



The Associate Product Manager Playbook

The definitive guide on resumes and interviews from an alumni

BY

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Part 1: Understand the Programs

Note: This guide is supported by partners. If you sign up for their services, I'll get a few bucks to keep writing guides like these. I only recommend products that are actually useful.



Why I Made This Guide

Getting your first product management job is hard.

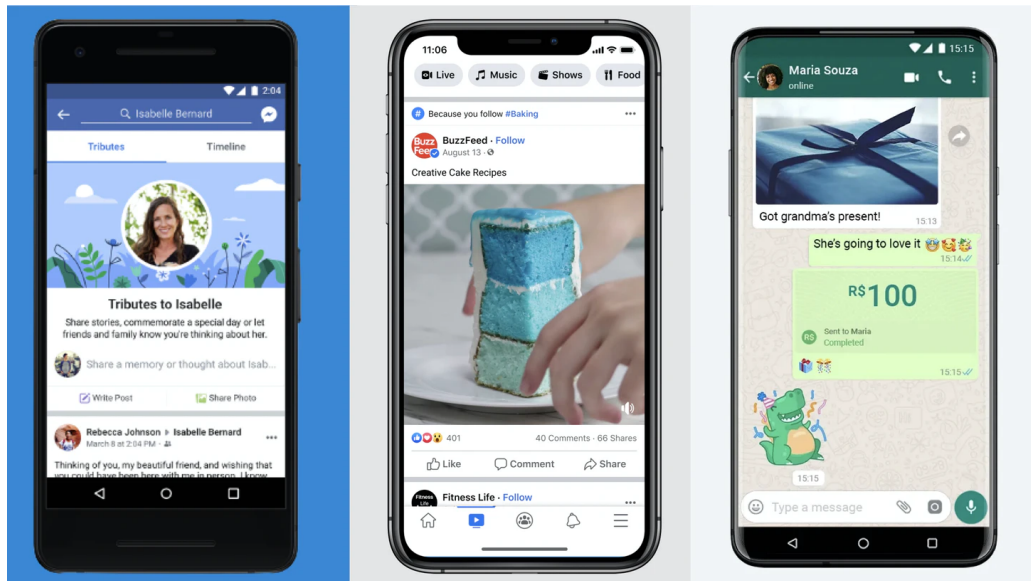
It's even harder to get one at a top company that invests time and resources into teaching you about the craft of product management.

I was one of ~15 people to join Facebook's (now Meta's) [Rotational Product Manager program](#) during the summer of 2019. Before joining, I didn't have any formal product management experience. I can honestly say that the 18 months in the RPM program were amongst the steepest learning curves I ever had and prepared me exceptionally well as a product manager.

I had the chance to play meaningful roles in three different teams across the company.

1. Product Manager for Facebook Memorialization
2. Product Manager for Facebook Watch
3. Product Manager for WhatsApp Payments

I wrote about my experience in depth [here](#).



The RPM program at Meta is one of several **Associate Product Manager (APM)** programs in the tech industry. Each of them has the potential to change the trajectory of your personal and professional life.

Getting into these programs, however, is competitive. The year I applied, over 10,000 people applied for just 15 spots in my cohort at Facebook. This is about a 0.15% acceptance rate.

When I applied to the program, I didn't know any product managers. I didn't get a referral to any program, I didn't have someone to coach me and didn't know the nuances of the interviews. I went it alone and spent significant amounts of time researching, practicing and refining my approach to getting the job.

I also invested in the right resources. While money was tight for me, I knew that these jobs pay *extremely* well. [Levels.fyi](#) has Facebook RPMs making on average \$166,000 while Google APMs making \$167,000. Using the right resources let me take proven approaches to interviews, build the right skills and write my resume.

This is why I'll highlight the highest return on investment (ROI) resources if you need more support in a given area.

In this guide, I'll share all the advice I wish I had when going through product management recruitment. My goal with this guide is to "level the playing field" and make sure everyone has the knowledge they need to succeed.

I want to help people with diverse backgrounds — including underrepresented ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds and varying educational pedigrees — get opportunities that are usually reserved for a select few.

We desperately need more diversity in our industry and I hope that this guide will give you the help you need to make the jump.

Top Associate Product Manager Programs

APM programs are perfect for new grads or people with less than 5 years of experience in a non-product field. In my cohort at Facebook, about half were new grads and the other half had backgrounds in analytics, consulting, program management or finance.

