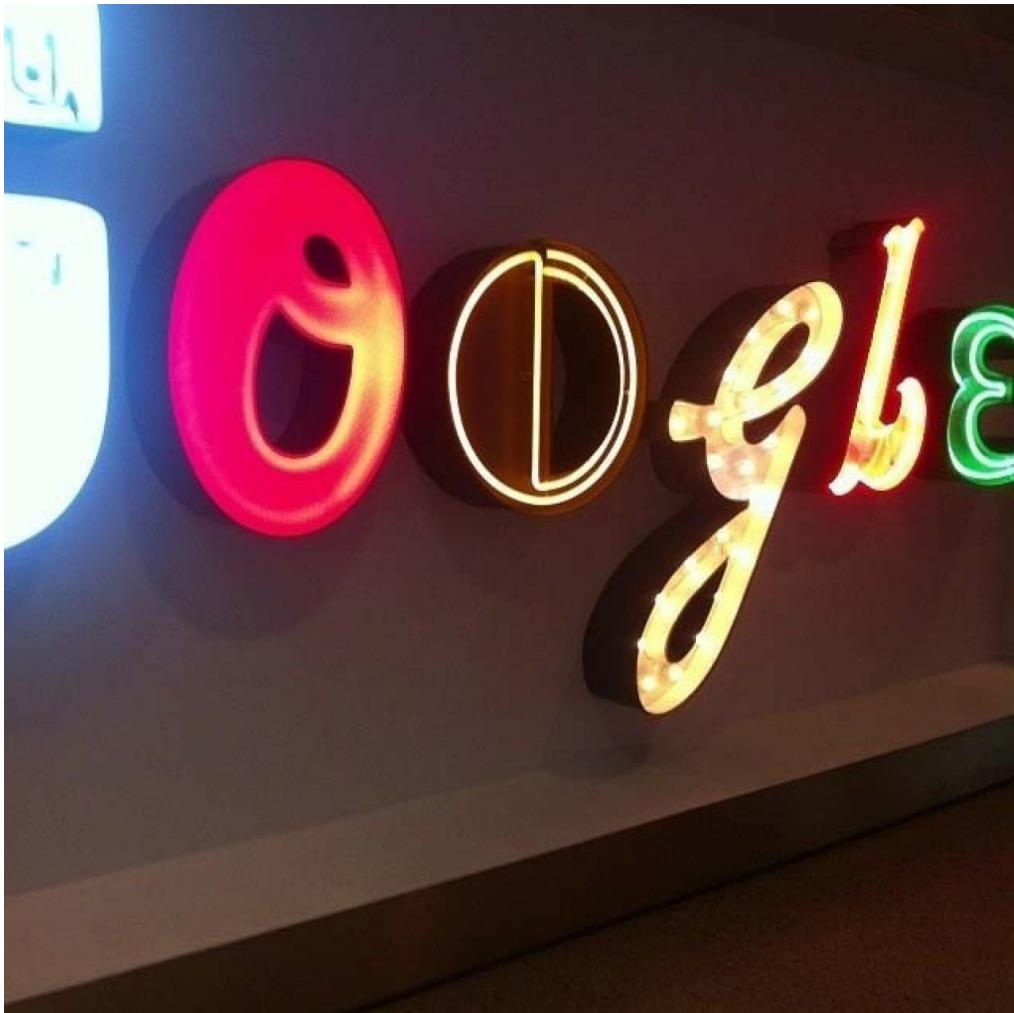
Screenshot / Daniel Dione

No.

Google has a very aggressive recruiting strategy; they will consider you, despite a non-brand MBA.

With or without a brand name, your best strategy to get invited to an interview is to have a current Google employee refer you in, preferably someone who is familiar with your work.

What does Google look for in filling product management and marketing roles?



For product manager, here's what Google is looking for:

- Communication skills: Yes
- Cultural fit (aka “Googley”): Yes
- Product design skills: Yes
- Technical skills: Yes
- Analytical skills: Yes
- Strategic thinking: Yes
- Creativity: Yes, but as it relates to product design

And here's the equivalent list for product marketing:

- Communication skills: Yes

- Cultural fit: Yes
- Product design skills: Not usually
- Technical skills: No, but may require technical understanding especially for Google's solutions for enterprise software. Also PMMs need to be adept and comfortable working with technical team members.
- Analytical skills: Yes, but not to the same extent as a PM
- Strategic thinking: Yes, but as it relates to marketing
- Creativity: Yes, usually as it relates to marketing. And some as it relates to product design.

Additional skills that Google looks for in both PM and PMM candidates: project execution, cross-functional leadership and customer focus.

Are PMs and APMs at Google approaching real problems the way PM interview books propose?

Yes, many Google PMs use frameworks, checklists, and templates for the product development process. To elaborate:

1. Frameworks, whether it's Porter's Five Forces or the CIRCLEST™ method is meant to be a checklist. Checklists help us from forgetting critical parts of the process, whether it's defining business strategy or product innovation. By using a checklist, you'll more likely get a product design process (or interview response) that is complete, satisfying and impressive.
2. Not all Google PMs use a design process like CIRCLEST™. Reasons could include no time, lack of knowledge, or individual preference for a different design framework. However, the risk of not using a checklist is, in the long-run, poor outcomes. For more research on the correlation between checklists and good outcomes, see Atul Gawande's book, *How to Get Things Right*.

Does Google still ask estimation questions?



Screenshot / 349th Air Mobility Wing

Yes, they do.

Laszlo Bock, the Senior VP at Google, admitted that estimation questions continue to get asked today:

Full disclosure: I'm the Senior Vice President of People Operations at Google, and some of these interview questions have been and I'm sure continue to be used at the company. Sorry about that. We do everything we can to discourage this, and when our senior leaders—myself included—review applicants each week, we ignore the answers to these questions .

Source: Here's Google's Secret to Hiring the Best People ,
<https://www.wired.com/2015/04/hire-like-google/>

Part of the confusion around “does Google ask estimation questions?” is around definitions. Bock lumps estimation questions in the same category as brainteasers. But it shouldn’t be.

Estimation is an important part of many Google jobs — not only in product management but also in software engineering, operations, or business development.

Brain teaser questions are riddles. Here's an example, "In British Columbia you cannot take a picture of a man with a wooden leg. Why not?" Knowing the answer is unlikely to predict your job performance.

Many Google hiring managers believe that the work sample test is an excellent predictor of future performance. The Wired article cites that it explains 29% of future performance, the strongest signal that their study identified. It's also more potent than structured behavioral and situational interviews, which explains only 26% of future performance.

A reasonable, performance-predicting work sample test for many roles is an estimation exercise. For example:

As the Gmail product manager, how would you convince the Google Search product manager to put a Gmail sign-up link on the Google Search page?

(Hint: An estimation is involved.)

In conclusion, estimation questions continue to get asked today and will likely get asked in the far future. So keep on practicing.

Are behavioral interview questions asked during Google's onsite product management interviews? Why or why not?

Based on reports that I've received from Google PM candidates, the answer is yes: Google is increasingly asking more behavioral interview questions both on the phone and on-site interviews. These behavioral interview questions are being used to assess fit, teamwork, leadership, and decision making skills.

Part of this is a reaction to Lazlo Bock's comments to the NY Times in 2013 regarding the effectiveness of behavioral interview questions during the hiring process:
<http://nyti.ms/1fTseRV>

Keep in mind that Google PM interviewers are never required to ask particular categories of questions, so the actual questions you'll get will vary.

Net takeaway: don't be surprised if you get a behavioral interview questions during the on-site interview.

What are the most common reasons why Google PM candidates get rejected?

The two most common reasons are:

- Poor product design skills
- Poor technical skills

Many Google PM candidates stumble on common product design questions, such as:

- What do you like about this product or website?
- How would you improve it?
- If you were to design a new feature or product at Google, what would it be?

The next area where Google PM candidates run into problems is the technical interview. It might be an algorithm, whiteboard coding, or technical implementation question. Yes, pseudo code is fine. But this is a distant second to most candidates' problems with product design.

Most people struggle with product design questions because they don't have a habit of critiquing products, suggesting improvements, or articulating their design process in an effective way. To improve, there's no substitute to practicing, using industry standard product design vocabulary and frameworks. Brush up if you're not familiar with the lingo.

To get better at product design questions, use the CIRCLES Method™ framework. With CIRCLESTM, most candidates struggle with customer empathy (the I and the R) and brainstorming (the L).

To increase your mastery of product design questions, I'd recommend *Product Manager Interview Questions* and *Case Interview Questions for Tech*. Both books have numerous exercises to help you gain proficiency.

For technical questions, review intro to computer science concepts such as algorithms & hash tables. Then practice some

simple technical interview questions, so you don't get nervous when you stand in front of a whiteboard during your on-site interview.

If you think it's hard to get a Google PM interview, think again. It's actually quite easy. Google doesn't mind interviewing far and wide to find talented PMs. As long as your resume resembles a standard PM resume, you'll get an interview. Furthermore, Google will give you another chance to reapply. It varies, but they usually re-consider candidates in about 18 months and in some cases, less than that.

Are product managers at Google required to have a programming background?



Screenshot / Alper Çugun

You will find plenty of current Google product managers who do not have a CS degree or prior programming experience.

However, a CS degree, is strongly preferred at Google.

During my time there, near early 2008, the engineers had a strong backlash against MBA product manager types. The engineers maintained that the product managers with MBA degrees got in their way; they didn't feel comfortable taking

product development direction from those who didn't know the technical details.

Shortly after that backlash, there was a mandate that all new Google product manager candidates have computer science degrees. The backlash was so extreme that not even an engineering degree (even electrical engineering) would qualify as an alternative to a CS degree, which was the recruiting norm for most Silicon Valley companies. If I recall correctly, even prior programming experience, wouldn't stand-in for lack of a CS degree.

Today, I doubt the hard CS degree requirement still exists, primarily because it would cut off Google's supply of potential PM candidates. It would also undercut Google's "leave no stone unturned" hiring philosophy.

That being said, I just looked at my recent Google PM candidates I've worked with, and the number of PM candidates who do not have either a CS degree or a programming background is infinitesimally small (about two in the last 6 months).

I don't have a CS degree. Will Google ask me to code at the interview even though I don't have or have limited training to do so?

Yes, Google will still ask coding interview questions to candidates who have no or limited CS training.

Google believes that PMs must be technically capable to effectively influence engineering teams.

Am I expected to write code during the on-site rounds?



Screenshot / Startup Stock Photos

I've worked with a lot of Google PM candidates, and the answer now is the same as it was seven years ago: all signs point to YES — you will be asked to write code during the on-site interview.

However, there are two scenarios where that might not be the case:

The PM candidate did not get a technical interview .

The hiring team decides to cancel the technical interview because the candidate performed poorly on the non-technical portion of the interview such as product design or analytical case interview questions. This saves Google from wasting a senior engineer's time. Candidates in this category are unlikely to get an offer.

The PM candidate did get a technical interview .

However, the senior engineer or engineering director decides to not ask a whiteboard coding question. Instead, he or she decides to evaluate the PM candidate's technical ability another way, such as a :

- *Technical definition question* such as “Explain how the Internet works.”
- *Architectural question* such as “Explain how you would implement a micro-blogging site like Twitter.”
- *Past technical experience* such as “Tell me more about the Android app you built two years ago.”

This is a reminder that, while there may be guidelines, there are no rules in the interview process. In other words, the senior engineer or any

interviewer can ask you whatever question they want.

Lastly, more on-site candidates, that get offers, report getting coding interview questions than not. So be prepared.

Am I expected to write code during the phone interview rounds?

It is unlikely that you'll receive a technical coding interview question during the phone interview.

Why? Product managers run the phone interviews. Most PMs aren't comfortable asking coding questions; they're not as strong technically as a Google engineer.

Caveat, while the probability is extremely low, interviewers, PMs included, are always free to ask whatever they want, regardless of title and job function.

Can you share more examples of technical definition questions?

Here are some additional examples of technical definition questions. I've included sample answers for a few.

Question	Sample Answer
What is garbage collection?	Garbage collection's purpose is to identify memory that's no longer needed by a program. The memory is freed up, allowing other processes and applications to use it.
What is a deadlock?	Critical data, such as financial information, can be locked, so that information cannot be accidentally overwritten. A deadlock is a condition where two or more users are waiting for data that's locked by those users. As a result, none of the users can access the data.
What is big O notation?	Big O notation explains how long it takes for an algorithm to run. It allows programmers to compare the efficiency of one algorithmic approach to another.

Additional technical definition questions:

- What is a regular expression?
- When an algorithm is classified as having linear performance, what does that mean?

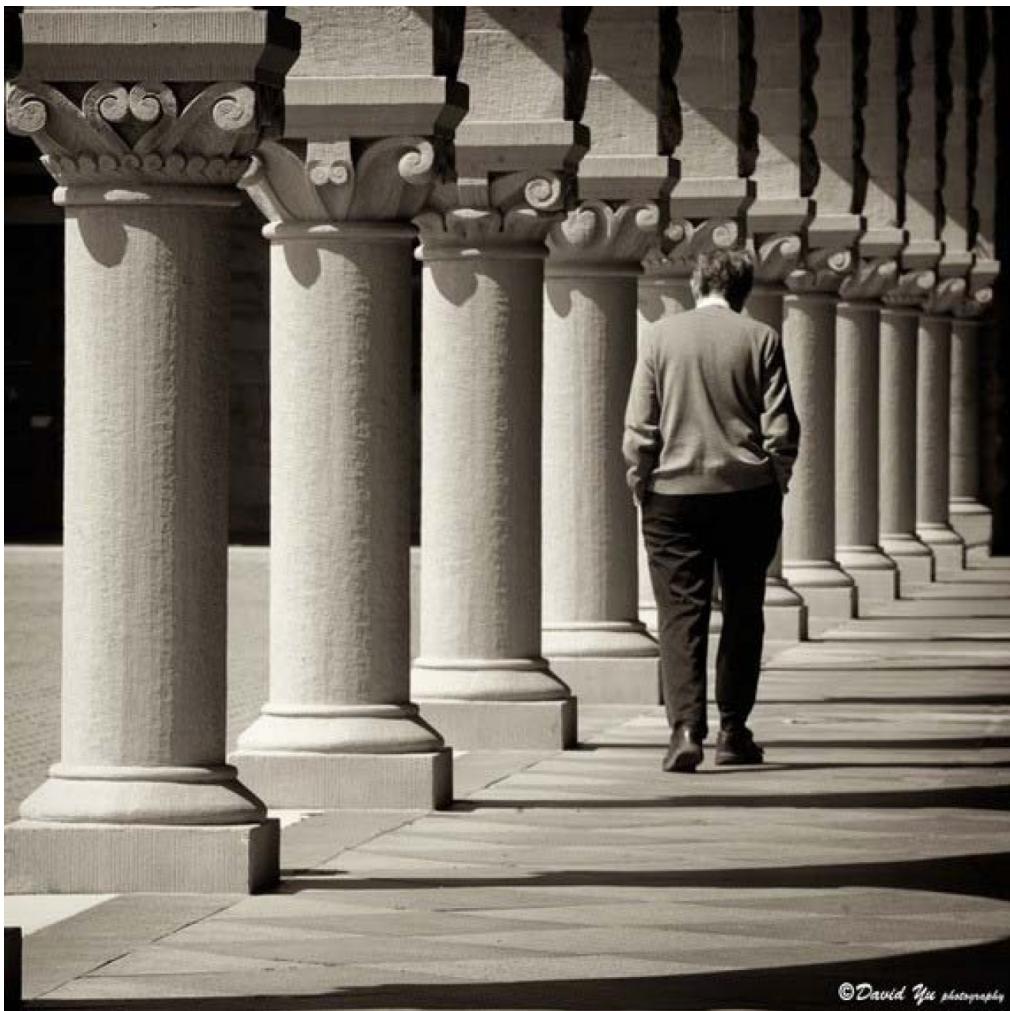
- What are state machines? Give me an example of when we would use one.
- What's the difference between a process and a thread?

How can I get into Google's APM Program?



Screenshot / Carlos Luna

To maximize your chances of being hired as a Google APM,
I'd recommend the following:



Screenshot / David Yu

Go to a Top University and Major in Computer Science

Take a look at the LinkedIn profiles of current Google APMs (<http://linkd.in/1BMwnUN>), and you'll find several common themes:

Schools

- Stanford
- UC Berkeley
- MIT
- Ivy League schools, including Harvard and Yale

Majors

- Computer science

This is not to say that those who don't go to a particular school or major in computer science can't be APMs. However, Google does get thousands of resumes for its APM program. Going to a top school and majoring in computer science can't hurt your chances of getting an interview.

Have a History of Being an Entrepreneur

There's a prevailing sentiment that if Google APMs weren't working at Google, they'd start their own company. Thus, it's no surprise that many Google APMs have demonstrated entrepreneurial experience either during or before college.

Entrepreneurial experience doesn't have to be a software start-up or a profitable small business. Instead, it can also be any extracurricular activity that showcases your intellectual curiosity, flawless execution, and propensity for achievement.

Some entrepreneurial examples include contributions to an open-source movement, completing a successful Kickstarter campaign, or creating a popular smartphone app.



Screenshot / cybrarian77

Have Teaching Experience

Many Google APMs are former teaching assistants (TAs) for their university's computer science courses. Marissa Mayer, widely known as the caretaker of Google's APM program, was the head teaching assistant for my CS 106 course at Stanford. Google continues to tap CS 106 section leaders as potential APM candidates.

Why are former TAs attractive APM candidates? Excellent communication skills and technical mastery.

Get Referred into Google

The most effective way to get an APM interview? Get an existing Googler to refer you. Your resume will make it to top of the recruiter's review stack. And within 1-2 weeks, you'll likely get a call for a phone interview.

Why? It's the similarity principle. A+ APMs are friends with A+ candidates .

You can take your chances by submitting your resume online, but you'll have to compete with thousands of unsolicited submissions.

And no need to be bashful about getting a referral. Google has a generous referral fee for employees that land top candidates. So bug your friend, have them submit your resume, get hired, and have them take you to a nice non-Google lunch after they get the referral bonus.

Show Passion for Google and the APM program

It doesn't matter if it's Google or another company, hiring managers want employees who dedicate themselves to the job and give 120%.

Why? It's a lot of work for managers to prod employees to do their work, take initiative, and / or think outside of the box. Managers pray for candidates who are just rock stars — without constant nudging. Most rock stars are those who are passionate about the company they work for and the work that they do — every single day.

What's the best way to do this? Give your 120% even before you get the job. If you can code, write an Android app using the Google Maps API. If you can't or don't have time to code, do a product teardown and offer recommendations on how to improve it.

Just imagine sharing your pre-interview homework at the interview. I'd be impressed. And there will be less time for those pesky Google Interview Questions.

Prepare for the Google Interview

There's no way you can opt out of the interview, unfortunately. And the interview is tough. You'll get hypothetical case questions used to assess your skills in product design, analytics, and technical.

Are different parts of Google's PM interview given different weights?

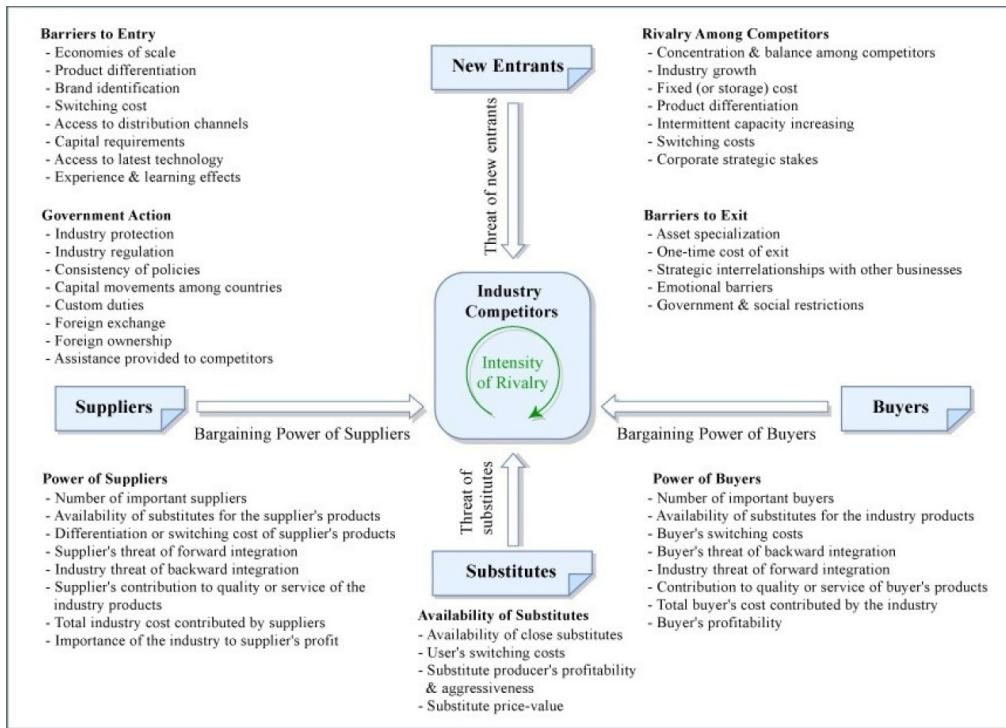
Rate the pizza! 0 (awful) to 5 (excellent)!				
	Cheese to Sauce Ratio	Crust	Taste for Price	Comments
16	SALVATORE OF SOHO	4	5	\$19.50 4
14	Aldrienne's Pizzabar	4	4.5	\$18 4.5
12	EMPORIO	4	4	\$15 3
7	Veloce Pizzeria	5	5	\$15 3.5
18	ARTICHOKE	5	3	\$4/shell 5

Screenshot / Jason Eppink

Typically, no. Google is looking for PM candidates who are strong in all areas.

If you're deficient in one (or more), they'll either ding you or conduct a follow-up interview to re-assess that perceived weakness.

How can one prepare for the Google Associate Product Manager position requirement: “Demonstrated capacity for developing and understanding strategy”?



Screenshot / MIT OpenCourseWare

That's a great question. I've included my response below.

What Are They Looking For

- Does the candidate understand business issues including business models, competitive strategy, supply and demand, and complementary products?
- Can the APM candidate relate their (and the team's) day-to-day activities to the bigger (business) picture?
- Can the APM candidate successfully solve a strategic problem?
- Can the APM candidate recommend a plan for solving the strategic problem?

Questions to Test APM's Strategic Thinking

Here are some examples of questions to test an APM's capacity for developing and understanding strategy :

- Why is Google making the Android OS free for handset manufacturers?
- Who is the biggest threat to Google and why?

- Why did Google decide to make a free browser, Google Chrome, in 2008, despite the market having several good browser alternatives at that time including Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Opera?

How to Prepare

- **Learn business strategy concepts.** Some good books include Michael Porter's *Competitive Strategy* book and the *Business Model Generation* book. A great article would be Michael Porter's "What is Strategy?" HBS article. Wall Street Journal and the business section of the New York Times would be excellent newspapers to get more exposure to business strategies and concepts.
- **Practice business strategy interview questions.** It's not necessary to use frameworks that business consultants use. Use the shorthand that most executives use. Start by thinking how the companies make money and the critical drivers to the business. Then consider how the competition, the new acquisition, or new product launch can affect those particular business drivers.

