Google Associate Product Manager
Interview Experience

Role: Associate Product Manager

No. of Rounds: 3

Duration of Hiring Process: ~1-2 months

Interviewee: Urvish

Status: Selected

APEX ROUND - DIRECT PRODUCT BASED

Note – Urvish's Profile was directly shortlisted.

:Interviewer: "Let's say you have the opportunity to be the associate product manager for Google Calendar, what parts of the app do you think you'd potentially want to improve?".

Urvish: Let me answer your question in a structured approach so that both you and I are walking through this together.

Phase 1: Clarifying Questions:

Urvish began by asking several clarifying questions to narrow the scope of the problem:

- **Goal:** He asked if the goal was to improve a specific metric like user engagement, monetization, or revenue. The interviewer clarified that the goal was to "generally improve the experience of the app itself".

- **Constraints:** He inquired about any resource or timeline constraints, to which the interviewer replied Not at the moment.

- **Geography:** He asked if the improvement should target a specific geographical location, suggesting that user behavior with Google Calendar differs between countries like the US and India. He proposed focusing on the United States, arguing that adoption is higher there, which the interviewer accepted.

- **Platform:** He asked whether to focus on the mobile app or the browser version. The interviewer specified the iPhone app.

He concluded by reiterating the refined problem statement: "improve Google Maps [Calendar] for iPhone and restricting our geography to the United States...and we are trying to improve primarily user experience and engagement".

Phase 2: Defining the Goal and User Segmentation

- **Product Goal:** Urvish defined the goal as making users "as productive as possible" by reducing context switching and making scheduling easier, positioning Google Calendar as a "One-Stop shop for all scheduling needs". He also connected this to Google's overall mission of making information accessible.

- **User Personas:** He identified four main user groups based on their usage habits and requirements:
  - Students/Professors: Active users managing multiple tasks like projects, classes, meetings, and research.
  - Professionals: A large user segment who use the calendar to micromanage their 9-to-5 workday.
  - Household/Service Industry Users: Less frequent users who schedule specific appointments (e.g., dog cleaning services) or personal tasks (e.g., grocery shopping).
  - Infrequent Users: People who use the calendar for one-off meetings or specific, isolated use cases.

Phase 3: Prioritization and Problem Identification

Prioritized User Group: When asked to focus on one user group, Urvish chose professional workers. He reasoned that they represent a "big chunk of our users," need to be highly productive, and currently perform a lot of context switching.

Pain Points for Professionals: He identified several pain points based on his internship experience:

a. Lacking Priority of Tasks: Professionals often have conflicting meetings (e.g., a one-on-one with a manager vs. an optional info session) and must manually decide which is more important.

b. Difficulty Finding Common Meeting Times: Scheduling group meetings is cumbersome despite calendar visibility features.

c. Scheduling with External Parties: Sharing calendars and availability with people outside the organization can be restrictive.

d. Notifications: He felt notifications could be more helpful in real-time.

e. Email-Based Meeting Creation: Creating a meeting from an email thread requires context switching between Gmail and Google Calendar.

▪ **Biggest Pain Point**: Urvish identified priority-based tasks as the most significant pain point, as it directly impacts productivity.

Phase 4: Validation, Solution, and Metrics:

- **Problem Validation:** When challenged on how he would validate that this is a real problem, Urvish proposed a two-step approach:

  - **Qualitative:** Conduct a user focus group with working professionals, followed by a survey to a larger audience to confirm the pain point.
  - **Quantitative:** He suggested analyzing Google Calendar data to see how many times users change their meetings due to a conflict and how many users have more than one meeting scheduled at the same time.

- **Proposed Solution (MVP):**

  - He envisioned a feature where users can assign a priority level (e.g., P0 to P4) to each event via a dropdown menu, with P0 being the highest.
  - These priorities would be color-coded (e.g., dark blue for high priority, light blue for low). When
  - scheduling a new high-priority meeting, lower-priority events in conflicting slots would be visually "overshadowed" or blurred, indicating they are replaceable. Notifications would also be
  - prioritized, alerting users to the more important meeting first.

- **Measuring Success:**

  - **North Star Metric:** Percentage of meetings where a priority is assigned. He chose this as the North Star metric because it's a leading indicator that shows initial adoption and signals that users find the concept of priority important.
  - **Secondary Metric:** Number of meetings changed or replaced based on priority per user. He viewed this as a lagging indicator that would increase as users become more habituated to the feature..

Interviewer's Feedback and Final Assessment:

The interviewer provided a detailed, section-by-section critique of Urvish's performance.

What Urvish Did Well:

- Structured Approach: He followed a clear, structured process for answering a product design question.
- Good Ideas: He had thoughtful, pre-considered ideas for improving the Calendar, which showed he critically analyzes products he uses.
- Reiterated the Problem: He did a good job of restating the clarified problem to ensure he and the interviewer were aligned.
- Fleshed out Personas: He clearly articulated distinct user segments and their needs.
- Grounded Pain Points in Experience: He used his personal internship experience to explain the pain points, making them relatable.

Areas for Improvement:

- Lacked Depth in Clarification: The interviewer noted that "experience" is a vague term, and Urvish could have asked more granular follow-up questions to demonstrate deeper product insight.
- Weak Rationale for Prioritization: His reason for choosing the US market sounded like it was based on a pre-existing solution rather than a principled, PM-driven approach (e.g., based on impact vs. effort or opportunity size).

- **Confusing Goal with Problems:** His initial goal statement about "reducing context switching" was too narrow and sounded more like a problem to solve than an abstract, high-level goal.
- **Overlapping User Segments**: The interviewer pointed out that his user segments were not mutually exclusive (e.g., an "infrequent user" could also be a "professional") and suggested a more structured segmentation framework.
- **Framing Problems as Solutions**: Some of his "pain points," like "email-based meeting creation," sounded more like a solution. He was advised to always articulate the underlying user problem first (e.g., "it takes too much time and effort to coordinate meetings from long email threads").
- **Unconvincing North Star Metric:** The interviewer wasn't sold on his North Star metric, pointing out that assigning a priority doesn't directly translate to improved productivity. Urvish needed to better articulate the logical chain connecting the two.
- **Missed "Googliness" Factor:** He didn't articulate a long-term, "moonshot" vision for the feature. The interviewer suggested he should have hinted at the endgame, where Google might automatically prioritize meetings for users based on its data.

Final Verdict: The interviewer assessed Urvish's performance as "on the fence," leaning towards "no hire." While his ideas were good, the way he presented and structured them needed improvement to demonstrate a more mature PM mindset.