There are a handful of associate product manager programs out there:

1. Meta's [Rotational Product Manager Program](#)
2. Google's [Associate Product Manager Program](#)
3. LinkedIn's [Associate Product Manager Program](#)
4. Uber's [Associate Product Manager Program](#)
5. Lyft's [Associate Product Manager Program](#)
6. Atlassian's [Associate Product Manager Program](#)

While all of them vary slightly, there are a few common benefits of APM/RPM programs:

 **Opportunity to try multiple teams:** APMs/RPMs have the chance to be the PM on multiple teams, giving them the ability to choose areas of interest, learn how things are done in different environments and build a rounder skillset

 **A tight-knit cohort:** These programs have a small number of other talented peers. Having a small group of people allowed us to get to know everyone individually and have intimate conversations that were not performative. We also bonded because all of us were equally smart, ambitious and had similar career goals. This community thrived because anyone could reach out and you would be excited to speak with and learn from them.

 **Mentorship:** Each program has various forms of mentorship. At Facebook, we would have a manager for the entire 18 months, a mentor, small-group mentorship and alumni support.

 **Access to company leaders:** We had many events where 5-6 PMs would have a candid conversation with industry titans like Sheryl Sandberg, Fidji Sumo and Chris Cox. These conversations were *exponentially* more enlightening than fireside chats in front of 1000s of people. Conversations got personal, specific and involved the whole group (rather than a Q&A).

 **Key idea:** Each APM program gives people with no formal product experience the chance to work in an interesting product space, bond with a talented cohort and receive training within the company.

Frequently Asked Questions

What type of candidates get into these programs?

All backgrounds are eligible to apply. In practice, though, successful candidates often have experience in strategy, analytics, data, design, engineering, consulting or finance. This is because successful candidates will have the experiences necessary to succeed in the role.

Do I need a technical background (i.e. do I need to code)?

Some programs, most notably Google, do require a technical background. Others, like Meta, LinkedIn and Uber, do not screen for technical backgrounds.

Would you recommend an APM program?

100%. I learned a ton in 18 months (and wrote about my experience in detail [here](#)).

Is this program only for recent graduates?

No. It's for people with little PM experience, including existing professionals or new graduates. In my cohort, roughly 50% of RPMs were experienced hires.

What are some example rotations?

Growth for Uber Eats, Launching Google Payments in Brazil, Creator Monetization for LinkedIn, AR filters for Instagram Stories, Machine Learning for Google Search. Nearly every part of a company is open to APMs/RPMs.

Can I apply if I need a visa sponsorship?

Yes. I know several people who applied while needing a sponsorship to work in the target country.

Is one program better than any other?

Not really. Each company has their own culture and way of building products. But rather than getting caught up on culture too early in the process, I recommend you apply to all the programs that you are interested in.

Timeline and Approach

Applications for these programs open between June - October of any given year. Here's a summary from [APM List](#):

1. Facebook - Opens July 2022
2. Google - Opens September 2022
3. LinkedIn - Opens September 2022
4. Lyft - Opens August 2022
5. Atlassian - Open now
6. Uber - Open now
7. Visa - Open now

 **Key idea:** Don't wait until applications open to start preparing. Start now -- specifically by learning the right skills, building an effective resume and getting referrals. Preparing early is what sets strong candidates apart.

At a high level, this is how I'd suggest preparing for recruitment:

1. **Make sure you have the right skills for the job:** If you don't build a project or two to demonstrate those skills/
2. **Make a killer resume:** Frame your experiences in effective ways, use a simple template and highlight the impact of your experiences
3. **Effectively practice for interviews:** learn the interview rubrics, self-study frameworks and practice a ton.

I'll walk you through how to do each one.

Part 2: Become a Great Candidate

With the logistics covered, the rest of this guide will be about making your application stand out.

 **Key idea:** 97% of applicants don't get an interview. You need to build the right experiences, make a killer resume and network to be a part of the 3%.

Here's my general advice: your main focus needs to be on getting an interview. Once you land the interview, switch to interview prep.

The exception is if you are confident you'll get an interview (e.g. you've secured a referral and/or you have incredible experience). If this is the case, switch to interview prep early.

