

Part II: Interviewing The Basics

What basic guidance is helpful when we're interviewing, especially if it's been a while since we've gone through the process?



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About Me

Vice President, Consulting at LitheSpeed,
Educator and Agile Coach

25+ years in technology, throughout all
areas of the SDLC

15+ of those years in senior leadership roles
(SVP, CIO, CTO)

Was the hiring manager, or manager of
those managers in over 10 different
organizations and many more
divisions/departments, and have participated
in hundreds of interviews

Happy to share my experiences,
observations and perspectives with you in
this two-part series



John Halberstadt
(And yes, I do
enjoy Scrabble.)



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In-Person or Remote: Be Prepared and Professional

First impressions still, and likely will always, count. While workplace norms and dress codes vary, err on the side of caution.

Always have available

- A copy of your resume, for review and reference
- A copy of the posting for which you are applying
- Your notes and questions for the interviewer(s)
- Key talking points to ensure you cover, especially if you get nervous

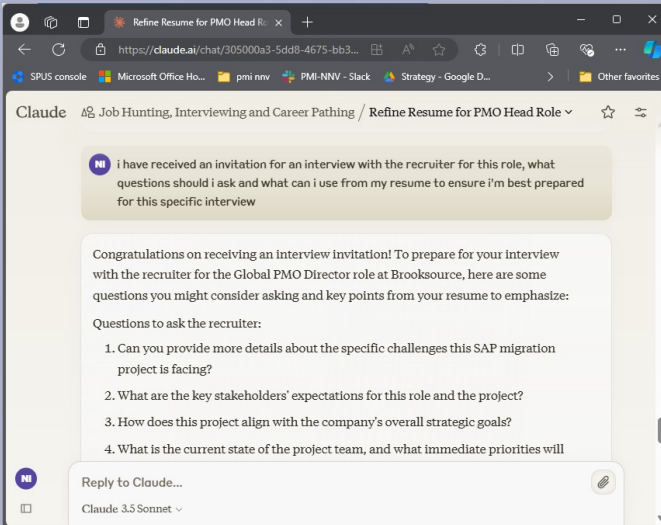
For remote interviews

- Dress professionally, and otherwise present yourself as if you were interviewing at in an office
- Ensure that you are in a well-lit, quiet space, with no distractions
- Double-check your Internet connection, webcam and audio
- Pre-install and configure video conferencing clients if they are not ones you have used on your machine previously



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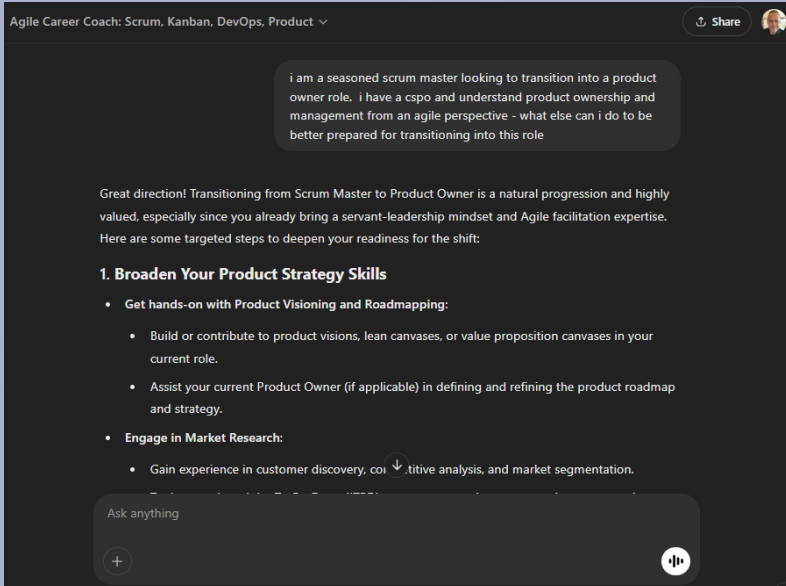
Preparing For The Interview



- Using the context provided in the project and prior prompts, I can now use GenAI to help with interview prep
- In my example, I ask for specifics about what questions I should ask
- I also ask what I can use from my resume to ensure I'm prepared
- These questions are specifically targeted at this specific job posting and opportunity
- This helps the interviewer(s) know that I have done my homework as to their needs and wants

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Preparing For A New-To-You Role



