Informational Interview Prep Examples

**Josh Tatum – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
23 January 2025**

**Call with Josh Tatum**

**Goals for call:**

* Communicate my background/experience, the types of roles/companies I’m interested in
* See if he’d be willing to connect me with any companies in the StoryHouse portfolio
* What do startup founders look for in new hires that might be different from more established companies

**Josh’s Background:**

* StoryHouse Ventures Co-Founder
* CMC Grad
* Grew up outside of Chicago
* Apple Corp. Fin.
* Dodgers Project Manager

**Companies I’m interested in:**

* Parakeet Health
* Terra AI
* Living Carbon
* Cisco
* Doximity
* Fastbreak.AI

**Elevator Pitch:**

"Hi, I’m William DeForest, and I recently earned my MS in Applied Data Science from the University of Chicago, building on my Economics degree from Claremont McKenna. During my academic and professional journey, I’ve worked on diverse projects that combine data science and strategic problem-solving—like developing machine learning models to support player development with the Arizona Diamondbacks and improving supply chain analytics and automation at Lumentum.

Beyond honing my technical skills, I’ve discovered that I’m most energized by roles where I can work on products that have a meaningful mission—whether that’s improving people’s lives or benefiting the planet. I thrive when I’m able to contribute across multiple dimensions of a product’s lifecycle, from coding and data analysis to marketing, business strategy, and everything in between. My experience as a two-time college baseball captain taught me how to bring people together, align diverse priorities, and drive towards impactful outcomes.

I’m especially drawn to startups and innovative teams like those in StoryHouse’s portfolio, where I could work on mission-driven AI applications that solve real-world problems. While I’m early in my career, I bring enthusiasm, adaptability, and a strong foundation in data science, and I’m eager to contribute and grow. I’d love to hear your advice on positioning myself for these kinds of opportunities and how I can best align with the needs of innovative teams."

**Questions:**

**Career Path**

* I’m drawn to startups because of the wider range of types of work I could get to do, but I’ve noticed that a lot of the startup founders seem to have begun their career at a big company. Following a similar path yourself—from working at Apple and with the Dodgers to co-founding StoryHouse Ventures – what are your thoughts on the tradeoffs of beginning a career at a startup versus a large, established company?
* “What advice would you give someone early in their career who wants to eventually work in leadership roles at mission-driven startups? Are there specific experiences or skills I should focus on building?”

**Skills**

* What do startup founders look for in new hires that might be different from more established companies?
* “What do you think are the most important skills or traits that early-career professionals should bring to a startup environment?”
* “How do startups like those in the StoryHouse portfolio balance the need for technical expertise with the need for people who can contribute to business strategy and operations? Do you see hybrid roles becoming more common?”

**Startups**

* “What do you think makes the startups in your portfolio stand out?”
* For startups in your portfolio, like Parakeet Health or Terra AI, what stage are they at in their growth? Do you think they’re open to early-career professionals who are eager to grow alongside them?”

**Jennifer Liang – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/13/2025**

**Notes from Call with Jennifer Liang**

**Goals:**

* Reconnect with Jennifer, be friendly and forge a good rapport
* Learn about her experience as a cloud technical resident
* Learn more about the application process and any advice she'd have for preparing
* Learn about other recent grad positions she knows of at Google (APM)
* If there are other people she'd recommend I talk to

**Conversation Structure & Approach**

**Warm Introduction & Reconnection (~5 min)**

* Express appreciation for Jennifer’s time and remind her of your previous interaction.
* Reintroduce yourself and provide a quick update on what you’ve been up to.
* Set the tone by expressing your interest in learning about her career path and any advice she has.

**Deep Dive into the Cloud Technical Residency (~10-15 min)**

* Learn about her experience in the program and her transition into her current role.
* Ask about the application and interview process.
* Seek her advice on how to best prepare and stand out as a candidate.

