

COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO

Ace a Product Manager Interview



PRAGMATIC
— INSTITUTE —

How many pizzas are ordered every night in the United States?





Introduction

WHAT'S THE MOST UNEXPECTED question you've been asked in an interview?

Was it, "What two things, aside from food and water, would you want on a deserted island?"

Or, "How many pizzas are ordered every night in the United States?"

As a job hunter, the goal is to be prepared and ready to showcase all you can bring to the prospective company. But, preparing for interviews is like a second job. You have to polish your resume and run through a long list of mock questions.

You could spend hours or days preparing for a 30-minute interview, but it's all worth it in the end if you land that dream job or take that next step in your career.

This ebook is designed to help you efficiently prepare for a product manager position, because interviewing for product management positions looks a lot different than other types of jobs.

Sure, you'll encounter the usual job interview questions, which we'll cover in the last section of this ebook, but the preparation shouldn't stop there for most individuals working toward a product management role.

Applicants have to plan for questions that might vary widely from interview to interview based on the industry and how each company defines the role of product management.

These unique questions can be categorized broadly into these five types:

1. Product Design Question
2. Estimation Question
3. Instructional Question
4. Product Strategy Question
5. Tell Me About Your Favorite Product

But, why are so many product manager interviews packed with what feels like games and brain teasers?

The reason for these types of questions is that hiring managers believe the approach can reveal strengths, weaknesses and thinking processes of individuals they're considering for the role.

The tricky part is there isn't a right answer for most of these questions. Instead, you have to impress the interviewer with your approach to solving problems.

This is not an exclusive list of question types, but they are the most common. You may encounter all of these types in an interview, or none of them. The goal is to be prepared so you're a competitive applicant.

SECTION
ONE

PRODUCT CASE STUDY QUESTION

The most iconic feature of a product manager interview is the case study question, which is when an interviewer asks you to come up with a product based on a specific scenario (example: present an idea for a rideshare app or app feature for individuals who are blind).

This question is designed to test your communication skills, user insights, product design process and creativity. Interviewers are assessing your comfort level with problems where you may or may not be familiar with the products or industry. The question can also measure your familiarity with the brand by asking you to design a feature or product that is unique to the company's industry or product line. What they aren't looking for is a right answer. In fact, if you just give them an answer without walking them through the process, you'll fail the question even if it is correct.

Example: Design a new app for travelers who are going to take their first international trip.

At this moment, you might be inclined to think about an idea and immediately start sharing it, but of this question is to think strategically and show your problem-solving process. An answer that doesn't show user empathy, competitive research, an understanding of the goal, available alternatives and success metrics will fail.

If there is a whiteboard, use it. If not, take out a sheet of paper and ask the interviewer for some brainstorming time. Try to use as little time as possible but enough to start the conversation.

Let's get started:

STEP 1: ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

The goal is to create constraints while keeping the questions fairly high level. The questions should also get you closer to understanding the ideal user. Try to spend no more than three minutes completing this step.

Here are some questions you could ask to start the conversation, and some assumed answers for the example:

1. What type of company are we? A large corporation or a start-up?
Answer: You are in the R&D department at Google.
2. Any constraints on resources?
Answer: There are no significant time or financial constraints.
3. Are the travelers going on business trips or vacations?
Answer: Both.
4. Does the ideal user live in the United States or is there an international market?
Answer: There is a global market because Google is a global brand.
5. Are the travelers going by plane, train or automobile on their international trips?
Answer: This app is designed with air travelers in mind.
6. Is our goal to improve their experience during the travel or at their destination?
Answer: The goal is to improve the experience at airports or on airplanes.
7. Is our goal user engagement?
Answer: Yes, that's a good goal. We want to see people engaging with this new app.

PRO TIP Don't ask what's the goal because that is a less thoughtful approach. Instead, present a goal or multiple goals and ask the interviewer for their input.

Before you move on to the second step, take a moment to identify any competitors that are obvious to you and/or any experience you have with similar products.

Here's what you could say:

"One app that I've used while traveling is Kayak for finding deals on flights. There is also Rome2rio that helps users identify things to do at their destination as well as compare costs between options like traveling by plane or train from Florence to Rome.

Finally, a real competitor could be App in the Air, which positions itself as a personal travel assistant. It helps users stay organized by making it easy to review itineraries, boarding passes, landing times and even current waits for check-in, security and customs.