- Using a standard GenAI tool like ChatGPT or Claude can also help when applying or interviewing for a new type of role or position
- Custom GPTs, like the Agile Career Coach one here, may be more useful, as they are focused specifically on Agile roles
- Leverage these same tools to get specific details on how to get up to speed in the areas suggested

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Preparing For A New-To-You Role

- I have guidance on areas where I need to prepare
- Next, I need to get specifics about how to take action
- The GenAI Agile VMO Copilot not only suggested where I needed to improve my skills and experience but how
- Books, courses, online communities, certifications and the like are all provided with specific details
- I won't be able to get a certification in a couple of days in most instances
- But I can ensure I'm as prepared as possible with the time I have available

Recommended Training Resources

1. **Books:**
 - "From PMO to VMO: Managing for Value Delivery" by Sanjiv Augustine: Provides insights into transitioning from traditional PMO structures to Value Management Offices (VMOs), emphasizing value delivery and Agile principles.
 - "Leading Agile Teams" by Sanjiv Augustine: Offers guidance on leading teams through Agile transformations.
2. **Courses and Certifications:**
 - IC Agile Certified Professional - Agile Coaching (ICP-ACC): Focuses on the mindset, roles, and responsibilities of an Agile coach.
 - SAFe Program Consultant (SPC): Provides a deep understanding of the Scaled Agile Framework and prepares you to lead Agile transformations.
 - Lean Portfolio Management (LPM) Certification: Helps in understanding how to implement Lean principles in portfolio management.
3. **Online Resources and Communities:**
 - Agile Alliance: Offers a wealth of resources, including webinars, whitepapers, and a community of practice.

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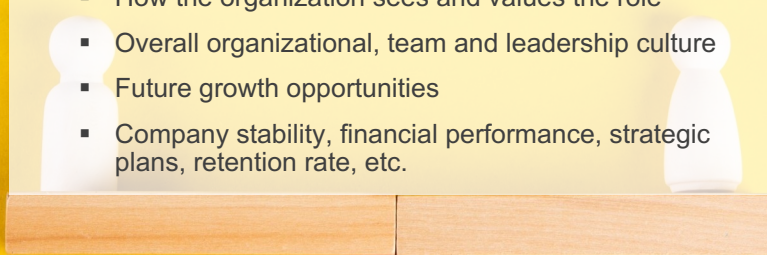
Interviews Are (or Should Be) Mutual

The interviewer(s) are **interviewing you** to see if you're a good match

Don't forget that **you're also interviewing them** to see if they are a good match for you

With respect, ask questions to understand:

- How the organization sees and values the role
- Overall organizational, team and leadership culture
- Future growth opportunities
- Company stability, financial performance, strategic plans, retention rate, etc.



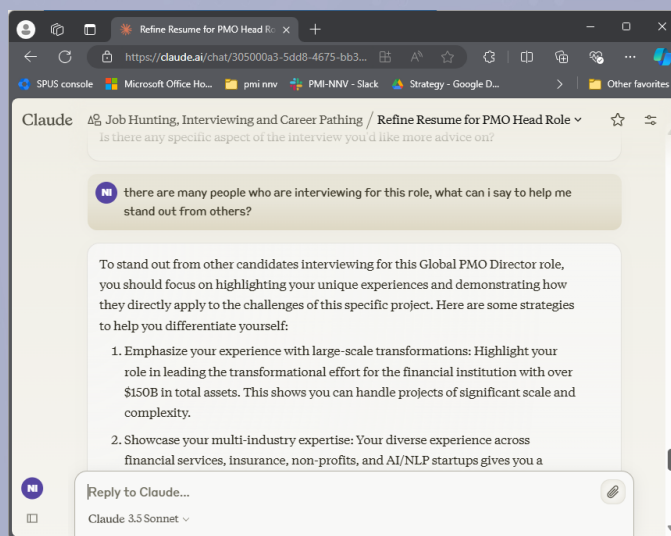
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Common Interview Anti-Patterns To Avoid

- Being unprepared** – unable to speak to items on the resume in clear and accurate terms
- Getting caught exaggerating or lying** - background, education, experience on the resume
- Trash-talking** - prior employers, co-workers or customers
- Lack of self-reflection** – inability to identify and own mistakes or turn them into learnings
- Poor communication skills** – avoiding answering questions; unclear, inaccurate, incomplete or meandering responses to questions posed
- Negative body language** – lack of eye contact, crossed arms, rolling eyes, smirking
- Unprofessional behavior** – inappropriate dress, showing up late to the interview, excessive and/or NSFW personal discussion, inappropriate language, checking phone or computer notifications during the interview... the list goes on