 **Key idea:** Don't prepare for interviews until you are at least 80% sure that you will get an interview. Focus all your time on getting the right experiences, making the perfect resume and getting referrals until then. Being a great interviewee is useless if you don't get an interview!

But for the rest of us, getting an interview consists of three things: the right experiences, the right resume and the right referral. The most important of these is the right resume as this is how you'll be evaluated.

Learn the Right Skills

Like any job, having the right experience means you have the skills to do the job well. APM/RPM programs are no different.

The trick is that people feel that they can't demonstrate product management skills without having a previous role in the product. This is a lie.

 **Key idea:** The right experience is in alignment with the PM job requirements. These are a combination of soft and technical skills.

The skills necessary to succeed as a product manager include soft skills and hard skills.

Soft Skills

Let's focus first on soft skills. These include

1. Leadership
2. Project management
3. Strategy & Vision
4. Analytical Thinking

These are the skills that you've likely developed from past jobs, school or life experience. While we'll get into how to frame this on your resume in a future section, it's important to map out all of your experiences that map to one of these attributes. Do not restrict this mapping to your work experience. Instead, your list may include:

1. **Leadership:** lead hockey team, led fundraising campaign at the food bank, led team of marketers for marketing campaign
2. **Project management:** managed tasks for an engineering project, organized freelance calendar
3. **Strategy & Vision:** build a go-to-market plan for Class 454, and established a charter for volunteer group
4. **Analytical Thinking:** did research project for undergraduate thesis, built financial models

Catalog all of the experiences that you have related to these soft skills in a document. This will help you see where your strengths may be and where you need to fill in gaps.

For areas with gaps, I'd suggest taking a short course to improve your skills here. A course will give you the experience to put on your resume (in the Skills or Education section).

 **Key idea:** If you have gaps in your skillset, take a short course. This will give you something to put on your resume to fill that gap.

[LinkedIn Learning](#) is offering readers of this guide 1 free month to learn all the product, design and technical skills you're missing. [Claim your free month here.](#)

Here's one for each section:

1. [High-Stakes Communication](#) - Spend an hour improving one of the most important skills of your career - communicating effectively.
2. [Project Management Simplified](#) - Learn a simplified version of project management to determine how to effectively drive progress amongst several stakeholders.
3. [Product Management: Building a Product Strategy](#) - a great crash course on how strategy is created for products
4. [Data Driven Project Management: Project Metrics That Matter](#) - learn how to choose the right metrics using analytical thinking

I think of soft skills as the bare minimum that you need to demonstrate to get an interview. But to exceed the minimum, you need to include skills that will differentiate you from others.

Hard Skills

This is where hard skills come in. In my experience reviewing resumes, having these is what differentiates a strong candidate from a weak one. If you want more advice on building hard skills, I [wrote a guide](#) on this exact topic.

Hard skills include

1. Engineering/Coding Knowledge
2. Design
3. Data Analysis

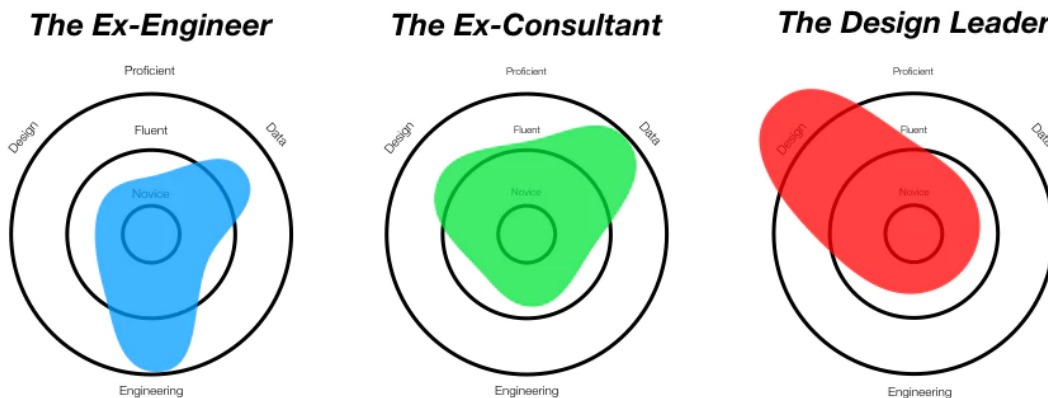
Any candidate can say that they are a strong leader. But it's harder to claim that you have a hard skill like design, analytics or programming.

