

HOW TO GET THAT NEXT PM JOB

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Product Manager @ Google

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Goal:

actionable steps that will
increase your chances of
getting the right product
management job

Disclaimer:

Opinions and ideas expressed here are my own. They don't necessarily reflect the views of my employer

ABOUT SHREYAS

UNIV. OF MUMBAI, INDIA

BACHELORS
IN
COMPUTER ENGG.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

M.S. IN
COMPUTER
SCIENCE

IRVINE, CA

A BUNCH OF
JOBS AS
ENGINEER

EDS, SUNNYVALE

ENGINEER,
LATER PRODUCT
MANAGER

GOOGLE,
MTN. VIEW

PRODUCT MGR.,
LATER SR. MGR.
OF PM

PRODUCT
MANAGER

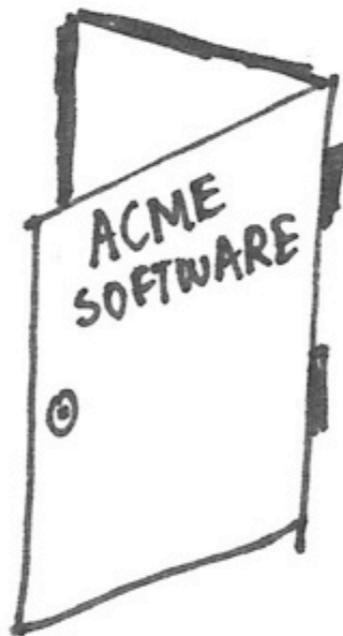
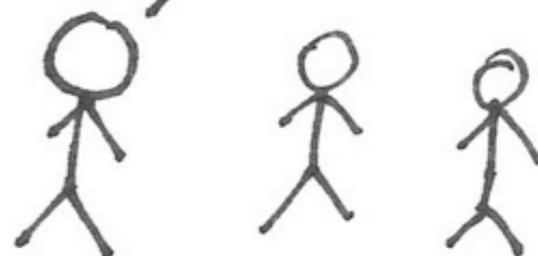
YAHOO!, SUNNYVALE

3 key lessons learned
from hiring and getting
hired:

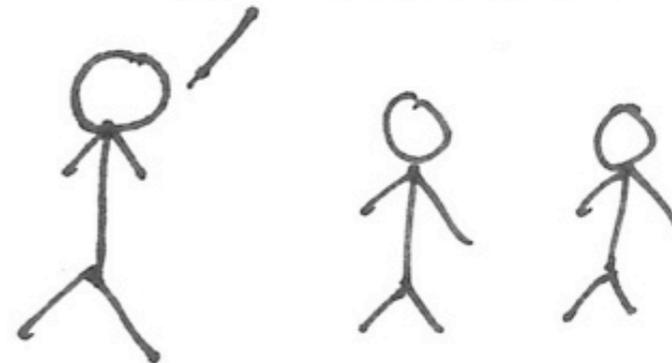
INTERVIEW DAY



SIGH. ANOTHER INTERVIEW.
LET'S SEE IF HE'S
"THE ONE".



JUST SPENT 30 MINUTES
ON HIS BLOG. THIS GUY
REALLY GETS IT.



1.

building credibility
before you even walk
through that door =>
priceless

2.

PM roles usually
require prior
experience:
the catch-22

YOU



YOU + RESUME



ABC INC. ZYNGA

EBAY INC.

FACEBOOK

APPLYING + RESEARCHING



INTERVIEWING



YOU, SMARTER



3.

job hunting makes you
smarter

So, what are hiring
managers looking for?

take a step back:
what does a product
manager do?

Marty Cagan

the product manager is
responsible for
discovering a product
that is useful, usable,
and feasible

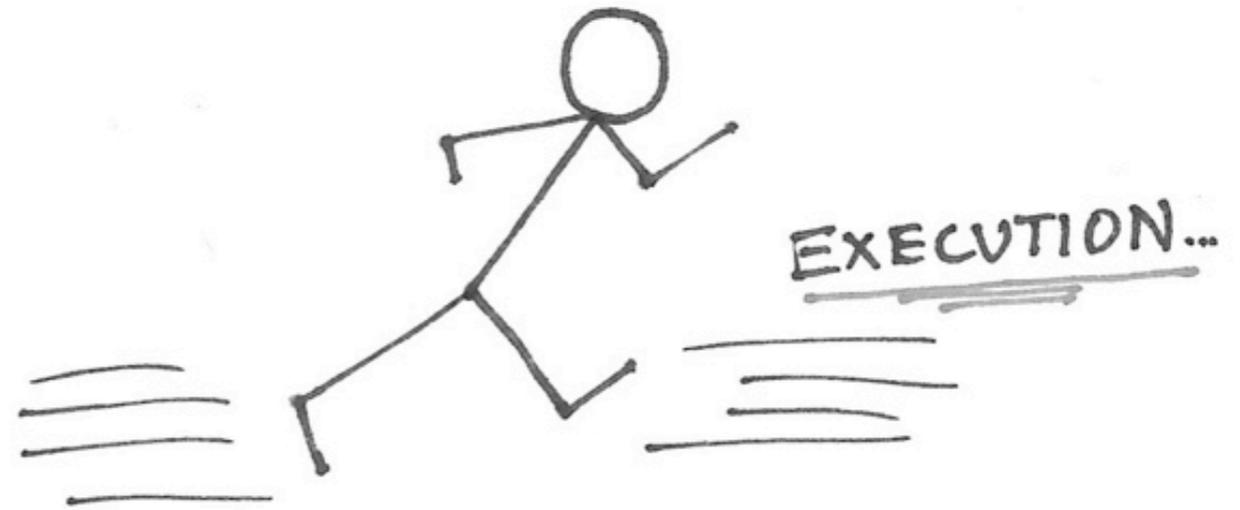
Shreyas' addendum:

DISCOVER

1. DEFINE



2. LAUNCH



the 5 essential attributes
of PMs:

1.

has product sense

product sense =
the ability to *usually*
make the right product
decisions - both macro
and micro