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Standing Out From Other Applicants



- The job market is competitive
- Many postings for Agile and Lean-focused roles have hundreds if not thousands of applicants
- GenAI can help brainstorm ideas on how to help me stand apart from others
- This helps connect my specific resume and background with the posting's specific needs and wants
- The areas where I have skills or experience that may be valuable and unique
- GenAI suggested a few areas where I likely do have an edge for this role

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Common Formats for Interviews

One on one interview with a recruiter or Human Resources staff member – generally a pre-screen of basic qualifications, often also covers comp expectations, benefits, basic Q&A

One on one interview with the hiring manager – assessing skills and fit from a leadership perspective

Team/Panel interview – multiple individuals simultaneously, often with different roles within the Team, aka prospective peers and fellow Team members, assessing skills and culture fit

Technical interview – often whiteboard or other exercises, assesses technical skills and problem-solving approach, as well as how one works under pressure

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Key Considerations for Agile Leaders

Agile Coaches, Scrum Masters, Agile Delivery Leads, Product and Project Managers can expect specific questions related to those roles

Many interviewers will have less experience or knowledge than you in these areas

Ensure that you not only can answer questions accurately and clearly, but provide context and audience-appropriate language tailored to your interviewer(s)

Expect any combination of:

Theoretical (book knowledge) questions, like “what is the most current Scrum guidance on Team size?”, “Who is a Developer in Scrum?”, or “How does one calculate the default WIP limit on a Kanban Team?”

Hypothetical questions, like “how would you handle a situation where there is an ongoing conflict with developers not getting code to testers until the last day of the sprint?”

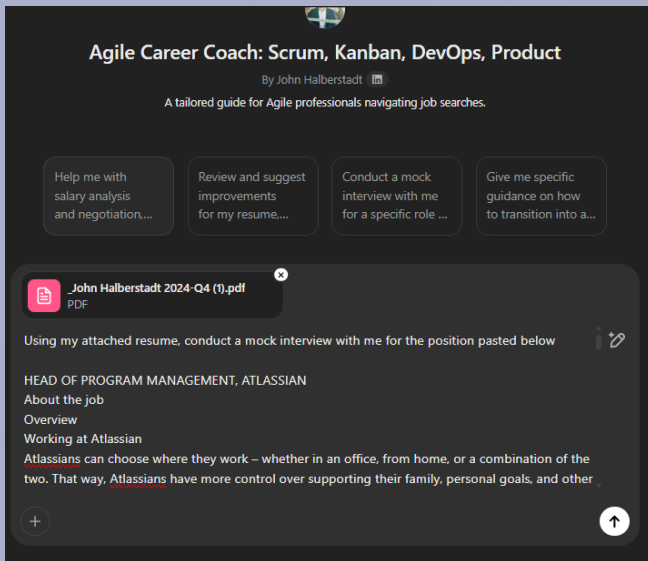
Brain-teaser questions, like the famous Microsoft one: “why are manhole covers round?”

Empirical questions, like “tell me about an instance where you had difficulty working with a product owner and having them provide sufficient acceptance criteria for their stories?”

Philosophical/Preferential questions, like “what is your preferred scaling model?”

