

Operations Manager interview checklist

Operations manager hiring usually runs as an HR screen, a functional round with the operations head that often includes a case on a failing KPI or a capacity problem, sometimes a site visit, and a final round with a business leader and HR.

10 QUESTIONS TO PRACTISE OUT LOUD

1. Which KPIs do you review every day in an operation you run, and why those?

What it checks: Whether you manage by a small set of meaningful measures linked to customers and cost, rather than drowning in reports.

2. Tell me about a time a major customer escalation landed on your desk.

What it checks: How you respond under pressure: owning the problem, protecting the relationship, fixing the cause and preventing repeats.

3. This role covers three sites in different cities. Are you comfortable with frequent travel?

What it checks: Whether you accept the travel the role demands and have a sensible plan for managing sites remotely.

4. How do you plan staffing and capacity for an operation where volumes change week to week?

What it checks: Whether you can turn a demand forecast into a staffing plan using productivity norms, and build flexibility for variation.

5. Describe a time you had to manage a serious safety incident on your site.

What it checks: Whether you put people first, follow proper incident procedures and fix underlying causes rather than only blaming individuals.

6. Why do you want to move into operations management with us?

What it checks: Whether a new manager or MBA graduate understands what operations work really involves and has a clear reason for choosing it.

7. Explain the main types of waste in lean and give an example of removing one.

What it checks: Whether you know lean basics and can spot waste in a real process, a core skill for operations roles at every level.

8. Tell me about a time you had to let go of or discipline a team member.

What it checks: Whether you handle difficult people decisions fairly, follow process and keep respect, which matters greatly in large operational teams.

9. What compensation do you expect for this operations manager role?

What it checks: Whether you give a reasoned figure tied to the scope of the role, and handle the discussion professionally.

10. Walk me through how you use the 5 Whys and a fishbone diagram to find a root cause.

What it checks: Whether you can go beyond symptoms to systemic causes, and use simple problem-solving tools properly.

TIPS FOR THIS INTERVIEW

- Prepare a one-page summary of the operation you run now: team size, volumes, key KPIs, budget and two improvements you led with before and after numbers.

- Revise lean, Six Sigma basics, root cause tools and capacity calculations, because case rounds often ask you to apply them to a real scenario.
- Expect a site visit or floor walk in some interviews, and practise pointing out safety, flow and waste issues you notice in a workplace.
- Have stories ready about a safety incident, a difficult people decision, a customer escalation and a cost reduction, since these are asked very often.

THE DAY BEFORE

- ☐ Confirm the time, venue or video link and the interviewer's name
- ☐ Plan your route and leave time for traffic, or test your camera, microphone and internet
- ☐ Keep copies of your resume, ID proof, certificates and photographs in a folder
- ☐ Iron your clothes and charge your phone and laptop
- ☐ Do one final run-through of your introduction, then stop and rest

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Arrive 15 minutes early, or log in 5–10 minutes early for a video call
- ☐ Greet everyone politely, including the receptionist or coordinator
- ☐ Listen to the full question, pause, then answer in a clear structure
- ☐ Take brief notes of names and key points
- ☐ Ask your prepared questions and confirm the next steps before you leave