Can I take a few moments to identify some users?" (*Don't worry the interviewer will say yes, just use enough time without using too much*).

STEP 2: IDENTIFY USERS

The first step in a quality answer is ensuring you've properly defined your user. You'll never waste time by developing a robust understanding of the user because you'll be positioned to present an excellent and unique design idea.

The goal isn't to think of as many users as possible. Instead, identify three reasonable segments.

You can start with demographics such as life stages (i.e. kids, young adults, adults and elderly). You can group by product-specific identifiers (i.e. solo-travelers, group travelers or travelers with a disability.) You can also identify personality traits or behaviors (i.e. orderly, spontaneous, anxious, disorganized, budget-conscious or thrill-seeker).

"So make a list of these traits and start to identify quality segments to pursue.

Segment 1: Young adults who are solo-travelers and budget-conscious.

Segment 2: Adults with a disability who are anxious.

Segment 3: Teenagers who are disorganized traveling with their family."

Keep in mind the interviewer may give you a broad segment like, "Design a travel app for adults with disabilities," but your job is to make the segment more specific such as identifying a specific disability such as adults in wheelchairs or adults who are blind.

Once you've discussed some of your ideas for segments, make a decision. There isn't a wrong decision, but make sure to justify your decision.

So say something like this:

"Before I discuss pain points, we should pursue young adults who are solo-travelers and budget-conscious. This segment is the largest and most inclined to download a new travel app even

if they are using or have used other types of travel apps. Would that be okay, or would you prefer we select a different segment? ... Can I take a few moments to brainstorm some pain points?"

STEP 3: USE CASES AND MARKET GAPS

The last step before presenting design solutions is outlining approximately three pain points your target segment might experience. This shows user empathy and ultimately gives you a problem to solve with your new product design idea.

"In our example, there are several key pain points this group may encounter on their first international trip:

1. While it's not always the case, the first pain point international travelers will encounter is engaging with others in a foreign language. It's challenging to ask for directions or talk to people at shops and restaurants.
2. The second pain point is navigating sometimes complicated airports and completing checkpoints. If this is their first international flight, they might be on entirely new airlines and certainly in new airports where navigation might not be translated into their native language.
3. The last pain point is the lack of entertainment on the flight where they'll likely not have wifi for an extended period of time."

The first step in a quality answer is ensuring you've properly defined your user.

STEP 4: BUILD SOLUTIONS

There are three types of ideas you can present: the safe bet, the aggressive bet and the moonshot idea. It helps to present all three during your answer. Above all, make certain your solutions solve the pain points and are related to the goal.

"Here are some solutions for the example:

1. **Google Play section that aggregates fun offline-mode mobile games**
What better way to pass the time on international flights than a mobile game. Not all mobile games require internet access, so Google could create a tab in the Google Play store that curates offline-mode options. It could include other quality apps that travelers might like too such as apps that could teach the user new languages based on where they are traveling. (This is a pretty safe bet because it requires modifying an already existing product).

3. Google Street View for Airports

Some people might find it more difficult to follow directions in airports, especially if they find themselves in a time crunch between landing and take-off for connecting flights. Solo travelers might feel safer and more prepared for landing if they've pre-walked their route virtually. Google could also integrate a map that users could use in airports just like they can on the road. They could see how long it would take to walk from Gate A to Gate H or use "their location" and see the route they should take to reach their next gate in the airport. (This is a somewhat aggressive bet because they'd have to invest in people walking around and taking photos of airports).

4. Google Travel

Google could release an entirely new app called Google Travel, which would be positioned as a pocket translator and personal tour guide. It might have features like the Google street view for airports but it has so much more to offer.

When you turn on Google Travel, you'll get notifications at airports about wait times, a list of nearby restaurants and even notifications for the closest restroom. The app will have a feature that gives you suggested questions or statements when you walk into restaurants or particular areas of the airport.

It's also a helpful app when you reach your destination because it will give you travel ideas complete with Google reviews and a new safety star feature where reviewers tell Google how safe they felt in different parts of the city. You could search for restaurants or hotels based not only on their quality review but also their safety review. For example, searching for a hotel that has at least a 3-star quality review and a 4-star safety rating."

(In this scenario, this is your moonshot idea but honestly, it's not too wild. Something wilder would be a new type of technology that makes it possible for you to seamlessly understand any language being spoken and allows you to speak any language).