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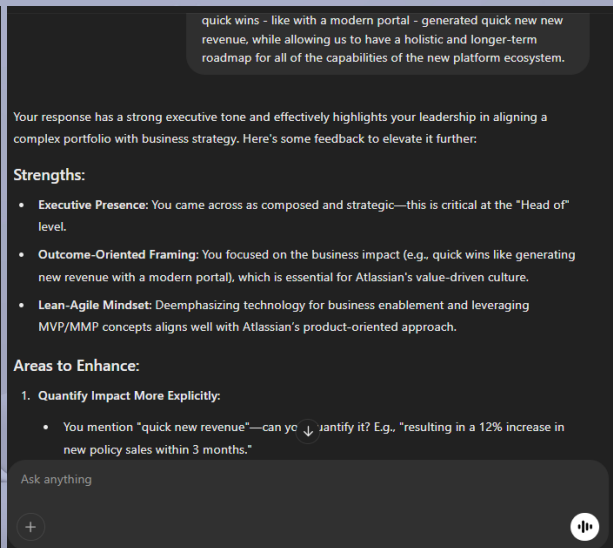
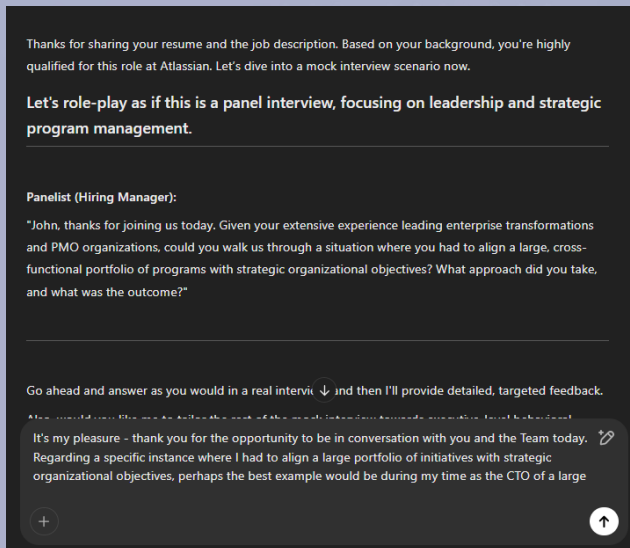
Using GenAI For Interviewing Practice



- You can use your preferred GenAI tool for getting practice interview questions
- Ensure that you provide the full job posting as well as your targeted resume for the best results
- Consider trying a specific, custom GPT like those in this example for a real, “mock” interview
- This can be especially helpful if you haven’t interviewed for a while
- It can also be helpful if you get anxious or nervous in interviews (and who doesn’t?)

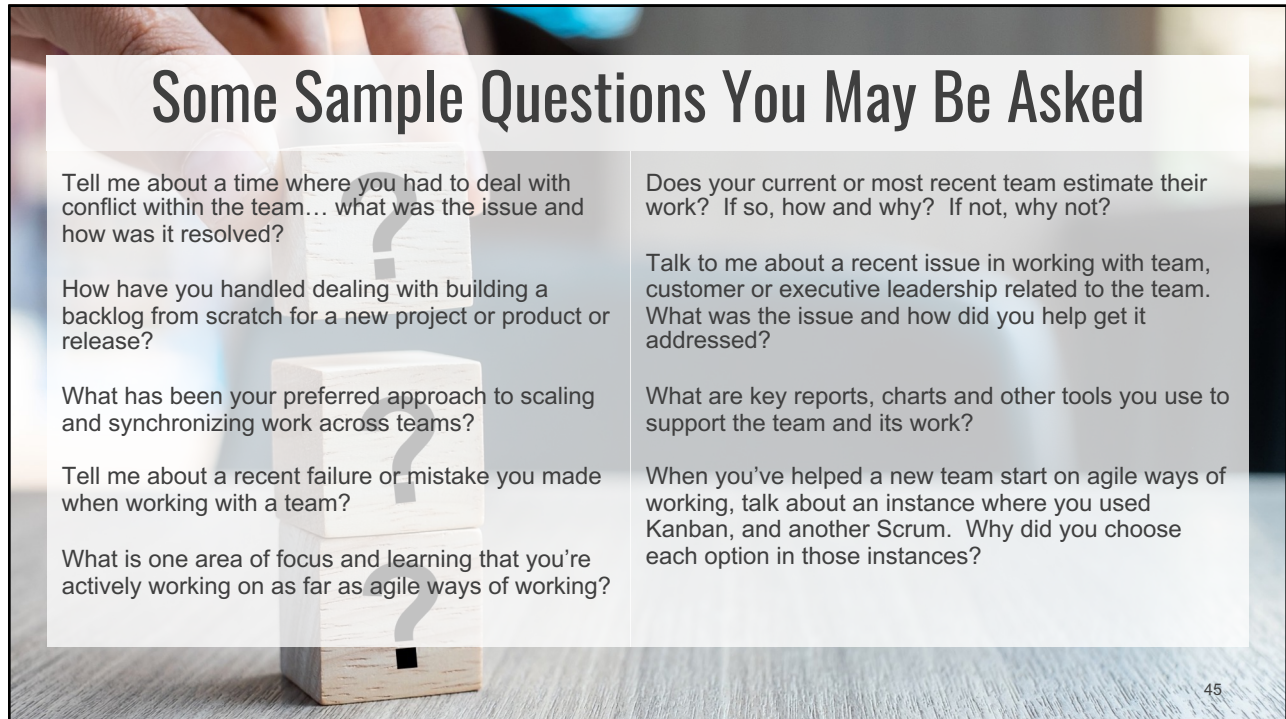
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Using GenAI For Interviewing Practice



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Some Sample Questions You May Be Asked

Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict within the team... what was the issue and how was it resolved?