**Exploring Other Early-Career Opportunities at Google (~5-10 min)**

* Inquire about other roles at Google that might align with your interests (e.g., APM, data roles).
* See if she has recommendations for who else you should speak with.

**Closing the Conversation (~5 min)**

* Express gratitude.
* Ask about staying in touch.
* If applicable, ask if she’d be open to reviewing your resume or providing a referral.

**Opening the Call**

\*"Hey Jennifer! Thanks so much for taking the time to chat with me—I really appreciate it. I really enjoyed your presentation last year when you spoke to the UChicago cohort about your experience as a Cloud Technical Resident. It was one of the things that put the program on my radar, and now that I’m applying this year, I wanted to reach out to learn more from you directly.

A quick update on me: I recently graduated from UChicago’s MS in Applied Data Science program. Since we last spoke, I’ve been working on projects related to AI applications and data-driven decision-making, and I’m really interested in roles that combine technical problem-solving with business impact—so Google’s CTR program and roles like Customer Engineer are very appealing to me.

I’d love to hear more about your experience in the program and any advice you have for someone preparing to apply. And of course, I’d love to reconnect and hear how things have been going for you since we last spoke!"\*

**Questions:**

**Cloud Technical Residency (CTR) Experience**

* Can you share more about your experience in the Cloud Technical Residency program? What were the biggest takeaways or skills you developed?
* What did you find most surprising about the role? Was there anything you didn’t expect going in?
* What aspects of the CTR program best prepared you for your transition into a Customer Engineer role?
* How did the program help with career mobility within Google? Did you have opportunities to explore different teams or projects?
* What do you think makes someone a strong fit for the CTR program?

**Application Process & Interview Advice**

* What was the interview process like when you applied? Are there any key skills or topics I should be focusing on to prepare?
* For the technical screening, do you have any recommendations on what to review or practice?
* For the whiteboarding and demo presentation component, what do you think makes a strong impression?
* How much weight do they place on leadership and communication skills in the hiring process?
* If you were applying again today, is there anything you’d do differently in your preparation?

**Exploring Google’s Early-Career Roles**

* Beyond the CTR program, are there other early-career roles at Google that you think I should consider? I’m particularly interested in roles that combine AI, data, and business strategy—do you think a Customer Engineer, APM, or something else might be a good fit?
* How does Google support early-career employees in developing their skills and moving between roles?
* Do you know if Google is currently hiring for recent graduates outside of the CTR program?

**Networking & Additional Recommendations**

* Are there other Googlers—especially former CTRs—you’d recommend I reach out to?
* Do you have any advice on making the most of networking at Google, even before applying?
* Would you be open to staying in touch as I go through the process?

**Closing the Call**

\*"This has been incredibly helpful, Jennifer—I really appreciate you taking the time to chat with me. It’s been great reconnecting and hearing about your journey at Google.

If you have any last-minute advice as I prepare my application, I’d love to hear it! Also, if you think of anyone else I should reach out to, I’d be grateful for any recommendations.

Would you be open to staying in touch as I go through the process? And if it’s not too much trouble, would you be willing to review my resume or provide any insights on how to make it stand out?"\*

**Ilana Zimmerman – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
3/4/2025**

**Notes from Call with Ilana Zimmerman (Meta)**

**Informational Interview Prep Guide**

**Call with Ilana Zimmerman  
Program Manager | Trust & Safety Operations | Meta**

**Goals for the Conversation**

* Understand what a Program Manager at Meta does and how it compares to Technical Program Managers, Data Scientists, and Product Managers.
* Learn about Ilana’s career journey and how she transitioned across roles and companies.
* Gain insight into Meta’s work culture and how it compares to her previous roles at Whole Foods and Southwest Airlines.
* Learn about entry-level opportunities at Meta, including roles that might be a good fit for you and the hiring process.
* Specifically, gather insights on Meta’s Rotational Product Manager (RPM) program, as Andy Moore mentioned she might know about it.
* Get advice on how to best prepare for applying to Meta.