In a similar way to how you catalog soft skills, catalog your hard skill experience too. To help you out, here are some areas that might fit into these categories:

1. **Engineering:** coding, systems design, APIs, scripts, building programs
2. **Design:** wireframes, interface design, prototyping, graphic design, user research
3. **Data:** SQL, statistical analysis, experimentation, survey design, data collection

 **Key idea:** Use hard skills to differentiate yourself from other candidates.

This is where it's important to have experience in either design, engineering or data analysis. Ideally, you'll have experience in all three. It all depends on your background:



Highlight all the technical skills you have. Again, if you're not feeling strong on one or more of these, take a quick course and build some projects in this area.

Again, I'd recommend taking these courses with a LinkedIn Learning free month ([redeem it here](#)). Here are some suggested tutorials:

1. [Programming Foundations: Real-World Examples](#) - I did this course while I was in university! I learned a ton about computer science and featured this course prominently on my resume.

2. [Figma Essential Training: The Basics](#) - Figma is the premier design tool for UX designers. Understanding the basics while working on a real project is hugely valuable.
3. [Data Storytelling Basics](#) - Rather than coding, learn the basics of storytelling with data. This will be more valuable for interviews and on the job.

Build the Right Experiences

In addition to taking courses, another great way to build the skills you need for a PM role is to get PM experience before you get the job,

I wrote a [full piece on this topic](#), but the summary is to work on side projects. These are small projects that you can ideally do on a weekend that help you try a new tool, practise a new skill or perhaps earn some extra cash.



Key idea: Use projects to fill in skills gaps from your experiences.

At a glance, the best PM side projects involve **building something** and **taking it to market**. Here are some ways to build that experience.



Data Science Project

Find a data set that's interesting on [Kaggle](#) (a site with awesome, free datasets). Use Excel, SQL or Python to find interesting trends in the data. I did this exact process with a dataset from Spotify to answer a research question, [Is faster music happier?](#) As a bonus, I shared this project with a Research Scientist at Spotify and it helped me build a great relationship (while developing my skills).



Design Feedback

Find an app you love and identify changes to improve the user experience. This helps you build product sense and gives you something to share with a company you love. Check out [Growth.Design](#) or [UserOnboard](#) for great examples of doing constructive app critiques.



Use No-Code tools to build a product

This is likely the best avenue. No-code tools make it easy to build a product. I'd personally check out tutorials on [NoCodeMba](#). In a few hours, you can build a [Tinder clone](#) or an [upvote site like Product Hunt](#) without coding. Once you've built a product, drive traffic, get users and respond to their feedback.

★ Highest ROI Resource: LinkedIn Learning

If you want some help building the right skills or experiences, I'd highly recommend claiming a [free month of LinkedIn Learning](#) (usually \$26/month). LinkedIn Learning has over 14,000 expert-led courses related to business, design and technology. As a bonus, you get access to all of LinkedIn Premium including talent insights, InMails and more.

I've personally taken six courses on LinkedIn learning, including Technology for Product Managers, Programming, Python GUI Development with Tkinter, and Programming Foundations: Real World Examples. Featuring them prominently on my resume definitely helped me get my PM job.

🤝 Get a Referral

All APM/RPM programs are at companies that value referrals. A referral is when a current employee at that company refers you for an open role that the company is hiring for.

A referral will significantly improve your chances of landing an interview. While it's not 100% necessary (I didn't have one), you would be foolish not to try to get one.

🔑 **Key idea:** People are incentivized to refer strong candidates. They determine your fit for the role based on your resume and opening messages.

To expand on this, many employers give their employees a bonus if they refer someone who gets the job. They also want to help people.

But in my experience, most people who ask for referrals do not appear as strong candidates. Common mistakes I see:

1. They don't personalize their message to the person they reach out to
2. They have spelling or grammar mistakes in their message (shocking, I know)
3. They don't attach their resume
4. If they do, their resume is not strong and does not highlight relevant experiences
5. They do not explain why they are perfect for the role

Now the next steps are to find the right person to refer you and to send them a great message.

The right person is often someone who works at the company. Start with your own network

1. Do any alumni of your college work at the company? See here for a guide on how to find those people.
2. Do any alumni of one of your former jobs work there?
3. Do you have any friends or contacts at the company?

