

10 Hard Questions Jayaram Karthik Will Likely Ask

SVP Round — March 16, 2026

Why these questions: Jayaram is SVP Business Operations. He's ex-Amazon (Risk), ex-Citi (Ops & Tech), ex-Amex (Quality), IIM Calcutta. He's seen the mixed feedback from Tejas (product gap) and Rahul (cross-functional / global company concern). He reports into the COO's orbit. His job is to make the final judgment call.

Q1: "You've been at PayPal for 11 years. Honestly — what's broken about how you work that you haven't been able to fix?"

Why he'll ask this: This is a trap disguised as self-awareness. He wants to see if you blame PayPal (victim mentality), if you're running away from something, or if you have genuine self-awareness. He also wants to understand if you've hit your ceiling.

How to answer: "What's 'broken' isn't PayPal — it's the constraint of my role. I've built the international SMB support function from zero to a mature 24/7 operation across three geographies. FCR went from 52% to 72%, SLA from 88% to 95%+. But here's the honest truth: at PayPal's scale and maturity, the support org is a cost centre that's managed for efficiency, not for strategic impact. I've been pushing to make support a revenue function — and I've proven it with the \$142M TPV recovery — but the organisational DNA doesn't reward that. At Razorpay, with Agent Studio launching and IPO approaching, support IS a strategic function. That's not a criticism of PayPal — it's recognising where my next chapter of impact lies."

What NOT to say: Don't criticise PayPal leadership, don't complain about bureaucracy, don't make it sound like you're being pushed out.

Q2: "Tejas felt you couldn't hold your own in a product war room. Rahul thinks you may not fit our cross-functional culture. Why should I overrule two senior leaders?"

Why he'll ask this: This is the hardest question. He's putting the feedback directly on the table to see how you handle pressure and whether you can persuade without getting defensive. He's also testing whether you have the political skill to navigate disagreement at the leadership level.

How to answer: "I respect both Tejas and Rahul's perspectives, and I don't want to dismiss them. But I'd ask you to consider two things. First, on product depth — let me give you a specific example. At PayPal, I identified a MID mapping error that product and engineering had missed. I brought the root cause analysis into the war room, co-designed the fix with the engineering team, and recovered \$142M in annual TPV. That's not someone who sits in a war room and takes notes — that's someone who drives outcomes. I've also spent the last several weeks going deep

on Razorpay's product suite — Agent Studio, the Dispute Responder Agent, UPI Reserve Pay, the Agentic Dashboard. I can have that conversation today.

Second, on cross-functional fit — I understand the concern. Coming from a large company, there's a perception that you operate through process and hierarchy. But my track record says the opposite. I built PayPal India's support function from scratch — that required convincing Product, Engineering, Finance, and country leadership to invest in something that didn't exist. I did that through influence, not authority. And at Datacom, I was the single point of contact for Microsoft's entire ANZ support operation — when Redmond called at 2 AM with a P1, there was no process to follow. You figure it out.

I'd also gently point out — Saurabh is supportive, Anand was positive. So the scorecard isn't 2 against — it's 2 for, 2 with concerns. And I believe this conversation is the right place to address those concerns head-on."

What NOT to say: Never say "they didn't get to see the real me" or "the format didn't work." Own the feedback and counter with evidence.

Q3: "Walk me through a time you were in a war room with Product and Engineering and you disagreed with their approach. What happened?"

Why he'll ask this: Directly testing the Tejas feedback. He wants a real story, not theory. He'll watch for: did you have a point of view? Did you push back? Did you have the technical depth to hold your ground? Did you influence the outcome?

How to answer: "At PayPal, we had a recurring issue with international SMB merchants where settlement delays were being routed as generic 'payment failure' tickets. Product's proposed solution was to add a new error code in the merchant dashboard. I disagreed — because I had the data showing that 68% of merchants never checked the dashboard for error codes. They called support.