STEP 5: PRIORITIZE YOUR DESIGN IDEAS

Choose a prioritization process and present why you think one idea is better than the others. You could base your decision on any framework like an impact versus effort analysis. Ultimately, you'll want to let the interviewer know that you're considering the objective specified at the beginning and the pain points. You'll also want to mention feasibility and time, which usually eliminates the moonshot idea.

In this scenario, let's keep the moonshot idea because it closely fits the challenge posed.

Here's what you could say in the interview for this scenario:

"I think we should proceed with the last design solution because it's robust and we aren't facing significant time or financial constraints at a company like Google. There are

three reasons I think this is a good solution. First, it's a new app instead of a new feature in an existing app. Second, it addresses all the pain points including language barriers, safety and navigation. Finally, it helps improve the travel experience on airplanes but it also improves a user's experience at their destination."

STEP 6: METRICS FOR SUCCESS

You'll conclude your answer with how you'd measure the success of the proposed solution. The purpose of this step is to show you know what data to collect.

Here's how you could conclude for this example:

"Now that we've prioritized the solution, we'll track success by using a variety of metrics. First, we'll use the number of downloads and retention rate to measure how many users are adopting the new app. Finally, we'll use time spent on the app to determine the engagement.

At the end of your answer, the interviewer will likely ask follow-up questions that'll require you to dig deeper into your idea. Their questions might be about features, metrics or feasibility. Regardless, be ready to defend your decisions."

Don't Make This Mistake

The biggest mistake applicants make is they complete the question without engaging in a dialogue. It's not about rushing through the product design ideas or concepts, it is about solving the problem together.

This type of question is hard, which means you'll need to practice it ... a lot. Engage in mock interviews and utilize this strategy again and again with different scenarios. Eventually, you'll be able to conquer any product design question with ease.

Take-Home Case Study

Applicants dread take-home challenges because they're time-intensive and ambiguous just like the in-person case study question. The difference is you won't get feedback through the process from the interviewer and you'll generally have more time (which can be good and bad).

Before getting started on your work, reduce ambiguity by asking clarifying questions to define the goal and identify the potential user. Be really strategic and specific with the questions because instant feedback won't be available in a take-home scenario.

The steps for solving a take-home case study question are the same as an in-person question except you can showcase your research skills as well as any design skills you might bring to the role.

Rather than working through the steps with the interviewer, you'll likely have to present your process in an engaging way after it is complete. For example, you can create a slide deck that walks the interviewer through each step to show how you came to the final solution.

There are a few ways you can stand out in the response. For example, demonstrate your ability to find and present

Blah-
Blah- Blah
Blah



The biggest mistake applicants make is they complete the question without engaging in a dialogue.

competitors in the market. You can also do some basic consumer research by surveying a small group of people who might be target users. Finally, you can create some type of mock-up that shows you know the fundamentals of design.

Variations of this Question

1. Suggest a new feature for Amazon.
2. How would you improve Google Maps?
3. Design a product to help users find dentists on Facebook.
4. Design a new feature for a rideshare app to help people who use wheelchairs.
5. What would be your approach for introducing a product into a foreign market?
6. Suggest a new feature to our X product.

SECTION TWO

INSTRUCTIONAL QUESTION

A quirky question you might be asked in a product manager interview is to teach the interviewer “something,” and that “something” can take two forms.

First, they could ask you to teach them how to do something fairly known like make a cup of coffee or scramble an egg. Second, they might ask you to teach them something complex you know that they probably don’t know.

Why might they ask these seemingly off-topic questions? Simple, they want to know how well you can communicate information to audiences who might not have the same background as you.

Here’s how you can ace this question.

STEP 1: TELL THEM WHAT YOU’RE GOING TO TEACH.

Start by telling them exactly what you’re teaching. For example, “I am going to teach you the five steps for making French press coffee,” or “Today, I am going to teach you the three ways you can improve privacy on your Facebook account.”

STEP 2: BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE.

Separating out your instruction in categories or steps can improve how well they retain the information. It also shows how well you organize information before presenting it.

Don’t assume they know anything about the process. When you want to be specific, don’t say “put the coffee in the French press.” Instead say, “Pour ¼ cup of roughly ground coffee beans into the French press.”

PRO TIP Demonstrate empathy by stopping occasionally to ask if they have any questions.

Here’s an example: Teach me how to make a bed.