If yes, reach out to them on LinkedIn or over email. If you don't know anyone at the company, you'll need to make a contact. In this situation, just search Product Managers at the company you're looking for on LinkedIn.

Strong opening messages contain four things:

1. **A personal connection**: include a message to endear the connection to you. This may be what you have in common or a media feature they did that you enjoyed
2. **A sentence on your strong background**: use one sentence to communicate why you're a good fit for the job.
3. **Ask for a referral**: be direct and ask for a referral, not a coffee chat or a call. This is because these PMs are inundated with requests for their time. It's also infuriating getting onto a coffee chat where it's very clear that the candidate just wants a referral and doesn't care about your answers.
4. **Include your resume**: this gives them a chance to dig deeper into your background and even refer you without any additional follow-up.

Here's a template I'd suggest:

Hey Will. I loved your blog post about your journey to Facebook. As another first-generation immigrant, I could really relate!

I'm a computer science student at USC and interned as a PM at Walmart this summer. I'm set on product and have been preparing for interviews all summer. I'd love to interview for Facebook's RPM program, would you be open to referring me? I've attached my resume.

Thanks!

Your Name

 **Key idea:** Your referral reach out should include a personal connection, a sentence on your background (bonus if it sounds impressive) and your ask for a referral. Don't beat around the bush and please don't ask to "pick your brain" or a "virtual coffee chat".

I would try 1-3 people at each company you're aiming for. These people are likely receiving many referral requests, so be patient and understanding.

Part 3: Cracking the PM Resume

Creating the perfect resume is the hardest part of landing an interview. But it's also the most important.

 **Key idea:** A strong resume is the single most important thing you can do to be a part of the 3% of applicants who get interviews.

If you're like me and are applying without a referral, without a coaching service or without connections at the company, the best way to get an interview is to have a killer resume.

I made hundreds of resumes during my job hunt. Now, I have had the benefit of seeing hundreds of PM resumes and interviewing over 50 candidates for PM roles at Facebook/Meta. I want to use this experience to share detailed guidance on building a stellar resume. If you need more help, I'll share a resource that I wish I had when applying.

Overall Principles of a Great Resume

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 products*

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 just choose a simple resume template ([recommended resource](#)). No fancy graphics, colors 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.

 **Key idea:** Each bullet point should be concise, show impact and be highlighted specific to the PM job. Don't include filler words, vague statements or fancy visuals.

Sections

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

Summary [Optional]

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 behavior. 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. I spent years refining the art of creating good experience bullet points. Here are some critical suggestions to improve yours:

- **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 skill sets and experiences. Note these down and aim to fill them in with projects (more on this below).

Let's go into even more detail. You may have heard of the STAR method for breaking down your experiences during interviews.

STAR METHOD



STAR is fine for interviews but is bad advice for resumes. Generally, people spend too much time on the situation and tasks whereas the action and result is what matters for a resume.

This is why I recommend RACR, or result, action, context and result. Yes, the result is twice on purpose. This is because there are often two levels of results: the outcome of your action and the impact of this outcome. Here's an example using a strong PM bullet point.

Built a custom Tableau dashboard by integrating with Salesforce data platform; enabled the team to accurately track user engagement metrics and build a roadmap to grow engagement by 20%.

1. Result
2. Action
3. Context
4. Result

 **Key idea:** Use RACR (results, action, context, results) to frame your experience bullet points.

Notice how this bullet point leads with a tangible outcome (the dashboard) and ends with the business outcome. This is what product management is all about -- creating things that improve the metrics of the business. The context of the situation is a supplement to the outcomes as it is not especially relevant for the roles themselves.

If you need more help on your experience bullet points, I added 40+ strong examples from PM resumes I've seen to the [recommended resource](#).

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 soft skills and hard skills (more details in Part 2).

★ Highest ROI Resource: My Resume Kit

If you need more help on your resume, I made a [Resume Kit](#) that includes the actual resume I used to apply to RPM/APM programs and 40+ of the best PM bullet points I've seen.

I made this kit because I noticed that there were no good resources for product management resumes. This caused people to overlook resumes and focus solely on the interviews. As we

discussed, 97% of candidates don't get interviews -- and I hope this kit can significantly improve your odds of being part of the 3%.

Part 4: Crush the Interview

After investing in getting the interview, it's time to shift gears to get the offer. This means succeeding in the interviews.