How have you handled dealing with building a backlog from scratch for a new project or product or release?

What has been your preferred approach to scaling and synchronizing work across teams?

Tell me about a recent failure or mistake you made when working with a team?

What is one area of focus and learning that you're actively working on as far as agile ways of working?

Does your current or most recent team estimate their work? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

Talk to me about a recent issue in working with team, customer or executive leadership related to the team. What was the issue and how did you help get it addressed?

What are key reports, charts and other tools you use to support the team and its work?

When you've helped a new team start on agile ways of working, talk about an instance where you used Kanban, and another Scrum. Why did you choose each option in those instances?

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Considerations: Before, During and Concluding the Interview

What specific considerations should we keep in mind during these three key periods, to ensure the best possible outcomes from our interviewing?



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Before the Interview

For remote interviews, ensure hardware, software and connectivity are all functional

Whether remote or in-person, ensure you have, within arm's reach

- A copy of the posting
- Your resume, ensuring also you can speak to anything on it
- Any other reference material, including the following

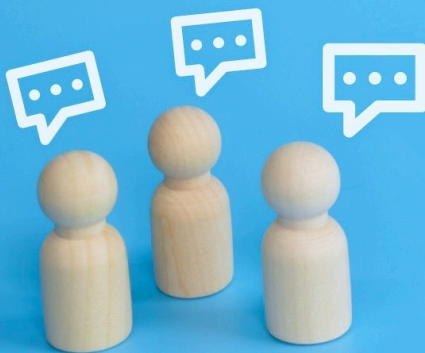
Use GenAI to help document/highlight and reference

- Your experience and skills specifically aligned to the role's requirements
- Specific talking points to raise
- Questions to ask, including those
 - About the position itself, including growth opportunities and future paths available
 - About the organization, including financial stability
 - About the team, including culture, structure and related
 - About comp, benefits, schedule, WFH/hybrid expectations



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During the Interview



Ensure your answers align to not only agile and lean practices, but to principles and values

The best agile and lean leaders measure success on how they help teams work better together while delivering desired business outcomes – not on vanity metrics or management

Showcase specific examples, even in response to “what if” or “how would you” questions, i.e. “when a situation like your example happened when I was leading a Team at ABC Corp, we...”

Always be mindful of body language and tone, in addition to what is being said verbally

If body language, tone or response indicates lack of comprehension, consider asking directly if your response answered the question properly

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Concluding the Interview

Offer any additional points you wish to share if they were not raised in the interview process already

Confirm your interest in the role and your belief as a good match, preferably with specific qualities, skills and experience aligned to their questions

If not already on your list of questions, respectfully ask

- Next steps and associated timing
- If anything else is required or requested of you

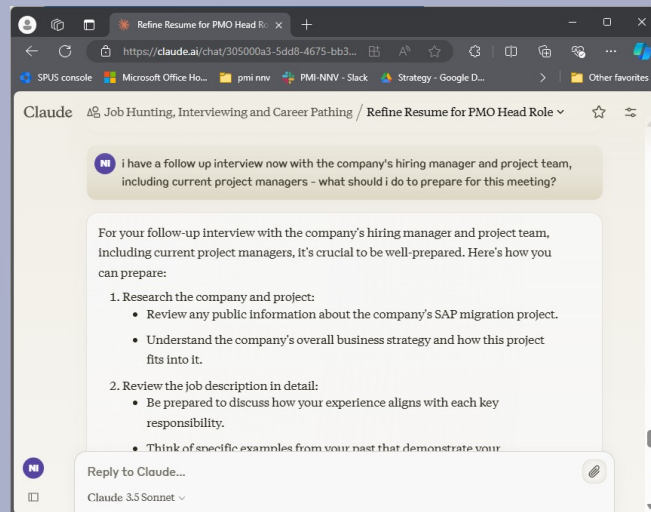
Offer your thanks for the opportunity to interview