What's a good way to study probability and statistics for a Google product manager onsite interview?

More context about this question:

I'm studying for an onsite interview with Google for a product manager position. While looking at interview questions online, I've realized that I really need to brush up on the probability and statistics that I once knew in college such as marbles, cards, and dice. I'm expecting questions like this one:

If the probability of observing a car in 30 minutes on a highway is 0.95, what is the probability of observing a car in 10 minutes (assuming constant default probability)?

*What's a good way to find a lot of problems at this level? I'd like to try to do several per day between now and the interview (which is a couple weeks away). Are there any good books of problems like this? I don't *think* I need to study*

permutations/combinations or types of distributions or anything like that, so a general probability or stats textbook isn't really what I need. I don't really know how to characterize those problems well enough to search for them .

I've worked with a lot of Google PM candidates, and this question category you mentioned is quite rare:

I would put it in the brain teaser category; that is, trivia minutiae that mature Google PM interviewers would not normally ask in a PM interview. Brain teasers have largely been banned at Google.

Why? If you really needed to know probability or stats in the workplace, you could either ask a co-worker or yes, even Google it.

If you do have time, it doesn't hurt to brush up on probability basics. Schaum's has a good one.

But just make sure more likely topics, such as product design, analytics, strategy, and technical, are in strong shape before undertaking stats and probability prep.

Does Google provide on the spot offers after on site interviews, especially for brilliant candidates?

No .

After the on-site interview, the hiring committee reviews the interview feedback along with other data points in the candidate's application packet. From there, the hiring committee recommends which candidates should receive offers, which at that point is reviewed and likely approved by the executive management committee (EMG). Normally EMG and the hiring committee meet once a week.

I had a Google APM interview, and at the end of three interviews they said they had "enough information." None of these interviews were technical. Is the number of interviews you have onsite indicative of your performance?

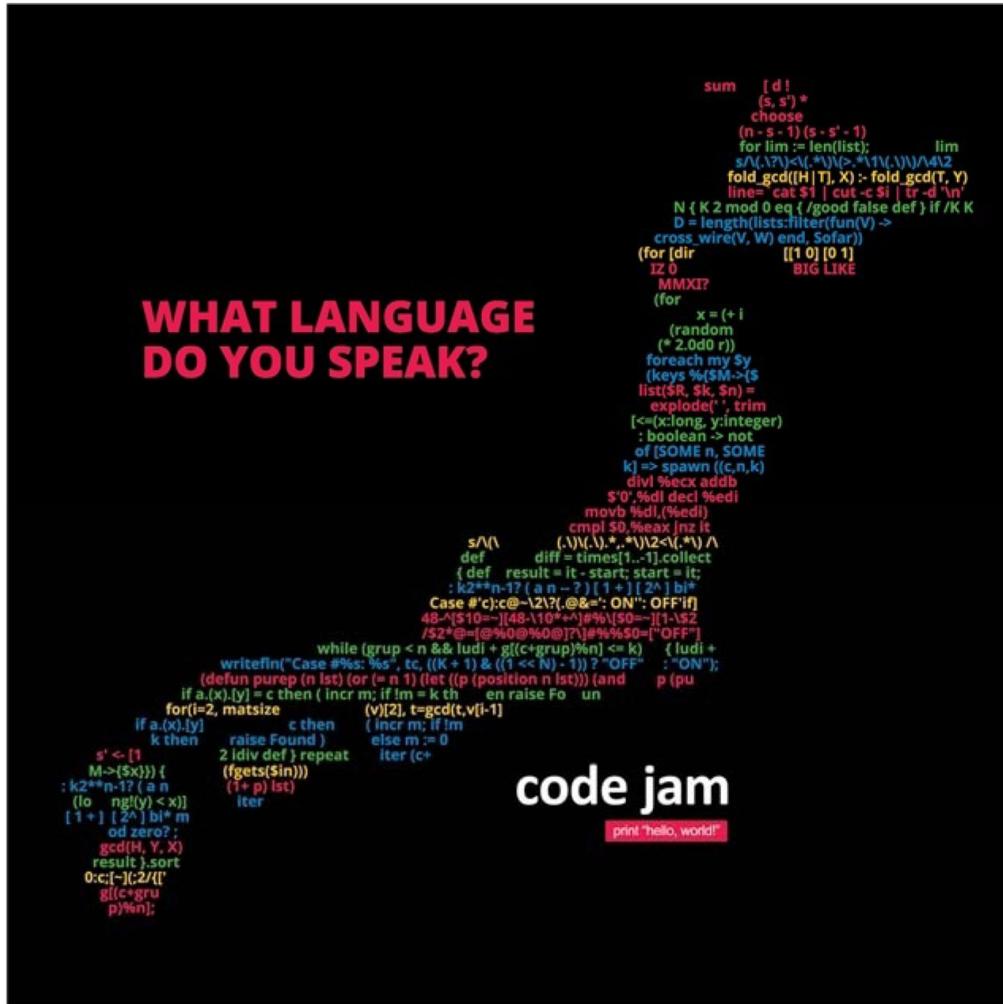
Based on my work with Google APM candidates, Google is now scheduling the technical interview only when the APM candidate has performed well on the non-technical portion of the interview.

So yes, the fact that you did not receive a technical interview can be an indicator of how well you performed in the non-technical portion of the interview.

When should I contact my Google recruiter again?

My general rule: if you haven't heard from your recruiting contact in a week, you can ping him or her for an update.

Is it okay to go to Google's onsite interview wearing a CodeJam T-Shirt?

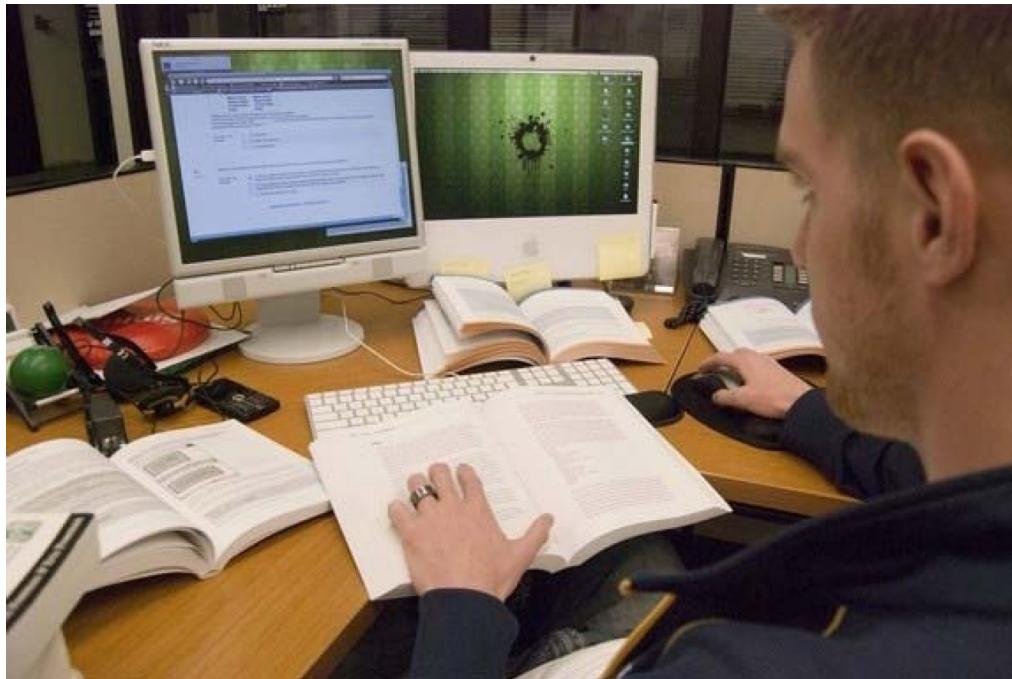


Screenshot / Google

Ha!

It really depends on which role you'll be interviewing for, but you'll get some serious dev cred.

Can I Google answers during the phone interview? For example, if I need to know Seattle's population?



Screenshot / Mr. Stein

Please don't.

I can hear the typing in the background.

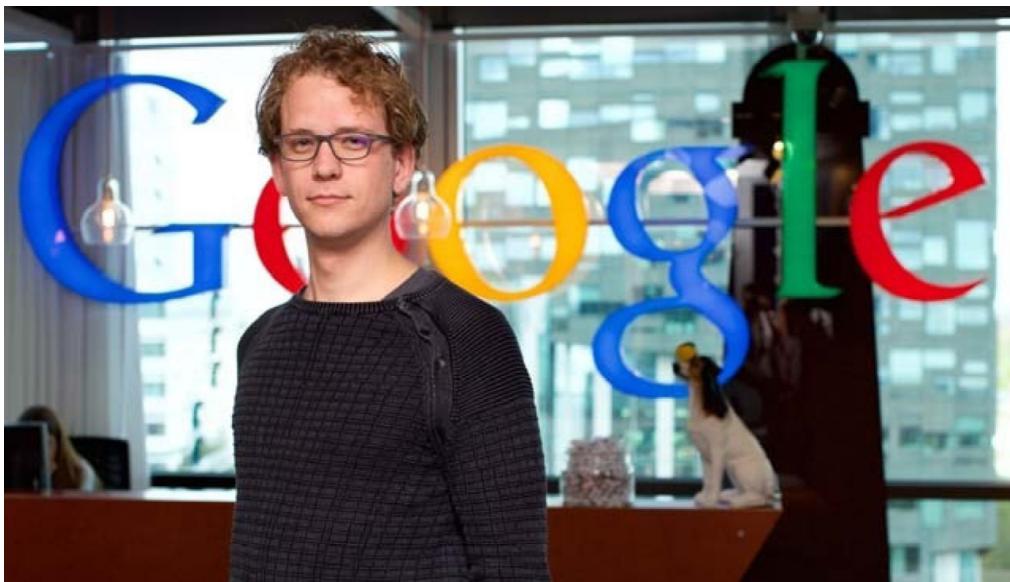
If I was interviewing you, I'd either think you're doing exactly what you proposed (Googling the answer) or checking email.

Either way, you're not going to win points with me.

If I haven't heard from Google after applying online for a job more than a month ago, should I assume I will never be shortlisted for an interview?

Your chances of getting an interview are much, much higher if you have a current Googler refer you. So don't despair, find a Google employee to do so.

What value is having product management experience from Google?



Screenshot / Sebastiaan ter Burg

Prestige

Google is the most selective when choosing PMs; not only do they have the lowest acceptance rate, but also they interview more PM candidates than any other tech company.

As a result, becoming a Google PM is very prestigious. It signals to employers that you're the best of the best. Having that brand will open doors that are closed to others.

Network

Being part of this selective crowd naturally creates opportunities to meet an A-list of movers and shakers that will pay dividends in your career, both internally and externally.

Think Big

After working at Google, it's no surprise to me that they built self-driving cars, contact lenses that monitor glucose levels, or dominant products in what was then a crowded marketplace such as Gmail and Chrome .

A big reason Googlers do extraordinary things is Google's "think big" culture. Larry and Sergey get credit for creating a culture with a very high bar, filled with dreamers and doers.

No other company on the planet has a culture that repeatedly does GREAT things. The only other two companies that have a similar think big approach are Amazon and Tesla.

Machine Learning

Google is the ring bearer of the machine learning movement. Spend some time there, and you'll see how the solution to many of their problems is "machine learning."

Opportunities

As a Google PM, you'll have more career choices than PMs at other companies. Think about the possible realms you can work in:

- Consumer or enterprise
- Software or hardware
- US or international
- Developed or developing

Resources

90 percent of Google's revenue comes from advertising. According to Henry Blodget, Google has incredible 75%+ operating profit margins; other companies would kill for 50% operating margins. Lastly, Google generated an average of \$21B of free cash flow per year, in the last two years.

What does this mean? An abundance of riches for Google PMs including:

- Lots of computing power
- Lots of storage
- Lots of headcount
- Lots of budget

I didn't quite appreciate this until I talked to friends working at Yahoo: they're constrained by what they can do because they don't have money. It's no surprise that Yahoo had to outsource their search engine business to Microsoft and Google: Yahoo didn't have money to buy computers or storage.

Big Surface Area

The problem with working at small, medium, and even other large companies is their products can struggle to get even 100,000 users.

That's not a problem at Google. With its brand, even fairly obscure products, whether it's Google Keep or Google Scholar, will have millions of users.

Leveraging the powerful Google brand means PMs can focus on building great products, not struggle to get noticed (despite great products).

Chapter 4 Google TPM Interview



Screenshot / Google

Here's what you can expect in the Google technical program manager product manager (TPM) interview and how you can best prepare. This information is based on research and post-interview debriefs with my Google TPM coaching clients.

What to Expect

For the Google TPM interview, expect one to two phone interviews, followed by an on-site interview.

Phone Interviews

The phone interviews are usually a mix of behavioral and hypothetical questions, focused on your program and project management experiences and philosophies.

Sometimes they ask technical or estimation questions during the phone interview rounds. But generally technical questions are more likely during the on-site interviews.

On-Site Interviews

On-site interviews will have behavioral and hypothetical questions, just like the phone rounds. During the on-site interviews, technical questions will come in abundance.

Compared the Google product manager candidates, TPM candidates don't get as many estimation questions, but I'd recommend preparing just in case you get a few.

Details on the Five Categories of Google TPM Interview Questions

Google TPM interview questions are categorized into five buckets:

Program and Project Management

Google TPMs get stuff done. They can adapt to changing conditions and make tradeoffs. Great TPMs are familiar with all the responsibilities of PM including: gathering requirements, setting project scope, identifying stakeholders and resources, getting buy-in, setting expectations and contingency plans, managing budget, and setting timelines. TPMs also have talent in identifying risks, tradeoffs, priorities, and dependencies. Sample questions include:

- How would you start a project?
- How would you balance and prioritize multiple projects of varying complexity?

- How do you evaluate success or failure of a project?
- What are some strategies to handle competing visions on how to execute a project?
- Compare Agile and Waterfall methodologies.
- How do you handle new requirement in the middle of a project?
- How do you estimate a new project's expected work, if you have no prior history to rely on?
- How would you prepare a five page or less PowerPoint for the executive team?
- Walk me through how you'd create a forecasting tool or document.
- What's the difference between program and project management?
- What is critical path? Explain with an example.
- Given a deadline and limited resources, how would you complete a project successfully?
- If you find a critical software bug on the day before the release date, how would you handle the situation?
- What are the most common things that go wrong in a project?
- How do you make sure you are delivering quality in your product or service?
- What's your area of expertise ?
- Let's say you don't get along with the engineering lead. What would you do?

Programming and Technical Knowledge

Google TPMs are comfortable working with technical details. Sample questions include:

- What are the various sorting algorithms, and which are the fastest?
- Compare a hash table to a tree.
- What do you know about data centers? What are the top issues in a data center?
- How would you build software that automatically updates a fleet of machines?
- Write code to reverse a string.
- Write code to multiply or add base 3 numbers.
- Write code to compare a couple of number pairs to see if they have overlap and then print out the boundaries.
- If you have n machines with a 10 GB string of characters on each, how do you find the most common character?
- What happens in Linux Shell when trying to run the ls command?
- Describe the TCP protocol. How is TCP different from UDP? When should you use it? Does DNS use UDP or TCP protocol? What is the size of UDP packet?
- Describe what is a struct, enum and union in C.
- Describe the memory structure on an operating system including heap, data and stack.
- What is inside the UNIX file system? What actually happens when a file is deleted? How to delete a file with a special character in the first position ?

Technical Judgment

Google TPMs work very closely with engineers. As a result, they have to make technical tradeoffs and challenge technical decisions and assumptions. Sample questions to assess a Google TPM's technical judgment include:

- Design Gmail's server infrastructure.

Analytical Ability

Google TPMs are strong problem solvers. They have to filter the wheat from the chaff, get critical data to form logical conclusions, and use assumptions as necessary. Sample questions include:

- How many gas stations are in the United States?
- Estimate the number of spark plugs in the state of California.

Other Behavioral Interview Questions

Google TPMs are leaders. Most TPM leaders have significant program or project management type experience even if they had not previously held a formally titled or defined program manager role. Sample questions include:

- What was the greatest challenge you ever faced on a project you were managing and how did you handle it?
- What's your biggest accomplishment?
- Tell me a time when you exceeded goals.
- Tell me a time when you made a difficult decision.
- Give an example of a project that would not have happened without your presence.
- Tell me a time when you influenced a co-worker.
- Tell me a time you took initiative.
- Give an example of when you involved others in a decision-making capacity .
- Describe times when you faced stress on a project. How did you cope?
- Tell me a time when you put your needs aside to help a coworker.
- Tell me a time when you failed to make a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the

repercussions?

How to Prepare

Behavioral PM Questions

I'd recommend brainstorming in advance, writing your stories on paper, and verbally rehearsing them. Google's recruiting team suggests that you use the CAR or STAR method for telling your stories. However, during my coaching sessions, I've found that both methods lead to dull and boring answers. For an interview story approach that grabs the interviewer's attention, I'd recommending using the DIGS Method™.

Hypothetical PM Questions

For the first 30 seconds, start your answer with the Rule of Three and use the next 90 to 120 seconds with an example based on the DIGS Method™.

Technical Questions

Google TPM candidates will get a torrent of technical questions, so it's important that you spend significant time getting ready for these. The best resource for tips and practice examples is *How to Ace the Software Engineering Interview*.

Analytical Questions

To get ready for estimation questions, I'd recommend doing estimation practice problems in the book, *Interview Math*.

Chapter 5 Facebook PM Interview



Screenshot / Facebook

What to Expect

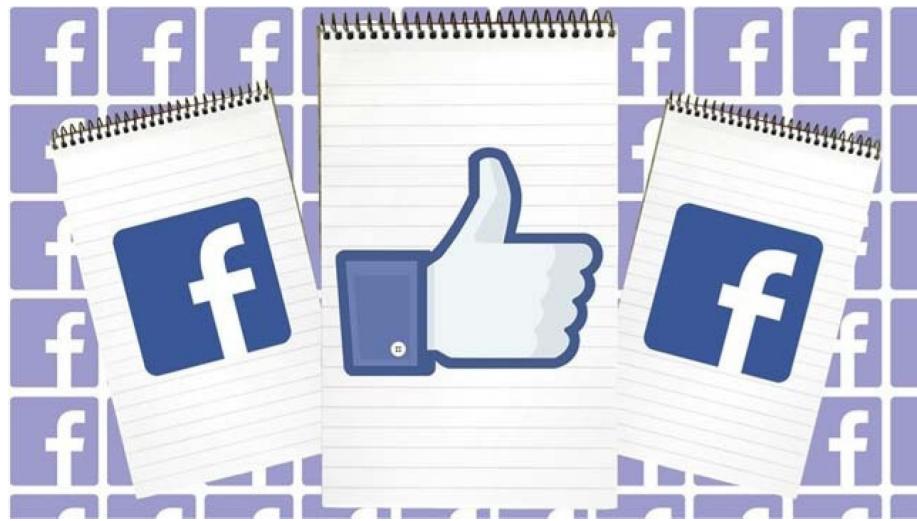
Product Sense

Good Facebook PMs innovate beautiful products that solve big, messy user problems.

Product sense is Facebook's term for a candidate's product design abilities. In this book, I'll use the terms product sense and product design interchangeably.

Example questions include:

- How would you improve the Facebook News Feed?
- How would you design Facebook Events 2.0?
- How would you redesign Facebook Pages?



Screenshot / Apextribune

Execution

Good Facebook PMs get things done and make critical decisions.

Facebook's term for this competency is called execution. Interviewers test for executive skills by evaluating a candidate's:

- **Fit** . Is the candidate a good fit for the company? Is the candidate aligned with Facebook's mission and values? And are the candidate's skills and experiences aligned with Facebook?
- **Scrappy** . Can the candidate get things done?
- **Decision-making** . Can the candidate evaluate data and make decisions, especially when the situation is murky and the decision is far from being unanimous?
- **Focused on the big picture** . Can the candidate select an appropriate product goal that factors in the needs of the user, team, and / or company?
- **Analyze, diagnose, and evaluate** . Can the candidate troubleshoot a problem by analyzing the root cause and recommending a course of action?

Interview questions can include :

- We've outsourced a critical mobile app to a third-party developer. How do we decide when to take that

development in house?

- What are the goals for Facebook's News Feed?
- How would you decide between showing more ads on the Facebook News Feed vs. showing a People You May Know recommendation widget?
- Weekly active users (WAU) for Facebook's iPhone dropped. What happened?

Leadership

Top-notch Facebook PMs are driven leaders. Facebook interviewers test for leadership and drive by evaluating the following:

- **Introspection** . Is the candidate self-aware, especially his or her own flaws?
- **EQ** . Does the candidate get along with others? In other words, how is their emotional intelligence (EQ)?
- **Leadership & team building** . Does the candidate like leading others and building teams?
- **Bold, eager visionary** . Lastly, does the candidate get excited about technology and have the capacity to set forth a bold and inspiring vision?

How to Prepare

Product Sense

Practice leading product design discussions using a design framework like the CIRCLES Method™. Explore possible personas and articulate the use cases. Prioritize the use cases and then brainstorm solutions. Most candidates fail the product design interview because they jump straight into solutions .

Wireframing your ideas on the whiteboard will get you bonus points.

Effective communication counts, and pictures communicate more capably and elegantly than words.

Download a wireframing tool like Axure or Balsamiq to get comfortable whiteboarding UI designs.

Execution

When tackling questions in the execution bucket, I'd recommend the following frameworks:

- ROI estimation
- AARM Method™
- Root cause analysis
- Behavioral interview framework
- Rule of Three
- ROI estimation

ROI estimation

For interview questions around evaluating or comparing trade-offs between different features or decisions, the Facebook interviewer wants to see that your decision is grounded in data. And that inevitably means evaluating the net benefit to the company. Now that Facebook is a profit-making, publicly-traded company — net benefit and even user engagement — can be measured in terms of revenues and costs.

For your different feature choices, calculate the ROI impact of your various options. You can also evaluate the options qualitatively by drawing up a pros and cons list. However, a qualitative comparison is rarely sufficient at the Facebook PM interview.

If you're not comfortable generating your own revenue estimates, do the practice problems from [Chapter 4](#) of *Interview Math*.

AARM Method™

AARM Method™ stands for four sets of metrics: acquisition, activation, retention, and monetization. It's a handy metrics checklist when answering questions about appropriate goals and metrics to track as a product manager. For more details on the AARM Method™, refer to *Decode and Conquer*.

Root cause analysis

When asked to identify the cause of a WAU drop in the Facebook iPhone app, brainstorm, as best (and quickly) as possible, all the potential causes. Then systematically investigate and rule out each cause to get the root issue.

A fishbone diagram may help organize your thoughts, brainstorm a more complete list, and impress the interviewer with your visual communication skills.

Behavioral interview framework

When answering FB PM interview questions such as, “Tell me a time when you needed to complete a deadline, but didn’t have the resources” use a storytelling framework. Use the DIGS Method™ featured in *Decode and Conquer*.

Rule of Three

For cultural fit questions, such as Why FB? or Why PM?, I highly recommend using the Rule of Three. It worked for exceptional communicators like Steve Jobs and Thomas Jefferson. It’ll work for you too .

