

# Product Manager Interview Questions

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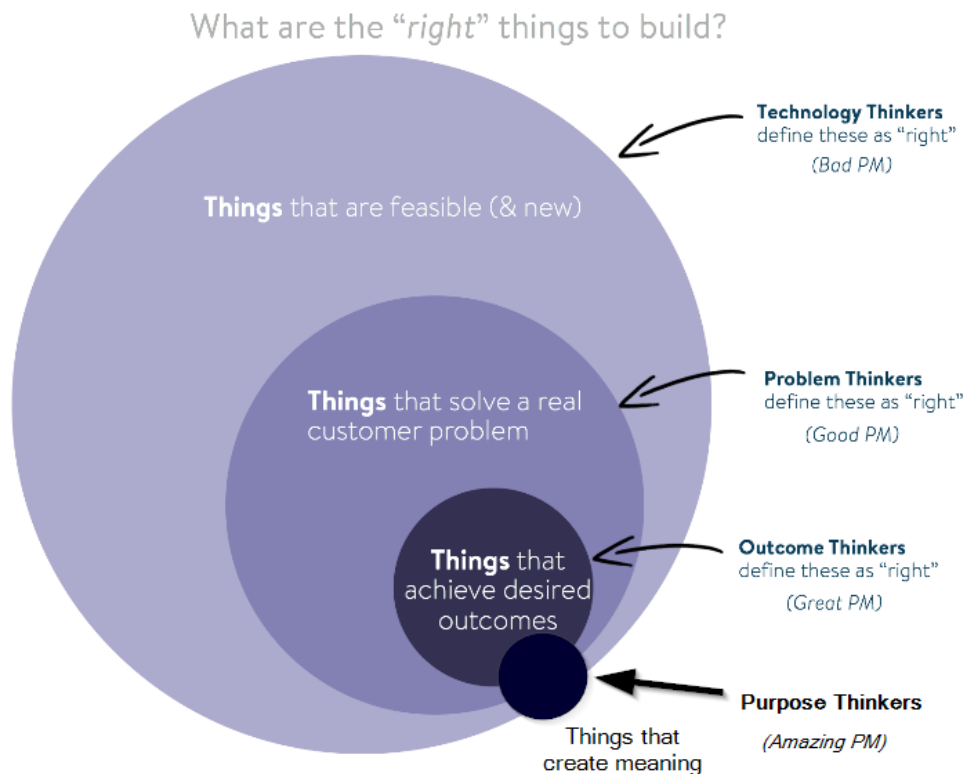
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## What makes a great Product Manager - Question categories

### Product design

Great PMs put users first. PMs are zealous about providing the best user experiences. It starts with customer empathy and always includes a passion for products, down to the smallest details. They can sketch a wireframe to convey an idea to a designer. Thinking creatively/critically about products – e.g. how to monetize Twitter, how to change Gmail, design an app for the Louvre. Give feedback and analysis on features (think of how to best delight the user), technical design, UI design.



## **Analytical and Decision-Making skills**

Good PMs get things done and make critical decisions.

Great PMs are fluent with numbers. They define the right metrics. They can interpret and make decisions from A/B test results. They don't mind getting their hands dirty. Sometimes they write SQL queries; other times, they run scripts to extract data from logs. They make their point by crisply communicating their analysis. An important area that gets attention in Product Management interviews is analytical skills – these summarize your ability to think critically, make rational decisions, and your capacity to solve problems, even when they're abstract. Most important is attention to detail and communication of how you'd break the problem into smaller nuggets to reach an overall solution.

But also know when to stop and make a decision.

## **Technology understanding**

Great PMs lead product development teams. To lead effectively, PMs must have influence and credibility with engineers. During the final round (aka onsite) interview, a senior member of the engineering team will evaluate your technical competence. Be prepared for whiteboard coding questions at the onsite interview. Technical questions are there to make sure you'll be successful working with engineering teams. Specifically, you have to earn their respect/trust, you have to understand the systems they build, you have to be able to field technical questions about your product when asked by other teams/companies, and more. You could be asked about architecture/design (e.g. multi-tiered web apps, data stored in databases) or conceptual questions (e.g. internet technologies and protocols). Possibly even an algorithm/coding question or two.

## **Product Strategy & Business sense**

Great PMs are business leaders. As a result, they must be familiar with business issues. It's not necessary for PMs to have business experience or formal business training. However, they do expect you to pick up business intuition and judgment quickly. Understand the competitive landscape and discuss the vision for our company, the mobile market, our market, the internet, and technology in general. Discuss long-term product roadmaps & strategies to increase market share.

## **Leadership: Managing yourself and others**

Top-notch PMs are driven leaders. They have a strong drive and good IQ.

## **Cultural fit**

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

## Interview Questions

### Product Design

How do you create, maintain and share specifications?

What tools and processes do you use for product management?

Do you have any agile certifications?

Could you name the scrum meetings?

Would you separate the back-end API and the front-end implementation of a feature into two separate user stories or not?

What are the top 3 products (or product modules) you are most proud of that you created from scratch? How many users did they products eventually have or revenues did they make?

What UX design and prototyping tools do you like?

How do you ensure specifications and UX design are aligned?

What lessons have you learned about user interface design?

What do you dislike about our product? How would you improve it?

#### *Less important questions*

What do you dislike about scrum?