Interviews have rubrics and predictable structures. This is why the best predictor of success in interviews is the number of hours of *effective* practice.

 **Key idea:** Your experiences don't matter once you get to the interview stage; it's now all about performance. The best way to perform better is through effective practice.

There are three stages of effective practice

1. **Understanding the interviews:** read and learn what the interviews look like. This is key for understanding the rubric you're being evaluated by, what great answers look like and strategies for answering PM questions.
2. **Self-study:** easily the most underrated step, studying by yourself will help you solve interview problems with greater ease.
3. **Mock interviews:** finally, practice with others to improve your communication, time efficiency and ability to interact with an interviewer.

I practiced for a few hours a day over 3-4 weeks before and during my interview period. This may have been overkill, but I knew that getting an interview meant I was a serious contender for one of the roles. I didn't want to leave anything to chance.

Rather than give you high-level guidance on each interview, I'll share my advice and link you to more detailed guides, videos and resources to go deep on specific areas.

Let's dive into each of these.

Learn the Interviews

Each APM interview process will have different interviews. I haven't done them all, so I'll share my experience and link to some great resources from [Exponent](#) which is (spoiler alert) the best ROI resource for understanding how interviews work.

Phone Screen (All)

Key question of the interview: **Does this person meet the job requirements?**

Example Question: **Can you walk me through your professional background?**

They are looking for two main things they are looking for at the phone screen stage: communication skills and alignment with the job description criteria.

 **Key idea:** Phone screens are all about strong communication and how aligned you are with the job description.

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. But if you feel like you could benefit from improving your communication, I'd pick up a free month of LinkedIn Learning and take one of the following courses

1. [Communicating with Confidence](#) (free trial)
2. [Communication for Product Managers](#) (free trial)

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 on the phone screen. For example, if you lack design experience, anticipate questions like "What's your favorite product and why?"



Execution / Metrics (Facebook, Lyft, Google)

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?**

For this interview, I'll point you to several great resources that can help you best prepare

- [How to Ace Facebook's Product Execution Interview](#) (free): two friends of mine wrote a great guide for Execution interviews.
- [Mock Interview](#) (free): A former colleague did a great mock interview
- [Mock Interview 2](#) (free): Another interview looking at Facebook Marketplace
- Here is a [list of questions](#) you can expect for Execution interviews (free)

 **Key idea:** Show the criteria about how you are making a decision and making the decision. Indecision kills candidacies.

Product Sense / Product Design (Facebook, LinkedIn, Lyft, Uber, Google)

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?**

I always enjoyed conducting this interview -- it's much more creative and interesting than some of the others! At a high level, 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.

For the best dives into how to do well in this interview, use the resources below.

1. [Facebook Product Sense Interview](#) (free): A helpful and comprehensive guide!
2. [Mock Interview from a Facebook PM](#) (free): A former colleague did a great mock interview
3. [Product Sense Rubric](#) (paywall): The things that interviewers are looking for during product sense interviews.
4. [List of questions](#) (free)

I always enjoyed conducting this interview -- it's much more creative and interesting than some of the others!

Leadership & Drive / Behavioral

Key question: **Does this person have the attitude and soft skills to succeed as a product manager?**

Example question: **Tell me about a time that you failed. What did you learn from it?**

This is largely a behavioral interview. I'd prepare using the following guides.

1. [How to Ace Your Google Behavioral Interview](#) (free): a guide that has helpful advice for Google and beyond
2. [How I Prepared for Facebook PM Interviews: Leadership & Drive](#) (free): This is a great guide written by a friend
3. [Expert Tips for Answering Common Interview Questions](#) (free trial): a one hour LinkedIn Learning course with high ROI

One general tip that I learned when conducting these interviews:

 **Key idea:** Behavioral interviews are 50% strong communication. I'd suggest taking a free LinkedIn Learning course, practicing saying your answers during mock interviews and practicing structured communication.

Estimation (Google, Meta)

Key question: **can this person use logic and math to handle ambiguous situations?**

Example question: **how many Google Maps users are in New York City?**

I've never done this interview, so I'll lean on some useful resources:

1. [PM Estimation Interview Guide](#) (free): a good breakdown with strategies on doing execution interviews
2. [Google PM Estimation Interview](#) (free): a great mock that covers this question type

★ Highest ROI Resource: Exponent

If you need more help on interviews, I recommend getting a membership to [Exponent](#). For \$19/month, you get access to their full product interview resource library. There are also specific resources for several popular APM companies like Google, Meta, Uber and more.