Leadership

To get ready for interview questions in the Leadership + Drive bucket, I’d recommend using many of the frameworks I introduced earlier:

Behavioral interview framework

Use the DIGS Method™ to answer questions such as “Tell me a time when you disagreed with an engineer. How did you convince him or her?”

Rule of Three

Use it to answer questions like “What’s your favorite project where you played a leadership role?”

CIRCLES Method™

Use the CIRCLES Method™ as a checklist for answering questions such as “What’s a technology trend that you’re

excited about?" Key areas to emphasize: the customer problem, the technology trend or solution that will address that problem, and an assessment of likely adoption, potential costs, and technical feasibility.

Weakness question

To answer this question, use this framework:

<http://bit.ly/weaknessquestion> . Also refer to this article on how not to answer the question: <http://bit.ly/weakness-ques-not-do>



Screenshot / Yahoo

Additional Resources

How to Ace the Facebook Product Manager Interview :
<http://bit.ly/fb-pm-interview>

Frequently Asked Questions

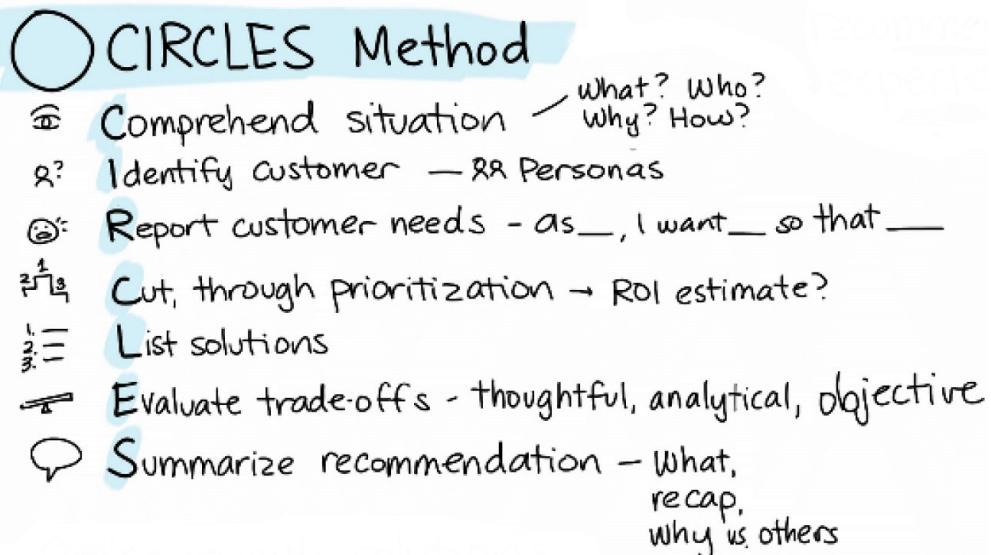
Do you have additional tips for the Facebook interview?



Screenshot / Christoph Aigne r

Each interviewer will be tasked to evaluate you for a particular competency .

The FB recruiter or interviewer will explicitly mention that one interviewer is testing you for “product sense” or that the additional interviewer will test you on “execution.” You’ll also find these three competencies explicitly named in Glassdoor’s interview reports.



Screenshot / Sacha Chua

Product sense continues to be the most difficult part of the interview .

A common FB product sense question is, “How would you improve the Facebook News Feed?”

Product sense, which is another name for product design, is not something that’s being taught in a traditional computer science curriculum. As a result, answering a product sense question is unfamiliar to most rotational candidates.

Practice using the CIRCLES Method™ design framework. In the CIRCLES Method™, I’ve found that my FB PM rotation clients struggle most with step 2 & 3, customer empathy, along with step 5, listing solutions.

The trade-off and comparison section of execution is the next hardest part of the interview .

Facebook calls them trade-off and comparison questions. Some examples include:

- How would you decide between showing more ads on the Facebook News Feed vs. showing a People

You May Know recommendation widget?

- We've outsourced a critical mobile app to a third-party developer. How do we decide when to take that development in house?

These questions are meant to test a product manager's ability to make decisions. While you could answer these types of questions with a pros and cons list, the interviewer will want you to be data-driven, which means you'll have to come up with revenue estimates for the scenarios you're comparing or trading off.

Estimation questions are unlikely .

These trade-off and comparison questions are a better reflection of what FB interviewers will ask you instead; however, you are still on the hook to crunch some numbers.

Who can apply for Facebook's RPM program?

Anyone with less than two years of full-time experience can apply to the RPM program.

Candidates can be experienced professionals or recent graduates from bachelor or master's programs. Past RPM candidates have had computer science, mechanical engineering, psychology, and business degrees.

Is the RPM program for new MBA graduates?

Yes.

How long is the rotational program? And how many rotations are there?

RPMs do three rotations over the course of 18 months.

How do the interview questions for the rotational product managers compare with regular FB product manager candidates?

While rotational product manager candidates have less experience, the interviewers are not likely to ask different questions. In other words, both rotational candidates and experienced candidates will get very similar questions.

However, the interviewers will note that rotational candidates have less experience and will adjust their assessment of a rotational candidate's responses accordingly.

How can one stand out in the RPM interview process? Current RPMs appear to be from an Ivy League school or worked as a prestigious consulting firm.

Forget about the stuff you can't control. Focus on the stuff you can.

That is, if you have an interview opportunity, make the most of it.

Prepare as if it's the most important thing in the world .

I've seen people with non-Ivy and not-so-prestigious backgrounds snag a PM offer at Facebook. Just to give you a sense, the best candidates are doing 100—200 practice interview questions. I've even seen one person do 400—500 practice interview questions.

If you don't have an interview secured, then network like crazy. Make sure the RPM coordinator has you on the top of their mind and you on their shortlist of candidates to invite.

Chapter 6 Amazon PM Interview

What to Expect

Negotiation & ability to influence others

Amazon PMs can take a position, convince others, and drive teams to action. All Amazon employees challenge others and themselves, even when it may feel awkward. The interviewer may play the devil's advocate to your reaction.

Expect questions like:

- Amazon recently launched display advertisements on its web page. It was a very controversial decision within Amazon. Pick either the pro or con side of the argument. Explain your reasoning.
- Assume you are the new Product Manager in our Amazon Prime business and are in charge of new Feature Development. What data would you look at to develop new features? What new features would they be?
- For a while now, Amazon's digital books have outsold physical ones. However, for our books' detail pages, the physical book is still the default page. How would you change the website to reflect this new reality? What are some of the big issues you'd encounter?

Dive deep, are right a lot, and think big

Amazon PMs have superior business instincts. PMs can and love getting into the details. They can paint a compelling vision and articulate clearly how to achieve it.

Sample questions include :

- How would you price the Kindle Fire HD?
- Assume you are the new Product Manager in our Amazon Prime business and are in charge of Pricing. The VP would like to lower the price from \$79.99 per

year to \$69.99 per year. Making your own assumptions, develop the financial projections of this decision.

- Start a new category, division, or international market for Amazon. Which one did you choose and why?

Deliver results

Amazon PMs focus on the right issues. No obstacle is too large. PMs always deliver.

Expect behavioral interview questions such as:

- Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your objectives.

Innovate & simplify

Amazon PMs are resolute in improving products and processes. They are highly aware of new trends & new opportunities.

Expect questions such as:

- Tell me about the last time you had an idea to improve the way things work. Was this idea implemented? Why or why not?

Cultural fit

Amazon PMs (and employees) are known for focusing on the customer, taking initiative, and having a backbone. Having a backbone means having courage to stand up for what's right and your personal point of view.

Anticipate cultural fit questions such as :

- Choose a company that you believe provides a world-class customer experience. What do they do well?
- Tell me a time where you disagreed with a manager's or executive's decision. How this play out, and what did was the outcome?

Communication

Amazon PMs can communicate issues concisely and crisply, while influencing others to their point of view. Amazon has a strong writing culture: Jeff Bezos believes that when people write complete sentences and paragraphs it forces clarity. Amazon staff meetings usually do not have PowerPoint slides. Instead, the meeting owner is asked to prepare a memo that attendees read in silence at the beginning of the meeting. Don't be surprised if you are asked to provide a writing sample as part of the interview process.

Expect interview questions such as:

- Describe a situation in which you communicated a complicated situation to a group of people that was completely unfamiliar with the topic. What approach did you take?

There are two more things that distinguish the Amazon interview from other companies.

Bar Raiser

First, the interview loop will include a “bar raiser.” This person is easy to spot during the interview loop; they come from a group that’s completely unrelated to the job position you’re interviewing for. Their role is to “raise the bar” at Amazon. That is, weed out candidates that are below average, when compared to an average Amazon employee in the same role. If they identify a candidate that is below average, they can veto a candidate’s hiring, even when the hiring manager likes the candidate.



Screenshot / Jesus Hernandez

Probe Deeply

Second, Amazon interviewers probe deeply. If you claimed “I improved product performance by 25%,” interviewers at other companies would rarely question your claim.

However, at Amazon, they will dig for details. For instance, the interviewer may hypothesize that the candidate was just a participant and understands very little about the topic. To test their hypothesis, the Amazon interviewer will ask:

- Who was involved?
- What was your role?
- What did you do?
- How did you do it?
- Why did you do it?

The interviewer will distinguish whether you were the leader vs. participant, demonstrated good vs. great performance, and whether you were involved in the entire project or just a portion of it.

For many, it feels uncomfortable to receive this type of follow-up because it involves recalling details that one may have forgotten .

What Not To Expect

Amazon PM Interviewers almost never ask programming interview questions, so focus your interview preparation efforts elsewhere.



Screenshot / Geekwire

How to Prepare

First, review my 36-Day Amazon PM interview study guide:
<http://bit.ly/AMZN-PM-Interview-Study-Guide>

Then, review Amazon's Leadership Principles
<http://amazon.jobs/principles>. Integrate them into your interview responses.

Spend an hour or more on warm up questions such as "Why Amazon?" and "Tell Me About Yourself."

Spend about 4-6 hours developing stories with DIGS method for the drill down questions they'd ask about your previous work experience. Lastly, spend 10-12 hours preparing for hypothetical questions. This may include specific business problems that Amazon is encountering including:

- Pricing
- Supplier relationships
- New market entry

- Customer UX

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between the following Amazon roles: technical program manager, product manager, technical, and product manager?



Screenshot / Aaron Fulkerson

Here are the differences, based on several conversations with Amazon recruiters and hiring managers:

Technical Program Manager (TPM)

TPM candidates have a development background. They are someone who started as a developer and eventually became a PM. As a TPM, they should still be able to do the system design and architecture. TPMs do not code. They usually work to get technical alignment, among various pieces, to make a product work. They're also involved with resource planning, including labor, computing, and hardware resources.

Product Manager (PM)

Candidates are those who create and develop product features, either software or hardware. They create the product from inception to completion. No development required, either on the job or prior experience.

Product Manager, Technical (PMT)

PMT candidates are those who are usually someone who has technical knowledge too. They are not coding, but the product they are creating/building/developing has the technical pieces to it.

A PMT's responsibilities can include developing product strategy, define product requirements, and project coordination. PMTs may also be responsible for go-to-market aspects including pricing, positioning, and market messaging.

Program Manager

Like TPMs, program managers are project managers at Amazon. However, unlike TPMs, they are not technical.

One more note, Alex Mooney, a 7-year Amazon veteran adds the following caveat: “ the candidate must pass the technical bar. That is to say, if you are a TPM or a PM-T, you must have sufficient knowledge of the technical expertise needed within the role being offered. This could include the understanding of system architecture, algorithms as products, or another area of technical knowledge that often comes with a computer science background.”

Is each interviewer responsible for assessing different competencies during the Amazon on-site interview?

Yes, each interviewer is instructed to evaluate specific competencies that either:

- Relate to the role
- Relate to Amazon's Leadership Principles

For example, here's an example of what different interviewers are tasked to evaluate for an Amazon product manager role on the Alexa team:

- Bar raiser: customer obsession; invent / simplify

- Hiring manager: learn / be curious; have backbone / disagree & commit; earn trust
- Product manager: analytical ability; think big
- Technical program manager: requirements gathering; problem solving; analytical abilities

Additional Resources

How to Ace the Amazon Product Manager Interview :
<http://bit.ly/aceamzn-pm-int>

Chapter 7 Uber PM Interview

What to Expect

Homework assignment

The first round is a homework assignment. The homework assignment prompt typically asks the candidate to consider an Uber feature or product that is on the market but has not realized its full potential. The candidate is then asked to:

1. Analyze the product or feature
2. Recommend improvements, which includes taking the audience through the full product life cycle

Sometimes candidates present and answer questions about the homework in subsequent interview rounds.

Interview Questions

After the homework assignment, candidates are usually invited to 1-2 phone interviews and then a half-day, on-site interview. The interview questions for both the phone and on-site are similar. And unlike other tech companies, Uber does not ask technical or coding interview questions for PM roles.

Note: That they still prefer technical candidates, since product managers build technical products and interact frequently with engineers.

Traditional and behavioral

Sample questions include:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why Uber ?
- Tell me a time when you influenced engineering to build a feature they didn't want to build.

Design

Example questions include:

- Improve the Uber passenger pick-up experience.

- How can Uber attract and subsequently on-board more drivers in a measured way?

Pricing

Example questions include:

- Invent a new Uber product. How would you price it?

Metrics

Example questions include:

- What should be the main success metric for UberPool?
- What metric would you measure if we're focused on improving the Uber pick-up experience?

Analytics

Sample questions include:

- How much does an Uber driver in NYC make in a day?
- If 1,000 people opened the Uber app during one hour, how many cars do you need on the road?

Strategy

Sample questions include :

- We're about to expand UberPool. What cities should we expand to?

Go-to-market

Sample questions include:

- How would you approach rolling out an ultra-high-end service line within Uber (e.g. one that offered Rolls Royce or Bentley cars)?
- How would you go about launching a new Uber product in city X?

How to Prepare

Homework Assignment

Conduct a task analysis using the template provided in Alan Cooper's *About Face: The Essentials of Interaction Design*. Brainstorm new ideas using Michael Michalko's *Thinkertoys*. Wireframe your ideas using Sketch.

Interview Questions

Traditional

Write and verbally practice these interview questions. For example inspiration, I'd recommend *Interview Magic*.

Product design

Practice leading design discussions using a framework like the CIRCLES Method™.

Metrics

During the interview, brainstorm a list of potential metrics and rationalize your preferred metric. A simple pros and cons list will do.

Pricing & Analytics

Grab a copy of *Interview Math* and get comfortable solving estimation, pricing, and breakeven questions

Strategy

No need to use Porter's Five Forces or any other management consulting framework. It'll feel a little too canned and heavy. Instead, just use a simple pros and cons list.

Go-to-market

Treat this like a project management exercise. That is: what's the goal? What are the critical tasks, milestones, and dependencies? And be prepared to drill down and talk about each item in more detail.



Screenshot / Uber

Additional Resources

How to Ace the Uber Interview : <http://bit.ly/ace-uber-interview>

How to Ace the Uber Excel Analytics Test : <http://bit.ly/uber-excel-test>

Frequently Asked Questions

I am interviewing with Uber. How would you answer these sample questions? This is not for PM, but for Uber's general manager role, which is related.



Screenshot / TechCrunch

Uber's job interview questions appear intimidating. This question is easier to answer when we recognize that this list of questions belong to five simple categories:

- Marketing
- PR
- ROI: Analytical
- Customer, partner, and business understanding
- Go-to-market

In addition to these five category of questions posed by the original poster, Uber is also known to ask questions that revolve around product metrics, product design, behavioral, and strategy.

Uber is also known to give some candidate a writing sample test or an Excel Analytics Test: <http://bit.ly/uber-excel-test>.

Uber Question Categories

Marketing Case Interview

- An Uber competitor opens in your city with unlimited cash capital, if you were them how would you steal Uber's customers?

- If we ask you to find us 100 new drivers this month. Describe what steps you would take? How about the next 1000?

PR

- If you were Uber how would you convince drivers not to leave?
- How do you sell an existing taxi driver on using Uber?

ROI: Analytical

- Say an Uber black car driver makes \$30/ride with a 20% commission. How do you convince him to upgrade to a new made up service UberSuper with a 25% commission? What costs will the driver incur in upgrading.

Uber Customer Understanding

- Why don't taxi drivers like using Credit Cards?
- What's the KPI for the quality analysis?
- What's the difference between UberX and UberPop?

Go-To-Market

- If nobody knew about surge pricing, how would you explain it and justify using it? How would you go about implementing it? Specifically, based on what factors would prices be changed and in what regions?
- How would you supply drivers in a new product in a launch city?

How to Answer These Uber Interview Questions



Screenshot / TechCrunch, David

Marketing Case Interview

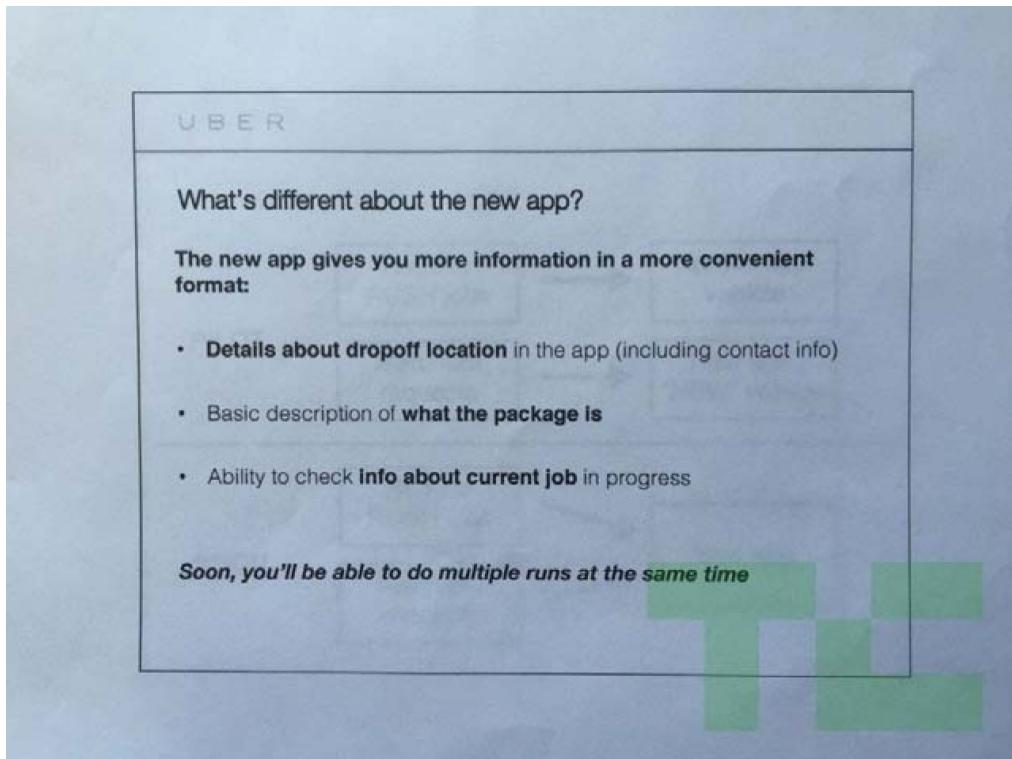
For the marketing case interview, I'd recommend developing a marketing plan using The Big Picture Framework. It has nine different parts, but to simplify, we can condense the Big Picture Framework into three main categories .

This framework works, whether it's for Uber, or as one of the question's listed here denotes, for Uber's competitor.

- *Goals (I)*. What are the business and marketing goals? Is it to increase profits or more likely, to drive market share? How much time do you have to achieve the goal, and what are the core competencies to emphasize? Thinking in terms of the marketing funnel, should the marketing plan focus on awareness? Or is it to drive trial?
- *Customer Strategy (II)*. What are the possible customer segments? Which segment is ideally suited for us? And what value proposition will resonate with them?
- *Marketing Tactics (III)*. What are optimal channels to target the customer? Online or offline? What advertising and promotional ideas should we

consider? Do we have any say in the product pricing or product offering?

If you're looking for more marketing case practice questions or more information about the Big Picture marketing framework, I'd recommend my book: *Rise Above the Noise* .



Screenshot / TechCrunch, David

PR Interview Questions

I consider these questions PR questions:

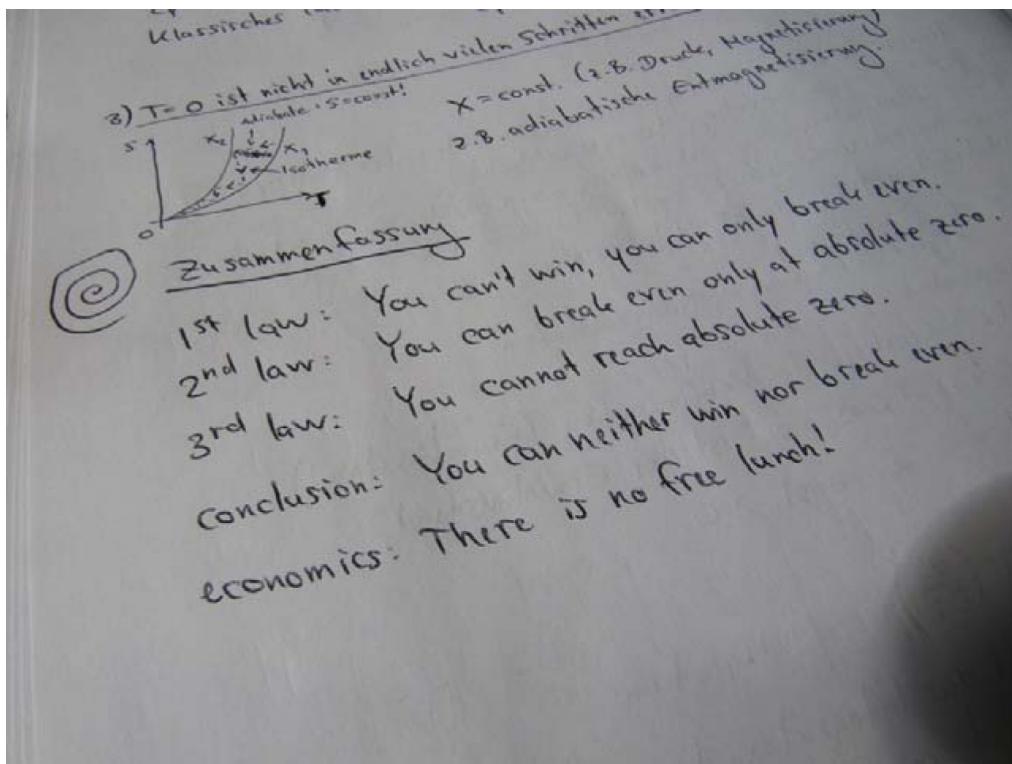
- If you were Uber how would you convince drivers not to leave?
- How do you sell an existing taxi driver on using Uber?

It requires you as the Uber candidate to explain a new product, policy change, or other difficult (and sometimes controversial) topic.

- For these types of questions, your response must cover the basics:
- *What* is the new product or policy change?
- *How* is it going to affect the reader? How do you use the product?
- *Why* is this beneficial?
- *Who* will the affect?
- *When* will this product or change go live ?

The italics are mine. As many of you will recognize, the italics emphasizes the Five Ws (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Ws), which every good PR communique addresses.