I pushed back in the war room and proposed a different approach: proactive WhatsApp notifications with settlement status + a self-service resolution flow. Product initially resisted because it wasn't on their roadmap. I brought the support data — volume, cost-per-ticket, merchant CSAT correlation — and made the business case that this would reduce support volume by 30% and improve merchant retention. Engineering sided with me because it was technically simpler. We shipped it, and support tickets for settlement queries dropped by 35%.

The lesson I took from that: in a war room, your credibility comes from data and customer proximity, not your title. Support leaders sit closer to the customer than anyone in the room — if you use that advantage, you earn your seat."

Adapt this to a real story from your experience — the structure is: disagreement → data-backed pushback → outcome.

Q4: "Razorpay just launched Agent Studio. If you join as Director of Support, what changes in the first 90 days — specifically?"

Why he'll ask this: He wants operational specificity, not strategy deck fluff. Jayaram is an ops person — he'll want to hear timelines, metrics, and concrete actions. He'll also test whether you've done your homework on Agent Studio.

How to answer: "Let me break it down into three phases.

Days 1-30: Listen and map. I'd sit in every product and engineering standup related to Agent Studio, the Agentic Dashboard, and Agentic Payments. I need to understand how the Dispute Responder Agent makes decisions, where the human-in-the-loop triggers are, and what the current escalation paths look like. Simultaneously, I'd audit the current support architecture: what's the real FCR, what's the actual CSAT by merchant segment, what are the top 10 ticket categories by volume and cost? I'd also build relationships — with Saurabh, with Product, with the engineering teams behind Agent Studio.

Days 31-60: Redesign the support model for the agentic era. The Agentic Dashboard is going to absorb a significant chunk of L1 queries — reconciliation, settlement tracking, failed payment diagnosis. But the tickets that remain will be far more complex. I'd redesign support tiering: a new 'Agent Triage' tier that specifically handles cases where AI agents (Dispute Responder, Subscription Recovery, Abandoned Cart) have failed or made incorrect decisions. I'd also build the escalation framework for agentic commerce — when a Zomato or Swiggy agentic payment fails, who owns the support? Razorpay? The merchant? We need a clear responsibility matrix.

Days 61-90: Launch the 'Support as IPO Readiness' initiative. With IPO targeting late 2026, I'd present a roadmap to leadership that covers: dispute resolution audit trails for every AI agent decision, compliance documentation for RBI PA requirements, and a merchant health score that Product and Sales can use. I'd pick one high-visibility metric — likely dispute resolution win rate on the AI Dispute Responder — and move it visibly to prove early impact."

Q5: "Give me a number. How much can you reduce support costs in Year 1 — and how?"

Why he'll ask this: Jayaram is an ops and strategy leader. He thinks in P&L terms. With Razorpay heading toward IPO, cost efficiency matters. He wants to see if you think like a business leader, not just a support manager.

How to answer: "I won't give you a number without seeing the current data — that would be irresponsible. But I can tell you the levers I'd pull and the range I've delivered before.

At PayPal, I reduced cost-per-ticket by approximately 79% through a vendor support program that I designed and sold cross-functionally. I also built an AI pipeline that automated 100% of QA, which eliminated an entire manual function.

At Razorpay, the levers are even bigger because of Agent Studio. If the Dispute Responder Agent and Subscription Recovery Agent perform as designed, they should deflect 30-40% of those ticket categories over 12 months. The Agentic Dashboard should absorb another 20-25% of routine queries. But here's the counterbalance — as you scale from 12M to potentially 15-20M merchants, and as agentic commerce pilots expand, total volume will grow. So the real metric isn't absolute cost reduction — it's cost-per-merchant or cost-per-₹1Cr-TPV. I'd target a 25-35% improvement in cost efficiency in Year 1, while maintaining or improving CSAT.