**Conversation Flow**

1. **Introduction & Icebreaker (5 min)**
   * Thank her for taking the time to chat.
   * Establish a mutual connection: “Andy spoke highly of you and mentioned you might have great insights into program management at Meta. I really appreciate the opportunity to learn from your experience.”
   * Light, friendly question to start: “How’s your day going?” or “I saw you’ve been at Meta for a while now—how has your role evolved over time?”
2. **About Her Career Journey (10 min)**
   * “You’ve worked in a few different industries—airlines, retail, and now big tech. How did you navigate these transitions?”
   * “What made you interested in program management, and how did you land your role at Meta?”
   * “What do you enjoy most about being a Program Manager? Are there aspects that surprised you?”
   * “How would you compare working at Meta versus your previous companies like Whole Foods and Southwest Airlines?”
3. **Understanding the Program Manager Role (10 min)**
   * “Could you walk me through what a typical day looks like for a Program Manager at Meta?”
   * “How does your role compare to other similar roles, like Technical Program Managers, Product Managers, or Data Scientists?”
   * “What are the key skills and strengths that make someone successful in this role?”
   * “Do you find that program managers need to be technical, or is the focus more on strategy and coordination?”
4. **Meta’s Work Culture & Career Growth (10 min)**
   * “Meta is known for its fast-paced, high-impact culture. What’s been your experience with it?”
   * “How does Meta support career development and internal mobility?”
   * “Are there common traits among people who thrive at Meta?”
   * “What’s something people might not expect about working at Meta?”
5. **Entry-Level Opportunities at Meta (10 min)**
   * “I’m exploring opportunities where I can bridge data, business, and product strategy. Based on my background, do you think there are particular roles at Meta I should look into?”
   * “Do you know anything about the hiring process for entry-level roles at Meta?”
6. **Wrapping Up (5 min)**
   * Express appreciation and ask if it’s okay to stay in touch.
   * Optionally, inquire about further contacts or advice.

**About Me (Short Introduction)**  
"Hi Ilana, thanks again for taking the time to chat! A little bit about me—I recently earned my Master’s in Applied Data Science from UChicago, building on my Economics degree from Claremont McKenna. My background is in data science, analytics, and product strategy, and I’m particularly interested in roles that combine business impact with technical problem-solving. I’ve worked on projects ranging from supply chain analytics to AI-powered chatbots, and I thrive in environments where I can work cross-functionally and drive meaningful impact. I’m currently exploring career opportunities at the intersection of data, strategy, and product—and I’d love to hear your perspective on how program management fits into that picture."

**Thoughtful Questions to Ask**

* Career Path & Role at Meta
  + “What attracted you to program management over other roles like product management or data science?”
  + “What skills from your past roles at Whole Foods and Southwest Airlines have been most valuable at Meta?”
  + “How does working at Meta compare to working in retail and aviation?”
* Program Management vs. Other Roles
  + “How does a Program Manager collaborate with engineers, data scientists, and product managers at Meta?”
  + “What kinds of challenges do you solve in your day-to-day work?”
  + “What’s the most rewarding part of being a Program Manager at Meta?”
* Meta’s Culture & Hiring Process
  + “Are there any specific skills or experiences Meta looks for in early-career candidates?”
  + “What advice would you give to someone applying for an entry-level role at Meta?”
  + “What can you tell me about the Rotational Product Manager (RPM) program?”
* Final Advice
  + “What’s one piece of advice you’d give to someone looking to break into Meta?”
  + “Would you be open to staying in touch as I continue my job search?”

**Daniel Landa – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/11/2025**

**Call with Daniel Landa – Enterprise Technical Lead at Palantir**

**Goals for the Call**

* Understand his role at Palantir – What does an Enterprise Technical Lead do? How does his work differ from when he was a Forward Deployed Engineer?
* Learn about hiring at Palantir – How do job applications work? What do they look for in candidates?
* Gain technical interview insights – What does the technical portion of the interview process involve?
* Understand staffing on projects – How does Palantir assign employees to projects? How much flexibility is there?
* Learn about his career path – How did he transition from baseball analytics to Palantir? What skills and experiences were most valuable?
* Get other advice on networking, standing out as a candidate, and positioning for success at Palantir.