To see an example of how Uber communicates new products, check out this confidential deck, explaining a new merchant delivery program to their partners: <https://techcrunch.com/2015/04/28/uber-is-quietlytesting-a-massive-merchant-delivery-program/>



Screenshot / TechCrunch, David

ROI: Analytical Questions

For analytical ROI questions, they typically revolve around breakeven analysis. If you're looking for more breakeven practice problems, check out *Interview Math*.



Screenshot / TechCrunch, David

Uber Customer Understanding Questions

For specific questions about Uber's business, customers, and partners, here are some resources I'd consider for insight:

- Uber's webpage
- Business Insider and TechCrunch articles about Uber



Screenshot / TechCrunch, David

Go-To-Market Questions

Here are some examples of Uber go-to-market questions:

- If nobody knew about surge pricing, how would you explain it and justify using it? How would you go about implementing it? Specifically, based on what factors would prices be changed and in what regions?
- How would you supply drivers in a new product in a launch city?

The first question in the set is a hybrid question. The first part is a PR question, and the second part is strictly a go-to-market question. The second question is a go-to-market question only

Go-to-market questions usually revolve around the implementation of an idea or plan. This is a fairly common Uber interview question, especially since Uber is trying to enter many new markets, both in the US and internationally.

When approaching go-to-market questions, I'd recommend the following:

- *Name the goal .*
- *Diagnose the dependencies related to the goal , using an issue tree (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Issue_trees). Issue trees help to define options that mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive, which management consultants call “MECE.”*
- *Identify the key issues related to each dependency .* For example, when launching Uber in a new developing country, form of payment can be issue. What are the most popular forms of payment? Are their government regulations related to those forms of payment? Are licenses required? How about product integration?
- *Brainstorm solutions for each dependency .*
- *Summarize your go-to-market plan , proposing a logical sequence of operations along with a recommendation on the appropriate investment, both in dollars and headcount, required.*

Chapter 8 LinkedIn PM Interview

What to Expect

LinkedIn evaluates PM candidates in seven different areas:

Product design

LinkedIn PMs can set a compelling product vision, develop product roadmaps, and collaborate on product designs. Anticipate questions like:

- How will you improve LinkedIn's webpage?
- What improvements would you make to the site?
- How do you like LinkedIn's endorse feature?
- How would you improve the signing process of LinkedIn?
- Design an iPhone app which lets you get news content on it.
- How would you improve Facebook to get people to share more photos?

Analytic ability and data-driven orientation

LinkedIn PMs can identify a shortlist of critical metrics and make decisions of the data. Example questions include:

- Estimate McDonald's annual revenue.
- How would you determine the success of a specific feature?
- What metrics will you look at in order to evaluate the success of our product?

Business acumen

LinkedIn PMs understand recent trends with social media, web & mobile. They understand the customer and competitive landscape along with the threats. Example questions include:

- Why do people use Facebook? How does Facebook increase its page views ?
- How does Facebook increase the number of users?
- What are mechanisms which Facebook uses to keep people coming back to their website?

Strategy & planning

LinkedIn PMs can think strategically about business issues. They lead the analysis of the competitive environment, customers, and business goals. Sample questions include:

- How many elevators do you need for a 40-story building?
- If you were the CEO for Facebook, what top 3 things would you do for the company?

Leadership

LinkedIn PMs work with the product development team to bring features to life. LinkedIn PMs influence others by being decisive and backing up their decisions with clear reasoning. Sample questions include:

- How do you influence engineering to build a particular feature?
- Tell me a time when you convinced an executive to reverse a critical decision.

Operational ability

LinkedIn PMs know how to launch products. They work with various teams such as marketing, operations, and legal to get products on the market. They know how to engage with the user community and how to use social media to drive feature awareness. Anticipate questions like:

- What would you do to increase users signing up for LinkedIn? How will you promote a new feature ?

Technical

LinkedIn PMs can lead engineering discussions, participate in technical brainstorming, and help assess technical trade-offs. Sample questions include:

- Explain object oriented programming to your grandmother.

How to Prepare

I would recommend the following priority when preparing for a LinkedIn PM interview:

Product design

Practice leading design discussions with a framework. Start with possible personas and detailed use cases. Prioritize the use cases and then brainstorm solutions. Invigorate the interviewer with unique, compelling ideas. Draw wireframes on the whiteboard to help visualize your ideas. To practice, download a wireframing tool like Balsamiq.

Analytic ability and data-driven orientation

Brainstorm LinkedIn's business goals and the drivers for the goal. Identify the different ways that LinkedIn generates revenue including consumer and corporate products. Also practice estimation questions.

Business acumen

Empathize with the customer by going over LinkedIn (and competitive) products. Understand motivations for using the products. Walk through the customer funnel, analyzing what helps or hinders customers during the product journey. Read about successful customer acquisition and growth hack efforts at comparable companies.

Strategy & planning

Use a framework like SWOT or Porter's Five Forces to think through the various strategic issues .

Leadership

Prepare leadership stories from your background, using the DIGS method™.

Operational ability

Understand what it takes to put together a go-to-market plan.

Technical

LinkedIn has never asked programming interview questions. However, during the early 2010s, they did ask questions about technical concepts and definitions.

In the last three to four years, we haven't heard any reports of LinkedIn asking about technical concepts and definitions.

To be safe, confirm with the interviewer, hiring manager, or your internal contacts on whether you can safely skip technical interview prep.

Phone vs. on-site interview questions

One last thing, the questions asked during the phone interview are largely similar to those during the on-site interview.

Additional Resources

How to Ace the LinkedIn Product Manager Interview :
<http://bit.ly/ace-lnkd-pm-int>

Frequently Asked Questions

How competitive is it to get into LinkedIn as a product manager ?

Here is my stack ranking of the most coveted PM roles today, in terms of competitiveness, based on my work preparing PM candidates for interviews:

Google PM . Hardest to get. High standards AND difficult technical interview questions during the on-site interview.

Facebook PM . No technical interview questions. However, the metrics questions are pretty difficult. Product design questions are just as challenging as Google's.

LinkedIn PM . No technical interview questions. Similar to Facebook in terms of challenging metric questions. Design questions are just as challenging as Google's and FB's. But Facebook is generally a more desirable company to work for than LinkedIn.

Amazon PM . Difficult interview process. But they're hiring so much, both due to growth and high turnover, so there's a healthy supply of offers. Less likely to get challenging design questions, but more likely to get business-y type analytical questions like customer lifetime value and pricing.

Chapter 9 Microsoft Program Manager Interview



Screenshot / Robert Scoble

What to Expect

Product Design Questions

- Build a mobile app for your favorite website.
- What Microsoft product do you like? How would you improve it?

Analytical Questions

- How many elevators do you need for a 50 story building?

Technical Questions

- Design an elevator control system.
- How would you solve a server bottleneck ?
- Suppose that there is a building with 100 floors. You are given two eggs. What's the minimum number

of drops needed to determine the lowest floor at which the eggs break?

Behavioral Questions

- If you are slipping your product development milestones, what would you do and why?
- How would you explain to an important stakeholder that your team is unable to deliver a feature?
- How would you convince a software engineer to adopt the feature prioritization you're proposing?
- What's the most challenging thing you've had to face as a PM? How did you deal with it?
- How would you triage your bug list? How would you prioritize?
- What's the most difficult question you've faced in the interview so far? And how would you answer it differently in retrospect?

Additional Resources

How to Ace the Microsoft Program Manager Interview :
<http://bit.ly/ace-msft-pm-int>

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Microsoft's approach to product development and product management?



Screenshot / BUILDWindows

The best article I've seen on this topic is Steven Sinofsky's blog post titled "PM at Microsoft" (<http://bit.ly/PM-Microsoft>).

Chapter 10 Frequently Asked Questions

Your First Product Manager Job

How do I get my first product manager job?

Getting your first PM job, as a new grad or as a career switcher, will be tough. Hiring managers are wary of candidates who don't have experience. Inexperienced candidates are more likely to:

- Make mistakes on the job
- Consume extra time and resources
- Miss opportunities that experienced individuals exploit

The best way to convince a hiring manager that you deserve the job is to show them that you have experience already. And the good news is that you don't need anyone's permission to build product management experience. In other words, you can do the product manager's job now.

Here are some ideas on how you can build and showcase that experience:

Resume building activity	Demonstrated competency
<i>Write requirements</i> on how you would improve your favorite Google product	Customer empathy; ability to prioritize requirements
<i>Develop UI mock-ups</i> on how you would re-design the Facebook news feed	Design skills
<i>Present your work</i> at the interview	Communication skills; thought leadership
<i>Build a product end-to-end</i> , on your own.	Technical expertise; end-to-end product experience; go-to-market experience.

The last suggestion will, by far, impress any interviewer. Just imagine if you walked into a Google interview with a fully functional Android app that you've developed, leveraging their available APIs .

If you're thinking, I don't have time to do this, here's another way to look at the situation: interviewers might ask you these questions anyway, so

why not prepare in advance, when you're not stressed, constrained by time, and can tap into the Internet for third-party information?

To summarize, if you've demonstrated before and during the interview that you've taken the initiative to do PM work already (i.e. conceive, build, and ship products) then it's a no-brainer to hire you on as a PM and pay you for the great work you're already doing.

What companies offer Associate Product Manager position?

Here's a list of companies with APM or APM-equivalent positions for new graduates:

- Google: Search for APM
- Facebook: Search for RPM
- Uber: APM
- Yelp: APM
- LinkedIn: APM
- Intuit: Rotational Development Program
- Microsoft: Program Manager
- Yahoo: APM
- Pocket Gems: APM

How do I prepare for a product manager interview with no technical experience?

Check out my 2 week PM interview prep plan: <http://bit.ly/PMPrepPlan> . It'll be a good starting point; feel free to modify to personal situation including your prior experience and your upcoming interviews.

How do I find APM jobs?

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn search results page for the keyword "associate product manager". The search bar at the top contains the query. Below it, there are several filters on the left: Advanced, All, Jobs, More..., Keywords (*associate product manager), Company, Title, Location (Located in or near), Country (United States), and Gender (Female). The main area displays 64 results. One result, "Associate Product Manager – Entry Level" from LinkedIn, is highlighted with a red box. This listing includes the job title, company (LinkedIn), location (Mountain View, CA), date (Jan 5, 2015), and a note about connections to the poster. Other results include "Associate Product Manager" at Wagner Spray Tech and "Associate Product Manager" at Worldwise, Incorporated.

Screenshot / LinkedIn

To find APM jobs, use your favorite job search engine.

I have a lot of non-PM experience in X industry. Should I try for a product manager role there?

Let's say you have a lot work experience in the gaming industry as a software developer.

Given that, you'll naturally and more easily attract the attention of other gaming companies. Also, folks outside of the gaming community don't really recognize the brands and company names — unless it is a big company like a Zynga.

Similarly, let's say you've got experience as a fraud analyst at PayPal. You're more likely to get a PM job in the payments sector.

How do I know who's in charge of hiring for a particular role or set of PM roles ?

Ask your friends who work at the company. If you don't have any friends at the target company or if you do and they don't know, then it's time to make new friends. ☺

I'm interested in working for Google / Facebook / Amazon, but I don't know if they're hiring PMs in my specific location. How do I find out?

Same as above. Ask your friends who work there.

Should I apply to job openings directly as well as via employee referral to be safe?

Additional details:

I know that employee referral has a higher priority than direct application, so I'd rather be considered by a recruiter through this channel, but sometimes requesting my networks to submit my resume via employee referral doesn't happen on time. What if the recruiter rejects my resume through direct application, if they receive it again through employee referral shortly following, would they reconsider it? What is the best strategy here?

Start with employee referral for the reasons you mention:

- Increased chance of getting an interview
- Getting your friend referral \$\$\$'s credit

Two to three days after asking your friend to refer, ask them if they've passed on your resume.

If the answer is no response or the answer is "No" with no clear ETA, then go ahead and submit your application via the website .

How important are cover letters when applying for product manager roles in technology companies in SFO Bay Area?

I wouldn't stress too much about it. Spend no more than 15 minutes putting together a cover letter, using a template: <http://bit.ly/cover-ltrtemplate> .

Most hiring managers spend 6 seconds on a resume and even less on the cover letter.

On the rare occasion that you get a hiring manager who actually cares about the cover letter, a 15-minute version will be good enough.

How do I make friends at my target companies?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Reach out through your alumni organizations including university, former employers, and even high school
- Re-engage old contacts in your LinkedIn network
- Attend local meetups
- Attend conferences
- Cold email people you'd like to friend, preferably with an engaging incentive

Which is tougher to crack, a Google interview or a Facebook interview?

I've coached hundreds of product management candidates, and I would maintain that the Google product manager interview is more challenging than the Facebook product manager interview.

Here's why :

- Google product manager interview includes a technical interview during the final rounds. This could include a whiteboard coding interview or technical implementation question. Facebook's does not. Most product manager candidates are uncomfortable with technical interview questions.
- Facebook's product management interviewers are more likely to engage in dialogue whereas Google's product management interviewers are more likely to have the candidate do all the talking. More candidates feel more at ease with Facebook's back and forth dialogue style.
- Google's product management interviewers are more likely to ask estimation questions, despite Bock's desire to minimize the use of those questions, which some candidates might find challenging.

Is it better to choose a Monday time slot or Friday or some day in between?



Screenshot / Robert Couse-Baker

Avoid an early morning slot

The interviewer can be preoccupied with work or even home issues. You don't want to deal with an interviewer who's thinking about when to dash off an important email to his or her boss.

Steer clear of the last slot of the day

The interviewer may have to rush off a pick up their kids from school. Once again, avoid a distracted interviewer.

Dodge pre or post-lunch meetings

Before lunch, the interviewer may be distracted, especially if they're hungry. After lunch, the interviewer may be late.

Stay away from interviews before or after weekends and holidays

The first day after a three-day holiday is similar to early morning slot; there's a lot on the interviewer's mind. Interviews before holidays and weekends aren't ideal either, where the interviewer may forget to follow-up after they return to the office.

Get insider information

If you have a friend who knows the interviewer well, ask if there's a certain day that's preferable to others.

I am a product management executive. I get job interviews but not the offer. I've had many successful past jobs. I am 48. How can I get a job?



Screenshot / Victor1558

It sounds like you have the right experiences, but don't have the right interview skills to get the job offer.

HR, friends, or hiring managers unfortunately won't, can't or don't know how to give you actionable advice on how to improve your interview skills .

I'd recommend that you work with a professional interview coach who can diagnose what's wrong with your interview skills and how to improve. You'll save yourself from random guesswork on what's wrong and close those offers quickly.

Interview Process

Are technical and coding interview questions becoming more prevalent at the product manager interview?

The number of companies that have included hard technical questions in the interview have dwindled over time.

Many companies are no longer asking technical questions in the interview, even simple ones like *Explain recursion to your grandmother* or *How does the Internet work?* Facebook, for instance, ended the practice of asking technical interview questions about two to three years ago.

Of the name brand employers, only Google continues to have a hard technical interview component.

What's the purpose of an interview framework?

To me, an interview framework is a checklist, just like a recipe.

If you miss a critical step, when baking a soufflé or answering an interview question, the resulting soufflé or interview answer will be incomplete and satisfying.

Novices and experts alike use checklists. Experienced pilots and surgeons are big fans of checklists. When the task is complex and the consequence of failure is high, checklists prevent us from making errors. Interviews are hard to ace, and missing out on your dream job would be terrible. That's why I encourage you to use a framework .

How is a job candidate supposed to answer tricky interview questions?

You're on the right track.

By logically think about the end goal, breaking down into the component parts, and coming up with a justified assumption for each component, you'll arrive at a reasonable estimate.

These questions are called Fermi questions. If you're looking for a resource to practice these types of questions, I'd recommend my book, *Interview Math* .

What does it mean when an interviewer tells you to sell yourself?



Explain why you should get the job, relative to other candidates.

How should I answer the biggest weakness question?



Screenshot / A Shot of Adrenaline

There are three things that interviewers are looking for in the biggest weakness question:

- **Self-awareness** . Does the candidate recognize their shortcomings? And can he or she be candid

about them?

- **Initiative** . What has the candidate done to improve their imperfections?
- **Results** . Now that they've put a fix-it plan in place, how have they progressed? Is there a happy ending?

There are two types of “biggest weakness” responses that you should avoid:

- **Spin a weakness into a strength** . Don't tell the interviewer your biggest weakness is your inability to have work-life balance. Which hiring manager doesn't like someone who works 120 hour work weeks? Hiring managers are wise to this tactic. Many view candidates who do this as being insincere and evasive .
- **Too naive** . If you're interviewing for a finance role, your biggest weakness should not be: I hate numbers.

What should I wear to the interview? They said business casual, but I'm thinking suit.

Ask the recruiter about the interview dress code. Whether they say it's formal or business casual, just dress in the style that they tell you to dress. In this case, business casual.

I'm interviewing for a PM job with the X team. But I'd prefer a PM job with the Y team. What should I do?

If there's a PM job with the Y team, then apply for it. They may want to interview, or they may not be interested.

If Y team doesn't or hasn't shown interest, then go ahead and interview with X team. Especially if this company is your dream job, it's more important to get your foot-in-the-door. Once you're an internal employee, it's much easier to switch the team you'd like when compared to an outsider.

One more reminder, don't delay your interview with team X, especially if you'd consider working for them. You don't want

to be perceived as difficult or stubborn.

I'm interviewing for a PM job with the X and Y team. If they ask which one I prefer, what do I say?

The most common mistake is to say you prefer both. The reason people do that is that they're afraid of losing opportunities. Risk-aversion is part of being a human being.

That being said, answer the question directly. That is, clearly state your preference for one vs. another. Here's how you might say it: "While I'd be honored if I could get job offers from both teams, if I had to choose between the two, I would select team X for these three reasons."

It would be natural for team Y to feel sad that they are the runner-up in your mind. Let's hope that team Y is mature enough to:

1. Not retaliate and reject you, even though they intended to give you an offer
2. Patiently hope that team X decides to pass on you, so that they can grab you, without feeling jilted

In case you're wondering, the alternative to NOT answering the question directly can lead to you being perceived as:

1. Evasive
2. Indecisive
3. Greedy

All three are undesirable traits that could impact whether you get an offer for EITHER team.

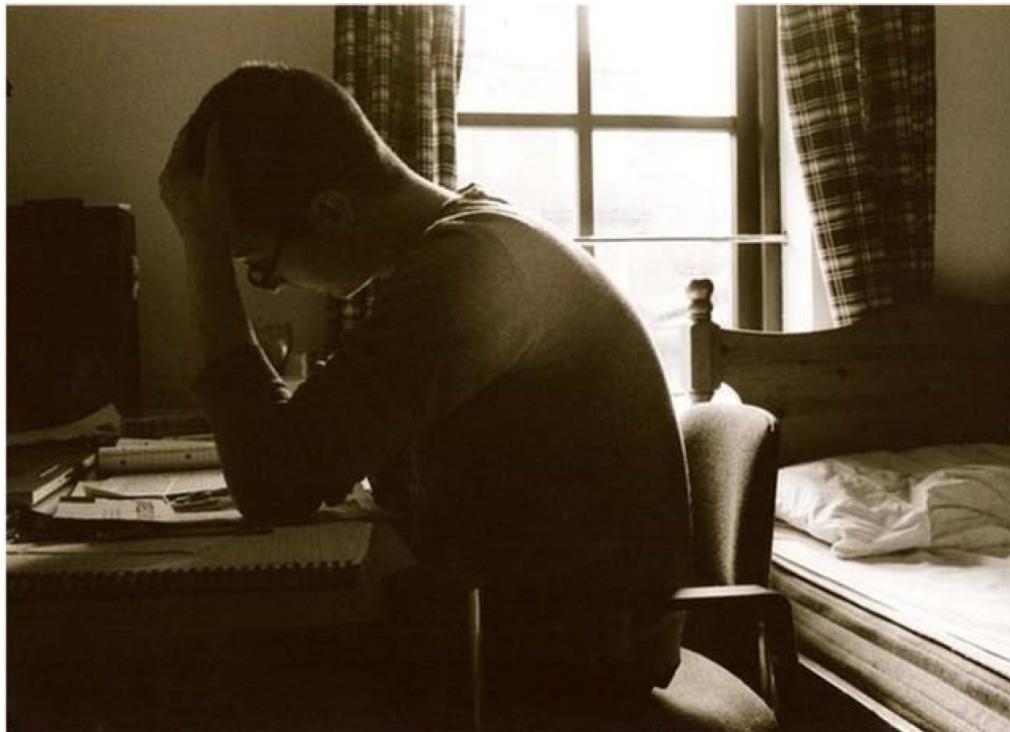
So here's the key takeaway: accept life's limitations. You can't have it all.

Can I use a calculator while answering an estimation question? If I ask for permission to use calculator, am I sending the wrong signal?

Some interviewers do care.

Inability to do mental or public math may be perceived as not having intellectual horsepower.

So I'd stay on the safe side and refrain from using a calculator, unless the interviewer explicitly says it's okay.



Screenshot / David A Ellis

How can you follow up with an interview if you are not given the email of the interviewer?

A couple ideas:

- Google for email info online
- Contact via LinkedIn
- Ask your recruiting contact to forward your thank you email on your behalf

How do I get a company to speed up their interview process?

The sure fire way to get hiring managers to move faster: When they know you're in demand. They'd hate to miss out .

So get some competing offers, especially from some blue chip brands in your industry, and you'll be surprised how much

faster the hiring process will go.

After a great interview, the recruiter called and said they've deprioritized the filling of the position this quarter. Should I wait until the next quarter or give up?

To help maintain your sanity, take the feedback at face value. That is, it's nothing against you; the company's business priorities have simply changed.

It doesn't hurt to keep trying, so check in with your contact every other month or every quarter.

After my job interview, should I connect with my recruiter on LinkedIn while I'm waiting for a decision? Will it seem creepy or desperate?



Screenshot / Sheila Scarborough

If I were in your shoes, I'd hold off connecting with the recruiter on LNKD during the job search process .

After a decision has been made, I feel that:

If you've received an offer

It's absolutely fine to invite the recruiter to connect on LinkedIn.

If you haven't received an offer

You can attempt to connect on LinkedIn. However, do note that their willingness to do so may not be high — primarily because they're concerned that you'll ask why you did not get the offer. Many recruiters cannot disclose why a candidate was rejected for a variety of reasons. The biggest reason: they're afraid an unhappy candidate would use those reasons to take legal action .

Why does the interview process at a big company feel slow?

Smaller companies generally move much faster than big companies. Less bureaucracy and they have to use their speed

to try to snap up candidates that would otherwise join one of the big names.

Why don't corporations recruit job candidates by referral only?

Here are some reasons I can think of:

Referral-only won't satisfy a company's hiring needs

All the data points to referral only being the most effective, but perhaps the theoretical quantity of referrals is insufficient. Also, relying on referrals may not have the diversity that a company needs, such as skill set or geographic diversity.

A 100% focus on referrals isn't practical

Just imagine the employees saying, "Hello, I have work to do. Don't we have a recruiting team? Isn't that their job to find new candidates?"

The recruiter told me I did very well in my Google and Facebook interviews. However, they called my references. Then, both companies declined to offer without stating a reason. Are my references hurting my chances?