If you're at the interview stage, investing in the right resources will have a large impact on your likelihood of landing the job.



Practice Frameworks

Self-studying is the piece that I feel sets me apart. Others over-indexed on reading books and mocks with peers. I would spend hours each day self-studying, specifically by practicing:

1. **Segmentation:** breaking down ambiguous problems into actionable pieces
2. **Brainstorms:** creatively think of many options given an ambiguous prompt
3. **Prioritization:** choose the best option amongst a series of reasonable ones

These areas are agnostic to the interview type or the company, so practicing is high-leverage when interviewing for multiple companies. Below, I'll walk through the exercises I did and share resources on how to do the same

Segmentation

Every interview begins with a problem. It could be something like

1. Why has metric X gone down?
2. What should we build first in area Y?
3. How would you set the market for market Z?

Each of these are ambiguous questions with multiple paths forward. This is where it is important to break down problem spaces with a structured approach.

 **Key idea:** Bucket potential options into a mutually-exclusive-collectively-exhaustive list of options. This will make navigating the ambiguity much simpler.

The best way to do this is to look for buckets of mutually-exclusive-collectively-exhaustive (MECE) options. These buckets should encompass all of the potential options while being separate. Here are two examples.

What has metric X gone down?

Bucket 1: Factors external to the company

1. *Economic changes*
2. *Social changes*
3. *Geopolitical changes*

Bucket 2: Factors internal to the company

1. *Measurement changes*
2. *Product changes*
3. *Policy changes*

These two buckets cover 100% of the possible options for why this change may have occurred.

Structures like these are very common parts of product management interviews. The only way to do them well is to practice (the [recommended resource](#) has tons of drills to do this).

Brainstorms

At many points during the interview, you will need to creatively brainstorm across multiple different areas. Examples include

1. What are all the metrics we may want to track?
2. Who could we possibly build for?
3. What pain points do these user groups have?
4. What potential solution might we build?

 **Key idea:** Practice brainstorming for every possible axis ahead of time. When brainstorming during an interview, you'll remember some of the best ones.

Create brainstorm situations for yourself and push yourself to identify all of the potential

Example: What metric should we care about most?

1. Engagement
2. Retention
3. Monetization
4. User Sentiment
5. Social Value Created
6. Virality
7. Performance
8. Reliability
9. Activation

Brainstorming is crucial. Again, the [recommended resource](#) has tons of drills to do this and it's something that I feel set me apart during interviews. Practice a ton!

✓ Prioritization

This is the third and arguably most challenging framework to master. It's also the one that is most relevant to the actual PM job.

Prioritizing between two or more reasonable options is challenging. You may need to decide between

1. **User groups:** do we focus on teens or adults?
2. **Metrics:** do we focus on retention, engagement or monetization?
3. **Solutions:** do we build a VR shopping experience or a new standalone Google App?

I wrote a [full guide on prioritizing](#) as a product manager. The key here is to define the criteria that you will use to make the decision and then measure your options against that criteria. This will show that your process is objective, logical and auditable.

 **Key idea:** Prioritize based on explicit is explicitly defining the criteria that you will make your decision on.

★ Highest ROI Resource: RocketBlocks

If you want more help with frameworks, [Rocketblocks](#) is an excellent resource to practice key frameworks for product interviews. I used their resources when applying for jobs and enjoyed the active practice. There are tons of drills, technical skill reviews and product sense exercises to choose from at a reasonable price.

They also have a community that you can use for...

Mock Interviews

With an understanding of the interview structure and practice in breaking down problems, brainstorming and prioritization, you're ready to do mock interviews.

 **Key idea:** Use mock interviews to practice timing, communication and simulating the environment. Be careful of taking too much feedback from other interviewees.

Mocks are great for practicing your delivery and simulating the environment. Be cognizant that there's a little bit of "the blind leading the blind" here -- the person on the other side of your interview may not know exactly what to look for. This is why I recommend self-evaluating yourself based on your own knowledge of the interviews.

