

A Guide to Facebook's RPM program by an RPM-Alumni

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Preface

Note: This is an UNOFFICIAL guide and does not represent the views of Facebook Inc. or Facebook's recruiting team.

Hey, I'm Will. In my final year of university, I was keen on applying to Facebook's [Rotational Product Manager](#) program. The one problem: I didn't know anyone at the company and hadn't done product manager interviews before. I spent hours Googling, practicing and reading books, guides and resources. Fortunately, I was able to get the job.

Recruitment for programs like RPM are very competitive. Given the massive demand for these roles, interview-prep companies are charging \$500+ for courses on how to get through the interviews. These courses are problematic because it gives an unfair advantage to people who can afford these premium resources.

Below, I'll share all the advice I wish I had when going through product management recruitment -- all for free. The goal of doing this is to "level the playing field" and make sure everyone has the knowledge they need to succeed.

I especially hope that this guide is helpful to people from **diverse backgrounds** — including underrepresented ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds and varying educational pedigree. We desperately need more people like you in the tech industry. Don't be discouraged because

you're not from school X, have experience at company Y or know skill Z. Please, please use this guide and apply to this program.

Alright, let's jump in.

Introduction

Facebook's Rotational Product Management (RPM) program is an 18-month program for people with less than one year of product management experience. RPMs have a chance to rotate through three different teams across the company over six-month periods.

As an RPM, you'll have a lot of support, including:

1. A manager to support your 18-month journey
2. Managers on each rotation to help you succeed in the day-to-day
3. A mentor to help you ramp up
4. A "circle" of other RPMs to crowdsource knowledge from
5. A broad alumni network (in and out of Facebook)
6. Program managers to support the program and your individual growth

I say this to highlight that you do not need to be an expert product manager on Day 1. You're expected to grow and learn as time goes on.

I started at Facebook as an RPM in the summer of 2019. I wrote about my [four-year journey to Facebook](#) and my [18-months as an RPM](#) in more detail if this is helpful.

The Application Process

How do I apply for the RPM Program

We hire RPMs once a year for two start dates in the following calendar year. There are five Facebook offices that support RPMs: Menlo Park, Seattle, New York City, London, and Tel Aviv. [Applications open on July 26th](#) on the [Facebook Careers](#) page. We encourage you to sign up for alerts there, so you are notified when applications go live.

Your application to the program will require a resume and responses to short answer questions. These questions will be emailed to the applicant automatically by CodeSignal after a resume is submitted through Facebook Careers. Applicants will have 24 hours to submit answers to the short response questions (estimated time to complete: 1 hour).

Application Timeline for 2022 Start Dates

- July 26, 2021: Applications available (all sites)
- July 30, 2021, at 5 PM PT: Application deadline for Menlo Park, Seattle, and New York City
- August 6, 2021, at 5 PM BT: Application deadline for London and Tel Aviv

Who is the ideal candidate?

RPMs are hired from various backgrounds. We look for people with full-time experience or recent graduates.

We actively seek applicants with no tech experience. RPM is suited for individuals completely new to the product manager (PM) function.

Individuals with more than one year of PM experience, including PM internships, should apply for Product Manager roles listed at Facebook Careers.

Frequently Asked Questions

There is a complete [list of FAQs](#) with the following questions on the RPM website:

- Who is the ideal candidate for the RPM program?
- How long is the RPM program?
- How is Product Management at Facebook different from other companies?
- What does a 'day in the life' of a Facebook RPM look like?
- What kind of mentorship is available to RPMs?
- What happens after the program?
- How do I apply to the RPM program?
- Is RPM a remote-eligible position?
- How can I prepare for the interview process?
- Is there anything else I should know about applying?

Here are some more FAQs that I'm often asked:

- 1. Do I need a technical background (i.e. do I need to code)?**
 - a. No. Many RPMs come from backgrounds in finance, marketing or consulting. That said, exposure to technology and engineering is always a bonus.
- 2. Would you recommend the program?**
 - a. 100%. I learned a ton in 18 months (and wrote about [my experience in detail](#) here).
- 3. Is this program only for recent graduates?**
 - o No. It's for people with little to no PM experience, including existing professionals or new graduates. In my year, roughly 75% of RPMs were experienced hires.
- 4. What are some example rotations?**

- a. Growth of Facebook Watch, Launching WhatsApp Payments in Brazil, AR Commerce features, Oculus VR experiences, Instagram Stories, Building Portal. Nearly every part of Facebook is accessible to RPMs.