Based on what you're sharing, your references are torpedoing your chances to get an offer .

Furthermore, I would recommend being more selective in choosing references.

Hiring managers and recruiters expect candidates to share references who are enthusiastic about you. If they encounter references that are negative or even lukewarm, most hiring managers prefer to pass and move on to the next candidate.

Choose references that will champion your cause. And don't select those who are reluctant. Consider the following phrases for your next set of potential references:

Identifying Reluctant References

"I'm interviewing for a new role. I would love for you to serve as a reference. However, if you are busy or otherwise

choose not serve as reference, I understand.”

Encouraging Positive Reviews

“I’m interviewing for Facebook, and I want the job. A glowing reference or recommendation would be greatly appreciated.”

What questions are asked in product management internship interviews?

Generally I’ve asked the same PM interview questions to both interns and experienced hires — with the expectation that experienced hires should have a higher quality response.

There are a few exceptions:

- I’m less likely to ask behavioral questions about prior PM experience to intern candidates .
- I’m less likely to ask hypothetical questions where prior experience working with a larger (and yes, bureaucratic) organization would lead to a higher quality answer.

How long does it to go through the following stages: phone interview #1 -> phone interview #2 -> onsite interview -> job offer?

Historically speaking about four weeks, sometimes closer to six weeks.

Candidate Evaluation

Do people get into Google without degrees?

Yes. One of my Google coworkers did not have a college degree and made his way up Google’s executive ladder.

Would you hire someone with no CS background for a PM role who just graduated from General Assembly’s Product Management Immersive course?

Yes.

I wouldn't take someone off my list just because he or she didn't have a CS degree, especially if that person possessed incredible strength in one or more of the following areas:

- Product vision
- Organizational leadership
- Operational excellence
- Business management

As the candidate during a job interview, what qualities do you want in your to-be manager and how do you check for them?



Screenshot / Ralf Appelt

Qualities I Would Want in An Ideal Boss

Here are the qualities that I would want in my ideal boss:

- Communicate openly
- Support my career objectives

- Remove obstacles for my most ambitious projects

Checking for these Qualities

To check for these qualities, I'd use the same technique that I'd use when evaluating a direct report: a history of demonstrating that competency. In other words, use behavioral questions. Here are some off the top of my head :

- Tell me a time when you disagreed with a direct report's point of view or performance. What was the issue, and how did you raise it?
- Give me an example of a time when a direct report asked for a raise or promotion. How did you evaluate his or her request, and how did you champion it?
- Tell me a time when a direct report proposed a bold, ambitious project. How did you support him or her in achieving it?

One More Thing

I would only ask the hiring manager these questions after I have an offer in hand and before I accept.

If someone is good at PM interviews, does that mean that person is also a good PM?

No. Some PMs, who are good at interviewing, make terrible PMs.

The interview process is fraught with misleading signals; interviewers can get duped easily. Some examples:

- **Pedigree** . Interviewers can assume that all candidates from a prestigious school or company are automatically must hires.
- **Self-confidence** . A candidate's self-confidence, charisma, or executive presence can sway interviewers. As a result, interviewers may overlook the quality of a candidate's actual words and thoughts.
- **Appearance** . Interviewers can fall into a trap of choosing candidates that look like they can do the job,

based on other successful PMs they've seen first-hand

Preparation

How do I prepare for product management job interviews at tech startups?

I'd recommend a three-step process:

1. **Figure out what questions will likely be asked during your PM interview.** Some startups are known to ask lots of product design questions. Others will ask lots of metrics questions. There's no shortage of PM questions you can prepare for. Unfortunately your time is limited, so prioritize based on likelihood.
2. **Put together a preparation plan for the likely topics.** If you need a template, you can use this 2 week PM interview prep plan that I created: <http://bit.ly/PMPrepPlan>
3. **Execute on the preparation plan.** Some of your prep will require some self-study, especially if you have knowledge gaps. Other parts of your prep might require you to focus on oral delivery and application. If you can, find a practice buddy, ideally someone who is also interviewing for PM roles. They can keep you accountable and point out mistakes you're making. You might also learn a new trick or two when you see them answering PM questions.

SEE ALSO: One-Page Product Manager Interview Cheat Sheet: <http://bit.ly/PM-int-cheat-sheet>

Should I prepare for interviews differently at different companies?

BIG difference. Interviewers adapt questions based on what the candidate needs to do be successful in the role. Sometimes they're assessing functional skills. Other times they're assessing alignment with corporate values.

For a functional example, an Amazon marketing interview is more likely to have questions about your e-commerce background. But a Starbucks marketing interview is more likely to have questions about any prior brick-and-mortar retailing experience.

For a values example, Amazon is notorious for doing the backbone test during the interview. That is, interviewers are evaluating a candidate's ability to commit to a point of view, even when others (and in this case, the interviewer) disagree. Other companies aren't as likely to test for this particular corporate value.

Long story short, always pay attention to the company and job description you're applying for. You'll get clues on likely questions interviewers will ask, helping you be more efficient and judicious in your preparation time.

Should I spend more time researching the company, team, and products?

Doing research on the company, team and products is an important part of showing interest in the company.

However, almost all candidates overdo it. Why? It's easy to surf the web and schedule coffee chats. In other words, doing so is a way to procrastinate and not do the hard parts of interview prep:

- Anticipating interview questions
- Outlining responses
- Practicing verbally with friends

Furthermore, few candidates incorporate company research into their response. To me, it's equivalent of doing homework and not turning it in.

So here's final takeaway: do your company research and coffee chats. But limit it to no more than 90-120 minutes per role. And don't forget to interject your research and anecdotes into your interview responses.

In job interviews, are there really only three questions that matter?

I'd say there are two things that every hiring manager is trying to find out about prospective candidates:

- Can the candidate do the job? (Capability)
- Would I (and others) enjoy working with this person? (Likability)

Which technology companies have the hardest interviews?



Screenshot / Steve Jurvetson

Considering all job functions (not just software engineering), I'd say Amazon is the hardest company to interview for. There are two main reasons that come to mind:

BACKBONE TEST

Amazon has a specific corporate value that they're testing for during the interview: your ability to commit to a point of view, even when others disagree. As a result, interviewers are intentionally argumentative and play Devil's Advocate to see if you get defensive or capitulate your position, even when you may be right. Most people have difficulty handling this kind of confrontation, making Amazon's interviews a jarring experience.

BAR RAISING

Jeff Bezos maintains that each hire must raise the talent bar of the company. In order to do that, each hire must be better than the average person in that role. Because this value is front-and-center, all interviewers, not just the bar raiser (who has veto power on a candidate's hiring), are rigorously assessing each candidate. Ability to do the job is not good enough.

Because of the rigorous questioning, most candidates feel Amazon questions are more difficult than a typical job interview.

How do I prepare for a product manager interview with no technical experience?

Check out my 2 week PM interview prep plan (<http://bit.ly/PMPrepPlan>). It'll be a good starting point; feel free to modify to personal situation including your prior experience and your upcoming interviews.

How can I get better in answering behavioral interview questions?

Use the DIGS Method™ to get more compelling and memorable interview stories. They're superior to STAR method stories, which come across as dull and boring.

For more information about the DIGS Method™ along with sample answers refer to any one of the following books:

- *Decode and Conquer*
- *Product Manager Interview Questions*
- *Case Interview Questions for Tech*

Finally, if you're still struggling to put your answers into words, consider hiring an interview coach to assist.

If case interviews are given in an interview for a product development/strategy position, is it right to assume that the cases will be focused only on product development?

Assume nothing.

Instead, I'd take a probabilistic approach. Gather data on likely case questions based on:

- **Historical interview questions** . Glassdoor is a good resource, as-is internal contacts who are familiar with the interview process.
- **Current company issues and pain points** . For example, Twitter is struggling with user growth. It wouldn't be unexpected to get a case question about "How would you improve Twitter to drive new active user growth?"
- **Skills and experience required** . Looking at the job description and talking to internal contacts, assess what skills they are looking for. For example, if a product team is having difficulty communicating product decisions, it would be fair for the company to ask this hypothetical question, "How would you put together a business case for feature X?"

Do companies really not care about the answer in technical interviews? I hear companies only care about the process. Yet every time I fumble with an answer, it's a guaranteed rejection, especially for in-person interviews. Is feigning confidence important in interviews?

Yes, it matters.

If a candidate misses obvious solutions, the candidate can be perceived as lacking knowledge and experience.

If a candidate comes up with uniquely clever solutions, the candidate can appear as smart or innovative.

In summary, you are being compared to other candidates. The quality of your approach and resulting answer matters a lot.

What are the best ways to showcase your product or work samples during the interview?

CIRCLES Method

- 1 Comprehend situation — What? Who?
Why? How?
- 2 Identify customer — Personas
- 3 Report customer needs - as __, I want __ so that __
- 4 Cut, through prioritization → ROI estimate?
- 5 List solutions
- 6 Evaluate trade-offs - thoughtful, analytical, objective
- 7 Summarize recommendation - What,
recap,
why vs others

Screenshot / Sacha Chua

I'd recommend using a modified version of the CIRCLES method™.

Product managers use CIRCLES to tackle product design interview questions. Here's the modified version:

Customers and Problem s

Begin by explaining which persona you're focusing on and what problem they're experiencing. Go into detail including:

- Describe a day-in-the-life for that persona
- Explain the persona's main challenges
- Share how the persona feels about the problem

Then, recap by explaining how they current solve the problem today and what deficiencies exist with their current solution.

Potential Solutions

Describe potential solutions that you evaluated as part of your product design process. Every good product designer knows: there's more than one product solution to solve the problem. Why not articulate the different approaches you considered? It helps us appreciate why your solution is better, compared to other approaches. It also shows that you're creative and think outside of the box. Don't forget to mention the pros and cons of each approach; it'll be useful and your interviewer will perceive you as thoughtful and analytical.

Walk-through the Solution

Demonstrate key functionality in your application. Don't forget to explain:

- *What is it?* Especially if it's not obvious.
- *Why is it needed?* In other words, what's the benefit?
- *How is it better?* Similar to above, share with us the alternative ways of implementing the feature and convince us why it's better.

Results and Next Steps

End your product demo by sharing your wins such as number of downloads, increase in user engagement, or perhaps even revenue growth.

Finally, tease us with some of the next steps you plan to take. Everyone likes people who are ambitious and have a desire to improve upon what they've already achieved.

Are there any good books on the S.T.A.R interview method?

I don't like the STAR method, but if you insist on using it, my favorite book on the STAR interview method by far is *Interview Magic*.

Not only does the author talk about the methodology, but also she has countless number of detailed examples and templates to help you craft your own STAR interview responses.

How do I find practice partners?

#request-practice-ptr

14 members · For practice partner requests. To increase your chances of matching include: 1) One-line introduct... June 21st June 20th

aadv 4:47 PM joined #request-practice-ptr
aadv 4:48 PM Hi everyone, Message me if you want to practice PM interviews this week.
chandra 4:52 PM joined #request-practice-ptr
chandra 4:52 PM Hi @aadv - I'll pm you
vishal 4:53 PM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @feng joined.
feng 5:01 PM @aadv @chandra got amazon PM next week; practice this wknd?

Yesterday

nissa 9:59 AM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @mark joined.
mark 10:11 AM @feng: I can practice with you. Free on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. DM me.
oliver 10:24 AM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @nick joined, @taylor9 joined, @rickyb joined.
taylor9 10:24 AM Got a Google interview next week. Looking for practice as well. Would love to partner up with anyone to help them out as well. DM me.

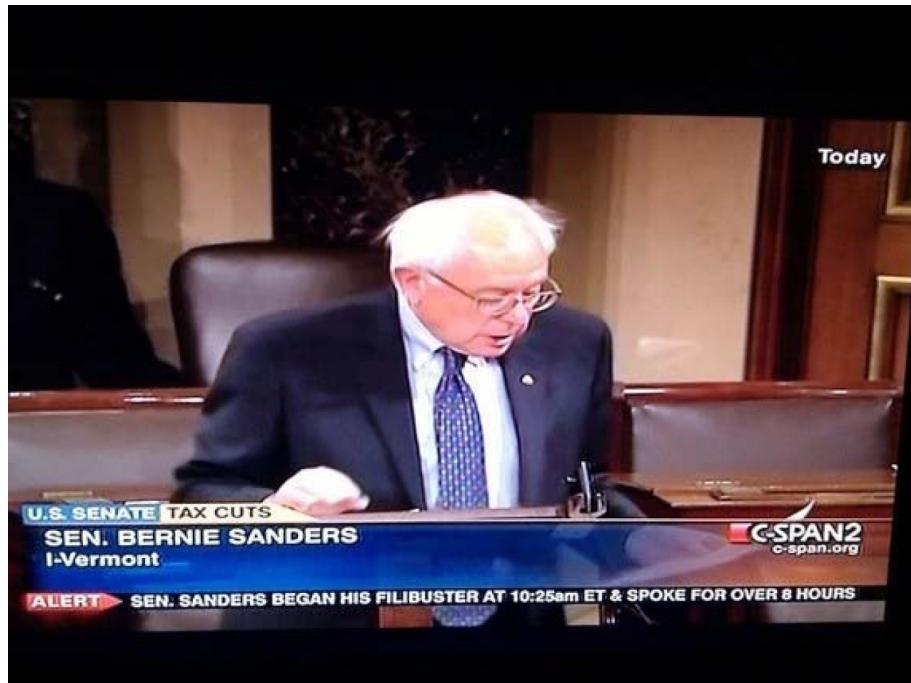
Today

pedro 8:01 AM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @steve joined, @elva joined.

Screenshot / Lewis C. Lin

To find practice partners, join my free PM Interview Practice community: <http://bit.ly/PMInterviewGroup>

How long should my interview response be?



Screenshot / Charlene McBride

You have as much time as you want, as long it is:

- Complete
- Effective
- Engaging

However, I've worked with many clients over the years, I haven't encountered many who can engagingly answer "Tell me about yourself" over a 30 min. duration. So here are my time guidelines, based on my experience:

- 2 to 2.5 min: traditional and behavioral interview questions
- 10-15 min: analytical and metric question s
- 20-45 min: product design and technical questions

Should I look every interviewer during an interview?

Bill Clinton is widely known to be the most charismatic and empathetic US president in recent memory.

His secret tactic: whomever he was addressing would feel like the most important person in the room, regardless of their celebrity status.

So when it comes to a 12-person, group interview, do what Bill would do:

Focus your eye contact on the person who asked the question...and let them feel like the most important person in the room.



Screenshot / LBJLibraryNow

How are phone interviews different from face-to-face interviews?

Expect the same question types for both phone and face-to-face rounds. Question types asked on the phone and on-site interviews are rarely different. The only exception I can think of: coding interview questions are rarely asked on the phone for two reasons:

- Phone interviews are usually conducted by product managers or recruiters. Neither are comfortable asking coding interview questions, due to lack of subject matter expertise.
- If they do have the subject matter expertise to ask a coding interview question on the phone, it's awkward to do so. Coding interview questions are best asked when a whiteboard or a collaborative coding editor is available.

Do note that coding interview questions are not common for product manager candidates.

Is consulting case interview prep good practice for product manager candidates?

To me, it's like telling a tennis player that he should play volleyball.

That is, if you've had prior experience doing consulting cases, you'll find transferrable skills that will help you with PM interviews. However, if you haven't done consulting cases before, focus your limited and precious time and focus on the big goal: conquering the PM interview.

The recruiter said I sound rehearsed or over-prepared. What does that mean?

Do note that when interviewers say a candidate is over-prepared, what they really mean is that a candidate comes across as robotic or is memorizing their responses. Neither is good, but it is not a symptom of over preparation. Instead, being robotic or memorizing responses is a symptom of the wrong type of preparation. So don't be a robot. And no

memorizing. Chemistry and rapport, with the interviewer, counts .

What are common signs that I haven't prepared enough?

You need more practice if your practice partners tell you that your answers:

- Feel prepared.
- Are long-winded.
- Come across as nervous or unsure.

The more practice I do, the worse I become. Why is that?

I have seen some candidates who seem to perform worse the more they prepare. In those cases, it's not that they've learned too much. Instead, fear and anxiety have overtaken those candidates.

As a result, during the interview, they fail to demonstrate what they do know. This lack of confidence and poise is akin to what actors call "stage fright" and athletes call "choking."

How do I prepare for company X? What's a recommended course of study?

I have provided preparation plans for the most coveted PM roles at Google, Facebook and Amazon. You can find them in my book, *Product Manager Interview Questions* .

If you have a PM interview with another company, you can construct your own preparation plan by leveraging the following resources:

- **Job Description** . The job description, especially the job responsibilities section, offers clues on what question categories interviewers will likely ask .
- [Glassdoor.com](#) reviews . Candidates share interview questions they've been given.

- **Internal employees** . Find a friend or make a new one at your target employer. Ask them what kind of questions they are likely to ask. Then, create your preparation plan by modifying the bit.ly/PMPrepPlan template, based on probable question categories.

What should I do if I have less than X days to prepare?

I am a firm believer that “success comes when preparation meets opportunity.”

However, life happens, and we do not always have enough time to prepare. It is impossible to come up with a plan for every candidate’s time constraints; I am sure someone will want a 15-minute study guide!

Instead, I have created a table on how to best allocate your preparation time, based on the most sought-after firms. With the time you have available, allocate your preparation time based on my recommendations below.

	Product Design	Metrics	Estimation	Pricing / LTV	Strategy	Traditional	Behavioral*	Technical
Google	50%	20%	19%	3%	5%	1%	2%	0%**
Facebook	50%	20%	10%	10%	7%	1%	2%	0%
Uber	50%	20%	10%	3%	14%	1%	2%	0%
Amazon	20%	10%	7%	15%	7%	1%	40%	0%
Microsoft	30%	5%	15%	5%	10%	5%	30%	0%

* Include hypothetical questions as part of your behavioral preparation

** Only prepare for technical questions if you have an on-site final round interview. It is unlikely technical questions will appear in earlier rounds. If you do have an on-site interview, spend almost as much time with technical preparation as you would product design .

General Interview Approach

How do I train myself to crack an interview and be a successful Product Manager?

I am glad you’re planning ahead!

For a full list of topics, plan and frameworks to prepare for your product management interview, I’d recommend that you check out the Two Week Product Management Interview Plan.

How can I get better in answering behavioral interview questions for program managers?

Unfortunately there’s no easy fix.

Interviewers expect entertaining, engaging stories on the level of a Pixar-movie. Most candidates, along with their friends, aren’t great storytellers. Storytelling is a craft that takes decades to polish.

Regrettably, interview candidates do not have decades before their next interview. The candidate's best option, if they are looking for quick results, is to hire a professional who can help polish one's interview narrative including what to say and how to say it.

How can I get better at answering product manager interview questions?

To get better at answering product manager interviews, I'd recommend that you find more opportunities to practice. I'd also recommend finding an expert to identify weaknesses in your approach.

How to Practice

On your own

I've put together a two week preparation plan (<http://bit.ly/PMPrepPlan>) with suggested exercises for each type of PM case interview question including product design, analytical, strategy, and technical. Adjust the timelines to fit your specific situation including deadlines and target company; for example, if you're not interviewing at Google, you might not have to do technical interview prep!

With others

You find PM practice partners here:

- PM Interview Practice Partner on Slack:
<http://bit.ly/PMInterviewGroup>

A practice partner can:

- Create more practice opportunities
- Increase your commitment
- Inspire you to try new approaches

How to Connect with an Expert

Sorry to introduce this cliché, but it's true: practice alone doesn't make it perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect.

To practice perfectly, you'll have to get feedback from an expert. Practice partners may not practice PM concepts

perfectly; it might be a case of beginners practicing with other beginners. And training other to be a perfect PM interview candidates, that's an even more challenging task for non-experts.

To find a PM interview expert, you might want to consider a product manager interview coach: <http://bit.ly/PM-int-coach>.

Quick Tips for Your Specific Situation

To get better at identifying pain points

Try my Rant Method. That's right, just rant.

With feeling.

Lots of it.

To build user flows more quickly

Build your user flow & design vocabulary. It's much easier to express your designs if you have a design library to draw from. Check out the design patterns featured in my 2 week prep plan.

Get comfortable mocking up wireframes quickly. Practice helps, but also getting the right design fidelity is important too. Too much detail, and you'll have an incomplete solution. Too little detail, and the interviewer won't be impressed. Wireframing tools like Axure can get you started, but eventually you'll have to be comfortable doing it quickly, either on paper or on the whiteboard.

During product management interview is it ok to tell the interviewer that I would be using CIRCLES approach to solve the design question?

Frameworks and checklists are amazing tools. Atul Gawande wrote a New York Times bestseller called the *Checklist Manifesto*. Doctors, pilots, home builders, and other professionals use them for vital and complicated tasks. Checklists help:

1. Prevent errors of omission
2. Lead to better outcomes

3. Improve productivity
4. Increase motivation

The CIRCLES Method™ is another checklist, but for product design interview questions. It has similar benefits:

1. Prevents errors
2. Increase your chance of having a complete and satisfying answer
3. Tackle the question quickly
4. Give you confidence by knowing you are answering the question effectively

In an interview situation, I would not declare to the interviewer that I'm using a checklist to answer the question, even though I am mentally doing so .

Just imagine if a pilot declared to his co-pilot:

I'm your captain for today's flight from Chicago to Seattle. I'm going to use the 27-point checklist American Pilot Association for our journey .

Let's pick up with where I left off item number 11: Seat belts and shoulder harnesses fastened .

Oh whoops, I forgot item 1: Turn off auxiliary fuel pump. Good thing I caught that. That wouldn't be good .

You get the gist. It feels like the pilot is inexperienced. Interviewers and hiring managers don't want to hire inexperienced talent. They want proven performers. Someone who is following a checklist, step-by-step, sounds like they're doing the task for the first time.

So if we revisited the pilot example, we'd feel much better if unfolded like this instead:

Hi folks, I'm your captain for today's flight from Chicago to Seattle .

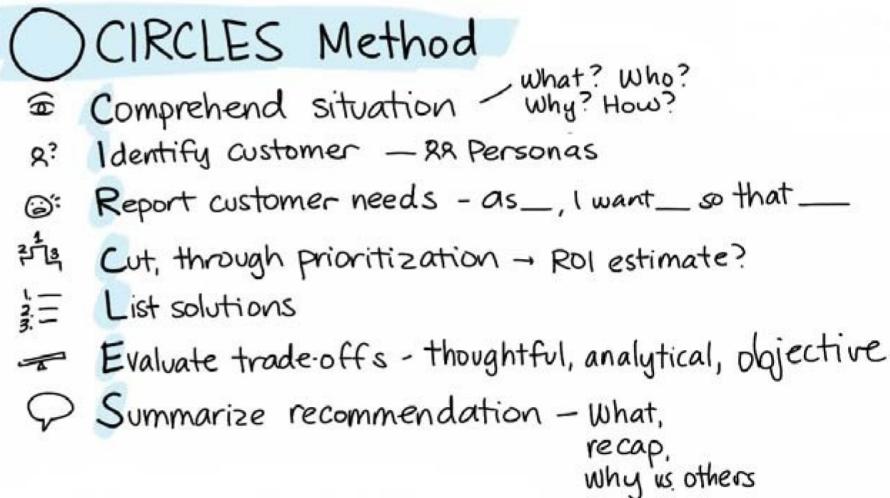
Let's start with the auxiliary fuel pump. Turned off? Good .

