

Store Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Store Manager interviews usually mix everyday operational questions with behavioural ones about handling staff and customers under pressure. Expect the panel, often a regional or area manager plus someone from HR, to test whether you can run the commercial side of a store while keeping a team and its customers happy.

- **Operational/process:** Questions about how you'd handle rostering, stock control, ordering or reporting on a normal trading week.
- **Behavioural:** Past-experience questions about leading a team, resolving conflict or handling underperformance.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical situations, such as a staffing shortfall on a busy day or a serious customer complaint, to see how you think on the spot.
- **Commercial/numbers:** Questions probing your comfort with sales targets, margins and shrinkage, since head office will expect regular reporting on these.

Most interviews open with a walk-through of your current or most recent store and your day-to-day responsibilities, move into behavioural and scenario questions in the middle, and close with commercial questions about targets and reporting, plus your own questions about the store's performance and team.

1. Walk me through how you'd set a staff roster for a typical trading week.

Why they ask

Rostering against wage budgets while covering peak trading is one of the core weekly tasks in this role, and interviewers want to see you think about both cost and coverage.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: describe the inputs you'd use (sales forecasts, wage budget, staff availability), the steps you'd take to build the roster, and how you'd adjust it if something changed mid-week.

Example answer

"I start by looking at last year's sales data for the same week alongside any promotions running, so I know roughly what foot traffic to expect. I check my wage budget against projected sales to set total rostered hours, then place my most experienced staff on peak periods like weekend afternoons. I always build in a small buffer for sick leave, and I review the roster again two or three days out in case trading patterns shift, so I'm not caught short-staffed on a busy day."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a staff member who wasn't meeting service standards.

Why they ask

Training and supervising the team is a core task, and the panel wants evidence you can address underperformance directly rather than avoid it.

How to structure your answer

STAR: set the situation, explain the specific task or standard that wasn't being met, detail the action you took to address it, and describe the result.

Example answer

"I had a team member who was consistently slow at the register during busy periods, which was creating queues and customer complaints. I sat down with them privately, walked through the specific steps where they were losing time, and paired them with a stronger performer for a few shifts to build

speed and confidence. Within a few weeks their transaction times were in line with the rest of the team and complaints about queuing dropped off."

3. A key staff member calls in sick an hour before a Saturday opening and you're already tight on the roster. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement under pressure and how you balance customer service, staff wellbeing and commercial pressure with limited options.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure: state the immediate priority, outline the options you'd weigh, explain the decision you'd make and why, and note how you'd follow up afterward.

Example answer

"My first priority is making sure the store can open safely and serve customers, so I'd check who's available to come in early or extend a shift, starting with staff who've indicated they're happy to pick up extra hours. If I can't fill the gap, I'd step onto the floor myself for the opening rush rather than leave the team stretched. Afterward I'd follow up with the rostered staff member about their absence and review whether we need a stronger on-call system for weekends."

4. How do you approach reducing shrinkage in a store?

Why they ask

Shrinkage reduction is a specific, named task in this role and head office will expect a Store Manager to actively manage it, not just report it.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: describe how you'd identify where shrinkage is occurring, the controls you'd put in place, and how you'd monitor whether they're working.

Example answer

"I start with the stocktake data to see which categories are showing the biggest variances, then look at whether it's likely theft, damage, or process errors at receiving or on the floor. In my last role I found most of the loss was happening at goods receiving, so I tightened the checking process and made sure two people signed off on deliveries. I track the same categories at the next stocktake to confirm the loss has actually come down, not just moved elsewhere."

5. Describe a situation where you had to resolve a serious customer complaint.

Why they ask

Resolving complaints and maintaining store presentation is listed as a core task, and this question checks whether you can de-escalate while protecting the store's reputation.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, the specific complaint or issue, the action you took to resolve it, and the outcome for the customer and the store.

Example answer

"A customer was upset about a faulty product and had already had a frustrating exchange with a junior staff member. I took over the conversation, moved somewhere quieter, listened to the full complaint without interrupting, and offered a replacement plus a small gesture of goodwill. The customer left satisfied and later left positive feedback through head office's customer survey, which I used as a coaching example with the team on how to de-escalate early."

6. How comfortable are you reporting store performance metrics to head office, and what would you flag if sales were down against budget?

Why they ask

Reporting sales, stock and profit margins to head office is a stated responsibility, and this checks commercial literacy and how proactively you'd communicate problems.

How to structure your answer

Direct commercial reasoning: explain what metrics you track, how you'd interpret a downturn, and what you'd communicate upward and change on the floor.

Example answer

"I track daily sales against budget, margin percentage and stock turn, and I'd flag a downturn as soon as I saw two or three consecutive days of underperformance rather than wait for the weekly report. I'd look at whether it's traffic-driven, a merchandising issue, or a staffing gap on the floor, and report both the likely cause and what I'm already doing about it to head office, rather than just the number itself."