Resume Advice

Now with the logistics out of the way, let me start sharing some advice.

Thousands of people apply for a limited number of interview spots. The best way to get an interview is to have a great resume.

I made hundreds of resumes during my job hunt. I've also read dozens of guides and articles on how to write the best one. I want to share my general philosophy on resumes and then more details on each section. Finally, I'll share my favourite article for making a killer resume.

Principles of a Great Resumes

Specific to the job: Every bullet point should be concrete and speak to your candidacy for the role. Remove filler or vague words (common culprits: "various," "managing," "impact"). Every word should speak to your qualifications for the specific role you're applying to.

Bad bullet point: *Managed various social media channels for a multinational firm by being proactive, hard-working and excellent at communication.*

Better bullet point: *Led team of 3 (2 marketers, 1 engineer) to execute a referral program for a SaaS project, leading to \$50,000 in new revenue and 120 new customers.*

Impact: Ideally, every bullet point should show the outcome you've created

Bad bullet point: *Led user research on our product*

Better bullet point: *Synthesized qualitative user research from 23 usability tests into actionable tickets in Visual Studio; worked with engineers to improve the user experience and confirm the build meets the user specifications.*

Simple: Please, please, please just choose a simple resume template. No fancy graphics, colours or multiple columns are necessary. The goal of your resume's style is to be easily readable. You will not get "bonus points" for cool logos or visuals.

Here's a simple resume [template](#).

Sections

My suggestion would be to have five sections: **Header, Experience, Education, Projects and Skills.**

A Note on the 'Summary' section

Some people like to include a summary section. My advice is only to include this section if you have significant experience in a field very different from product management.

Bad summary section: *10+ years experience managing teams, leading product development and creating business impact.*

- Why is this bad? Because it's redundant with your experience section.

Better summary section: *I'm a Ph.D. physicist who is fascinated with consumer behaviour. I'm looking to apply my rigorous academic background to the world of product management.*

- Why is this better? If your resume is made specific to the job, many of your experiences as a Ph.D. physicist will not be on your resume. This summary also creates a strong, memorable narrative for your experiences.

Header

Your name, email address and phone number are the essential information.

- Social profiles (ex. link to Twitter, LinkedIn or Github): include these if you're incredibly proud of the content on them. Most recruiters won't check these but interviewers later in the process might.
- Location: Resume best practices say that you should include this.

Style: Make your name legible and slightly larger than your header titles.

Experience

This is the most critical section in the resume. My main suggestion would be to follow this excellent guide from a former Google Recruiter: [How to Wow Recruiters With Your Resume](#).

In addition to that guide, here are some tips that I would add:

- **Each bullet point should tie to one of the responsibilities of a PM.** These include leadership, design, working with engineers, project management, data analysis and communication.
- **Every single point should be relevant.** If an experience isn't relevant, take it off your resume. This may feel painful, but it helps to strengthen your resume.
- **Fill in the gaps with side projects.** You may notice some gaps in your skillsets and experiences. Note these down and aim to fill them in with projects (more on this below).

Education

My main advice: keep it simple. You won't get hired because of your academic background. Education should go under your experience section unless you went to a very recognizable university (ex. Stanford, Oxford).

Use the education section to highlight the points from your degree that are most relevant to the role. Again, remove irrelevant information.

Example Education Section:

The University of Melbourne, Bachelor of Arts (Economics)

- Courses Include: Python Programming, Cost-Benefit Analysis, Design Thinking
- Extracurricular: 2015 Campus hackathon winner, mentor for Girls Who Code

Projects

I'm a huge believer in projects. These are things you do outside of your day job or core curriculum to advance your interests. On a resume, they are a great way to fill in your skills gap. My general philosophy: [build the experiences you need](#).