2.

is smart

3.

gets things done

4.

is a culture fit

5.

has technical skills

technical skills =

has domain expertise +

understands technology

Good PM

1. has product sense
2. is smart
3. gets things done
4. is a culture fit
5. has technical skills

the search:

where to look for PM
jobs

the usual places...

btw, LinkedIn works
pretty well for PM jobs

look and apply for new
positions every day

start-up job search tip

use crunchbase

Funding Rounds

 TechCrunch Research Q2 2009 report - \$149 »

Date	Name	Round	Size	Investors
10/09	Threshold Pharmaceuticals	Unattributed	\$35M	N/A
10/09	Epizyme	Series B	\$32M	Bay City Capital Amgen Ventures Astellas Venture Management MPM Capital Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers
10/09	PopCap Games	Unattributed	\$22.5M	Meritech Capital Partners Larry Bowman John McCaw
10/09	ChaiLabs	Unattributed	\$1.1M	N/A
10/09	ZoomSafer	Seed	\$1M	N/A
10/09	Visible Measures	Series C	N/A	DAG Ventures
10/09	Yummly	Seed	N/A	N/A
10/09	DeepDyve	Series A	\$5M	N/A
10/09	Intelepeer	Unattributed	\$4M	ATEL Ventures
10/09	TEOCO Corporation	Unattributed	\$60M	TA Associates
10/09	Flogs.com	Unattributed	€2M	N/A
10/09	Zattikka	Seed	N/A	Atomico Ventures
10/09	Howcast	Series B	€1M	N/A

Read more at:
<http://bit.ly/startupjobs>

start a blog if you don't
have one

the accidental A/B test

A

BLOG:

[Hand-drawn lines representing text]

B

MISSING!

[Hand-drawn lines representing text]

No Batteries Included - Shreyas Doshi's blog

A product guy's view of product management and the web

[« What does a product manager do? | Main | What is your daytime email address? How about your evening-time email address? »](#)

MARCH 03, 2008

Product Marketing Manager != Product Manager

A cursory glance through "Responsibilities" section of the job postings for "Product Manager" and "Product Marketing Manager" reveals that there is a great deal of confusion between these titles. Many postings that advertise a product marketing manager position are really looking for a product manager, and vice versa.

The role of a product manager, as I have recently described [here](#), is fundamentally different from that of a product marketing manager. There is always some overlap, but, in general, they demand a different set of skills for success.

I can best describe my view of the difference in the responsibilities of a product manager and those of a product marketing manager by using the well-known [4 P's model](#) of marketing activities. In the scope of activities defined by the 4 P's, the product manager is responsible for "Product" and the product marketing manager is responsible for "Price", "Place", and "Promotion". Its a simple distinction and it almost always works.

Posted at 03:53 PM in [productmanagement](#) | [Permalink](#)

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A:

more interesting
conversations,
references to blog posts,
higher success rate

B: lower success rate

*but, I can't think of any
topics to write about*

observation: compared
to other fields, theres
almost no info. on the
web on the practice of
product management

IDEAS FOR
PM BLOG POSTS

HOW TO
MANAGE A
LAUNCH

5 MISTAKES I'VE
MADE AS A PM
& WHAT I LEARNED

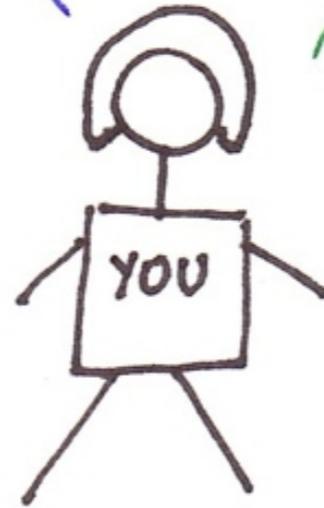
HOW TO DO AN
EFFECTIVE EXEC.
REVIEW

HOW TO BE A
MORE PRODUCTIVE
PM

ESSENTIAL
READING LIST
FOR PRODUCT
MANAGERS

WHY POSTERIOUS
IS AWESOME &
HOW TO MAKE IT
AWESOMER

HOW TO WORK
EFFECTIVELY WITH
SALES/ENG/UX/....