**Your Elevator Pitch**

"Hey Daniel, I really appreciate you taking the time to chat. A little about me—I recently earned my MS in Applied Data Science from the University of Chicago, building on my Economics degree from Claremont McKenna. My background spans analytics, machine learning, and product-focused problem-solving, from working in supply chain analytics at Lumentum to baseball analytics with the Arizona Diamondbacks. I’m really interested in Palantir because of its focus on solving high-impact problems with data and software. Given your experience transitioning from baseball analytics to Palantir, I’d love to hear about your journey, what working at Palantir is like, and any insights you have on the hiring process and interviews."

**Tailored Questions**

* **Transitioning from Baseball Analytics to Palantir**
  + What skills from your experience in baseball analytics translated well to Palantir?
  + Were there unexpected challenges in shifting from sports analytics to a company like Palantir?
  + What would you emphasize for someone coming from a sports/data background looking to break into Palantir?
* **Understanding Your Role at Palantir**
  + Could you walk me through your role as an Enterprise Technical Lead? How has it evolved from being a Forward Deployed Engineer?
  + How technical is your day-to-day work? What balance exists between coding and business-facing work?
  + What kinds of projects do you work on, and how do they impact clients?
* **Staffing and Project Assignments**
  + How does Palantir decide which projects employees work on?
  + Do employees have any say in the types of industries or problems they focus on?
  + How often do team switches occur?
* **Palantir’s Culture and Interview Process**
  + What do you like most about working at Palantir, and what challenges have you encountered?
  + Could you share insights into the hiring and technical interview process?
  + Looking back, what advice would you have for someone trying to break into a role at Palantir?
* **Closing Thoughts**
  + Is there anything you wish you had known before joining Palantir?
  + Are there any additional contacts you’d recommend for further insights?

**Cindy Lay – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/21/2025**

**Notes from coffee with Cindy Lay**

**Goals:**

* Catch up with Cindy and learn about her life in Seattle.
* Discover her experience as a PM at Microsoft on the OneDrive and SharePoint teams.
* Understand her job search and interview experience, including insights into roles and preparation.

**Goals for the Chat**

* **Catch Up & Personal Connection:**
  + How has she been? What’s life like in Seattle?
  + Any mutual CMC connections nearby?
  + How was her recent time with her sister?
* **Learn About Her Role as a PM at Microsoft:**
  + What does her day-to-day look like on the OneDrive & SharePoint teams?
  + What skills are most important in her role?
  + What are the pros and cons of her position?
* **Gain Insights Into Her Job Search & Interview Experience:**
  + How did she decide on product management?
  + What was her job search process like?
  + What did her interviews look like and when did they occur?
  + Differences in role titles (Product Manager, Business Development Manager, Technical Program Manager, Solution Architect)

**Conversation Structure & Talking Points**

1. **Warm-Up & Personal Connection (5-10 min)**
   * Casual catch-up about life in Seattle and reconnecting with CMC friends.
2. **About Me (Tailored for Cindy) (5 min)**
   * Brief introduction highlighting your background in data science, analytics, and product strategy.
3. **Questions for Cindy**
   * **Career Transition:**
     + When and how did she decide to pursue product management?
     + What other roles did she consider?
   * **Life as a PM at Microsoft:**
     + Describe her typical day and team interactions.
     + What does she enjoy most and find most challenging?
   * **Job Search & Interview Insights:**
     + What was Microsoft’s interview process like for PMs?
     + How did she prepare for interviews, and what frameworks or resources did she use?
   * **PM Career Advice & Positioning:**
     + What differentiates top PMs?
     + How might someone from a data analytics background best position themselves for a PM role?
4. **Closing the Chat**
   * Express gratitude and ask about staying in touch and possible referrals.