“Today, I am going to teach you the five steps to make a perfect bed.

Step 1: Clear the bed so you can start with a clean surface. Sometimes, it helps to leave the bottom sheet and simply adjust the corners so it is fitted properly. (And then skip step 2).

Step 2: Grab the bottom sheet, which is the one that usually has elastic corners. You’ll spread it out in the center of the bed and align the right corners before stretching it to fit. It helps to start by completing the corners from top to bottom rather than from side to side.

Step 3: You’ll lay the top sheet over the bottom sheet with an even amount of sheet in each corner. At this point, you can tuck the corners at the bottom of the bed and on the sides and slightly fold the top down if you like to sleep under the top sheet. Folding it down allows for easy entry.

Step 4: Grab the duvet or the comforter and throw it into the center of the bed and spread it across the surface. Just like the top sheet, you’ll want to slightly fold down the top for easy entry.

Asking smart and specific questions is a critical skill to have in this role.



Step 5: In the last step, you'll fluff your pillows and put them at the head of the bed along with any decorative pillows.

Pro tip: I like matching my pillows and comforters to make it look extra nice."

Variations of this Question

1. Teach me how to make scrambled eggs.
2. Teach me how to make coffee.
3. Teach me how to tie a shoe.
4. I am going to leave the room for 10 minutes. When I come back teach me something complex that you know that I might not know.

SECTION THREE

STRATEGY QUESTION

A strategy question is any question that deals with why and how a company should do something with a product, with respect to a particular audience or customer segment.

The purpose of this question is the interviewer is wanting to see that you follow a logical structure to come to a decision. The question is all about showing how you think. It can also demonstrate your general level of knowledge about specific products or industries.

Example question:

"You're a newly hired product manager that works for Microsoft and you're in charge of their search engine Bing. How would you grow the product?"

STEP 1: CLARIFY THE QUESTION

It's a common theme in all product manager interviews because asking smart and specific questions is a critical skill to have in the role. So, the first step is to pay close attention to anything in the question that seems ambiguous and ask clarifying questions. After you've done so feel free to take a moment to develop your response.

Here's what this step could be like:

"I'd like to start off by asking what exactly do we mean by growth? Is that looking in the direction of user retention? Growing the product in the sense of, bringing it within the same ballpark as Google, in terms of the amount of data available? Or are we talking about getting new users to try out the product?" [assume the

response was getting new users to try out the product]

If we're trying to expand the number of users then am I right in guessing that the product already has a strong retention rate? Does the data that Microsoft has, show that Bing is serving a niche that Google isn't providing?

[Assume the response was there is a retention rate they're more or less happy with. Also, they believe based on data that Bing is in fact serving a niche by adding more autocomplete functionality, and has a better search function when the user is attempting to be very specific.]

You'll likely ask multiple questions in this step. The goal is to have a complete understanding of the question in an efficient time frame.

STEP 2: SHARE YOUR STRUCTURE

You'll want to lay out a structure for your response so the interviewer knows what you intend to explore at a deeper level before going into detail. As you start to give suggestions on the direction of the company, think about and share what would justify your approach whether that be by gathering data or from the successes of other companies and products.

Here's how to complete this step with our example:

"I've thought of three ways we could look to improve the product.

Knowledge to non-users of the niche Bing is providing.

Removing ads from search engine result pages.

Allying with businesses to make Bing the company's search engine.

Those are the solutions that I'd like to explore and dive into and then after we can talk about how we should prioritize them.

So let's look a little deeper at these solutions starting with improving potential user knowledge.

An advantage that Microsoft has is that it has a large market share of operating systems on PCs. Most users don't want to be plagued with installing every product that Microsoft owns when starting up a PC for the first time. However, I see nothing wrong with Internet Explorer being the default browser on start-up as well as Bing being the default search engine.

Before the user downloads Google Chrome for the first time, Bing can have a user-friendly pop-up/presentation that demonstrates the advantages of Bing over other search engine options.

Next, the idea to design Bing as an ad-free space is pretty grand, but no one else has really tried it. I know many people including myself who go above and beyond to make my computer an ad-free experience. We'd have to look into the feasibility of that option after collecting data obviously but there could be an opportunity there. Since we'll be removing a big revenue stream, we'll have to identify other sources of income once we capture market share from search engines like Google. Like platforms such as Peacock and Hulu, the platform could remain ad free in the future with a subscription.

