

Microsoft Program Manager Interview - 80 Sample Questions, Process, and Prep

The fact that it's difficult to find someone who hasn't been influenced, directly or indirectly, by a Microsoft product says a lot about the tech behemoth. It's no surprise that you're aiming for the coveted position of Microsoft Program Manager. All you have to do is conduct research, plan ahead of time, and answer the Microsoft project manager interview questions.

Program Managers or PMs are also known as Technical Program Managers or TPMs. At Microsoft, PMs are expected to deep-dive into technical aspects when planning, designing, and outlining the roadmap of a product, in addition to performing all the duties required of a product manager.

In this article, we'll cover everything you need to know about the Microsoft Program Manager interview and its hiring process. The points we'll look at are:

1. Microsoft Program Manager Interview Process and Timeline
2. Topics to Prepare for Microsoft Program Manager Interview
3. How to Prepare for Microsoft Program Manager Interview
4. 80 Sample Questions for Microsoft Program Manager Interview
5. Roles and Responsibilities of Microsoft Program Manager
6. Microsoft Technical Manager Salary
7. FAQs on Microsoft Program Manager Interview Questions

Microsoft Program Manager Interview Process and Timeline

A typical [Microsoft Interview Process](#) for a Program Manager can take anywhere between **4-8 weeks** to complete. This is because the volume of applicants is vast, and timelines vary with different divisions at Microsoft.

The Microsoft PM interview steps are:

1. Getting the Interview
2. Phone Screening
3. On-site Interviews
 - 3.1. Face-to-Face Technical Interview

3.2. Systems Design Round

3.3. HR Interview

4. Results

1. Getting the Interview

The first step in the Microsoft Program Manager interview process is to bag an interview with the company. You will need:

- A compelling [cover letter](#)
- A [resume](#) fine-tuned to the expectations of the PM job description
- As many reliable referrals as you can get

2. Phone Screening

If your resume is shortlisted for a Microsoft PM interview, a recruiter will call you to test the waters and get to know you better. It may or may not include a video call.

A Microsoft Technical Program Manager phone interview is a mix of [behavioral questions](#) to see if you are a good culture fit and a product design coding assessment on a remote online editor to gauge your technical skill levels as a software developer. This round lasts for around **45-50 minutes**.

Find out [how to face phone screen interviews](#) with ease.

3. On-site Interviews

Once you pass the phone screening and preliminary technical interview, you get called for an on-site interview. These Microsoft Program Manager on-site interviews are based on product design, technical knowledge, behavioral aspects, and strategy. **Each of the rounds lasts about an hour.**

3.1. Face-to-Face Technical Interview

In this round of Microsoft PM interviews, you are given a real-life problem that you need to solve with code on a whiteboard. The assignments are usually related to data structures and algorithms. Recruiters want to see how you approach a given problem, how you plan your code, and how you execute your plan.

3.2. Systems Design Round

This round is conducted for more experienced software engineers. You will be asked to build a system design around a given problem. [System design interviews](#) test your ability to design large systems with various constraints and requirements.

3.3 HR Interview

This round focuses on evaluating whether you are culturally a good fit for Microsoft or not. It involves [behavioral questions](#). Check out the following articles for sample interview questions:

- [Microsoft Interview Questions](#)
- [How to Answer the “Why Microsoft?” Interview Question](#)

4. Results

This is the final act! The HR department will contact you with an offer if you have been selected. This time varies, as data aggregation and making the final call take time and depend on several factors.

Topics to Prepare for Microsoft Program Manager Interview

A program manager is expected to be well-versed in data structures and algorithms as well as systems design. You can plan your prep for Microsoft Project Manager interview questions around the following topics:

- [Arrays](#)
- [Sorting Algorithms](#)
- [Trees and Graphs](#)
- [Recursion](#)
- Strings
- Graph Algorithms
- Dynamic Programming
- Hash Tables and Queues
- Linked Lists
- Product Design
- Systems Design
- Product Improvement

Sample Questions for Microsoft Program Manager Interview

Practicing is the key to cracking any interview, and the same goes for Program Manager interviews at Microsoft. In this section, we have listed some of the frequently asked questions at Microsoft TPM interviews. We have categorized them for your convenience.

Most-Asked Program Manager Interview Questions at Microsoft:

1. How would you improve Microsoft Outlook?
2. How can Microsoft integrate LinkedIn with its core products?
3. Design a mobile app for Microsoft Teams.
4. How will you explain collaborative filtering to a five-year-old?
5. Design an elevator system.
6. Design a door for the visually impaired.
7. Should company X create a product Y for children?