**Caroline Evans – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/7/2025**

**Notes from Call with Caroline Evans**

**Goals:**

* Understand different roles at Palantir (e.g., SWE, deployment strategists, forward-deployed engineers).
* Learn about the nature of projects and work at Palantir, particularly in federal health/government.
* Gain insights into company culture, day-to-day work, and the interview/hiring process.
* Explore career progression and whether Palantir could be a good fit for you.
* Expand your professional network for future opportunities.

**Background Research**

*(Section reserved for any pre-call research notes.)*

**Questions:**

* **Understanding Roles at Palantir:**
  + Can you explain the differences between the roles (SWE, deployment strategists, FDE)?
  + What does a typical day look like for a SWE at Palantir?
  + How directly do engineers work with customers versus internal teams?
* **Nature of Work & Projects:**
  + How are projects assigned and is there flexibility?
  + Could you describe an impactful or exciting project you’ve worked on?
  + What balance is there between coding, system design, and other activities?
* **Palantir Culture & Work-Life Balance:**
  + What is the company culture like compared to other places?
  + What are the benefits and challenges of working at Palantir?
  + How are career development and mentorship opportunities structured?
* **Hiring & Interview Process:**
  + What was your interview process like and what should candidates focus on?
  + How does Palantir evaluate candidates beyond technical skills?
  + Any advice for someone interested in applying?
* **Personal Reflections & Advice:**
  + Looking back, what do you wish you’d known before joining?
  + Are there any additional resources or contacts you recommend?

**Andy Moore – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
29 January 2025**

**Coffee Chat with Andy Moore**

**Andy’s Background:**

* UChi math and econ class of 2014
* Experience as a strategy and profitability analyst, customer insight, decision scientist (Facebook, Noom, Opendoor)

**Goals for Chat:**

* Learn more about his role as a Decision Scientist at Opendoor.
* Understand how his role differs from a data scientist.
* Gain insight into the data and technology driving Opendoor’s home price models.
* Discuss his career path and what he liked or didn’t like about his previous positions.
* Identify the key skills a new hire should demonstrate today.
* Explore what entry-level roles are available at Opendoor and any additional networking contacts he suggests.

**Talking Points on My Side:**

* InternationAlly project, Washington Holdings internship, GEM internship
* Long-time interest in real estate (especially in Seattle)
* UChicago experience and Seattle living

**Questions:**

* **Personal/Warmup:**
  + Ask about his experience in Seattle, local coffee shops, and his travel habits.
* **Career Path:**
  + Discuss his journey to becoming a Decision Scientist at Opendoor and the differences between data science and decision science.
  + Explore how his previous roles helped transition into real estate analytics.
* **Opendoor & the Real Estate Industry:**
  + What projects do decision scientists typically work on?
  + What types of data drive the home price estimation models?
  + How is AI being integrated at Opendoor?
* **Early Career Job Advice:**
  + What advice would he give his younger self?
  + How should one identify and target the right path among many options in data/tech?
  + What skills or experiences would help stand out for entry-level roles?
* **Additional Networking:**
  + Would he be open to introducing you to others in the field?

**Brian Trost – Interview Prep Guide**

**Interview Prep Guide – Call with Brian Trost (Instagram)  
Date: February 28, 2025  
Contact: Brian Trost, Senior Data Scientist at Instagram  
Mutual Connection: Andy Moore**

**Goals for the Call:**

* Gain insights into data science at Instagram including projects, team structure, and methodologies.
* Understand Instagram’s culture and its integration with Meta.
* Learn about hiring processes and career paths at Instagram and Meta.
* Expand your professional network for future opportunities.