- At the conclusion of the interview
- Via email, if desired, after the interview



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Follow-Up Interview Preparation



- For professional roles such as ours, more than one interview is highly likely
- Use your preferred GenAI tool to get ideas on how to prepare for subsequent interviews
- Ensure that you provide the context necessary for good responses
- The nature and role of the interviewers is key
- Is it with HR, the team, management, etc.?
- Is it a technical, behavioral, or other type of interview?
- The more detail, the better the response

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Next Steps

- Use GenAI to get your “base” resume where you want it to be
- Review your resume to ensure you can speak clearly and convincingly for each item
- Create specific versions of the resume for the types of roles you’re looking for
- Consider asking a friend, co-worker or GenAI to do “mock” interviews with you
- Use GenAI for talking points, general questions and other notes for use in all interviews
- Ensure you add to or enhance the above with position-specific details for specific interviews
- Ensure you keep a copy of your resume and posting immediately available

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Thank You!


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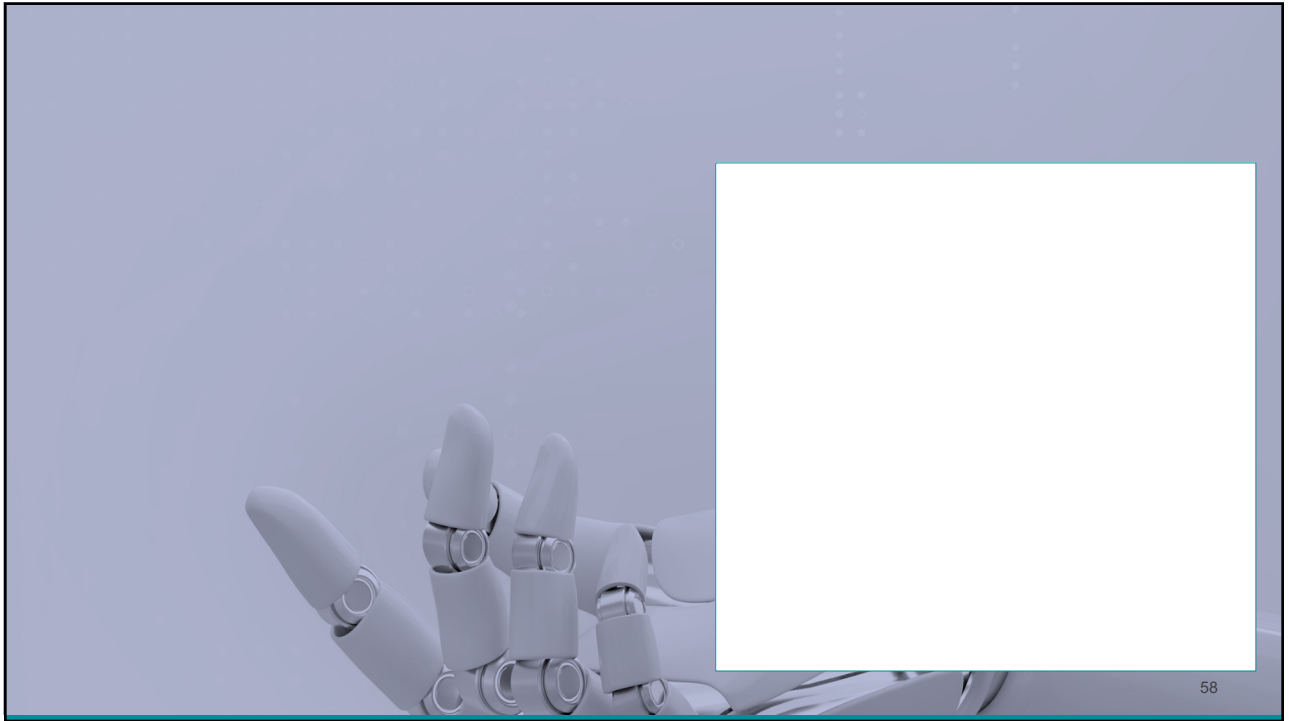
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Agenda

- Why AI?
- Know Before You Go: The Basics
- Preparation: Before the Interview
- During the Interview: Key Points
- Closing: End with the End in Mind
- Some Suggested Next Steps



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