Human Made Interview Answers
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1) Can you tell me a bit about your current role and what prompted you to apply to Human Made?

>> *Current—or most previous relevant roles:*

>>> ***Most recent roles: Code for America (/"CfA") and Code for Philly***

- As a CfA project-management fellow (this past summer through early fall), I helped with the implementation of the Open-Columbus CfA chapter (/"brigade")'s "impact-sprint."
  - Details of the project: a strategic ramp-up of the GIS-mapping of sidewalks and crosswalks in the city of Columbus (OH)—for the AccessMap app—via additional volunteer-recruitment, and provision of required technology (e.g., a Zoom account) and other resources.
- Code for Philly: with the PHLASK app project, I facilitated meetings, improved documentation practices, coordinated tasks among different work teams (e.g. civic/administrative, development, UX/UI, data, etc.). I also worked as a software-development trainee via a hands-on contribution with implementing the app's V.2 upgrade.
- Main takeaway from both the above and other roles: my unique execution style. This persona-professional PM-style is marked by an earnest use of communication best-practices and emotional intelligence, as well as tact/diplomacy, and use of conflict-resolution practices to strengthen team rapport.
  - The last point is particularly important; if/when handled constructively, conflicts can produce various good outcomes for all stakeholders!

>> *Why Human Made (?):*

>>> My main consideration for job-applications with any particular organization is always: "*Is my skill-set and professional background a good fit for the role*?"

>>> Other consideration(s):

- "Does the organization's—as well as the job position's core role(s) / deliverables / products and services, as well as the organizational culture—present me an opportunity to help people and solve local and international problems, while growing as a professional, and as a local and international civically-responsible citizen?
  - And in the case of "Human Made," I can answer affirmatively and fairly confidently, based on the information on the company's site, online reviews/reputation, etc.

2) Human Made is a fully remote team: what do you think the biggest challenges of working remotely are? And how would you address them?

>> While working both within the same time-zones, but especially in different time-zones with local, regional or international counterparts, in-person interaction—which is by far the richest mode of communication—is sacrificed.

>> But among other measures, tools such as video-conferencing, as well as occasional in-person meetings and activities, and strategies and tactics for clear and prompt communication, can help.

>>> A particularly useful strategy and set of tactics under this category is related to active listening; for instance:

- PMs should check for mutual understanding with stakeholders. E.g., paraphrase and recap interlocutors' points, and utilize critical thinking to comprehend messages.
- Relatedly, strive to "read between the lines," and notice what's *not* being said/written, in addition to what is (being said/written).

3) *What qualities do you think make a great Project Manager? Which do you have? And which are you working on?*

>> ***Skills I possess:***

>>> Ability to both strategize—i.e., see big picture/vision, and implement the strategies via good day-to-day tactics;

>>> Project-management knowledge—especially via my PMI-PMBOK-based CAPM training (to the PMP, but for PMs with less PM hours);

>>> A variety of general domain knowledge; e.g., basic business and finance strategy(/ies) and software-development expertise;

>>> Communication theory—e.g., strategies of persuasion, stages of group-formation, conflict-resolution strategies, etc. Relatedly, I also strive to practically utilize clear and earnest communication, and emotional intelligence.

>> *Skills I need to work on:* specific project-management training/certifications which complement the PMBOK's body of knowledge. Examples here include Scrum Master training, Six Sigma, and PRINCE2. However, please note that I have often made use of—and will continue to use—these methodologies' principles, based on good quality online-sourced documentation.

4) What's your approach to staying organized?

>> Use of to-lists, which I regularly review to ensure that I'm staying on track.

>> Phone and email calendar reminders also serve well in this context.

>>> However, one has to plan to be flexible—your number 1 priority on an ordinary day might be need to suspended, due to an emergency.

>>> With such contingencies, a PM should adjust accordingly, and keep all stakeholders abreast of progress, bottlenecks, etc.

5) What is your understanding of and experience with agile development?

>> My formal training and understanding vis-à-vis the agile development method is mainly derived from my PMI-CAPM certification/training. I have a solid understanding of, and have made use of processes/tools such as introductory planning processes, incremental iterations of the required (set of) deliverable(s), and the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, among others.

>> However, please note that my use of the agile method is always/often necessarily tailored to the particular project I am executing.