the search:
transitioning into product
management from other
roles

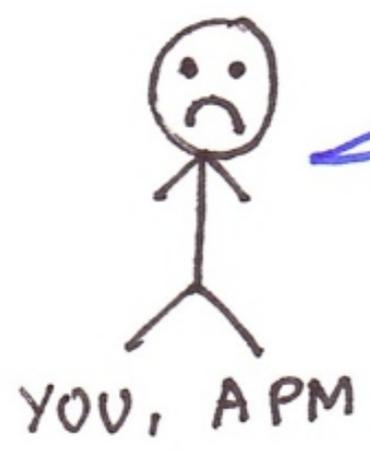
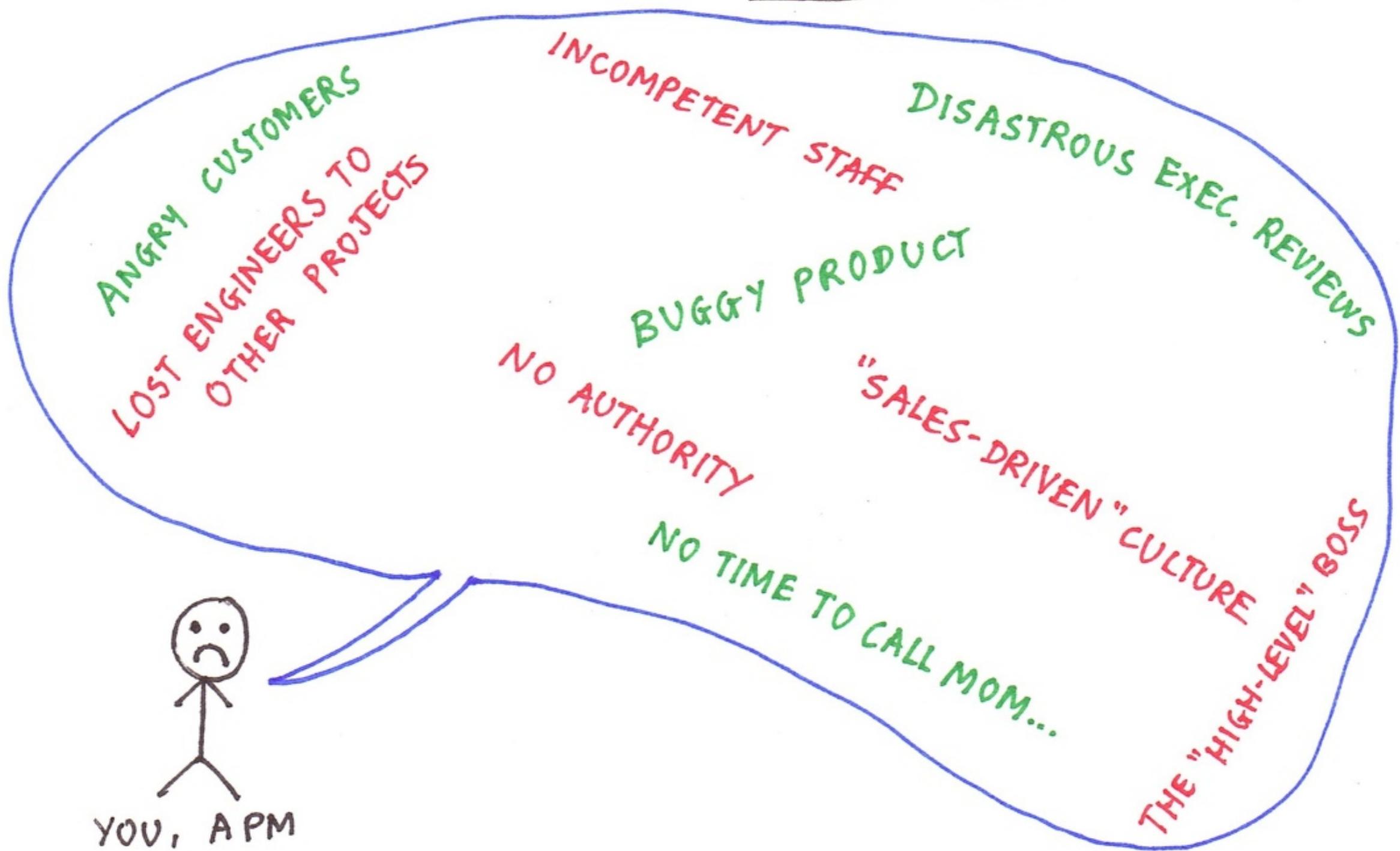
first, be sure that you'll
enjoy product management

WHEN I BECOME PM.....



YOU, NOT A PM

CONGRATS, YOU'RE NOW A PM....



talk to at least 8 product
managers about the good
and (especially) the bad

still want to do this PM
thing?

splendid.

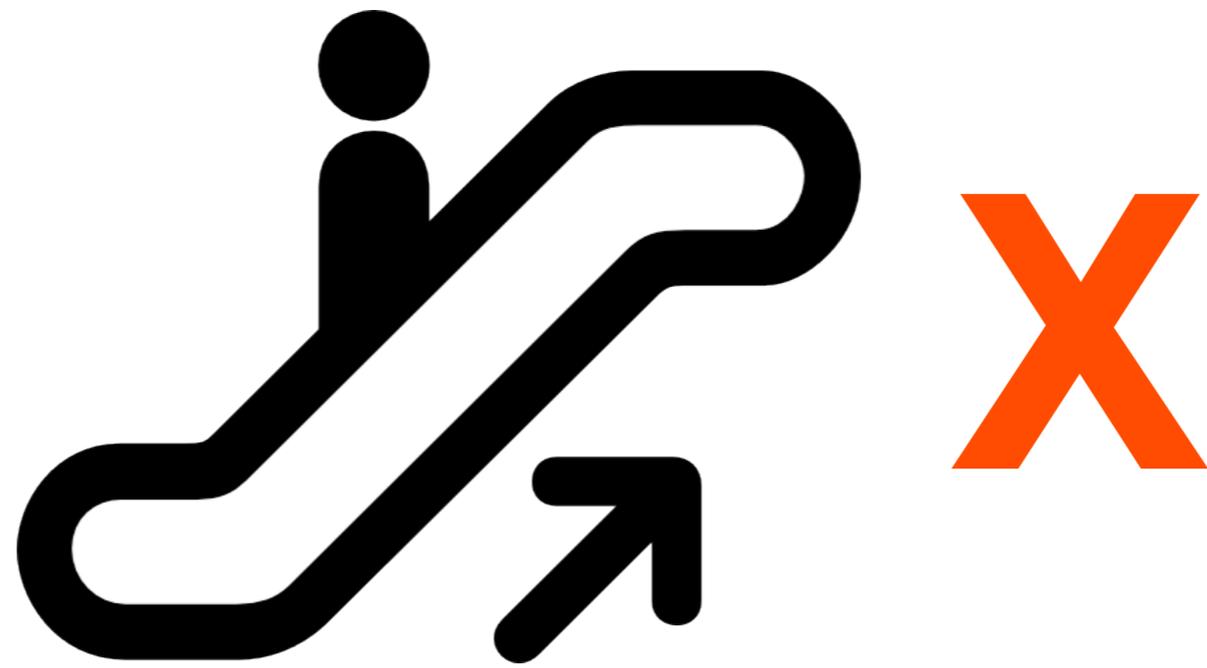
so what is the best place to
go to become a PM?

wrong answer:

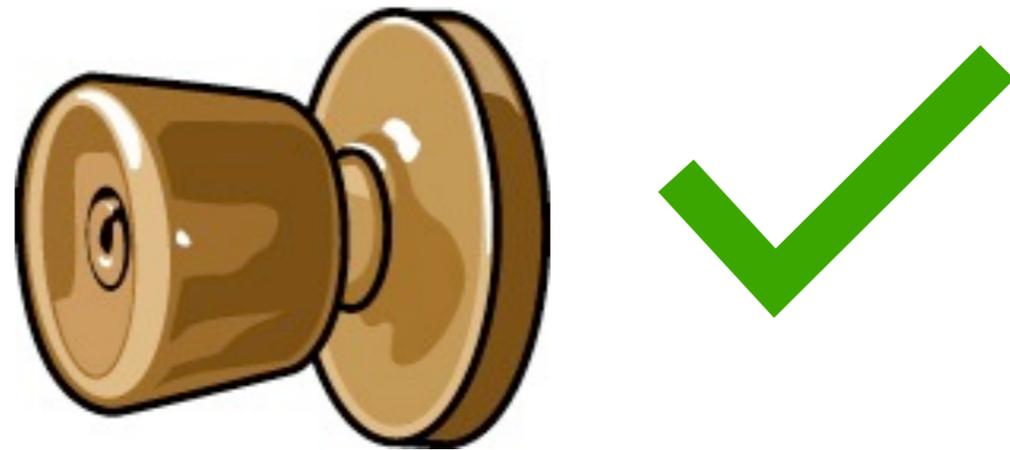
business school

don't fall for the *deferred life*
plan

the
“MBA first, PM next”
mindset is harmful



an MBA degree is not an
escalator. its a door-knob



confirm if your MBA
expectations are realistic

spend at least 20 hours with
the best, free career
research tool on the planet

?

Basic Account: Upgrade

Welcome, Shreyas Doshi · [Add Connections](#) · [Settings](#) · [Help](#) · [Sign Out](#)

LinkedIn® [Home](#) [Profile](#) [Contacts](#) [Groups](#) [Jobs](#) [Inbox](#) [More...](#)

People ▾  [Advanced](#)

[Join XO's Partner Channel - XO pays Partners top commissions and provides leading sales support - From David Sambrook](#)

Inbox

Action Items: [Invitations \(6\)](#). [InMails \(13\)](#). [See all messages »](#)

People You May Know

 [Rigo Avila Jr](#) (2nd) [Invite](#) [Add](#)

Advanced People Search

Reference Search

Saved Searches

Keywords:

First Name:

Last Name:

Location: Located in or near:

Country:

Postal Code: [Lookup](#)

Within:

Title:

Company:

School:

- Industries:
- Insurance
 - International Affairs
 - International Trade and Development
 - Internet
 - Investment Banking

- Relationship:
- All LinkedIn Members
 - 1st Connections
 - 2nd Connections
 - Group Members
 - 3rd + Everyone Else

Groups: [Join a group](#)

- Language:
- All Languages
 - English
 - Spanish
 - German
 - French
 - Others

Sort By:

Views:

Search

what is the best place to go
to become a PM?

right answer:

your current company

get hands-on PM
experience at your current
company. get the skills and
perspective you'll need for
people to take you seriously
when you apply for PM jobs

How?

observation: PMs are super-
busy people and can always
use help from capable co-
workers

1.

approach your PM - offer to
help out

be specific about what you'll
do, for how long, what the
goal is

2.

shadow PMs at their core
team meetings

3.

you already work on a
product. become the biggest
source of ideas for that
product. implement them
become “hard to ignore”

wait...

this is too much work

isn't there an easier way?

its about being resourceful

which is a key quality of
PMs

so treat this as a test of your
PM-suitability

4.

take a (good) PM class.

esp. useful for learning the
PM vocabulary for your
future interviews

do this for at least 6 months

highlight this experience
during your job search

more doors will open for
you now

the resume:

1.

the Summary is important
for the go/no-go decision

keep it short and real

if you have technical
background, mention it

remove the buzzwords

e.g. fortune 500, synergies,
C-level, CxO, product
management executive,
team player, cross-
functional, strategically
strategizing the strategies..

impress with facts, not with
big words that make you
look important

(because they don't)

Bad:

a visionary product
management executive with
vast strategic experience
driving operational
efficiencies at Fortune 100
enterprises with C-level
visibility

??

Better:
5 years of experience
building enterprise
monitoring products for
companies such as IBM,
HP, Applied Materials.
Products generated more
than 200 million revenue

2.

Don't write **everything**
about your product and
everything you did

three bullet points max:

- WHAT WAS THE PRODUCT
- WHY WAS IT SPECIAL (IMPACT)
- KEY CHALLENGES YOU OVERCAME

3.

include hooks - things that pique the reader's curiosity and become conversation points during the interview

e.g.

- Developed a creative solution to the problem of integrating two ticketing systems whose APIs were not available to us. The solution to this problem enabled the product to succeed in its pilot phase

4.

include links

e.g. info about your
product, or link to the
product itself, or even your
blog posts

radical idea - include a
small screenshot of your
most important product

5.