General/End-to-End Microsoft TPM Interview Questions:

7. Describe a time when you had to manage an end-to-end technical program.
8. Describe how you would manage a hypothetical project XYZ.
9. What makes a successful technical program manager, according to you?
10. Elaborate on the difference between program management and technical program management.
11. What is your methodology for approaching projects and programs?

Microsoft TPM Interview Questions on Prioritization:

12. Describe a typical day at work.
13. How would you manage a hectic work inbox?
14. Which tech tools do you find most useful?
15. Describe an instance when you delegated a task successfully.
16. What would you do in case you missed a deadline?
17. What is your response to unexpected project changes?

Kick-off/Sunset Microsoft TPM Interview Questions:

18. How will you kick off a program?
19. How will you sunset a program?
20. How will you respond to a project with no timeline or kick-off?

Microsoft TPM Interview Questions on Planning:

21. How will you create a strategic roadmap for your program?
22. How will you handle additional requirements that may come up unannounced in the middle of a project?
23. How will you build a forecasting tool?

Microsoft TPM Interview Questions on Risk:

24. What is your take on handling risks in a project?
25. Describe an instance when you had to manage a major risk in a program?

Microsoft TPM Interview Questions on Agile Methodologies:

26. How will you draft an Agile project?
27. How will you compare agile and waterfall methodology?
28. What will you do if you find a bug in your program just before it is time to release it?
29. Tell us about some of the agile methodologies you are familiar with.
30. What core components of Scrum are the most and least valuable according to you?
31. In a planning meeting, which sizing methodology will you use?
32. How will you prepare for a sprint planning meeting? How will you decide the sprint length?

Microsoft TPM Interview Questions on Technical Systems Design:

33. How would you design a search engine?
34. How would you design a shared drive?
35. How would you design Twitter?
36. How would you design a messaging system?
37. How would you design a vaccine rollout system?
38. Design a URL shortening service like bit.ly.
39. Design your own traffic control system.
40. Design a limit order book for trading systems.
41. Design a platform like Instagram.
42. Design a universal file-sharing app like Dropbox.
43. Design a secure ATM.
44. Redesign Facebook's feature Newsfeed.
45. Design a platform like Airbnb.
46. Design a parking lot.
47. Design an autocomplete feature for a search engine.
48. Design a vending machine in Java.
49. Design an API rate limiter.
50. Design a video streaming service like Netflix.
51. Design a ticketing management system for the zoo.

Microsoft TPM Interview Questions on Explaining Tech Concepts:

52. How does Agile work?
53. How do satellites work?
54. How does the Internet work?
55. How does a TV's remote control work?
56. How does an AC's condenser work?
57. How does the clutch system of an automobile work?
58. How do Instagram filters work?
59. How does a web crawler work?

Microsoft TPM Coding Interview Questions:

60. Find the missing number in a given integer array of 1 to 100.

61. Find the largest and smallest number in an unsorted integer array.
62. Find the duplicate number in a given integer array.
63. How will you remove duplicate nodes in an unsorted linked list?
64. Find the middle element of a singly linked list in one pass. ([Solution](#))
65. How will you print duplicate characters from a string?
66. How will you print the first non-repeated character from a string?
67. How will you check if two strings are anagrams of each other?
68. How is a string reversed using recursion?
69. How will you perform [preorder traversal](#) in a binary tree?
70. How can you implement a binary search tree?
71. How will you traverse a binary tree in preorder without recursion?

Microsoft TPM Interview Questions on Leadership:

72. How are your responsibilities different from those of your project manager?
73. Which tools do you rely on to successfully perform your duties?
74. What are your top metric choices for measuring success?
75. What can you tell us about program charters?
76. How will you define and control program goals?
77. What is your strategy for keeping up with the latest tech trends?
78. Tell us about your most recent program.
79. Describe a role where you had to deal with budgeting and resource allocation.
80. Have you ever fallen behind schedule in a project?

How to Prepare for Microsoft Program Manager Interview?

Microsoft Program Managers are responsible for designing and executing end-to-end programs. You must have a knack for planning, prioritizing features, and delivering on time. Program Management will include project kick-off, planning ahead of time, effective execution, monitoring closely, and finally, closing the project properly. Let's discuss a few points that will help you prepare for the various rounds at the Microsoft PM interview:

Technical Interview Preparation for the Microsoft TPM Role

In a Microsoft Technical Program Manager interview, you will be expected to demonstrate your technical knowledge. You should be able to explain every aspect of your coding assignment solution. This is also a test of how well you communicate technical details as you will be working closely with designers, engineers, and cross-functional teams.

When practicing, make it a point to **think out loud** and explain your thought process.