What is a burndown chart?

What is the advantage of using user story points instead of hours?

What was your biggest product mistake?

What made the iPod successful and beat MP3 players and disc-mans?

Tell me about a great product you've encountered recently. Why do you like it?

How would you implement a product to get app recommendations?

Do you mind telling us about your strategy for customer engagement?

## Product Design Exercise

For Facebook Groups, how would you increase usage? (discusses the objective, persona's, solution options, prioritization, testing)

Describe three features of one of your favorite products that you would like to improve.

(tests for product thinking, improvement thinking)

Let's say you were allowed to pitch one of these three improvements to the CEO of the company. Which one would you pitch and why?

(tests for a sense of business value, and the ability to articulate feature value)

How do you go about designing and creating this feature together with the team?

About this feature what are things you think are most important to clarify in a specification for developers?

### *Product Design Exercise evaluation*

- **Goals** and metrics. Did the candidate define objectives before answering? Were the candidate's selections reasonable?
- **Target Persona & Pain Points**. Did the candidate choose a target persona? Did the candidate explain the persona's pain points to the extent that demonstrated true consumer insight?
- **Prioritization**. Did the candidate demonstrate the ability to prioritize competing use cases or pain points in a compelling way?
- **Creativity**. Did the candidate demonstrate sufficient creativity? Or were the ideas copycats of competitive features and products?
- **Development Leadership**. When asked, did the candidate have a reasonable explanation of how a proposed feature would be implemented?
- (Summary and Next Steps. Did the candidate summarize their main argument at the end, including clear next steps?)

## Analytical and Decision-Making skills

What are important KPI's for an early stage saas startup? / Which metrics would you track if you were eBay?

What is your approach to building a roadmap?

How big or small do you like a roadmap item to be? Could you give two examples of roadmap items?

How do you make trade-off decisions between two roadmap items, and who would you involve?

Let say you had to decide between two features within one day without having contact with customers. How would you decide?

A SaaS provider could increase the number of customers by 30% if they reduce their price by 20%. Would you do it? You are free to use pen and paper and a calculator.

(tests for knowledge of data sources to help prioritize, i.e. the support department, analytical tools, results of past tests, etc.)

### *Less important questions*

Your product usage has dropped by 10%. What will you do next?

How would you evaluate the success of feature x? / How do you know if a product you are managing is successful?



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## Technology understanding

Did you do any software development in the past?

What are the three biggest cloud web services platforms in the market? Who is the biggest?

What does CRUD stand for?

What is a primary key?

What does GROUP BY in SQL do?

What is JSON?

### *Less important questions*

What technical skill do you have that sets you apart as a product manager?

What happens when you press the register button on the registration form of a web app? Mention as much as possible small steps.

If you wanted to prevent two users editing the same customer in a system at the same time, how would you do that?

What is the biggest technical challenge you have faced in a project?

## Product Strategy & Business sense

Who is our target customer?

How do we make money?

Who are competitors?

What do you think are some important KPI's for us?

What problems are we going to encounter in **five years** if we would keep our service about the same as it is now?

How can you increase the **revenues** of a SaaS app? (mentions increasing: Number of users, basket size, and orders per customer)

Name up to 10 tasks in a **product launch** project plan. (mentions other departments and common tasks, i.e. updating FAQ)

How would you reply to a CTO who wants to spend 4 weeks **rebuilding a part of the system** since according to him the technical debt in this area is slowing you down by 30%? (should acknowledge that there is little chance of getting funding for that, but highlight some ideas to accommodate the wish of the CTO, ie do it gradually or as part of other projects).

What's a **technology trend** that you're excited about?

*Less important questions*

What are some **strategies for user growth**?

Why did Facebook buy Whatsapp when they already had FB Messenger?

How do you deal with trade-offs between opposing metrics, such as higher AoV (average order value) but lower conversion rate? (answer should include an effect on total revenue)

## **Leadership: Managing yourself and others**

What do you do if a stakeholder changes the requirements on the fly?

What is some positive feedback you repeatedly got from colleagues in the past?

What is some negative feedback you repeatedly got from colleagues in the past 2 years? / What's a self-development area that needs improvement? / What is the main thing you think you could have done better in your current job in the last 6 months? / What was your biggest failure in the last year? What did you learn from this?

How did you work on that? (tests for self-knowledge and working on weaknesses)

What would you do if you found out 30% of your user data was deleted by accident?

How do you deal with your \*personal\* to do list? (planning skills)

*Less important questions*

How do you earn the respect of the engineering team?

Tell me about a difficult situation you had with an engineer and how you resolved it.

How would you go about building a lateral relationship with a key remote department head?

When an important decision needs to be made and key players have differing opinions, how would you proceed?

How will you motivate product teams to do the work outlined?

Tell me a time when you disagreed with an engineer. How did you convince him or her?

What's your favorite project where you played a leadership role?

## **Cultural fit**

What type of company do you like to work for, i.e. small big, startup, scaleup, corporate and why?

Why do you want to work for us?

Why do you want to be a PM?

*Less important questions*

What are you most proud of?

## **First interview - Basic fact-finding**

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### RESPONSIBLE FOR FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES

The most prevalent responsibilities for product managers relate to deciding what to build, while roughly a quarter are responsible for revenue targets or P&L.