**Recommended Structure for the Conversation**

1. **Opening & Introduction (5 min):**
   * Thank him and mention your mutual connection (Andy Moore).
   * Briefly introduce yourself, highlighting your background in Economics and Applied Data Science and your experience with machine learning, analytics, and automation.
2. **Learning About His Role & Instagram’s Data Science Work (10-15 min):**
   * Ask about his background and how his role at Instagram has evolved.
   * Inquire about a typical day, projects, and the impact of data science on product strategy.
   * Discuss the tools, models, and methodologies used by his team.
3. **Hiring, Recruiting & Career Growth (10-15 min):**
   * What entry-level roles does Instagram hire for?
   * Ask about the typical interview process and recruiting periods.
   * Inquire about career growth and internal mobility.
4. **Closing & Next Steps (5 min):**
   * Ask for any final advice, additional resources, or further networking contacts.
   * Express gratitude and willingness to stay in touch.

**Andrew Percival – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/21/2025**

**Notes from coffee with Andrew Percival**

**Goals:**

* Learn more about product management at PitchBook – understand the types of products, company structure, and PM responsibilities.
* Hear about Andrew’s experience at PitchBook and his career transition from baseball.
* Get insights into how your skills align with PM roles and advice on positioning yourself.
* Explore the possibility of a referral for the Product Manager I role recently posted.

**Conversation Structure & Talking Points**

1. **Warm-Up & Personal Connection (5-10 min):**
   * Thank him and mention the mutual connection (your high school coach).
   * Bring up baseball and his transition from that industry.
2. **About Me (Tailored for Andrew):**
   * Introduce yourself, mentioning your recent MS in Applied Data Science, your background in Economics, and your experience in data analytics, business strategy, and product thinking.
3. **Questions for Andrew:**
   * **Career Path & Transition:**
     + Ask about his nearly decade-long experience in baseball and what motivated his switch to PitchBook.
     + How did his experience in baseball analytics prepare him for product management?
   * **Product Management at PitchBook:**
     + What does product management look like at PitchBook?
     + How are teams structured, and what kinds of data products are built?
     + What challenges do PMs face, and how do they collaborate with data scientists, engineers, and business stakeholders?
   * **PM Role & Positioning:**
     + What differentiates successful PMs at PitchBook?
     + How might someone with a data analytics and AI background best position themselves for a PM role?
   * **Hiring Process & Referral:**
     + Insights into the open Product Manager I role and whether your background fits.
     + Ask if he’d be willing to refer you or offer guidance on the application process.
4. **Closing the Chat:**
   * Thank him for his insights and express your desire to keep in touch, along with any next steps regarding the referral.

**Robbie Ostrow – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/11/2025**

**Call with Robbie Ostrow**

**Goals:**

* Understand Robbie’s journey: How he got to OpenAI and what advice he has for someone looking to follow a similar path.
* Learn about hiring trends at OpenAI, especially for non-PhD, non-engineering roles.
* Get guidance on career positioning: What skills, experiences, and paths could help make an attractive candidate for OpenAI in the future?
* Explore potential introductions to other OpenAI employees who are earlier in their careers.

**Questions:**

1. **Robbie’s Career Path & OpenAI Experience**
   * Can you walk me through your career path? What led you to OpenAI?
   * I noticed you worked at Vanta—what drew you there, and how did that experience shape your journey?
   * What does your current role at OpenAI involve? Which team are you on and what kinds of projects do you work on?
   * How would you describe OpenAI’s culture and the day-to-day work environment?
2. **OpenAI Hiring & Non-Technical Opportunities**
   * OpenAI is renowned for hiring top-tier AI researchers and engineers, but are there opportunities for people with a mix of data science, business, and product experience?
   * Are there roles at OpenAI that don’t require a PhD or deep ML research experience (for example, forward deployed engineer or solution architect roles)?
   * What skills or backgrounds does OpenAI look for in non-engineering positions?
3. **Positioning Yourself for OpenAI in the Future**
   * If I wanted to work at OpenAI in 3–5 years, what experiences or skills should I focus on?
   * Do you think OpenAI values startup experience, or is experience at a larger AI company more beneficial?
   * Are there specific projects or contributions that could help a candidate stand out?
4. **Connections & Next Steps**
   * Do you know of any younger OpenAI employees who might be open to chatting about their career paths—perhaps in FDE or SA roles?
   * If I’m not actively applying right now, what’s the best way to stay engaged with OpenAI (e.g., research, open-source contributions, networking)?
   * Any final advice you’d give to someone interested in breaking into OpenAI in the future?