Here are some mock interview communities that I've heard great things about:

1. [ProductBuds](#): a great, supportive community of aspiring PMs. They have a channel to coordinate mock interviews that I would definitely recommend.
2. [Rocketblocks](#): there's a big community for mock interviews on Rocketblocks -- but they also have coaches and experienced PMs you can interview with too!

Final Recap

What a whirlwind. If you've read the full guide, you'll now be better equipped to:

1. Build all the skills you need to get a PM interview
2. Have a killer resume that will get you noticed
3. Crush the interviews and land a job offer (or two, or three...)

I wrote this guide to simulate all of the advice I would give to an aspiring product manager over 3-5 hours of coaching. I hope it helps you in your unique journey.

Here is a recap of all the key tips from the guide:

Part 1: Understand the Programs

- Each APM program gives people with no formal product experience the chance to work in an interesting product space, bond with a talented cohort and receive training within the company.
- Don't wait until applications open to start preparing. Start now — specifically by learning the right skills, building an effective resume and getting referrals. Preparing early is what sets strong candidates apart.

Part 2: Become a Great Candidate

- 97% of applicants don't get an interview. You need to build the right experiences, make a killer resume and network to be a part of the 3%.
- Don't prepare for interviews until you are at least 80% sure that you will get an interview. Focus all your time on getting the right experiences, making the perfect resume and getting referrals until then. Being a great interviewee is useless if you don't get an interview!
- The right experience is in alignment with the PM job requirements. These are a combination of soft and technical skills.
- If you have gaps in your skillset, take a short course. This will give you something to put on your resume to fill that gap. [LinkedIn Learning](#) is offering readers of this guide 1 free month to learn all the product, design and technical skills you're missing. [Claim your free month here](#).
- Use hard skills to differentiate yourself from other candidates.
- Use projects to fill in skills gaps from your experiences.
- People are incentivized to refer strong candidates. They determine your fit for the role based on your resume and opening messages.
- Your referral reach out should include a personal connection, a sentence on your background (bonus if it sounds impressive) and your ask for a referral. Don't beat around the bush and please don't ask to "pick your brain" or a "virtual coffee chat".

Part 3: Cracking the PM Resume

- A [strong resume](#) is the single most important thing you can do to be a part of the 3% of applicants who get interviews.
- Each bullet point should be concise, show impact and be highlighted specific to the PM job. Don't include filler words, vague statements or fancy visuals.
- Use RACR (results, action, context, results) to frame your experience bullet points.

Part 4: Crush the Interviews

- Your experiences don't matter once you get to the interview stage; it's now all about performance. The best way to perform better is through effective practice.
- Phone screens are all about strong communication and how aligned you are with the job description.
- Show the criteria about how you are making a decision and making the decision. Indecision kills candidacies.
- Behavioral interviews are 50% strong communication. I'd suggest taking a free LinkedIn Learning course, practicing saying your answers during mock interviews and practicing structured communication.
- Bucket potential options into a mutually-exclusive-collectively-exhaustive list of options. This will make navigating the ambiguity much simpler.
- Practice brainstorming for every possible axis ahead of time. When brainstorming during an interview, you'll remember some of the best ones.
- Prioritize based on explicit is explicitly defining the criteria that you will make your decision on.

- Use mock interviews to practice timing, communication and simulating the environment. Be careful of taking too much feedback from other interviewees.

Final thought: we need more diversity in tech

The final tip I want to share: apply.

These programs are transformative -- both for your personal learning and your socioeconomic standing. This was my situation; I went to a university in Canada, didn't know many people in Silicon Valley, didn't have a technical background and didn't have the resources to make big investments into myself.

Joining one of these programs exposed me to smart peers, incredible mentorship, new cities, new countries and new ways of growing my career.

If you feel like you need this, don't disqualify yourself by not applying. Don't assume that you don't belong in this industry because of your background, skin color, location or native language.

 **Key idea:** You can't get the job if you don't apply. Don't disqualify yourself because you feel like you don't belong in this program or tech in general. You belong.

We need more diverse thoughts and people in our industry if we want to continue to change the world for the positive. I sincerely hope that this guide is able to play a small part in many diverse stories about "breaking into tech"/

Please do share this guide with anyone else who may find it valuable or encouraging.

And, with that, good luck on applications!

If this guide was useful, you may like my newsletter Product Life. I share regular templates, tips and strategies with 10,000+ product managers. [Subscribe here](#).

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