6) What other methodologies have you worked with, and how would you compare them?

>> Depending on the needs or situation of the particular project I'm executing—e.g. specific product or service, time-constraints, scope and budget, and risk, among others—I have severally used elements of various other PM methodologies—including Scrum, Waterfall, and Kanban.

>> And despite my emphasis—as stated above on the need for using appropriate methods for particular projects, the concept of Kaizen—i.e., continuous improvement—might be (one of) my top favorite(s). Cliché as it might sound, it's true indeed: "there is always room for improvement."

>>> In other words, regardless of how successful my execution of a project has been, I strive to continually hone my project-management best practices.

7) Can you describe a challenging project you have managed? What were any problems that came up and how did you address them?

>> By far, the CfA/Open-Columbus project has been the most challenging project I have successfully executed so far.

>> Reasons: I was assigned the arduous responsibility of recruiting volunteers who could consistently help with the GIS-mapping of Columbus (OH)'s sidewalks and crosswalks.

>> In the end, I was able to enlist a total of 5 volunteers, who helped with the mapping of two large neighborhoods. That mapping data has now been forwarded to TCAT (at U. Washington), for processing and integration into the AccessMap GPS system.

>>> My most creative solution in this regard—i.e., how to enlist reliable unpaid volunteers, was the designing of a commendation system—i.e., certificates of merit, and a promise to volunteers for an open-ended provision of recommendation letters or references from me (for job, school, and other purposes).

>>> I also had to tactfully liaise between the main stakeholders of the Open-Columbus brigade vs. the CfA national directorate, while also keeping other stakeholders in mind, especially the end-users of the AccessMap, and disability/mobility advocates.

➢ In particular, I had to recognize/acknowledge and respect those respective organizations' expectations and unique goals, as well as their organizational/group-cultural norms and ways of working.

8) What's your biggest failure, and what did you learn from it? And in the same vein, what's your biggest success and what do you think others can learn from it?

>> Biggest failure: failing to get a tenure-track academia position as a communication professor, after completing my Ph.D. in "Communication, Culture, and Media" at Drexel U., Philadelphia. Despite sending out hundreds—or even thousands—of applications, and going through dozens of interviews since 2015, I

have somehow not managed to get permanent position, save for two stints—as lecturer, and as a non-tenure-track asst.-professor in China—at Wenzhou Kean U., and at Fort Hays State U., KS-USA, respectively.

>> Simultaneously/paradoxically, that same failure has also been my biggest success. Reason: I have persevered, and I have "upskilled," e.g. via:

- ➤ Project-management;
- ➤ Software-development; and
- ➤ Data-science.
- ➤ Moreover, over the years, I have also realized my passion for mental-health advocacy.
  - o As a result, I have earned a PA-state mental-health peer-counselor credential, and I'm embarking on a part-time/online Masters in clinical mental-health counseling.
    - ▪ Please note: the program is designed for working professionals, and it doesn't affect my productivity.

9) Describe the work environment or culture in which you are most productive and happy.

>> I believe—based on past experience, that I thrive in various work-environment vis-a-vis organizational sizes and culture.

>>> For instance, I have worked in large "R1" (research-intensive) universities—including Drexel and Temple universities, as well as smaller schools;

>>> I have also worked in both large corporations—e.g. Vanguard, and small/medium-sized companies; e.g., an IT MSP in New York City, as well as Social-Contract of DE, a nonprofit collective impact firm.

>>> Other examples of unique work-environments are my two recent project-management paid and volunteer work-roles with Code for Philly—with the PHLASK app project as a project-management fellow and project-manager and software-development trainee, and as the paid project-manager, to help the Open-Columbus CfA chapter (/"brigade"). Both these are civic-tech activism organizations.

- ➤ However, CfA is the national directorate—and it employs hundreds or thousands of employees and contractors, while Code for Philly and Open-Columbus are local chapters, with less than several dozen, or 100+/- volunteers.

10) What do you like to do when you're not working?

>> Flying planes, as part of my training for a private pilot's license;

>> Swimming, walking, mountain-climbing (a future—but realistic—goal!);

>> Reading;

>> Writing and software-development, as well as creativity in general, including art—drawing, painting, etc.