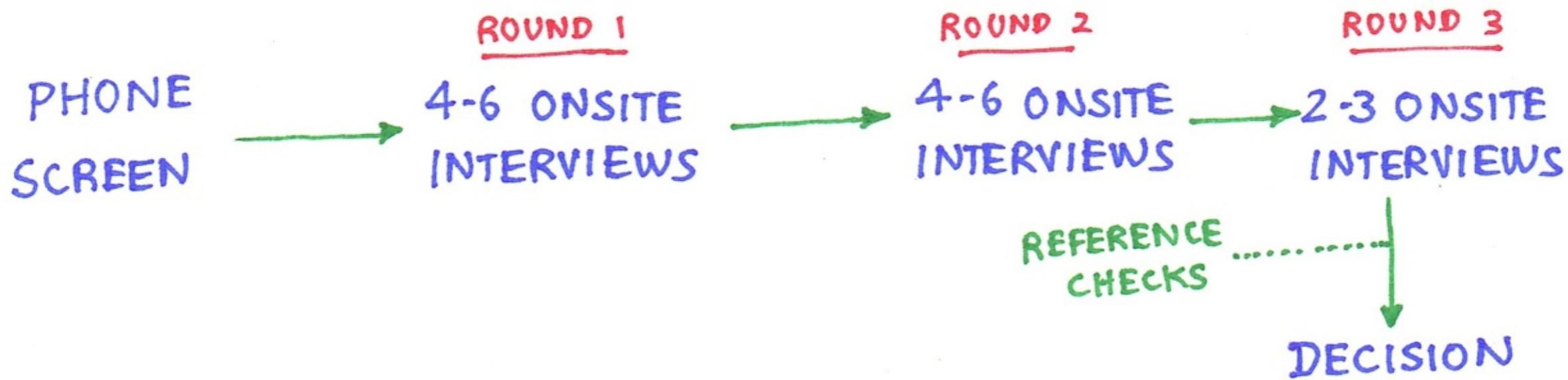
clearly highlight career wins

e.g. promoted to Group PM
within X years, given Y
additional responsibility

the interview:

the 3 types of PM interview
processes







WATCH 'EM DO
THE JOB RATHER
THAN JUST HEAR ABOUT
HOW THEY'D DO IT

the categories of questions
in PM interviews:

1.
product-sense questions

2.

product management basics

e.g.

what does a PM do

what are the key challenges
of the PM job

how to prioritize features

3. process-related

e.g.

how to manage a complex
launch

how to deal with a difficult
team member

4.

past projects or products

e.g.

why did you choose **X** over
Y

how did you deal with **Z**
failure

5.
brain teasers/problem-
solving

e.g.

Joe's weight: 140 lbs
weight of each stone: 5 lbs

how can Joe get 3 stones
across a bridge that can
only take 150 lbs of load?

6. domain expertise

e.g.

how is company X
positioned vs. company Y

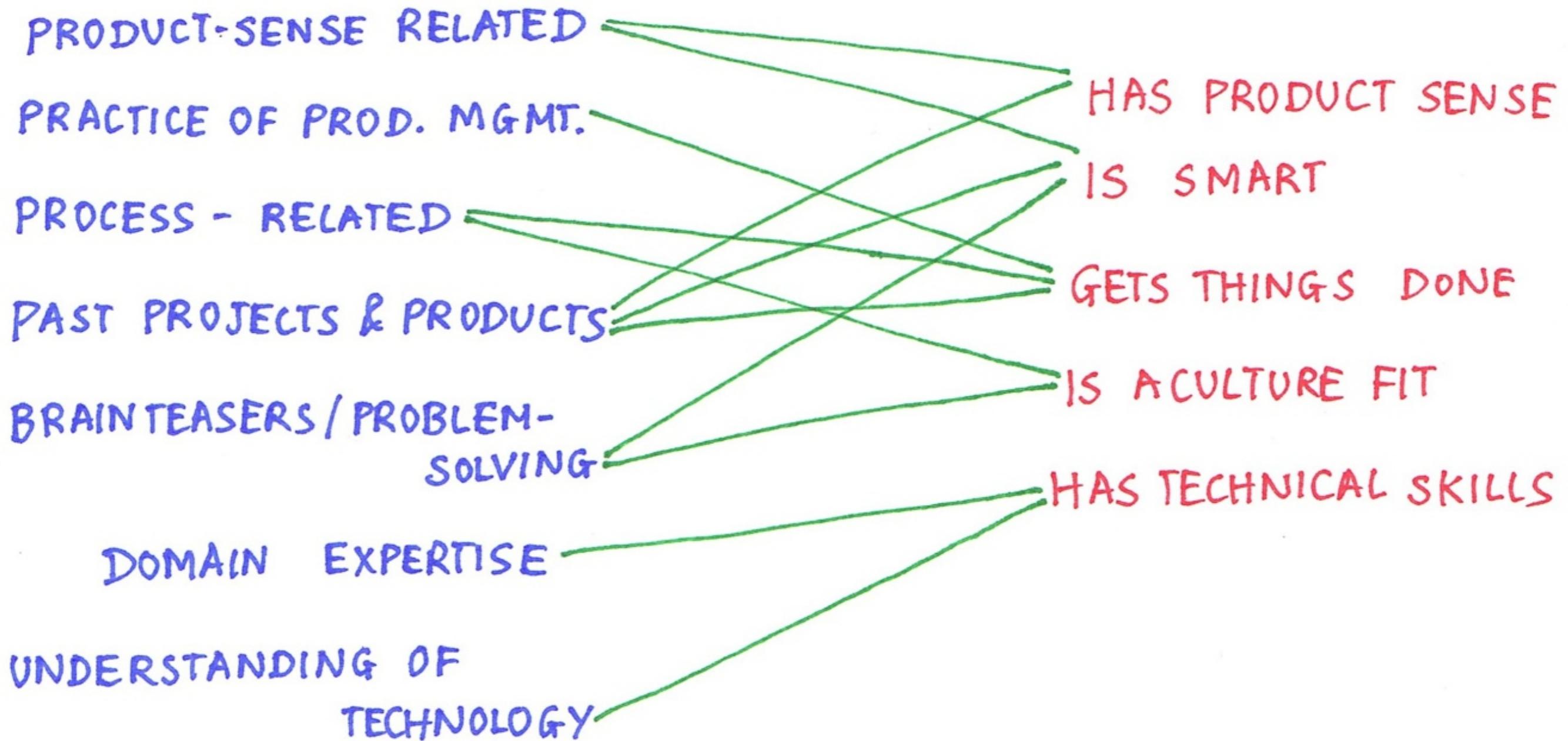
what are the 4 key pain
points for customers in our
vertical

7.
understanding of
technology

look familiar?