The purpose would be to grab the attention of other search engine users to showcase another way of searching.



Knowing or not knowing facts isn't going to prevent you from getting hired, but you do have to demonstrate your comfort working through these types of estimation questions.



Finally, we could partner with companies to make Bing their search engine of choice. This allows for a guaranteed increase in usage, and since we have a retention rate we're happy with, it's likely that those users will begin to use Bing outside of work."

STEP 3 : PRIORITIZE AND MEASURE

Once you present a few ideas, prioritize them and present metrics for your decision.

Here's how you could conclude your answer based on our example:

"Moving on now to prioritizing the improvements for Bing. I love the idea of an ad-free search engine space, but there isn't enough evidence through available data to show that this could give the desired results we're looking for, so I'm going to leave that at the bottom of my list.

Increasing knowledge about the benefits of Bing's niche could go a long way. It's easy to implement, and that's the main reason I'm putting it at the top of my list of prioritization.

The reason I didn't place business partnering at the top is because even though our user retention is high, that evidence doesn't necessarily correlate with a scenario where users were forced to adopt the product at work. I still feel this option has strong potential.

Success metrics would need to align with expectations of Microsoft. Ultimately if there's a market share increase we've reached our goal. We would want to look at the data pertaining to engagement with our installation software. My expectation would be that if we can get the user engaged with Bing and we have determined there is a high retention rate, the user is likely to stay with us."

Variations of this Question:

1. How would you increase the adoption of Google's Fiber?
2. How would you redesign our product?
3. What is a major challenge our company will face in the next year?
4. How would you monetize Facebook messenger?
5. If you were Google's CEO, would you be concerned about Microsoft?

SECTION FOUR

ESTIMATION QUESTION

An estimation question asks an interviewee to determine the answer to questions like, "how many golf balls fit in a school bus," or "how much is Twitter's daily revenue."

Some companies avoid these questions because they classify them as useless brain teasers. Others lean into this strategy to assess a candidate's mental agility, comfort with numbers and estimation skills.

A good response begins once again with asking clarifying questions. Be clear on what assumptions you made while solving the problem. Let's look at an example: How many miles do Uber drivers travel in Chicago?

STEP 1: ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

Clarifying questions let the interviewer know that you don't make faulty assumptions based on weak information.

For this example, you're not going to assume the interviewer means to travel in one day, one week or one month. You are also going to determine if they mean only when they are transporting customers and not in total miles driven regardless if they are responding to a customer. Finally, you're going to make sure they are looking for an estimation that includes all the drivers collectively and not the number of miles each driver travels on average during the specified time range.

Here's what these questions might look like:

1. What's the time range? Are you looking for the number of miles driven in a day, week, month or year?
2. Should the estimation include only when the drivers are responding to customers or any miles driven in the specified time range?
3. Does the estimation include the miles driven for each individual driver or should it be the collective number of miles driven by all Uber drivers in Chicago?

Let's say the interviewer's answer to question one is the time range is in one day. The answer to question two is that the estimation should only include when an Uber driver is responding to a customer. Finally, your estimation should include the collective number of miles driven by all Uber drivers in Chicago.

STEP 2: MAP OUT YOUR ESTIMATION APPROACH

In this step, you'll explain your approach to your interviewer and if it works you'll proceed to your calculations.

There are some facts that could give you a small edge here if you know them like the number of households in the U.S., revenue for large tech companies or a general sense of user populations. For example, it might help to know that there are approximately 750,000 Uber drivers in the U.S. (but maybe not since you're just considering Chicago in our above example).

PRO TIP If you're preparing for an interview in a particular industry or at a specific company, having a general sense of relevant facts could help.

Knowing or not knowing facts isn't going to prevent you from getting hired, but you do have to demonstrate your comfort working through these types of estimation questions. You can also ask the interviewer if they have statistical information to provide or if you'll be making assumptions.

Make it obvious to the interviewer when you are intentionally making assumptions, and back them up with basic arguments.

There are two different approaches you could make for the example. First, you could

FUN FACT

Chicago was the first city to publish data on ride-hailing trips, drivers and vehicles. A cool tidbit to drop in the interview that might surprise and impress the interviewer.

start by knowing how many people use Uber each day or you could know how many drivers are on the road each day driving for Uber.