I was an economics undergraduate with work experience in user experience design and analytics. The glaring gap in my product management resume was a lack of technical expertise (ex. working with engineers). I used the projects section to highlight three projects I worked on with engineers at hackathons. Here's one of those bullet points:

Tumblr HackDay – Led a team of 3 (2 engineers, 1 data scientist) to build a new Tumblr mobile interface for casual users; won 4th place across the entire company (40+ competing teams)

Skills [Optional]

This is a section to list out the tools and skills that you're proficient in. Use this to highlight [relevant skills](#) (ex. Python, Figma) and not generic ones (ex. Microsoft Word, hard-working).

Interview Overview

There are three stages of the interview:

1. Phase 1: Phone Screen
2. Phase 2: Video Call Screens - Execution and Product Sense
3. Phase 3: "Onsite" Loop (will be VC because of COVID) - Execution, Product Sense and Leadership and Drive

The good thing about this interview process is that there are many resources to succeed. Googling will lead you to example questions, resources and mock interview videos. Some of the resources are expensive, though, making them inaccessible to others.

I paid for two resources while preparing for my interviews: [Decode & Conquer](#) by Lewis Lin and [Cracking the PM Interview](#) by Jackie Bavaro. Both shared helpful frameworks for the interviews and were significantly less expensive than the \$500 courses others charged. Pair this with extensive Googling for free advice and example interview questions, and you should be good.

Here's my advice for specific interview stages:

Phone Screen

The goal of the phone screen is to do a non-technical screen of your candidacy. In my mind, they are looking for two main things: communication skills and alignment with the job description criteria.

Communication skills: This is the most critical part of the interviewing process. If you can practice one thing, I'd prioritize your communication. Strong communication means three things:

1. Structured
2. Concise
3. The ability to tell stories

Excellent communication is out of scope for this guide. I'd suggest looking at more resources to develop this skill set. Here is one course that I've heard positive things about (with a two-month free trial to Skillshare): [Communication Skills: Become More Clear, Concise, & Confident](#).

A recruiter may assess your communication skills by asking open-ended questions like "Tell me about yourself" or "Tell me about a project you're proud of."

Alignment with job criteria: Just as your resume aims to qualify you for every part of the job description, recruiters may look to confirm that you meet the job requirements in the phone

screen. For example, if you lack design experience, anticipate questions like “What’s your favourite product and why?”

Execution Interviews

Key question of the interview: how do you prioritize and make decisions involving metrics?

Example question: *You’re the PM for Instagram Stories. What’s your North Star metric?*

A fellow Facebook PM wrote a great guide on [how to prepare for the Execution interview](#). Rather than rehash it, I suggest you lean on his advice. Here’s a screenshot of the framework he suggests:

1. **Clarify:** understand what is the tradeoff, the status quo experience, which regions are you planning to make the change in, what population will be exposed to the change and why.
2. **Product and company mission:** state your understanding of the mission of the product and how that furthers the company wide mission.
3. **Goal:** state the goal that the tradeoff is optimizing for. For e.g. For FB Newsfeed we should prioritize content that is relevant for the user as measured by user engagement on the feed and with the posts.
4. **Key users & stakeholders:** who are the internal (such as cross functional teams) and users (such as advertisers and consumers) that will be impacted by this decision.
5. **Pros and cons:** assume you go all in with both the paths (one at a time), what will be the pros and cons of each.
6. **Experiment design:** layout your [strong hypothesis](#) and the population (such as users with more than the mean number of friends) you plan to test with.
7. **Decision framework:** create a framework with the top line and [counter metrics](#). Think of metrics in terms of buckets (e.g. advertisers, users, performance). Learn more about defining good metrics [here](#).
8. **Tradeoff table:** prioritize the key metrics and state your hypothesis of how those metrics would move for the population that you picked, and what would be your expected decision based on that
9. **Summarize**

Product Sense

Key question of the interview: How do you take an ambiguous problem space and turn it into a creative solution?

Example question: *You’re the PM for Facebook Dating. What do you build next?*

As an interviewer, I can share that we’re looking for people who can set a strong product mission/vision, define the right audience to build for and prioritize the right solution to build for this audience.