INTERVIEW QUESTION CATEGORY

ESSENTIAL PM ATTRIBUTES



on technical questions:

observation: engineering
usually has huge say in the
hiring decision

you must be able to explain
the basics of the
technologies your product
depends on

e.g. for consumer-internet

http, ssl, dns, html, ajax,
javascript, cookies, GET,
POST, web servers,

bad idea:

saying “i am a business
person. next question
please”

as a PM, technology is your
business

on product-sense questions:

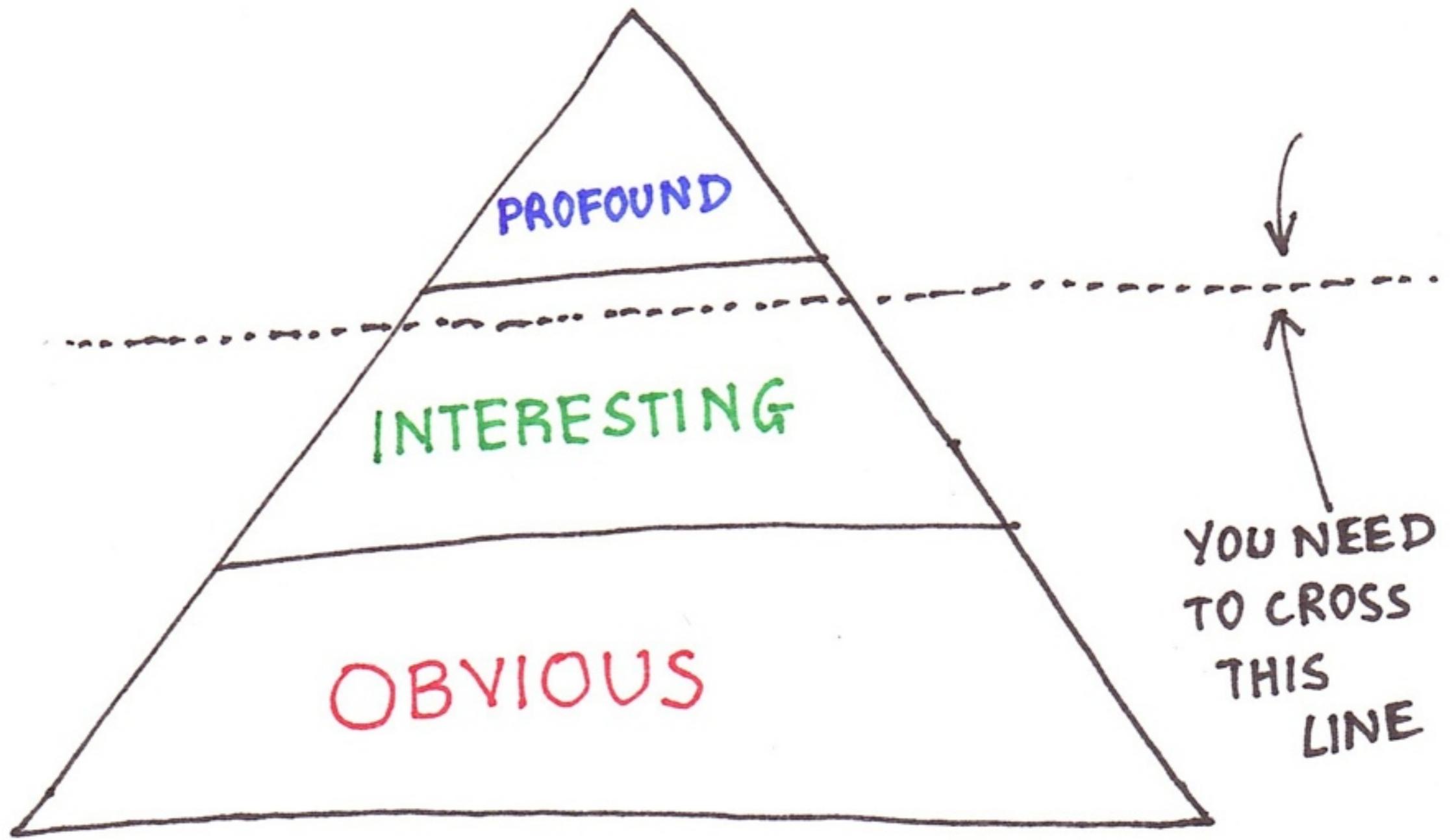
e.g.

your favorite product and

why

compare facebook and

twitter



true success = interviewer
has learned something new
from you today

on product exercises:

some examples

write a mini-PRD

draw rough wireframes

present a proposal on X

tips for success in product
exercises:

practice is key

Mark Twain

It takes more than three
weeks to prepare a good
impromptu speech

1. clarify the objectives
2. cover the top issues first, then go into detail
3. show options considered
4. point out drawbacks of your choice

okay to say “i don’t know”

practice - corollary:

if you **absolutely love** a particular company, wait a bit before interviewing there

you'll get noticeably better
after your first 2-3
interviews elsewhere

ensure you're interviewing
with that dream company
after that

finally, you must know the company's products *really* well. come up with ways you'd improve them. but you will be lacking a lot of context, so be aware of that

the choice:

congratulations, you have
some offers

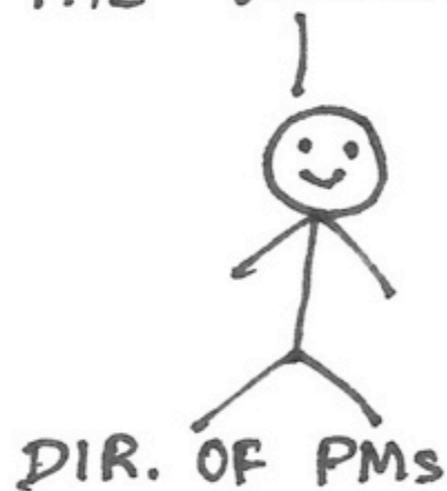
choose carefully

some PM jobs that (usually)
suck

YOUR FIRST PROJECT IS TO
FIGURE OUT OUR CHINA PRODUCT STRATEGY

EXACTLY ZERO. YOU NEED TO
CONVINCE THE PRODUCT PM TO
ADD THE FEATURES TO HIS ROADMAP.

DIDN'T WE TELL YOU ABOUT
THE WRESTLING MATCH?



GREAT! HOW MANY ENGINEERS
DO I GET TO HELP BUILD THESE
FEATURES?