1. Let's start by stating there are approximately 2.7 million residents in Chicago.
2. There is an assumption that about 15 percent of the population uses ride-sharing services each year. Of which, 10 percent are using Uber specifically.
3. Also, we'll assume annual users have on average 10 trips.
4. Let's assume the average Uber ride is 5 miles.

STEP 3: CALCULATE YOUR RESULTS

Do your best to use easy-to-manage round numbers when you make your assumptions. Remember the right number isn't the goal. You just want to show off your skills at managing ambiguous information and your process when estimating.

Also, make sure you talk out loud while doing calculations so the interviewer can follow.

"Let's do some calculations:

1. 2.7 million people x .10 users = 270,000 users
2. 270,000 users x 10 average trips = 2,700,000 trips
3. 2,700,000 trips x 5 miles per trip = 13,500,000 total miles per year
4. 13.5 million miles per year / 365 days per year = 36,986 miles per day

Uber drivers collectively travel around 40,000 miles per day.

To finish your answer, it's best to guess if your number makes sense. Double-check you didn't make any mental calculation errors that could hurt your chances at the position. Finally, let the interviewer know if you think this calculation is an overestimate or underestimate and why.

This number might be an underestimate because there may be a higher percentage of the population using ridesharing and Uber specifically. The average user might have more annual trips, maybe they use a ridesharing service every week rather than once a month. There were also many conversations in Chicago about limiting the number of ridesharing licenses available because of perceived congestion problems in the city."

Variations of this Question:

1. How many windows are in New York City?
2. How many people are currently online in Italy?
3. How many ping-pong balls fit inside an automobile?
4. How many iPhones are there in the United States?
5. How much revenue does Twitter make per day?
6. How many people are driving today?

Make sure you choose a product you can speak about in good detail, and provide insight to support your choice.



**SECTION
FIVE**

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE PRODUCT

The purpose of this question is for the interviewer to assess how candidates think about the products they use in their life. It helps if you present a product that is unique or new because it can pique the interviewer's interest. However, make sure you choose a product you can speak about in good detail, and provide insight to support your choice.

A good response will use language that clearly indicates you're engaged with the product. Show that you're talking about it from the standpoint of a user.

Share how you use it by providing different scenarios. Also try to think about the product outside of the scope of your own personal use, and how others different from yourself might find additional uses.

Be ready to explain why the product you've chosen is different from similar products. Show that you've thought critically about user needs and why similar products are not meeting them.

Additionally, talk about possible improvements you would make to the product. Make sure it's addressing a real need.

An example of the interview question is going to sound something like this.

Question: "So pick any product out there and go ahead and tell me what is your favorite product, why is it your favorite product, and one way you could think about improving that product."

Answer: "My favorite product is Discord. It's a digital communication tool that you can use on your phone or PC. I use it for messaging, audio calls, video calls and screen sharing

usually when I am playing video games with friends.

While we're in the same voice channel talking I can send messages in text channels that the rest of them can see. But, I can also keep it personal by sending a private message to someone.

So you're probably thinking yeah, that's basically Slack, we all use that. You could also compare it to Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts or even groups on social media platforms like Facebook.

But the important distinction with Discord is that it's great for connecting with people outside of work that share similar interests as you.

It's not just an application for video gamers, you can find discord servers that have people just watching movies together or talking about books. Everyone in each server cares about a specific topic, and I can find a wealth of information for collective interests.

The difference between Discord and the competition is first and foremost the ease of access. You can set up a server within a minute or less, that has text, video and voice calls available internationally.

I can also find servers that already exist and that have interests that I share with the search function. You can also find servers by using a search engine like Google. It's user-friendly in that regard.

Skype didn't have any of those functionalities, and while Slack does a great job of providing these similar functions, it's primarily for work and you're not going to see the labor of love added into the servers as you do for a discord server dedicated





What's most important is taking the time to practice sharing stories with a structure that is easy for the interviewer to follow.

to topics people are passionate about.

One way that Discord could improve is to create a more crisp user interface that helps identify niche servers. So for instance, say I like to play the game Stardew Valley, there could be a button with the game's name that provides a full list of every server dedicated to the game. Or even better, Discord could ask new users to pick from a list of interests and suggest server communities."

Variations of this question

1. What is a product you currently use every day? How would you improve it?
2. What is a product you hate and why?
3. What is a product you love and what would you change about it?