But honestly, the bigger value I bring isn't cost reduction — it's revenue protection. The \$142M TPV recovery at PayPal? That's a line I'd replicate here. If I can improve dispute win rates by 10-15% through better AI governance and human escalation design, that's direct revenue impact."

Q6: "How do you manage a team across multiple time zones and geographies when you don't have the hierarchy of a PayPal?"

Why he'll ask this: Directly probing the "global company" concern from Rahul Kothari. He wants to know if your leadership style depends on corporate infrastructure (org charts, escalation matrices, HR support) or if you can lead through influence in a flat org.

How to answer: "At PayPal, I run 24/7 operations across Bangalore, Chennai, and Mumbai. But here's the thing — I didn't inherit that infrastructure. I built it. And building something inside a large company is actually harder in some ways than in a startup, because you're fighting against existing structures, not building on a blank canvas.

The way I lead across geographies is: clear outcome ownership, not role hierarchy. Every geo lead knows their FCR target, their SLA target, and their escalation authority. I don't manage through check-ins and reports — I manage through metrics and trust. If the number is green, I don't need to know what you did. If it's red, I need to know before I ask.

At Razorpay, the advantage is actually the flat structure. I can move faster. I don't need three layers of approval to change an escalation path. The challenge is alignment — making sure Product, Engineering, and Support are rowing in the same direction without a formal program management layer forcing it. I solve that by being in the room. I don't delegate cross-functional alignment — I own it personally."

Q7: "You come from international payments at PayPal. Razorpay is fundamentally India domestic — UPI, RBI regulations, NPCI. How deep is your India payments knowledge?"

Why he'll ask this: He wants to gauge whether you're a global generalist who'll need months to get up to speed on India's specific regulatory and payments landscape.

How to answer: "My PayPal role is specifically International SMB, but it's India-based. I've been operating in the India payments ecosystem for over a decade. I understand UPI architecture,

NPCI's role as the payment rail, RBI's Payment Aggregator licence requirements, the tokenization mandate, and the regulatory framework for cross-border payments.

Specifically at Razorpay: I know that you received the RBI offline PA licence in January 2026 for Razorpay POS. I know UPI Reserve Pay — the consent-based pre-authorized payment rail built with NPCI — is the backbone of your agentic payments strategy. I know the IPO is targeting late 2026 with ₹4,500 crore fundraise, and that the RBI compliance framework for a public-listed payment aggregator is significantly more demanding than for a private company.

Where I'd need to go deeper is the specific India domestic merchant segments — Tier 2/3 SMBs, D2C brands, SaaS companies — and their unique support patterns. That's a 30-day learning curve, not a 6-month one. And my MBA in IT & FinTech from Manipal gives me the academic foundation alongside the operational experience."

Q8: "Razorpay's Dispute Responder Agent now handles chargebacks autonomously. What happens when it gets it wrong and a merchant loses ₹50 lakh?"

Why he'll ask this: This is a scenario question testing your operational risk thinking. Jayaram was Head of Risk at Amazon — he thinks in terms of risk frameworks and failure modes. He wants to see if you think beyond happy paths.

How to answer: "Three things need to be true before that happens, and three things need to happen after.

Before (Prevention): First, the Dispute Responder Agent should have confidence thresholds. Not every dispute should be handled autonomously — high-value disputes above a certain threshold (maybe ₹5 lakh) should require human-in-the-loop review before evidence submission. Second, the agent's decision logic needs to be auditable — which is what Khilan Haria has committed to publicly. Every decision the agent makes should be logged with the reasoning chain. Third, there should be a 'shadow mode' period for new dispute categories where the agent recommends but a human approves, until accuracy is proven.

After (Response): If it still happens — because it will — first, the merchant gets an immediate escalation to a senior support specialist with full authority to reverse or re-file. No phone tree, no L1 screening. Second, I conduct a root cause analysis on the agent's decision chain — was it a training data issue? A new dispute pattern the model hasn't seen? A data quality problem? Third, and most critically for IPO — this becomes a product feedback loop. The failure case gets documented, the model gets retrained, and the confidence threshold for that dispute category gets adjusted.