Flight controls, free and correct? Excellent .

Instruments and radios. Checked and set? Perfect .

So that's the takeaway: use the CIRCLES Method™ as a checklist. Don't declare to the listener. And you'll get all the benefits of CIRCLES, whether you're a novice or pro.

What would be a good way to practice product-related interview questions?



To do well on the product portion of the APM interview, practice leading the product design interview discussion with the CIRCLES Method™ framework.

Here are two more tips that I didn't cover in the other post: I've found that readers of Decode and Conquer: Answers to Product Management Interviews, where the CIRCLES Method™ was first featured, struggle most with steps 2, 3, and 5 -- customer empathy and brainstorming.

Customer Empathy

For steps 2 and 3, identifying the persona and reporting customer needs, push yourself to empathize with the customer. Empathy is defined as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.” One of the best ways to empathize is to share those feelings and emotions. You’ll be surprised how ranting about a customer problem deepens your customer connection.

Brainstorming

For step 5, brainstorming solutions is tough, primarily because it's hard to come up with innovative ideas on the spot. Google

calls them moonshot or 10X ideas. With practice, you'll get better about brainstorming new solutions. If you're looking to get better at brainstorming, brainstorming frameworks will help. One of my favorite books on brainstorming frameworks is *Thinkertoys* by Michael Michalko.

Lastly, reading about new product innovations will help spur your brainstorming creativity as you connect concepts from unrelated fields.

Practice

Bonus recommendation: reading about product design frameworks is one thing. But that's not the same as applying those frameworks. Find a practice partner at our PM Partner Interview Community (<http://bit.ly/PMInterviewGroup/>) and get practice in mastering those frameworks.

The screenshot shows a Slack channel interface. The channel is named '#request-practice-ptr'. It has 14 members. The messages are as follows:

- aadiv 4:47 PM joined #request-practice-ptr
- aadiv 4:48 PM Hi everyone, Message me if you want to practice PM interviews this week
- chandra 4:52 PM joined #request-practice-ptr
- chandra 4:52 PM hi @aadiv - I'll pm you
- vishal 4:55 PM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @feng joined.
- feng 5:01 PM @aadiv @chandra got amazon PM next week: practice this wknd?
- nissa 9:10 AM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @mark joined.
- mark 10:19 AM @feng: I can practice with you. Free on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. DM me.
- oliver 10:36 AM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @nick joined. @tayip9 joined, @rickyb joined.
- tayip9 8:26 PM Got a Google interview next week. Looking for practice as well. Would love to partner up with anyone to help them out as well. DM me.
- pedro 8:49 AM joined #request-practice-ptr. Also, @steve joined, @elva joined.

How do you answer vision questions in product management interviews?

Vision questions can be common during a product manager interview.

Here are some examples:

- What is your vision for Snapchat?
- What is your vision for Zillow?

Here's the framework I'd recommend, excerpted from *Decode and Conquer*:

How to Approach Vision Questions

1. **Solve a problem**. Your vision must solve a real problem. It also needs to be big, solving a problem for billions of people or dollars. Stay away from trendy, cool, or sexy problems with an unclear benefit.
2. **Be unique and memorable**. Most candidates reply with the first idea in their heads. More often than not, their answer is “tighter integration between two products.” The suggestion to integrate products, which can be valuable, is not unique, compelling, or memorable. Good visions move us. We obsess over

them. We can't wait to share bold visions with our friends and colleagues.

3. **Describe how it will be solved**. A good vision has two parts: the problem and the solution. Given each part equal airtime. An answer that explains the problem without the solution will be derided as a pipe dream. You have the burden of explaining the solution. Convince us that it's doable and go into specifics.

For a sample answer, review the “Choose one of these verticals. Where do you think it’ll be in ten years?” question in *Decode and Conquer*.



Screenshot / Antonio Thomás Koenigkam Oliveira

Is divergent thinking an effective approach in product design?

Absolutely. Steve Jobs was a big proponent of divergent thinking. Whether it was the iPhone or the iPad, his designers pursued multiple approaches (aka divergent thinking) before choosing his favorite solution.

Should I take a conversational approach to interviews?

I often tell my clients: treat the interview as if it's a coffee chat with a close friend. This mental image works wonders. Here's why:

- **Reduces interview stress and increases confidence .** The thought of sitting in a coffee shop, chatting with a friend feels less intimidating than a police interrogation-like interview, where the candidate meekly responds to an interviewer's rapid-fire questions.
- **Reminds candidates to exhibit good conversational dynamics .** To get the job offer, demonstrate two things: credibility and likability. Credibility is your ability to do the job. Likability is interpersonal chemistry and rapport. You're more likable when you exhibit good conversational dynamics. Good conversational dynamics usually occurs when the interviewer is engaged. The interviewer is engaged when the candidate allows the interviewer to speak. Many candidates forget to do that.

However, candidates can implement a conversational approach incorrectly. Here are some examples:

- **Insisting on a conversational approach .** There are some interviewers who just don't want to be conversational. Perhaps they're not in a talkative mood. Or they feel the candidate is trying to trick the interviewer into answering the question for them. At the end of the day, the candidate has more at stake than the interviewer. So don't fight with the interviewer on how the interview is conducted. The interviewer has the right to conduct the interview in a way they prefer. As the candidate, you're at their mercy.

- **Believing they are good conversationalists when they are not.** Some candidates erroneously think they're good conversationalists when they:
 - Vent
 - Lecture
 - Ramble
 - Name drop
 - Humble brag
 - Go into extreme detail
 - Overdo question asking
 - Unload emotional baggage

I will let you come up with your own reasons why it's not beneficial for candidate to vent, lecture, etc. at the interview.

I have read the questions in *Product Manager Interview Questions*. I find it unrealistic to know about every single product mentioned. Every sample answer seems as if the candidate just “happened” to be extremely well versed in that particular subject.

You are not the only one to feel that way. You may not know:

- How corporate taxes work
- What the YouTube API includes
- What celiac disease might be

Nevertheless, questions that seem unreasonable without a job description can be reasonable with it. For instance, a recent MBA graduate applying for a corporate finance role should know how corporate taxes work. A seasoned product manager applying for the YouTube API team should not be surprised when they are asked about the details of the publicly-available YouTube API.

That being said, there is an important reminder that goes for all interviewing situations: the interviewer has the power to ask whatever they want. They might ask a question that

requires you to be knowledgeable about celiac disease, even when you have no clue or if it is irrelevant to the role.

You will have to know how to react when you are in that uncomfortable position. It may feel unfair. However, be honest and courageous. Do not dodge the question.

The workplace is filled with scenarios, where you feel awkward, due to your limited knowledge. The interviewer may justify the use of such questions to judge your poise and grace under pressure.

How am I supposed to react when I am asked about something I have no idea about?

The interview is not a police interrogation. In other words, you, the candidate, have the power to ask questions.

In one of the answer examples in *Decode and Conquer*, the interviewer asks the candidate, “You are the CEO of Yellow Cab taxi service. How would you respond to Uber?” It is hard to fathom a tech-savvy candidate that hasn’t used Uber. However, in the sample answer, the candidate handles the situation gracefully by asking, “I apologize. I have never used the Uber service. Can you tell me more about it?” And the interviewer accedes, giving the candidate the information he needs to do well.

If the interviewer is being difficult and refuses to give you the context and knowledge to be successful, you need to have the self-awareness and courage to persist, despite the interviewer’s resistance. Your success is at stake. Give yourself a chance to give the best answer possible.

Interviewer wants to see work samples such as wireframes, a product roadmap, or an executive presentation. I feel embarrassed or otherwise awkward about the request. What should I do?

You should jump at the opportunity to show more.

By giving you this prompt, the interviewer is telling you that he or she found your work unsatisfying so far and is giving you a second chance to impress.

If you're afraid of divulging corporate confidential information, simply take your work sample and replace actual details with fictitious ones.

What is a good number of questions to ask an interviewer at the end of a job interview?

It suffices to ask just two to three questions .

It's enough to demonstrate your interest and passion for the role and company, without boring what is usually a busy interviewer.

The Q&A portion is another opportunity for the interviewer to assess your interest and passion for the company .

1 question is usually insufficient to demonstrate your passion and interest, unless you're running out of time. 2 or 3 questions is optimal. And the incremental benefit of doing more than 3 is marginal.

Where do I put my notepad during interviews?

I'd put it on the table.

Put it on my lap, and it might slide off. Holding it my hands, and it might be distracting. Or I might build a death grip, especially if I'm nervous.

What format or what platform is best to show wireframes for job interview?



Paper printouts .

Here's why :

- **Minimal setup wait time** . No need to spend 7 seconds for the OS to boot up. No need to fumble for a laptop, iPad, or smartphone in a bag or backpack.
- **Easy to share** . Cost cents to print. Can't leave behind an iPad for every interviewer unless you're a billionaire. About 5 to 15 pages would be reasonable. More than that might feel disorganized and difficult to manage; less than that could feel sparse and unsatisfying.
- **Easy to annotate** . Pen or pencil works on paper. The interviewer can't take their Sharpie to my laptop.

The only downsides I can think of right now are colors and paper cuts. For colors, you can print on a color printer. And paper cuts — I've seen people cry during an interview, but I'd hate to see anyone bleed.

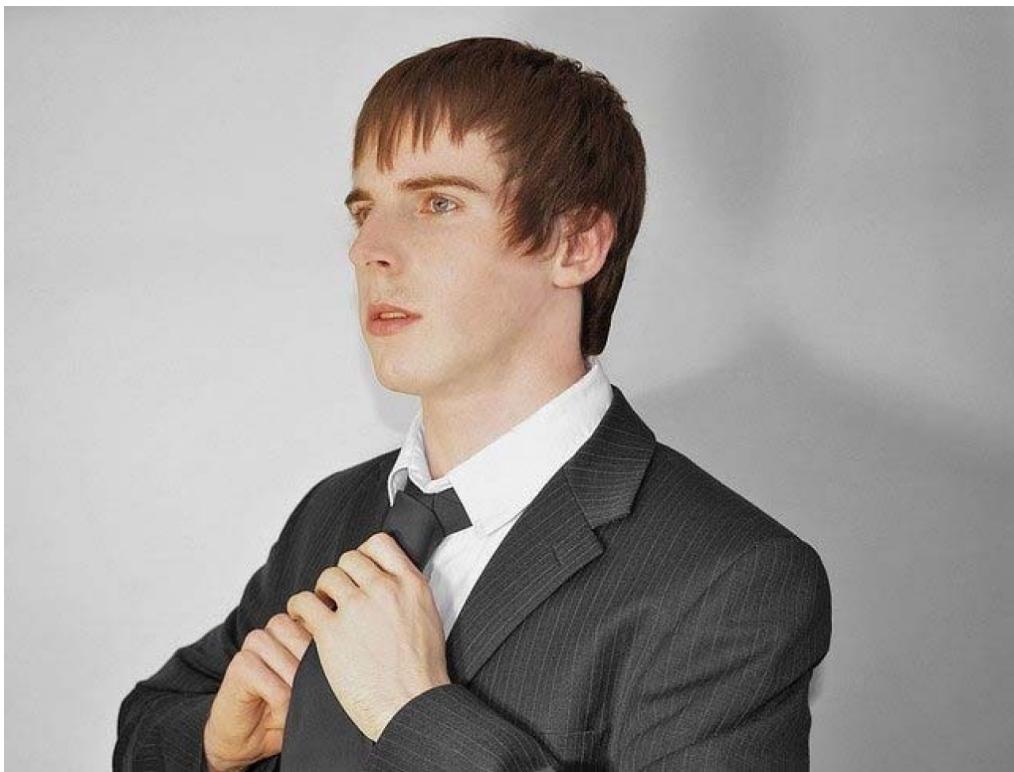
What should be included in the wireframe presentation?

A good wireframe presentation:

- **Describes the situation** . What problem are we solving? What is our objective? And why is it important?

- **Explains the complication** . Help us appreciate why the solution is not straightforward (e.g. need to monetize a mobile app with ads, but the complication is limited screen real estate).
- **Provides alternatives** . Showcase different iterations, explaining the pros and cons of the approach.
- **Summarizes your solution** . Present the final solution; ideally it should be clear, relative to other options, why it is superior.

Is it better to interview in the morning or afternoon?



Screenshot / Alex France

Primacy and recency effects (aka serial position effect) suggest that it is better to go either first or last because the interviewer is more likely to remember you.

Hunger and food coma can impact an interviewer's attention, so be wary of interview slots near lunch hour.

If the interviewer were doing 7-8 interviews in a row, then morning would be preferred because interviewer may be fatigued by the end of the day.

Of course, it also depends on you. If you're not a morning person, then choosing a slot later in the day may make more sense, despite primacy effects and potential afternoon fatigue.

Is it worth going for an onsite interview if there's a 90% chance you won't get the job?



Screenshot / Rob Sg

Totally hear you. Interviews are draining and frustrating. But if you want the job, keep interviewing. Here's a quote that might give you some extra motivation:

The brick walls are there for a reason. The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. Because the brick walls are there to stop the people who don't want it badly enough. They're there to stop the other people. - Randy Pausch

Is it fine to ask my recruiter to interview me via Skype instead of onsite-interview?

Doesn't hurt to ask, but be prepared to answer why. They may feel you have something to hide.

Good luck !

Is it unprofessional to reject the final stage of interviews because it is done remotely rather than onsite, as originally stated?

You have good reason to go on-site, but use those reasons to go on-site after you've received the offer and before you accept.

For now, be flexible and adapt to the situation. Business needs change all the time (or your recruiting contact misspoke) so just roll with the new plan.

Should you send a “Thank You” card after an interview for a new job?

SKIP the thank you card.

DO the thank you email.

It would be terrible if you lost the job because the hiring manager cared about something as seemingly trifle as a thank you note.

Cards seem to be a nice touch, but when I've gotten them as a hiring manager, I usually get them a good 2-3 weeks after the interview, when it's too late to make an impact.

What should I do when eating with the interviewer?



Screenshot / Gratisography

Lunch or dinner interviews are tough. The old saying is true: don't talk and eat at the same time. But unfortunately, job candidates rarely have a choice, so here are my tips on how to do your best in a tough situation:

- **Don't expect to eat anything at lunch.** Sure, you'll order lunch and have a few bites here and there. However, you don't want to give your interviewer the impression that you'd rather eat than answer his "What's your biggest weakness?" question. The corporate cafeteria calzone may look delicious, but resist the temptation! You're at the interview to get a job.
- **Choose a quiet location.** Let the interviewer choose the lunch location but request that it be quiet. It'd be a shame if the rowdy rugby fans at local pub silenced your perfect answer to the "Tell me about yourself" question.
- **Bring water and snacks.** Don't let an empty stomach ruin your post-lunch interviews. Bring your own food and water; nibble and replenish in between interviews .

What to do when I don't know what the interviewer is asking for?

More context:

The interviewer asked me to redesign Alexa's voice, on the Amazon Echo, to be efficient and precise while preserving her humanism. I honestly have no idea on how to approach this. If Alexa is briefer, then she'll probably lose her humanity .

When it's ambiguous on what the interviewer is asking for, just clarify. Here are some ways to say it:

- “I’m not sure if I follow. Can you repeat your question?”
- “Are you saying X? Or are you referring to Y? Or is it something else altogether?”

I have a target list of 30 companies. Is that too many?

30 companies is a lot, especially if the majority invites you for an interview. It's okay to have some warm-up interviews, but after a while, you'd want to prioritize so you don't get overwhelmed.

What are some questions one should never ask?

Yes, there are certain questions you should not ask during the job interview.

Topics that are sensitive or controversial .

For instance, “The Wall Street Journal wrote an article on how your company pays your employees unfairly. What are you doing about it?”

Topics that make the interviewer look dumb .

For example, “I know you’re the director for the Google Android team, but can you explain to me new job openings available on the Google Maps team?” Or “I know we just completed the interview, but can you give me some feedback on how I did and whether or not I’m going to get a job offer?”

Topics that make you look dumb .

For instance, “Can you explain what your company does?”

Is it okay to ask an interviewer his or her name?

Yes, it’s fine to do so. Just ask nicely; only jerks would decline your ask.

Approach for Specific Questions

Is it okay to answer: “I’m applying to this job because my wife and I decided to settle down and have kids” at the Google & Facebook interview?

No. There are a lot of jobs and companies where you can “settle down and have kids.” You’ll have to explain in more detail why Google or Facebook is the best place to achieve that goal.

Also, you’ll have to consider what possible interpretations (especially negative ones) may occur when someone hears a succinct “My goal in life is to settle down and have kids.”

How long should my answers be?

Here are guidelines on how long an answer should be:

Category	Target Length	Acceptable Length	Examples
Traditional	2 minutes	2.5 to 3 minutes, especially for those with more experience	<i>Tell me about yourself or Why do you want to work here?</i>
Behavioral	2 to 2.5 minutes	2.5 to 3 minutes, especially for those with more experience	<i>Tell me about the most difficult interaction you had at work .</i>
Product design	20 to 30 minutes	30 to 45 minutes, depending on interviewer	<i>What is the best decision tree for Facebook or LinkedIn’s “People You May Know” feature?</i>
Estimation	10 minutes for simple ones; 15 minutes for complex ones	15 minutes max	<i>How much storage space do you need to store all the info from Google Maps?</i>
Metrics	10 to 15 minutes	15 minutes max	<i>What metric would you measure if we were focused on</i>

How detailed or deep should my answer be?



Screenshot / Alex Eflon

It depends if the interviewer is:

Having a good day

- Three minutes, if the interviewee's response is exceptional
- Two and a half minutes, if the response is average
- 90 seconds, if the response is below average

Having a bad day

- Two and a half minutes, if the response is exceptional
- 90 seconds, if the response is average
- 20 seconds, if the response is below average

Takeaways

- *Prepare for the interview* . Shoot for exceptional answers.
- *Keep it concise* . Don't plan for average responses and be aware that the interviewer may have a bad or busy day. Make your responses exceptional and ideally shoot for 2 minutes in length .

How detailed or deep should my answer be?

To get the job offer, a candidate needs to demonstrate credibility and competence; that is, show that one can do the job. Credible interview answers are rich in detail.

So your answer should be as detailed as can be, given the time constraints. Refer to my answer, “How long should my answers be?” for my timing recommendations. And if you feel that the interviewer is expecting a shorter or longer answer, don’t be shy to ask.

Beware: do not misinterpret my request for detailed answers! It’s not acceptable to provide wordy, unedited answers. Your answers can be detailed while being precise, efficient, and easy-to-follow.

My recommendation for the most detailed response possible, given a time constraint, mirrors real-world realities. Sometimes, employees have months or years to solve a problem. Other times, they only have the night before. Either way, conscientious employees give the most detailed, thoughtful response possible, given the time they have.

How do I answer the interview question, “Come up with innovative ways to use a paper clip?”

This is a brainstorming question. The key is to come up with as many ideas as possible.

Interviewers commonly use these questions to test your out-of-the-box or divergent thinking. The candidate response’s is also an indicator of their self-confidence, willingness to be vulnerable, and patience.

The interviewer may already have some ideas in mind. If the candidate doesn’t come up with the same ideas as the interviewer, the interviewer may brand the candidate as “not creative.”

I would shoot for at least 10 ideas. If you need inspiration, check out these links:

- 101 Uses for a Paper Clip: <http://bit.ly/paper-clip-1>
- 100 Users for Paper Clips: <http://bit.ly/paper-clip-2>
- Yumi Sakugawa’s illustration showcasing creative ways to use a paper clip (see below)

21 COOL WAYS TO USE A PAPER CLIP

BY YUMI SAKUGAWA



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Screenshot / Yumi Sakugawa

How do you answer the answer the question: "What's the one word that describes you?"



Screenshot / Pascal

Why is this question asked?

The interviewer is busy: deadlines, fire drills, endless meetings, and family commitments. They're also interviewing lots of candidates.

In other words, there's so much clutter in his or her life, *the interviewer wants to distill into ONE WORD why they should hire you*.

This question also helps wordy candidates be more succinct, compared to similar questions like the open-ended “Describe Yourself” question.

How to approach and think through this question?

Think with the end of the mind. That is, imagine if a colleague asked the interviewer, “What did you think of that candidate?” How would you want the interviewer to reply?

Whatever that word is, you want THAT to be your interview answer.

For instance ,

- Steve Jobs or Elon Musk wants the interviewer to think he is innovative.
- Jeff Bezos: driven.

- Larry Page: intellectual.
- Richard Branson: marketer.
- Sundar Pichai: team player.
- John Chambers: sales person.

Is this the same thing as my personal brand?

Absolutely.

What word should I pick?

Pick a characteristic they're looking for.

For example, if they need someone to heal organizational wounds, you'd want to choose "team player." If the company needs to drive revenue, then choose "sales person."

How do I get inspiration for my personal brand?

Ask your friends, family, and colleagues: "What one word would you use to describe me?"

They might say analytical or helpful. From there, you can brainstorm what might work in your situation, keeping your target employer's needs in mind.

Should I state how many user stories I wrote in my résumé as a Product Owner?

It just seems like an odd thing to brag about. It's better to focus on a feature that you delivered and its business impact such as signups, revenue or cost savings .

Interviewing: In an interview, is it a good idea to say "I will outwork anyone you put me next to" if you can weave it in appropriately?

I'd prefer that the candidate "show me" rather than "tell me."

How?

Take initiative before the interview to work on a project or assignment that's important to the interviewer and bring it to the interview. They'll be impressed with your effort (and

possibly the value you bring) that you'll be far ahead of any other candidate.

How do you answer the interview question: “How do you know that you add value to your company?”



Screenshot / Michael Coghlan

Here's how I'd approach it:

When You Can Count It

Examples:

- As a junior software engineer, I created a new macro that automated our dashboard reporting process. It saved 80 hours per week, allowing my manager to slim down our headcount from three people to just one.
- As CEO of Microsoft, the stock price has risen from \$30 to \$65 in just two years. In the same time, my peers' stock price has only risen by 10%.

When Other People Say So

Examples:

- As the lead project manager, my VP said that I have high EQ, and that I'm a great team player. As a result, she asked me to lead a major change initiative, migrating all of our Windows XP machines to Chrome OS.

How do you approach a job interview question, “how can we increase sales 10x in a year”?

This is basically a marketing plan question. Check out my book, *Rise Above the Noise*, on how to prepare for marketing plan questions, including the Big Picture marketing framework.

What are good ways to explain company's poor revenue numbers during a job interview?



Screenshot / marsmet545

During the interview, highlight job experiences where your skills and accomplishments shine brightest. And perhaps it would be your experiences at previous companies .

However, if asked about your performance at your current company, it's important that you set appropriate context. For example, the product wasn't as compelling as it could have been due to lack of UX resources. How did you make your

product as aesthetically pleasing as possible, despite the constraints?

Do keep the interview positive. It's not an opportunity to criticize the CEO's choice to underinvest in UX resources. Be a pessimist and you may be labeled as hard to please and not a team player.

The interviewer asked me to mention three personal flaws. What's the best way to answer this question?