I prepared for this interview in two ways:

1. **Reading [Decode & Conquer](#).** This is a helpful book that shares a useful framework for tackling these types of problems. If you're at the interview stage, it is a must-read. That said, do not over-rely on this framework as 99% of other candidates are also applying the same framework. Think of ways to expand on the initial framework.
2. **Creating practice questions by going through the Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp apps.** I would literally open the app, find a section of the product and then try a product sense question. For example, I'd open Facebook, see the Marketplace tab and then ask myself, "You're the PM for Marketplace. What do I build next?". This will help you learn the apps and practice applying your process in new situations.

Here's an [example product sense interview](#).

Leadership and Drive

This interview tests a candidate's ability to support, build and lead their team. Again, I'll share a resource from a Facebook PM who has shared the [best way to succeed](#) in this interview.

Best Practices and Tips

Perfect the resume first: Don't worry about interviews until you're 100% confident in your resume.

Get people to review your resume: Ask friends, mentors, professional contacts, recruiters or other product managers to give you critical feedback.

Define your narrative: Concisely explain your background in a narrative format. This will be deployed multiple times during the interview process. Here's how I do mine:

- Hey there, I'm Will. I'm a product manager at Facebook working on gaming monetization. Before this, I was a PM on a few other products like WhatsApp Payments, Watch and Memorialization. Before coming to Facebook, I studied Economics at university. I'm a writer and am excited by the creator economy and international money movement.

Not every experience is relevant: I was proud of an experience I had in high school and thought I would always have it on my resume. But mid-way through my university experience, it no longer became relevant to the jobs I was applying to. I made the hard decision to take it off my resume and prioritize some of my internship experience. This made my overall resume much stronger and cleaner.

Not all of your experience will be relevant to being an RPM. You have two choices in this situation: Remove it from your resume or adjust your experience to make it directly tied to the job description (see [here](#) on how to do that).

Your background gets you to the interview; performance gets you the job: This was my mantra during interview prep. If you pass the phone screen, it's all about how well you do on the problems in the interview. This was comforting for me during the interview process.

Practice, practice, practice. When I had my interviews scheduled, I was practicing for ~5 hours a day. Regardless of how awesome you are, you can always benefit from more practice!

Apply to multiple programs: While this guide was specific to Facebook's Rotational PM program, I'd encourage you to also apply to other similar programs at places like Uber, Google and Twitter. It's common to interview for all of them and join the one that is the best fit (and gives you an offer, of course).

The RPM Experience

In this section, I want to share my background before entering RPM and some details on my experience in the program. The goal is to show that 1) people from very different backgrounds can enter the program, 2) the program is worth the effort put into the recruiting process!

My background before entering RPM

1. Studied Economics at a university in Canada (non-target for Facebook recruiting). An average student involved in entrepreneurship extracurriculars.
2. Internships at Microsoft as a User Experience Designer, Tumblr as a Business Analyst, a startup called Siftly as a Growth Intern and a final one as a business operations intern at an ad-tech company in China.
3. I went to a few hackathons, worked on a side project with local entrepreneurs and wrote content online.

If you want more details, I deep dive into [my background and four-year journey to Facebook](#).

My RPM Experience

I loved my experience as an RPM. I joined a cohort that was a 50/50 split of recent graduates and experienced hires. My rotations were:

1. Supporting the Bereaved/Profile Memorialization
2. Watch Growth
3. Launching WhatsApp Payments in Brazil

If you want more details, I did a deep dive into my [18 months as an RPM](#).

Closing Thoughts

Above are all of the tips I would give someone in a coffee chat about the RPM program, applications and interviews. I hope they are helpful.

The final tip I want to share: apply. You can't get the job (or any jobs for that matter) if you don't apply. Don't disqualify yourself because you feel like you don't belong in this program or tech in general.

Please do share this guide with anyone else who may find it valuable. Especially consider diverse people in your networks who may benefit from this advice.

Good luck with the applications.

P.S. Feel free to stay connected on [Twitter](#). I also share weekly lessons, tips and stories for thousands of product managers in my [weekly newsletter](#). Subscribe if that sounds useful!