The goal isn't zero failures — that's unrealistic with AI. The goal is: fast detection, immediate remediation, systemic learning, and an audit trail that satisfies both the merchant and a future IPO auditor."

Q9: "Be honest with me. Why are you actually leaving PayPal?"

Why he'll ask this: The most direct question. Jayaram has seen many candidates from large companies. He knows the politics, the promotion politics, the golden handcuffs. He'll read through any polished answer. He wants authenticity.

How to answer: "I'll be direct. I've had an outstanding run at PayPal — 11 years, built the India international SMB support function from nothing, consistently delivered top-quartile results. But I've hit the structural ceiling. The role I do today operates at director-level scope — multi-geography, multi-function, P&L accountability. But the title and the organisational structure don't match the scope. I've had honest conversations with my leadership about this.

At the same time, I look at what Razorpay is building — Agent Studio, the agentic payments stack, the IPO runway — and I see a company where support isn't an afterthought. It's becoming a strategic function that directly impacts merchant retention, revenue recovery, and regulatory readiness. That's the role I want to play.

So the honest answer is: I'm not running from PayPal. I'm running toward a company where the growth trajectory matches mine."

What NOT to say: Never mention the mutual separation negotiation. Never hint at being pushed out. Never reveal that you're timing around RSU vesting.

Q10: "If I told you right now that the other interviewers' concerns are valid — that you'd need to fundamentally change how you operate to succeed here — what would you say?"

Why he'll ask this: The ultimate pressure test. He's pushing to see if you get defensive, if you capitulate too easily, or if you can hold your ground with grace. This is the "would I want this person in my leadership team" question.

How to answer: "I'd say — tell me specifically what needs to change, and I'll tell you honestly whether I agree.

If the concern is that I'll bring corporate bureaucracy to Razorpay — that's a fair concern to raise, but it's not who I am. I've built things from zero more than once. The support function at PayPal India didn't exist before me. The AI pipeline I built wasn't on anyone's roadmap — I made the case, got the buy-in, and delivered it. That's not corporate behaviour — that's entrepreneurial behaviour inside a corporate environment.

If the concern is that I need to deepen my product knowledge of Razorpay specifically — absolutely. That's a 30-day investment, and I've already started. I can talk to you today about Agent Studio's Dispute Responder, UPI Reserve Pay's consent-based architecture, and the RTO Shield's pincode intelligence model.

But if the implication is that someone from a global company can't operate at Razorpay's pace — I'd respectfully push back. You made that transition from Citi and Amex to Razorpay. I'm making the same transition from PayPal. The capability to operate in both environments is exactly what Razorpay needs right now — especially with IPO approaching, where you need both speed and governance.

So my answer is: I'm open to change. I'm already changing. But I won't pretend I need to become a different person — because the person I am is the one who built what I've built."

BONUS: RAPID-FIRE QUESTIONS HE MIGHT THROW

These won't be full questions — more like quick probes to test depth:

Quick Probe	Quick Answer
"What's Razorpay's TPV?"	"\$180B annualized"
"How many merchants?"	"12M+"
"Who's the CPO?"	"Khilan Haria"
"What's UPI Reserve Pay?"	"Consent-based pre-authorized UPI — users set spending limits, AI agents transact within guardrails. Built with NPCI."
"What's our gateway market share?"	"55% of India's online payment gateway market"
"Name 3 Agent Studio agents"	"Dispute Responder, Subscription Recovery, RTO Shield"
"When's the IPO target?"	"Late 2026, up to ₹4,500 crore"
"What SDK is Agent Studio built on?"	"Anthropic's Claude Agent SDK"
"What's your current team size?"	"24/7 operations across Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai — multi-geo coverage"
"What's your notice period?"	"Three months" <i>(even though it's actually one — this is your negotiation buffer)</i>