SECTION SIX

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW PREP

These questions aren't the only types you'll encounter in your interview. Let's do a quick look at some of the more common interview questions you'll encounter. These aren't specialized to the product manager role, but excelling at them is just as important.

Tell Me A Bit About Yourself/Walk Me Through Your Resume

In this first question, you'll need to strategically pitch yourself. Think about what the hiring manager needs in the role, what you'll bring to the position and what others might assume about you.

Product managers have diverse experiences. Some transition to a product role after a career in marketing, design or sales. It's advantageous that there isn't one specific career path because it means you can bring something unique to the role if you know how to emphasize your strengths.

But, keep in mind, your career history, academic background and achievements all tell the interviewer a story about you that may or may not be true. If there are stereotypes worth addressing, the first pitch is a good moment to do it.

For example, if you have a background in data, make sure you emphasize your communication or leadership skills through the experiences you share during the interview. Conversely, if your background is design or marketing, take the opportunity to show how you aren't afraid to make data-driven decisions.

A good pitch will also drive the conversation by emphasizing experience or skills that you want to share with the interviewer. It isn't the time to take a chronological approach to your entire career history, but instead, run through your highlight reel.

PRO TIP Practice presenting various versions of your personal pitch and time yourself. One of the biggest mistakes candidates can do at this moment is to speak for too long. Even seasoned applicants can think their personal pitch is succinct but they are actually using 6-7 valuable minutes that could be used later in more critical sections of the interview.

Behavioral/Situation Questions

Questions asking for examples of success, failure, teamwork, leadership or conflict fall into the category of "behavioral questions."

What's most important with these questions is taking the time to practice sharing stories with a structure that is easy for the interviewer to follow. It helps to start the story with a snippet or lead so they can engage with the entire narrative without getting lost at the beginning when you're explaining the situation.

So for example, "let me tell you about the time I conducted research to better understand our followers on social media."

Or, "I am going to share with you the time I had to take the lead during the production of a live event when our director was unexpectedly absent because of an emergency."

Essentially, you're giving the interviewer a destination you have in mind so the journey getting there is a little easier to follow.

A common framework that some companies employ is the STAR Method. It's an acronym that stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result. It's a helpful format that allows you to tell any story for a behavioral question in an organized and easy-to-remember way.

PRO TIP Keep these types of responses from falling flat by making sure you focus on what you want the interviewer to learn about you. Do you want them to know you are data-driven, a leader, a risk-taker or a creative problem solver? Use the story to make that characteristic about you obvious.

Here's a list of some behavioral questions you may encounter:

1. Talk about how you overcame product failures/challenges or poor feedback.
2. Tell me about how you interact with customers/users?
3. What's the best way to work with executives?
4. What is one of the worst ideas you've ever had?
5. What is one of the best ideas you've ever had?
6. Tell me about a time you said no to an idea.
7. Tell us about a time you used data to influence an important stakeholder.
8. What's your approach to prioritizing tasks?

General Product Questions


In addition to the special questions you should expect during a product interview, you'll also encounter general questions about products and your experience. It helps to think about these questions individually and write your answer in an easy-to-find location. Before you walk into your interview, review your answers so you are prepared for anything.

1. What aspects of product management do you find the most exciting?
2. What aspects of product management do you find the least interesting?
3. What is your process for deciding what to build and what not to build?

4. How would you describe a good interface?
5. What is your experience with managing both B2C and B2B markets?
6. How do you know if a product is designed well?
7. Describe our product.
8. What do you dislike about our product?
9. How do you think we came up with the price for our product?
10. Who are our competitors?
11. Tell me about a company that has great customer service, what they do and why do they do it well?

Leadership/Teamwork Questions

Finally, take some time to prepare your answers to general questions about leadership and/or teamwork. In addition to being a quality candidate who is up to the job of a product manager or product marketer, you also have to fit well into the culture of the organization. These questions are designed to assess your work style and your interpersonal skills.

1. Tell me about a time when you had to motivate a team.
2. How do you think product managers interact with designers?
3. What's the best way to communicate with executives?
4. What kinds of people do you like to work with?
5. What kind of people do you have a hard time working with?
6. How do you keep a team on track to meet their goals?
7. Do you have experience in a remote working environment?
8. How have you kept communication from breaking down in a remote setting?
9. How would you manage a team in different time zones?
10. What challenges have you faced when working remotely, and how do you overcome them?
11. How do you approach team building when that team has never met in person? 



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