HMMM..... HOW DO I DO
THAT?



1.
the PM without any
engineers

Corollary:

the PM who's not in-charge
of an actual product

WE'RE READY TO SHIP ON THE
DATE WE COMMITTED

AS PER OUR INFLATED SCHEDULE

I KNOW. BUT THAT'LL REQUIRE
US TO RE-BUILD THE BINARIES.
MIS-SPELLINGS ARE P3 BUGS -
NOT LAUNCH GATING.

YOU HAVE 2 OPTIONS:

1. BLAME QA - THEY MISSED THE BUG.
2. CHANGE THE PRODUCT NAME



ENG. MGR.

WAIT, THERES A MIS-SPELLING
ON THE MAIN PAGE. WE NEED TO
FIX IT BEFORE SHIPPING.

BUT IN THIS CASE, THE NAME OF
THE PRODUCT IS MIS-SPELLED. CAN'T
WE DO SOMETHING?



YOU

2.

the PM in a company that
doesn't consider
engineering as a core
strength

Result:
engineering at such
companies becomes a
“service organization” -
doesn't attract good
engineers - engineering isn't
engaged in the product

WELCOME TO THE TEAM, JOE.
YOUR JOB IS TO DELIVER THIS
MRD TO ENGINEERING.

THE ENGINEERS WON'T GET INTO
THE SAME ROOM WITH THEM.
THAT'S WHY WE HIRED YOU. YOUR
JOB IS TO ENSURE THIS GETS TO THEM.

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, YES,
WE REALLY NEED A TABLE OF CONTENTS
IN THE DOC.



OKAY. JUST CURIOUS, WHY WON'T
THE MARKETING MANAGERS DO IT?

OKAY. CAN I REVIEW THE
REQUIREMENTS AND MAKE
CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT?



YOU, THE NEW PM

3.

the PM in a company that
doesn't understand the role
of Product Management

Corollary:
the PM who reports into
Marketing

Recap - heres what you
learned today:

Rule #1:

job hunting makes you
smarter - so enjoy it

on transitions:

know very well what you're
getting into

Rule # 2:

you don't know what you're
getting into unless you've
spoken with 8 people
who've gone through the
same thing

learning about product
management:

only way to learn is to
actually do the job

Rule # 3:

do the job before you get
the title, not the other way
around

Rule # 4:

MIBA ! = 

MIBA = 

Rule # 5:

best place to position
yourself for your next
career step is where you are
now

transitions require planning:

start 6-12 months before

you have to make any

transition

Rule # 6:

keep your resume short,
show you've worked on
important products,
use hooks

Rule # 7:

build credibility even before
they've met you.

start a blog

succeeding in the interview:

you now know what to
expect

prepare & practise

Rule # 8:

join a company that gets
prod mgmt, builds good
products, has smart
engineers

And finally ...

Once you have landed that
dream PM job ...

make great products

That's all
Good luck!

THE END

WANT MORE?

OKAY...

hiring for a crucial PM
position

Stats:

of resumes, # of
interviews, results

4 lessons learned:

1.

hard to know from
traditional interviews if
someone will actually
perform well

Jason Calacanis

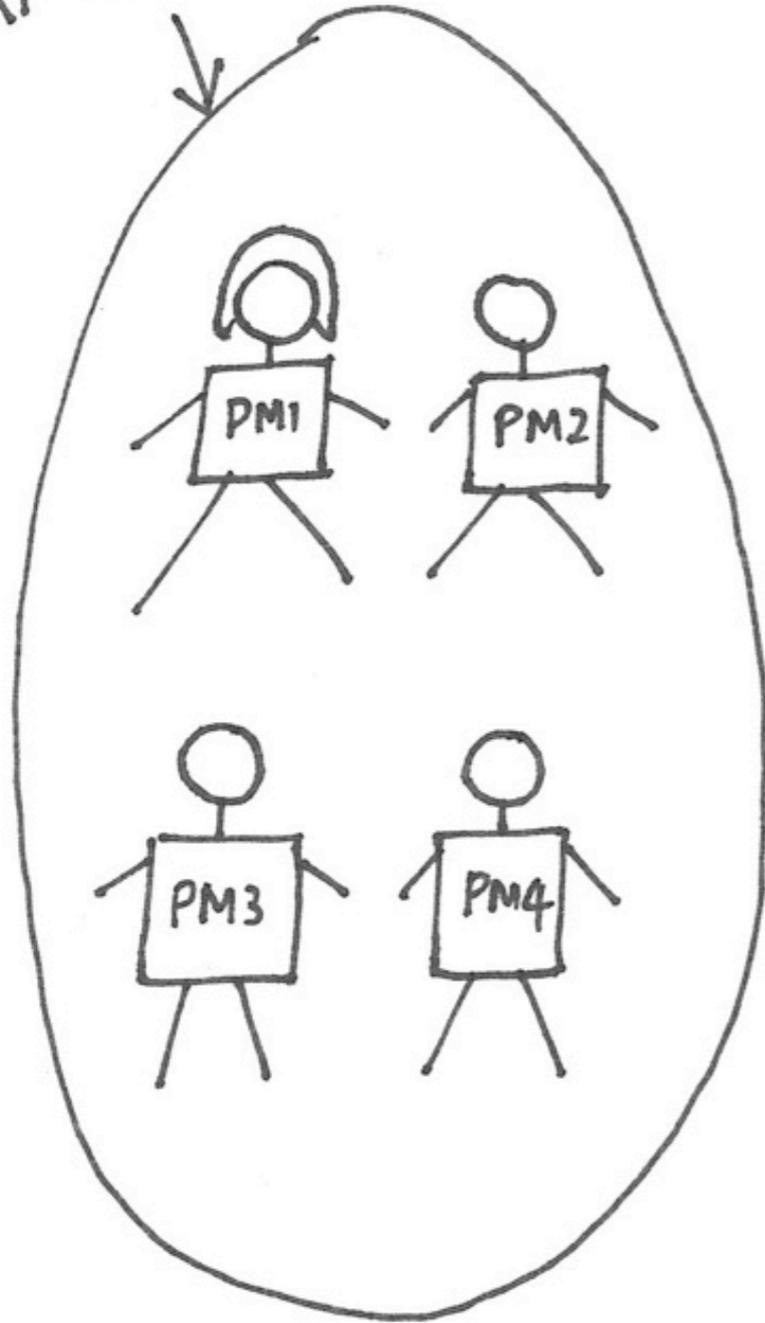
The only way to know
if someone will do a
good job is to watch
them do the job