Leadership Interview Preparation for the Microsoft TPM Role

You may be asked standard Microsoft Technical Program Manager interview questions such as describing past experiences of leading a project, collaborating with cross-functional teams, handling difficult associates, and more behavioral questions.

When answering such open-ended questions, use the **STAR or CAR** method to structure your responses. We have covered these methods in detail in the [Amazon Behavioral Interview Questions](#) article.

Systems Design Interview Preparation for the Microsoft TPM Role

Systems design interview questions are meant to test your understanding of large distributed systems that are scalable, reliable, and cost-optimal. Questions about systems design can be tricky as they are often ambiguous, and you will have to deal with the unstructured nature of the discussion. While practicing for Microsoft Product Manager interview questions on systems design, follow these steps to ensure you're covering all ground:

Step 1: Define the key assumptions about the system

Step 2: Define the key features of the system

Step 3: Define the scale of the system

Step 4: Define the data model of the system

Step 5: Design the high-level system

Step 6: Look for bottlenecks in the system

Step 7: Go in-depth on the subsystem

Step 8: Acknowledge the trade-offs

Check out [System Design Interview Preparation Tips](#) for more.

Roles and Responsibilities of Microsoft Program Manager

To answer the Microsoft Product Manager interview questions suitably and to understand your recruiter's expectations from this role, we must first look at what a PM at Microsoft is expected to do:

1. Craft a future-proof product roadmap
2. Carry out competitive analyses and map out strategies to take on the market
3. Foresee which features to build on priority
4. Effectively communicate with customers
5. Collaborate with design and engineering teams
6. Double down the growth curve post-launch and track related metrics

What Exactly Does Microsoft Look for in Program Managers?

In a Microsoft Program Manager interview, the recruiter is looking for potential associates who bring more to the table than just product management skills. Staying true to their core value of **finding excellence in simplicity**, Microsoft looks for the following two qualities in their TPMs:

1. Candidates who **genuinely believe** in Microsoft's products and align with its mission.
2. Candidates with **high potential** as compared to those who already come with significant accomplishments on paper.

Microsoft Technical Program Manager Salary

According to Comparably, a Microsoft Program Manager's average compensation is \$145,360 per year. The annual salary can range from \$113,000 to \$195,000. Your offer, however, will depend on various factors, such as your experience and the value you bring to the organization. How you perform during the Microsoft PM interview and how well you negotiate will decide your final package.

Tips to Negotiate Microsoft Program Manager Salary

- Do not share the current compensation you are receiving.
- Do not share the compensation you are expecting.
- Invest in building a good rapport with the hiring manager.
- Do not insist on receiving offers in writing.
- Ask for a relocation package if it applies to your case.
- Compare your offer with publicly available data.

Salary negotiation is a must-have skill. Read [The Ultimate Guide to Salary Negotiation at FAANG for Software Engineers](#) to hone your negotiation skills and get an offer that matches your value.

FAQs on Microsoft Program Manager Interview Questions

Q1. How to prepare for the Microsoft project manager interview?

Thoroughly research the company. Go over your fundamentals. Come up with a dependable method to answer PM interview questions. Practice as much as you can, by yourself or with your peers.

Q2. How do I prepare for the Microsoft program manager interview?

You can follow an interview prep plan that tackles every TPM recruitment round in detail. Practice as many Microsoft program manager interview questions as you can. You can also go

for an interview prep bootcamp like Interview Kickstart that offers a one-of-its-kind, tailor-made prep interview course for Product Managers.

Q3. How many interview rounds are there in Microsoft for TPMs, and how long does it take?

The Microsoft Program Manager hiring process consists of job application, phone screening, coding assignment, and a set of on-site interviews. A typical process can take up to 2 months or more, depending on which Microsoft segment you have applied in.

Q4. What can be expected in a project management interview?

Be prepared to answer questions related to your organizational skills, experience heading projects, familiarity with the required software, and so on.

Q5. How many rounds can you expect in a Microsoft interview?

Typically, you can expect five rounds - 1 screening interview and 4-5 on-site interviews.

Ready to Nail the Next Microsoft TPM Interview?

Cracking interviews at FAANG and Tier-1 Tech companies like Microsoft require dedicated and strategic prep. Interview Kickstart provides the most comprehensive curriculum and teaching methodologies that have helped over [9,000 engineers](#) crack the most challenging tech interviews.

With IK, you get the unique opportunity to learn from and practice mock interviews with [actual hiring managers and tech leads](#) from FAANG+ companies. What's more? Our programs are tailored to specific domains, including product management, which will help you hone your domain skills further and stand out from the competition.

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