Recently a candidate asked me,

The interviewer asked me to mention three personal flaws. What's the best way to answer this question? I can think of three approaches:

1. *Name three flaws that have nothing to do with your job. E.g. you apply as a journalist and you tell them your flaw is your “natural curiosity to learn new things”*
2. *Name three flaws, which are actually strengths: “I’m always so focused when working that I routinely work long hours...”*
3. *Be honest*

Here's my answer: **Pick three honest ones, option three .**

It's not that honesty is the best policy (it usually is), but it's more because listeners are smart and know when you're evading the question when you choose option one or two.

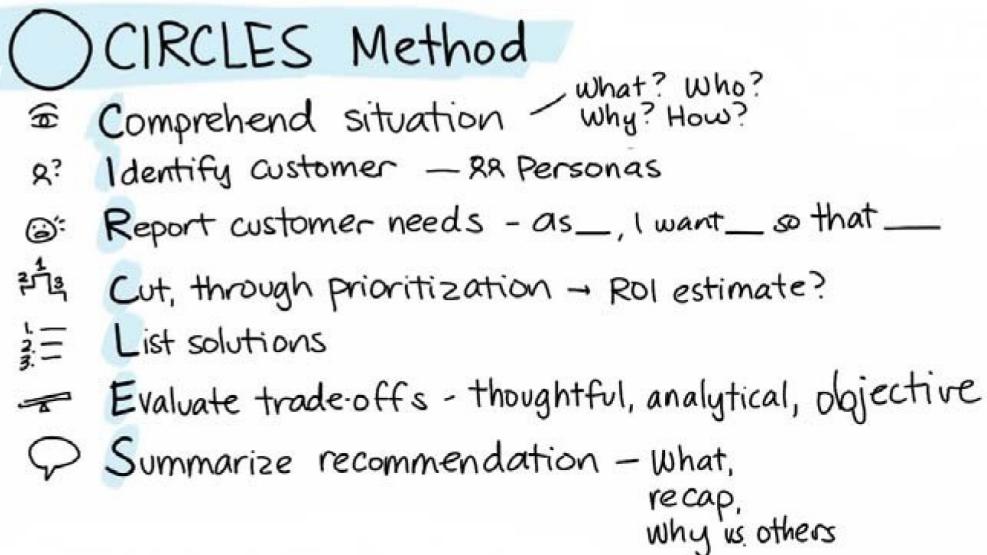
How do I answer the interview Question? : If you are to start tomorrow as a PM of this product what are the top 3 things you would change ?

Answer this product design interview question by:

- Evaluating the customer's needs
- Prioritizing their top 3 use cases
- Brainstorming solutions
- Evaluating solution trade-offs

- Making your recommendation(s)

In short, use the CIRCLES Method™ below:



Screenshot / Sacha Chua

What is the one thing that you shouldn't say at the end of a job interview?

Here's an odd interaction I encountered a couple years ago:

Candidate, at the end of the interview: "You're not going to hire me, huh?"

Me, after awkward pause: "Well, we're going to talk to a few more candidates. We'll be in touch."

Candidate: "Wow, don't lie. You're not going to hire me."

Those were the wackiest last lines I've ever heard from a candidate. I'll leave you to guess on whether he got the job.

How do I answer in an interview when asked, "What is your weakness"?

Talking about one's shortcomings is never fun. But look at this as an opportunity to demonstrate self-awareness as well as self-confidence in one's flaws.

If you have a readily apparent weakness, discuss how you've addressed it and why it won't be an issue in the job. For example, if you're a nonnative English speaker, you might

want to mention your accent as a weakness. Hopefully you've already demonstrated that an accent hasn't prevented you from communicating effectively and getting your point across during the interview. And let's say you participate in your local Toastmasters Club, a worldwide, nonprofit organization committed to helping over 200,000 people to improve their public speaking, then mention it! The interviewer will be impressed by your commitment to improving your weakness?

What is the best way to describe yourself in an interview?



Screenshot / Andrew Feinberg

Introduction

“Tell me about yourself” is the most frequently asked interview question. It is also the most challenging because most candidates don’t know where to start when it comes to this broad, open-ended question. Before you use this question to talk about your family, pets, or hobbies -- ask yourself, “What is the question behind the question?” In this case, the interviewer is really asking, “Why should I hire you?”

Top Three Tips

With this in mind, here are three key points you should drive home in your response:

Summarize your experience, including internships, extracurricular activities, and school projects. Don’t assume that the interviewer has read your resume. Maybe they were too busy. Or perhaps they read it but forgot the details. In any event, highlight where you went to school and where you worked. Quickly recap your experience, so they know a little bit about who you are. Don’t forget to mention relevant work experience such as summer jobs, part-time work, and internships. Extracurricular activities can demonstrate leadership and teamwork, while school projects can showcase your intellectual curiosity.

Elaborate on specific skills and experiences . The next step is to help the interviewer understand why someone with your education and experience is a good fit for the job. For instance, if a university student is applying for a job where the company is looking for someone with initiative, ability to work without guidance, and project management skills. For his response to “Tell me about yourself,” I asked him to mention specific school examples where the student proposed a new idea, organized a team, or got things done.

Explain why you are interested in the company and/or position . 99% of the time, I get canned responses to this question. I often hear candidates reply, “I want to work for a top notch company” or “I want to work with smart and talented people.” As a hiring manager, I want to hire someone who is passionate about the job; those that are passionate are less likely to churn and more willing to put in extra effort. When I hear generic responses, it tells me the candidate hasn’t taken the time to figure out why they really want the job. So do your homework; be detailed and specific on why you want to join a company.

And one more thing, think of your response to “tell me about yourself” as a trial lawyer’s opening statement. It’s your opportunity to establish your credibility and stimulate the interviewer’s curiosity. If you do well, the interviewer will be engaged and follow-up questions will flow easily.

What would you say/do if an interviewer asks you to impress them?

If you say, “I’m good at this” it may come across as bragging

The safer and more effective way to say it is, “My boss says I’m good at this.” Or “I presented at a sales conference, and 50,000 attendees nominated me as the best speaker out of 300.”

How would you answer this job interview question:
Why shouldn’t I hire you?



Photo credit / Rochelle Hartman

As a hiring manager, I would ask this question as a different way of asking the “What’s your biggest weakness?” question or, on a related note, whether a person is a good fit for a company culture.

As a candidate, it would be important to give a genuine weakness (whether it is competence or cultural fit related) to demonstrate self-awareness. Any weakness that is perceived as “safe” will come across as evading the question, which will cast doubt on your ability to be forthcoming and trustworthy .

If relevant and possible, discuss how you can or have addressed the weakness as well as progress to date.

What’s the best way to approach the question, “Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?”



Screenshot / Gratisography

Here's a hiring manager's perspective on the question: A couple years ago, I interviewed a job candidate for a product manager role. I asked him, "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?" He was a little too frank and blurted out, "My passion is music. I want to open a recording studio in 5 years." And all I could think to myself is, "Why wait 5 years? If that's your life dream, go do it...NOW!"

I use this question to assess cultural fit. As a hiring manager, one of my biggest challenges is employee morale and retention. Finding talent is hard work, and I want people who will stick around. If the prospective employee doesn't like the company or role I'm offering, I would move on. I can't convince the candidate that being a PM is better than recording Justin Bieber's next hit single.



Screenshot / Pixabay

I rarely use this question to assess one's ambition or goal-orientation on the job. If they are ambitious and hardworking, I could simply ask them about their biggest accomplishment or a time when they went above and beyond the call of duty. Their career progression is another way to see their ambition shine through.

The best answer to this question is to demonstrate your passion and enthusiasm for the role and the company. Do it with sincerity, thoughtfulness, and energy. Don't just use platitudes. Back it up with examples and anecdotes. And if you do it well, you will alleviate the hiring manager's anxiety. You may have the right skills for the job. But if you're not passionate for the company and/or the role, the hiring manager knows that it won't take much for you to leave for a different company.

How can I politely inform about my preference/restrictions on food during an onsite interview ?

It never hurts to ask, so definitely don't be shy. That being said, if it's not easy for them to fulfill your dietary restrictions, I would recommend bringing your own lunch or snacks during the interview. I doubt they would get offended if you ate your own food, and you'll appreciate not slogging through an interview on an empty stomach.

When using the CIRCLES Method™, I find that brainstorming 10 ideas is a lot. Can I do less than that? And do interviewers ask for a specific number of ideas?

It's possible, but unlikely that the interviewer will ask you for a specific number of ideas.

However, you need to have the self-discipline to know that creativity of your ideas is very important. The increase your chance of having at least one creative idea is to brainstorm many ideas. 10 is the target that I set for myself.

When brainstorming, I can come up with three to five ideas. But to get anything more than that, it'll take me about 10 minutes. What should I do?

Don't feel bad. With more practice and more exposure to brainstorming stimuli, you'll come up with ideas more quickly.

Good ways to get stimulated:

- Try new products
- Read about new products
- Watch others unfamiliar products

Should I ask for time to brainstorm? If so, how long ?

Yes, ask for time. I can probably come up with close to 10 ideas in one minute. If you need 90 seconds, that's okay too. Two minutes is probably the max anyone would be willing to tolerate.

Should I brainstorm aloud?

More context:

Should I:

1. *Ask for time to think*
2. *Come up with an idea silently*
3. *Explain the idea aloud*
4. *Repeat steps 2 and 3 until I have all 10*

I'd do the brainstorming silently. Then declare to the interviewer that you've come up with X ideas, but indicate that you're only going to share the top three.

In product management interviews, when asked "What are your favorite products," what are some you mention or have heard?

Here's what I often hear when I work with my PM interview clients:



Fun for a Minute

- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Trello
- Amazon Echo
- Uber
- Oculus, Google Cardboard, and anything VR



Boring

- Gmail
- Yelp
- Amazon
- Facebook
- Google Maps
- Spotify
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Waze
- Fitbit
- Product Hunt
- Netflix

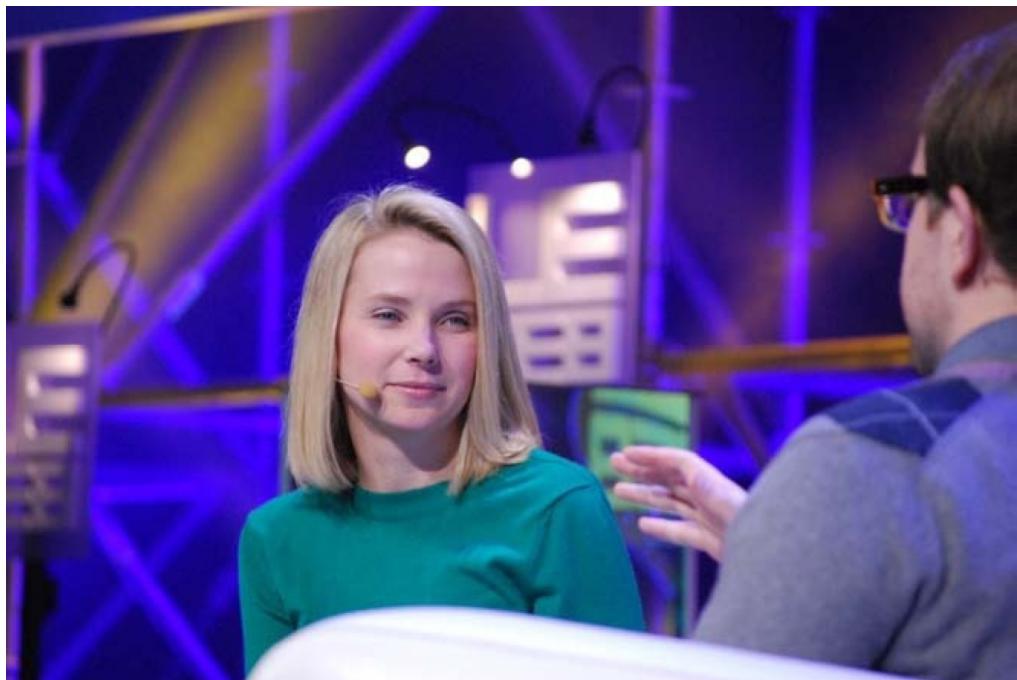


Dead on Arrival

- Apple iPhone

Images Sources: Revolution.co.za

An interviewer asked me how much do I sleep. What might she mean?



Screenshot / Magnus Höij

It depends on the situation, but I could see this question as an indirect method of determining your cultural fit.

For example, Marissa Mayer, Yahoo's CEO, is known for operating with less than five hours of sleep and her infectious Energizer bunny-like energy.

People prefer to hire candidates that remind them of themselves. So Marissa, in this example, could use this question determine your similarity to her.

Can I tell the interviewer that I want to leave because our company's products aren't making money or that the company is not doing well in general?

Additional question details:

I also want to tell the interviewer that I want to go to a more established company. Startups are too risky, and they pay poorly .

Replying this way may lead the interviewer to believe that you:

- **Give up easily** . When the company isn't doing well, you abandon ship.

- **Doesn't take responsibility** . As opposed to fixing problems, you are the type that runs away from them.
- **You're a terrible product manager** . Product managers with poor product results can be perceived as not being good at their job.

Try this alternative approach to answering the “Why leave?” question:

CANDIDATE: It's not so much that I want to leave my current employer, it's more about my being excited about this role, and here are 3 reasons why:

Reason 1: _____

Reason 2: _____

Reason 3: _____

One more reminder: always keep your interview positive. Don’t slam your current company, its products, your boss, or your co-workers.

Let’s pretend that the interviewer knows that my products aren’t doing well. The interviewer asks me, “How would you fix it?” After I give a response, she says, “Why didn’t you try this?” What can I do? Can I say that upper management didn’t listen to me?

Try this multi-step approach:

Part 1: Acknowledge that your products aren’t doing well .

Always keep the interview positive. Don’t convey discouragement or frustration. Resist the temptation to join the interviewer and poke fun at your company’s products too.

As an example, consider the following dialogue:

INTERVIEWER: [Bing.com](#) is a really crappy search engine. You and the [Bing.com](#) team are getting your butts kicked by Google .

CANDIDATE: Yes, we’re trailing the market leader, and there’s a lot we need to do to catch up .

The candidate's statement shows maturity: not disagreeing and reflecting the interviewer's thoughts.

Part 2: Explain how would you fix it

“How would you fix it?” is a product improvement question, so apply the CIRCLES Method.

Part 3: How to respond to “Why didn’t you try this?”

Like Part 1, show maturity and diplomacy. Here are some wording suggestions:

- “That’s a great idea. We hadn’t thought of that.”
- “That’s a great idea, and I came up with similar, but not identical idea. I can tell you more about how I presented my case, and what we learned about the feasibility of the feature.”

How do I answer the question, “How do you make decisions in situations where you don’t have complete information?” This question seems to be full of traps.

Use the Rule of Three. Here’s an example outline:

When I don’t have much information, here’s what I do to make a decision:

1. *Do third-party research* . I go to Google...
2. *Survey* . Quickly gather more information. SurveyMonkey makes it easy to purchase survey respondents for less than \$100....
3. *Leverage the wisdom of the crowds* . Survey others for their opinion. If you’ve ever wondered why Bing Predict is so accurate in predicting winners of elections or World Cup matches, it’s because it’s aggregating other people’s opinions...
4. ...
5. ...
6. ...

7. *Draw a decision-tree with probabilistic outcomes*
...
8. *Run a Monte Carlo simulation ...*

How do I answer the question, “Why do you want to switch from being a PM in industry X to a PM in industry Y?”

Use the Rule of Three.

Interviewer Feedback

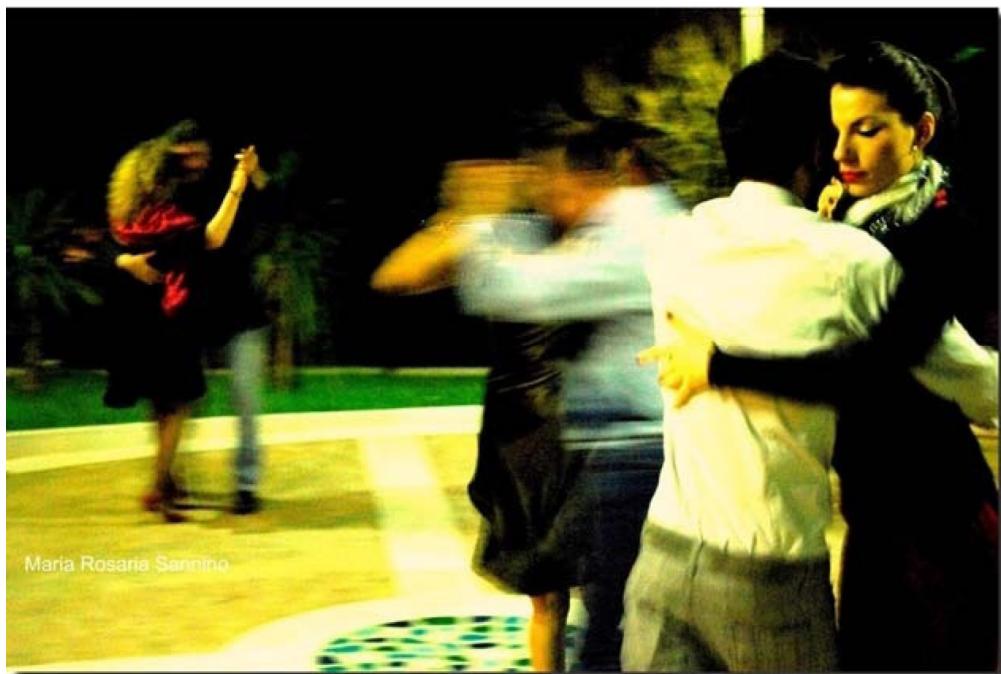
How do you know your interview went well?

If they give you a wink and ask you if you prefer having a Mac or PC on your first day of work.

Interviewer said I wasn’t “strategic” enough. What does that mean?

1. Use the right vocabulary. For tech companies, you’ll find plenty of examples in Decode and Conquer, PM Interview Questions and Case Interview Questions for Tech Companies.
2. Have top-notch communication skills. Practice with interview partners. Find partners free here: bit.ly/PMInterviewGroup
3. Practice using the whiteboard when you communicate your ideas.
4. Be structured in how you communicate. Frameworks in my book and even simple things like a pros and con table can go a long way.

The recruiter has pinged me, the interviewee, after an interview to ask me how the interview went. Why do they do that? Shouldn’t they just collect feedback from interviewer and let me know the outcome?



Screenshot / Maria Rosaria Sannino

They are assessing your interest in the role.

Also, some recruiters' annual performance reviews are based on candidate satisfaction with the interview process, so they are being courteous, with that metric in mind.

Interviewer said I wasn't "technical" enough. Why would they say that? They didn't ask me any technical questions.

There are many ways an interviewer can assess your "technical" abilities without asking you a coding, technical architecture or technical definition question.

The interviewer may have assessed your "technical" abilities with a traditional or behavioral interview question such:

- Tell me about yourself .
- Give me an example of when you led product development of a new feature.

When answering these questions, they may be looking for your comfort, willingness and proficiency in discussing technical details. They can probe either with follow-up questions or make an assessment on whether you proactively discuss technical details on your own.

During this narrative, they can conclude that you have poor “technical” abilities if you:

- Avoid technical details
- Over-simplify or gloss over technical details
- Use wrong, unconventional terminology to describe technical details

So what is the solution for a candidate who’s been labeled as “nontechnical?” Get into the details.

What does that mean? In your preparation, you’ll have to do the following:

- Recall and explain technical details
- Get the terms and vocabulary correct
- Diagram technical architecture on the whiteboard

The third suggestion is particularly noteworthy; interviewers love it when candidates go to the whiteboard!

If explaining technical details pushes you outside of your comfort zone, you wouldn’t be the only one. Take the time now to invest in your technical ability. You’ll connect better with engineers during the interview and when you start your new PM job .

Interviewer said I was “over-prepared.” Why would they say that? Should I prepare less?

When interviewers say you are “over-prepared” what they really mean is that your responses sound generic, canned, stiff, formal, and / or robotic.

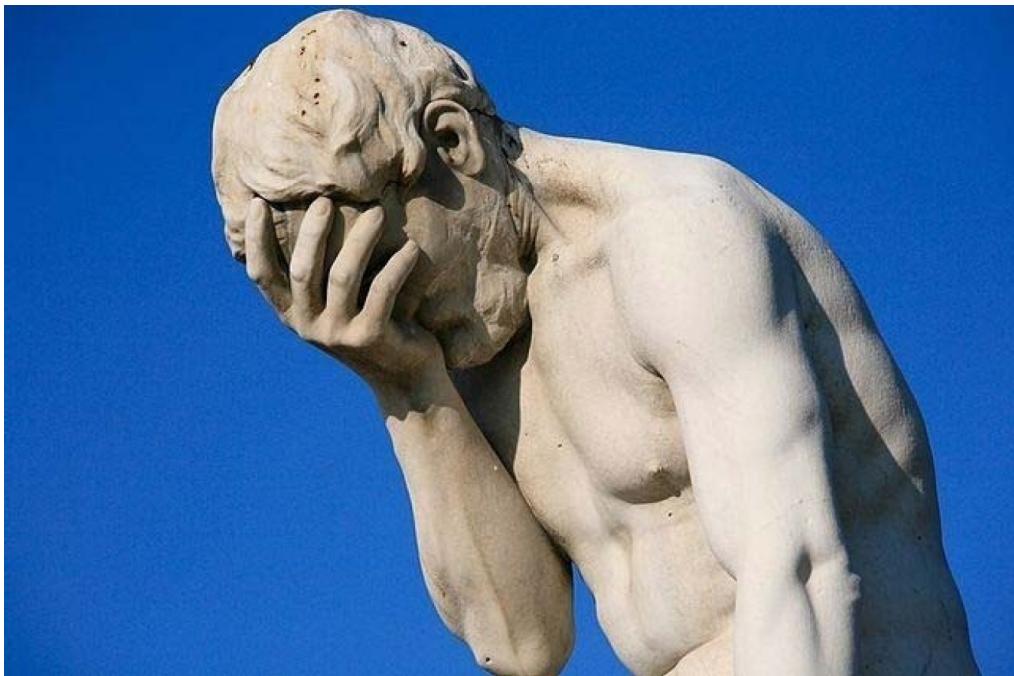
So the real problem is that you’ve actually haven’t prepared enough.

If you’re using generic or canned answers, invest more time to make your responses more personal and thoughtful.

If you’re coming across as stiff, formal, and / or robotic, find a practice partner and focus on smooth conversational delivery. The mental image you should have in your head is pretend that

you're having a cup of Starbucks coffee with a best friend, catching up on old times.

I'm not getting called back for interviews, what could I be doing wrong?



Screenshot / Wikipedia

If you're not getting the interview, then there are only two root causes :

1. They're not getting your resume and cover letter (RCL).
2. They're getting your RCL, but you're not getting selected based on info strictly on your RCL.

For the second one, find a friend and ask them to review your RCL.

For the first one, it's possible that they're not receiving it for a number of different reasons:

- **Too many submissions**. Your RCL is buried. Get it to the top of the heap by thinking about search keywords a recruiter is using to identify your resume. For example, they might be searching for “nodeJS” — if you’re using “node.js” on your resume, you might not be returning in their search results.