**About Me:**  
"I recently graduated with a Master’s in Applied Data Science from UChicago, where I worked on projects in machine learning, NLP, and AI-driven analytics. Right now, I’m exploring roles in data science, AI-driven product management, or analytics—ideally in a company where AI is a core focus. While I don’t have a pure engineering background, I’m really interested in how AI is built, deployed, and used in business applications."

**5-Year Goal:**  
To be an AI product manager.

**Wrap Up:**

* Thank him for his time: "This has been super helpful, Robbie—I really appreciate you sharing your insights."
* Express interest in staying connected: "If anything ever comes up at OpenAI that might be a good fit for someone like me, I’d love to stay connected. Also, if you know of anyone else I should talk to, I’d be grateful for any introductions."

**Michael Bronsdon – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/24/2025**

**Notes from Call with Michael Bronsdon – former Microsoft and Adobe (friends with Jon Evans)**

**Coffee Chat Prep: Michael Bronsdon**

**Goals for the Call:**

* Build a connection with Michael and learn from his career experiences at Microsoft and Adobe.
* Gain insights into product management, sales enablement, and GTM (go-to-market) strategy in the tech industry.
* Seek advice on career navigation, leadership development, and positioning for roles in tech and AI-driven companies.
* Explore opportunities for mentorship or future networking connections.
* Understand the biggest challenges and key projects at Adobe and Microsoft.
* Identify potential contacts at Microsoft or Adobe, particularly in AI or customer success teams.
* Learn about hiring processes at both companies and potential openings.
* Explore connections in other tech or consulting firms in the Seattle area.

**About Me (For Introduction):**  
"Hi Michael, thanks for taking the time to chat with me. I really appreciate the opportunity to learn from your experience. A little about me—I recently earned my Master’s in Applied Data Science from the University of Chicago, building on my Economics degree from Claremont McKenna. I’m interested in leveraging data science to drive business strategy and product growth, particularly in the tech space. I’ve worked on projects ranging from AI-driven chatbots to supply chain analytics, and I’m currently exploring career paths where I can apply both technical and strategic thinking. Given your experience in product management, sales enablement, and GTM strategy, I’d love to hear your insights on how best to navigate the tech landscape, especially for someone early in their career."

**Structure of the Call:**

1. **Warm-Up & Personal Connection**
   * "How has your year been so far? What have you been up to lately?"
   * "I saw that you’re involved with the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum—how did you get into that?"
   * "I noticed you’re a mentor at UW Foster. What do you enjoy most about mentoring?"
2. **Career & Industry Insights**
   * "You’ve had a long career in product management, sales enablement, and GTM strategy. What drew you to these areas?"
   * "What were some of the biggest lessons you learned from your time at Microsoft and Adobe?"
   * "How do you see the tech industry evolving, particularly in terms of AI and cloud-based business models?"
   * "From your perspective, what are the biggest challenges Adobe and Microsoft are currently facing? Are there any key projects they are focusing on?"
   * "What are some common needs or skill gaps at Adobe or Microsoft that you’ve observed?"
3. **Advice for Early-Career Professionals**
   * "For someone with a background in data science and business, what roles offer the best learning opportunities?"
   * "What differentiates people who succeed in tech leadership from those who struggle?"
   * "Do you think starting at a large tech company is a good foundation before exploring startups, or would you recommend diving into an early-stage company?"
   * "What advice would you give for someone trying to break into AI-related roles at companies like Adobe or Microsoft?"
4. **Networking & Hiring Insights**
   * "Do you have any contacts at Microsoft or Adobe, particularly in AI or customer success teams, who might be open to a conversation?"
   * "How does hiring typically work at Microsoft and Adobe? Are there any trends or strategies that might help me navigate the process?"
   * "Beyond Microsoft and Adobe, do you have contacts in other tech or consulting firms in the Seattle area that you’d recommend I connect with?"
   * "Are there any resources, books, or communities you’d recommend for someone interested in product and go-to-market strategy?"
   * "Would you be open to staying in touch?"
5. **Closing the Call:**
   * Express gratitude and ask if it’s okay to follow up in the future.