2.

don't use the “default”
interviewing team

THE DEFAULT INTERVIEW TEAM

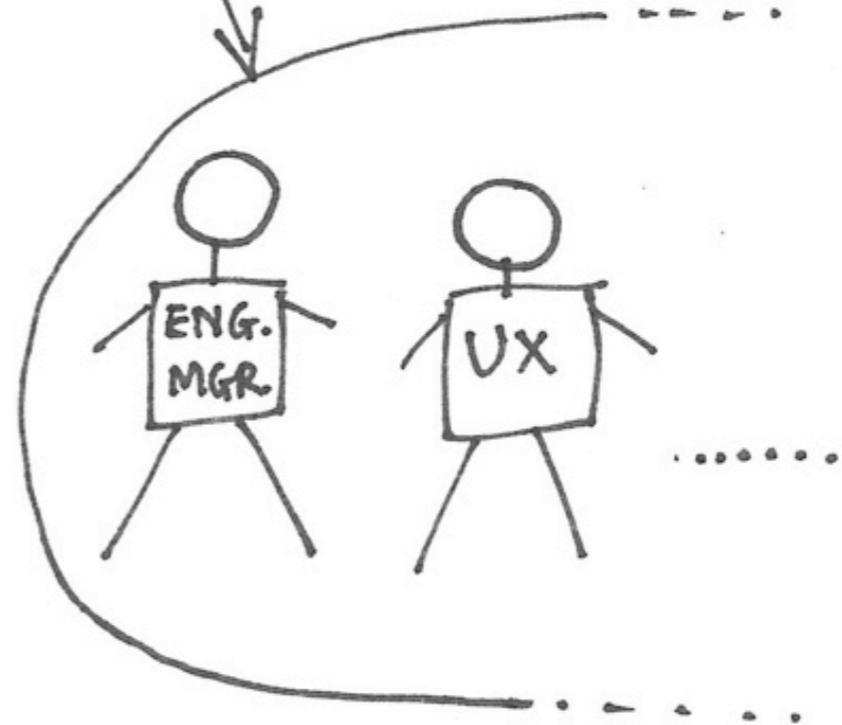
MY TEAM



THE BOSS



OTHER FOLKS



be sure to include the
best PMs from outside
your group - esp. those
who have no interest in
seeing your position
filled

3.

don't use the “default”
interviewing process



4.

candidates who made it
a no-brainer for me to
decide: rare

On “job hunting makes
you smarter”:

corollary:
even updating your
resume makes you
smarter

tip:

update & send out your
resume even if you're
not looking. response
rate will tell you
whether you're working
on the right projects

be a user of the product
before you apply

(easier for web
products)

tips on writing blog posts:

1. short better than long, but not too short
2. bullets/lists better than paragraphs
3. have an opinion, state it, and don't hedge

4. don't point out problems without offering solutions
5. don't disparage anyone or anything
6. humor is okay

on transitions to PM:

typical transitions into PM:

engineering, pre-sales, pro
serv, business analyst

project/program manager

QA, support

not typical:

marketing, biz dev, sales,
user experience

the search: PMs changing
verticals

big transitions:
enterprise => consumer
internet

consumer internet =>
mobile

hardware => enterprise

smaller transitions:

online advertising \Rightarrow social

networking \Rightarrow

virtualization

b2b \Rightarrow casual games

these transitions are hard

how to crack the catch-22?

get the experience you
need, where you are now

create the change

Seth Godin

Your work is your platform

e.g. want to go from
enterprise to consumer
internet?

create a web 2.0 aspect for
your enterprise product

*can't do - this won't work in my
company - they won't let me do
anything novel*

have you tried 7 times?

if yes, then just do it outside
of work

the search: do I need an
MBA to do product
management?

it will open some doors that
may have been closed
before

but it will not make you
CEO-material or even put
you on a fast track career

e.g. no one becomes a big-shot VC or a VP Product right out of business school

for that, you have to do something (much) more amazing than just getting into Stanford GSB

unless ...

you want to completely
change both **what you do**
and **where you do it**

e.g. from being an *engineer in
tech* to *PM in consumer
packaged goods*

if you do decide to go to
business school, have
realistic expectations

look for people who had
profiles similar to yours
before they went to business
school

check what job(s) they
landed after getting out

btw, the LinkedIn tip
applies to all transitions, not
just those to business school

transitions - summary:

be sure the transition to PM
is for you

get the experience that
opens doors for you

don't let “constraints” get in
the way

plan well ahead

start well before you *have* to
get that next job

a transition requires 6-12
months of concerted effort

finally, expect many
rejections

don't avoid applying
because you'll get rejected

be secure about who you
are and your talents

resume:

don't try to come across as a
VP/SVP of Product when
you're applying for an
individual contributor PM
position

interviewing - summary:

prepare well
&
practise

enjoy the process, no matter
how grueling

it will show

and remember, interviewing
makes you smarter - so *they*
are doing *you* a favor

the choice:

some concrete positive signs
to look for:

1.

the company understands
the importance and the role
of product management

(go back to Marty's
definition)

2.

the company has smart
engineers

3.

the company (mostly) has a
history of building great
products

4.

the hiring manager spends more time talking about the core product, and less talking about “stakeholders”, “reporting”, “product council reviews”, “building consensus”

5.

the director and VP of
product are actually
product people.
not “managers”

6.

you respect your prospective
peers' accomplishments

7.

the specific product you'll
work on is super-important
for the organization