- **RCL process is broken** . Person reviewing applications is on vacation. Or left the company. Or is going into a database where nobody has the password. Sounds corny, I know. But it has happened. Often.

To mitigate these issues, you need to do everything in your power to make sure the hiring manager (or equivalent person with hiring authority/ influence) will get their hands on your resume.

A common tactic is to befriend an internal employee, have them look up who the hiring manager is for the role you're interested, and have that internal employee forward your RCL to the hiring manager.

If you've never tried this before, it might feel invasive. But as a hiring manager, I don't mind seeing RCL submissions in my email inbox. Trust me, the hiring manager is probably just as frustrated as you are that the RCL process at their company is broken .

What does “we will not be looking to fill this position until a later date mean”?

Business priorities have changed and filling this position is no longer a top priority, at the moment.

Hiring manager who interviewed me two days back, viewed my LinkedIn profile. Does that mean anything?

I wouldn't read too much into it. It shows that the hiring manager is generally interested in you as a candidate, but it doesn't give any indication on whether they're going to hire or reject you.

The waiting game is unbearable; try to stay patient. If you haven't heard from the company in a week, don't hesitate to follow-up with your contact - whether it's the recruiter or the hiring manager.

Take Home Assignments

What's an interview assignment?

It's a take-home assignment to demonstrate a candidate's aptitude to do the job.

For the product manager role, there are four types of interview assignments:

1. Writing sample
2. Executive presentation
3. Excel spreadsheet
4. Business case

What's an example of an interview assignment?

Writing Sample s

Writing samples demonstrate a candidate's written communication skills. Here are some examples:

Assignment from Facebook

Answer the following question in your writing sample. What is the thing you are most proud of building? (100 words or less)

Assignment 1 from Amazon

Judgment Call

Most decisions are made with analysis, but some are judgment calls not susceptible to analysis due to time or information constraints. Please write about a judgment call you've made recently that couldn't be analyzed. It can be a big or small one, but should focus on a business issue. What was the situation, the alternatives you considered and evaluated, and your decision making process? Be sure to explain why you chose the alternative you did relative to others considered.

Assignment 2 from Amazon

Innovation

What is the most inventive or innovative thing you've done? It doesn't have to be something that's patented. It could be a process change, product idea, a new metric or customer-facing interface — something that was your idea. It cannot be anything your current or previous employer would deem

confidential information. Please provide us with context to understand the invention/innovation. What problem were you seeking to solve? Why was it important? What was the result? Why or how did it make a difference and change things?

Assignment from Google

Pick a successful social network on Android and answer the following questions:

1. What makes them successful?
2. How do people get hooked?
3. What makes them come back?
4. How does the network encourage users to create great content?
5. How is their content organized, and why is that effective?

Assignment from Zynga

List the top 5 narrative experiences that moved or impacted you and why. The narrative experience can come from a movie, game, books, etc.

1. explain why each of these impacted you
2. Choose one and describe in more detail what the building blocks that make it fantastic.

Executive Presentation

Assignment from Intuit: More about you

Create a presentation that addresses the following:

- Who you are: this could be a mix of personal and professional (~5 minutes)
- Portfolio of your work: showcase 2 or 3 of your proudest professional achievements and why; what the objective was of the initiative, what specific role did you play, what was the outcome of the initiative, what you learned, and why you selected this achievement to share (~15 minutes) We would

specifically like to hear about what you did as a product manager.

Excel spreadsheet

Assignment from Zynga: Excel spreadsheet

Open the Excel spreadsheet and answer the following questions. Using Excel's PivotTable feature may help:

- Between the 15th and 31st, which day had the most in-game purchases?
- For the month of March, which day had the highest average revenue per paying user?
- Which device type had a double-digit decrease in logins, week over week?

Case Questions

Assignment from Intuit: Roadmap Strategy

We want to learn how you think about innovating across different groups of customers. You're working at a bank and have come up with an idea for a "Business Debit Card." Similar to competing credit card solutions, it would allow small businesses with employees to have multiple debit cards attached to one master bank account, with additional functionality to make small business accounting simpler.

For example, the Business Debit Card could allow field workers to see, record, and document their expenses while at customers' job sites. A person back at the office could review and approve expenses from employees, check the account balance, pay bills and deposit money, and reconcile the account.

- What makes your idea great? How would you convince your leadership team to support/ fund this?
- How would you go about testing this idea to see if it is viable?
- What safeguards would you want to ensure that different customers use the account as you envision ?

- What information would you want to determine how to prioritize this idea vs. others you already have in the backlog?

Assignment from Salesforce: Metrics

PART 1: We have a weekly meeting every Monday with the product team (engineering, QA, design, customer success, support). What are the top 10 metrics across these functions that you think we should review every week?

PART 2: Assume that we are at \$10M in ACV (Annual Contract Value) as a business. What do you expect these metrics to be? E.g., if you think new ACV per week is a metric, what number do you expect that to be each week?

*I typically advise people to frame their answers in the form of a short presentation. We definitely don't want people to spend a ton of time making a beautiful PowerPoint deck, but often times a few slides can help frame the conversation.

Assignment from Credit Karma: A/B Testing

You are the owner for our A/B test platform. You have the choice of featuring one of two offers on our landing page when a user types in “cash back credit cards” in Google.

Chase Option . Feature the Freedom Unlimited card.



Chase Freedom UnlimitedSM

★★★★★ 615 Reviews

- Unlimited 1.5% cash back on every purchase – it's automatic
- Earn a \$150 Bonus after you spend \$500 on purchases in your first 3 months from account opening
- 0% Intro APR for 15 months from account opening on purchases and balance transfers, then a [Show More...](#)

Pros & Cons

Unlimited 1.5% cash back on every purchase	Earn a bonus reward for initial spending	No annual fee	Foreign transaction fee
No 5% cash back in rotating categories			

Our Take

Chase Freedom UnlimitedSM offers great cash back rewards with no annual fee.

What to Like

With Chase Freedom UnlimitedSM, cardholders can earn **unlimited 1.5% cash back on every single purchase**, which is pretty cool. If you spend **\$500 on purchases in the first 3 months**, you can also **earn an additional \$150 bonus**. The rewards **never expire as long as your account is open**, there's **no annual fee** and there's also a **0% intro APR for 15 months on both purchases and balance transfers**.

Look Out For

This card includes a **3% foreign transaction fee**. Chase Freedom UnlimitedSM also **doesn't have 5% cash back in rotating categories**, which is a feature of the standard Chase Freedom card.

[See Details, Rates & Fees](#)

Citi Option . Feature the Citi credit card.



Citi® Double Cash Card

★★★★★ 250 Reviews

Apply now

Apply by phone: 1-888-262-8315

Save Card

- Earn cash back twice on every purchase with unlimited 1% cash back when you buy, plus an additional 1% as you pay for those purchases.
- Balance Transfers do not earn cash back
- 0% Intro APR on Balance Transfers for 18 months. After that, the variable APR will be 13.49% -

Show More...

Pros & Cons

0% intro APR for balance transfers for 18 months	No annual fee
Balance transfer fee	Foreign transaction fee

Our Take

The Citi® Double Cash Card offers both an attractive rewards plan and a 0% intro APR, making it a good option for consumers with good credit.

What to Like

You can earn **1% cash back on all purchases**, and an **additional 1% when you pay back those purchases**. There are no cash back limits or rotating categories. The Citi® Double Cash Card also offers a **0% intro APR** on balance transfers for 18 months.

Look Out For

The Citi® Double Cash Card charges a **3% or \$5 (whichever is greater) fee for any balance transfer and 3% for foreign transactions**.

[See Details, Rates & Fees](#)

Which one would you choose, based on monetization? Show us your structured thinking by listing out your assumptions, hypotheses, and any other inputs.

Assume that (1) Their website generates money only after a visitor is approved for a credit card (2) Both credit cards pay the same commission rate.

Assignment from Wealthfront: Product Design

1. Paint a vision for the future of the personal finance market.
2. Write the requirements for a compelling new product in this market.

Assignment from Dropbox: Product Design

Please prepare a presentation diving deeply into one project or product you've built that you felt was the most impactful, either from a team or company perspective. Make sure to address as many of these key points as possible:

- What problem were you trying to solve?
- How did you know you were solving the right problem?
- What other approaches did you consider?
- How did you collaborate with your team?

- How did you measure success?
- How did you get these products out to market?
- What did you learn?

You'll have 45 minutes to present to a group of PMs. Feel free to prepare about 30 minutes of content, since the group will be asking questions along the way.

You're welcome to use whatever means of presenting your work you're most comfortable with — slides, a demo, schematics, or even just a white board session. If you're preparing slides, please upload your presentation into this shared folder so the team can look it over to familiarize themselves with the material. If you're hoping to project, Dropbox has the necessary equipment in the interview rooms, but please bring your own laptop to present.

Assignment 1 from Uber: Product Design

Explain why it might be that airport pickup trips are much fewer than the drop-off trips, and based on that create a better airport pickup experience on Uber.

Assignment 2 from Uber: Product Design

What Uber feature/product has been brought to market that you think has a lot of potential but has not achieved it yet? Analyze the product and take us through the entire product cycle for a feature that you feel will greatly help this product achieve its potential.

Assignment from Yelp: Product Design

Redesign the Yelp List experience. Include wireframes in your PowerPoint presentation.

How should I approach interview assignments?

Here are a few suggestions on how you can approach interview assignments:

Writing samples

Most writing samples are written forms of popular interview questions:

- What is your proudest accomplishment?
- Tell me a time when you made a decision with limited information.
- What is the most innovative thing you've done?

Strategies to answer verbal versions work for the written versions too. That is, I would answer using the DIGS Method interview stories framework.

Executive presentation

With executive presentations, hiring managers are evaluating:

Ability	Characteristics Hiring Managers are Looking for
Create a PowerPoint presentation	<i>Visual communication</i> . Can you create visuals that catch one's attention?
Present in front of an audience	<i>Executive communication skills</i> . Can you present in a concise, efficient, and impactful way? <i>Poise</i> . Do you get nervous, especially when executives ask intrusive follow-up questions? <i>Improv ability</i> . Can you adjust your presentation
effectively, in reaction to the needs of the audience?	

Read Gene Zelazny's *Say it With Charts* if you're looking to improve your PowerPoint creation skills. A few things to pay attention to:

- *Action titles* . Each slide's heading should summarize the slide's takeaway. This is called an action title. Not only do action titles make the presenter's intent clear, but also make it easier to understand. Here are some examples:
 - Good action title: "In 2017, our market share increased in the Android market, thanks to a new partnership with T-Mobile."
 - Bad title: "Market share by year and partner"
- *Use the right chart* . For example, if you wanted to convey an increase or decline in business performance over time, a pie chart would not be appropriate. A bar chart is better, but a line chart would be the most ideal.

Excel spreadsheet

With Excel assignments, hiring managers are assessing the following skills:

Ability	Characteristics Hiring Managers are Looking for
Familiarity with Excel	Does the candidate use Excel? Are they afraid of data?
Ability to manipulate data	Does the candidate know how to use critical data analysis features in Excel including PivotTables and

Vlookup?

Ability to draw conclusion from the data	After manipulating data, can the candidate draw conclusions or propose a course of action?
--	--

If your Excel skills are rusty, I'd recommend finding spreadsheet and modeling tutorials on either Coursera, Udemy, [Lynda.com](https://www.lynda.com), or YouTube.

Business case

For business cases, you'd want to use many of the same frameworks you'd use in a verbal interview. For example:

- Product design: Use the CIRCLES Method™
- Analytics: AARM Method™
- Strategy: Pros and cons table, issue tree, SWOT analysis, or 2x2 matrix

Salaries

Why do recruiters ask about potential competing offers when hiring?



Screenshot / USFWS Mountain-Prairie

There are three main reasons why a company asks a prospective employee about competing offers:

Assess Your Value

It's a principle that both recruiters and supply-and-demand theorists love: Someone who is valued by others is valuable. So having competing offers indicate your worth, especially from blue-chip companies.

Speed Up the Recruiting Process

If you're about to accept an offer from another company, your recruiter will put extra effort and emphasis to snatch you before your deadlines, especially if you're a desirable candidate.

Understand the Competition & Give More Attractive Offers

The information helps recruiters identify common competitors and develop more effective strategies to convert those candidates, such as crafting more compelling offers.

Startups vs. corporations: who pays more?

Corporations pay more because they can.

Startups don't because they can't.

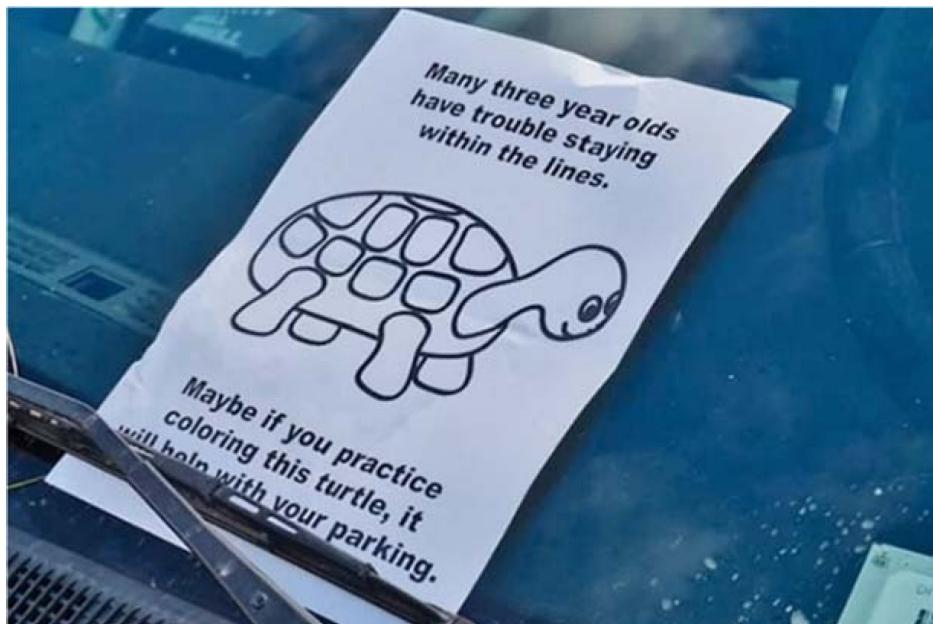
To compensate for reduced salaries, startups try to compensate with:

- Fancier titles
- More challenging projects
- Broader job responsibilities
- Less bureaucracy (e.g. fewer meetings)

Other Career Advice

What are the best tech companies to have on a product manager's resume ?

Here's my ranking of the best tech companies to have on a product manager resume:

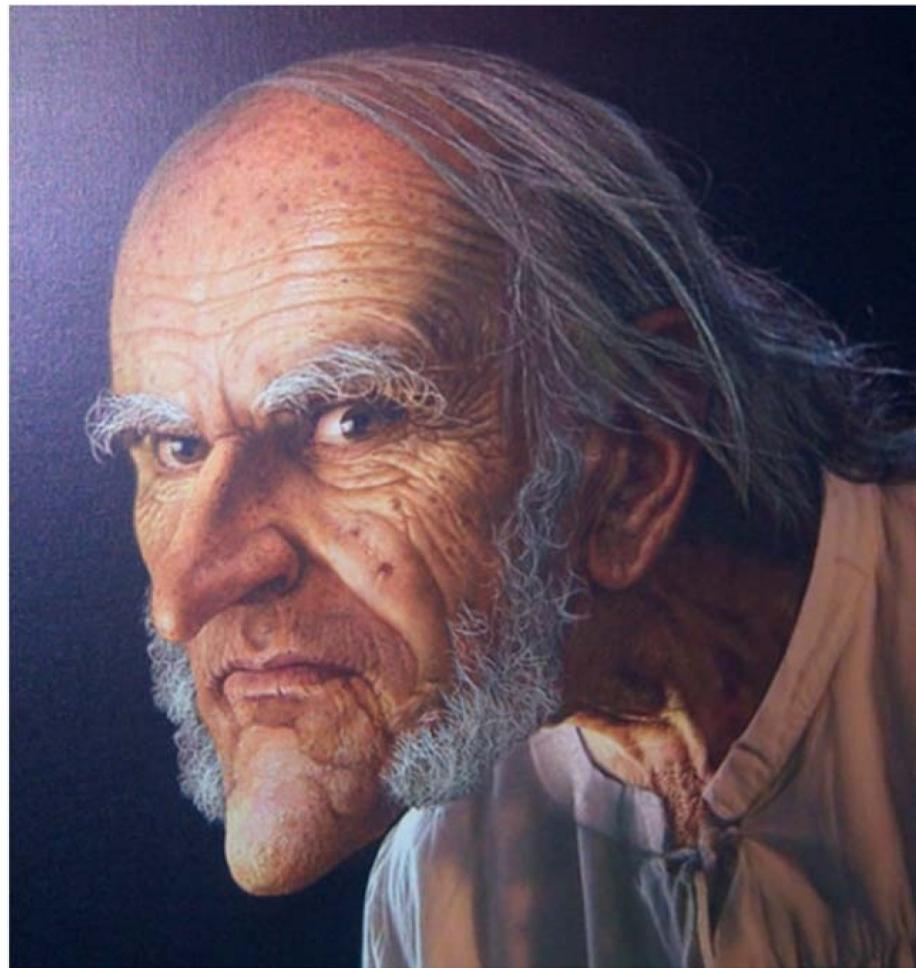


Screenshot / Crack Two

8. Pinterest

Consistent with Pinterest corporate culture, Pinterest PMs are more likely to have a passive aggressive communication style.

Archetype: Awkward Turtle



Screenshot / Loren Javier

7. Cisco

The complexity of Cisco's networking equipment business makes it difficult for Cisco PMs to get into details. However, they are strong at analyzing numbers and coordinating across company silos.

Cisco PMs are sought after for PM roles at networking companies, but have a hard time getting considered for PM roles at enterprise or Internet software companies.

Archetype: Scrooge



Screenshot / Wikipedia

6. Microsoft and Yahoo

Microsoft and Yahoo PMs are very good at managing up and communicating across the organization, at all levels.

Archetype: Valerie Jarrett

5. Yelp

Yelp PMs have an incredible eye for consumer design, more so than PMs at other companies.

Archetype: Dieter Rams



Screenshot / RNS Sofres

4. Uber & LinkedIn

Uber and LinkedIn PMs are very well-rounded. They get things done, have solid product design skills, and are fairly analytical.

Archetype: Iron Man



Screenshot / US Navy

3. Amazon

More so than PMs at other companies, Amazon PMs are known to be absolute grinders. Amazon PMs (along with Amazon employees in general) are the only ones known to

consistently work 60 hour work weeks. Many work more. Tough as nails, Amazon PMs will persist a lot longer than others in impossible conditions.

While Amazon is not as selective as lower-ranked companies (partly due to the fact they are on a hiring binge), an Amazonian's grit is commendable and a big difference maker that edge Amazon PMs ahead of others.

Archetype: Navy Seal



Screenshot / Wikipedia

2. Facebook

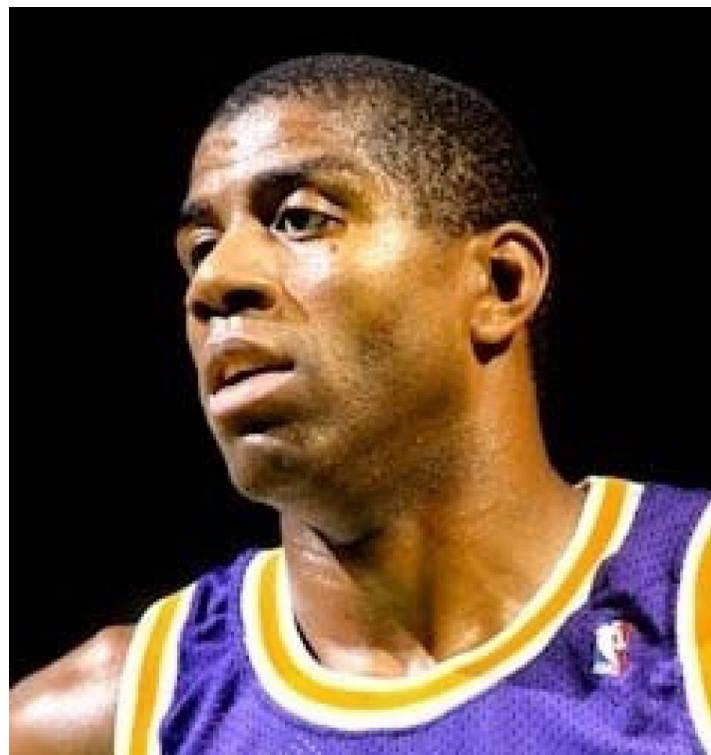
Facebook PMs, like Uber and LinkedIn PMs, are known to be well-rounded.

Unlike Amazon PMs, FB PMs are not known to be as gritty. Unlike Google PMs, most FB PMs don't have the leadership and technical chops of their PM counterparts at the Googleplex .

Despite that, being a Facebook employee is like being at Harvard. That is, joining Facebook will offer a network of

movers and shakers that you'll find valuable throughout your career, trailing Google's by just a tad.

Archetype: Harvardian



Screenshot / Steve Lipofsky

1. Google

Google PMs are more likely to have game-changing, moonshot product vision and be the most technical of the bunch.

They're also known for their incredible team leadership. They'll step up to take a firm leadership role, buy doughnuts and coffee, and even code if they must. But when all is well, they'll step away from the limelight and let the light naturally shine on the team.

Archetype: Magic Johnson

Why do some managers make it difficult for their full-time employees to switch jobs internally?

Managers are human and take it personally when someone wants to leave their team.

They may consider you to be disloyal. Related to this feeling of disloyalty, is a feeling that you may be ungrateful for what they've done for you.

Or they may view your departure as an embarrassment, that their inability to retain their employees an indictment of their poor management skills.

If you can, forgive your boss and your boss' behavior. Take the high ground, be professional (and not burn bridges), and move on.

Which company is the best for machine learning?



Screenshot / Wikipedia

Google.

Just imagine all the internal groups that rely on machine learning:

- Search
- Maps
- Ads
- Google Now
- Driverless cars
- Spam

- Fraud
- Image Search

Other companies may have a reasonable-sized machine learning team, but I'd have to say Google, more than any other company, culturally emphasizes machine learning (vs. rules or crowd-sourcing) as a solution to problems.

Google also seeks out AI talent more religiously than other companies. For example, Peter Norvig, the author of *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, is a director at Google.

What's Next

Thanks for reading! However, our journey doesn't end here. First and foremost, I'd love to hear from you. Please send questions, comments, typos, and edits to: lewis@impactinterview.com.

Next, I've got a couple of resources for you:

- To learn more about frameworks on how to answer popular product management questions, including product design, estimations, metrics, strategy, and technical, get my book *Decode and Conquer*. It includes detailed sample answers and candidate dialogue, which will help you see how other candidates approach the question.
- For 160+ practice questions, check out my book, *PM Interview Questions*. It includes sample answers for each question, along with a 30-day and 36-day study guides for Google and Amazon. You'll also learn how to adapt those guides for Facebook, Uber and interviews at other top companies.
- Practicing with partners is important; it'll help simulate interview day conditions. It'll also give you feedback and a different perspective on how you're approaching the interview. To find partners, sign up at bit.ly/PMInterviewGroup.