**Larry Arnstein – Interview Prep Guide**

**William DeForest  
2/4/2025**

**Coffee Chat with Larry Arnstein**

**Goals for the Chat:**

* Gain a better understanding of AI consulting and its demand in Seattle.
* Learn more about the work at Augmented AI Labs and if similar firms hire junior people.
* Discover how to position yourself well for an AI consulting role.
* Build a stronger connection with Larry for potential future opportunities.

**Self-Intro:**  
"Hey Larry, thanks for taking the time to chat with me. My dad spoke highly of you and your work in AI consulting, and I’ve been eager to learn more about the field. I’m in my final quarter of my MS in Applied Data Science at UChicago. My background is in economics and data science, and I’ve worked on projects spanning machine learning, NLP, and AI applications—including an AI-powered chatbot for international students. I’m currently exploring career paths that combine technical problem-solving with business impact, and AI consulting seems like a great intersection of those areas. I’d love to hear your insights on the field, especially in the Seattle area, and learn more about Augmented AI Labs and the kind of work you do. My goal is to understand what makes someone successful in AI consulting and what skills I should focus on if I decide to pursue this path."

**Questions:**

1. **AI Consulting Landscape and Trends**
   * "AI consulting seems to be in high demand, especially as companies figure out how to implement Gen-AI effectively. What trends are you seeing in the industry right now?"
   * "Are there particular industries or types of businesses that are embracing AI consulting more than others?"
2. **Augmented AI & AI Consulting Work**
   * "At Augmented AI Labs, what types of projects do you typically work on? Are they more technical (like model development) or strategic (helping companies figure out how to use AI)?"
   * "What do you enjoy most about AI consulting, and what aspects do you find the most frustrating?"
   * "How does AI consulting compare to working in a product-focused AI company?" *(This is especially interesting given your background with Xnor.ai, Fixie.ai, and Apple.)*
3. **Breaking into AI Consulting & Entry-Level Opportunities**
   * "Do firms like Augmented AI Labs typically hire entry-level candidates, or do they mostly bring in experienced professionals?"
   * "If they hire early-career people, what skills or experiences do they look for?"
   * "Since I come from a mix of business and data science, what would you recommend I focus on if I wanted to position myself well for a consulting role?"
   * "For someone just getting into AI consulting, would you recommend starting at a consulting firm, an AI product company, or an internal AI team within a larger company?"
4. **Building Connections & Next Steps**
   * "Are there any meetups, groups, or communities in Seattle that would be good for someone like me to join if I want to stay plugged into AI consulting and the business applications of AI?"
   * "Are there any books, blogs, or resources you’d recommend for learning more about the intersection of AI and consulting?"
   * "Would you be open to staying in touch? I’d love to hear about how Augmented AI Labs evolves and to share my progress as I continue exploring this space."
   * *(Optionally:)* "Is there anyone else in your network that you think would be good for me to speak with?"
5. **Technical Questions (if relevant):**
   * How does the KGA Manager (KGAM) tool facilitate the management and updating of knowledge bases, and what role does it play in ensuring the accuracy of AI-driven conversations?
   * You mentioned that the Questions and Answers are created using Gen AI—does human feedback factor into this process?
   * What does the tech stack typically look like for your content-RAG system?
   * Do you build a bespoke solution with a backend database and a fine-tuned model doing the RAG?
   * How do you handle data privacy and ethics?