

AI-Era Team Design, Slower Executive AI Workflows, and Habit-Driven Retention

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This brief covers Fiona Fung's operating model for AI-heavy product teams, Matt Wensing's method for producing executive-grade AI materials, and practical discovery and career lessons from the PM community.

Big Ideas

- **AI product teams are separating into two high-value profiles.** Fiona Fung says she is hiring for *creative builders with product sense* and *deep systems experts* for areas that require verification and trust [1]. She pairs that with *high agency and high accountability*, asking teams to tie freedom to a clear hypothesis and to judge work by whether output drives outcomes—not by PR count, token use, or other motion metrics [1]. **Why it matters:** PMs may need to rethink role design and success metrics as AI expands who can build. **How to apply:** separate roadmap areas that need end-to-end builders from areas that need specialist verification, then rewrite goals around outcomes.
- **Habit beats notification as interfaces shrink.** Nir Eyal's thesis is that as computing moved from desktop to mobile and wearables, external triggers like pings matter less; winning products create internal habits that bring users back on their own [2]. He says the same behavioral design can be used beyond social apps, citing edtech and fitness examples such as Kahoot! and Fitbod [2]. **Why it matters:** retention cannot rely only on reminders. **How to apply:** audit whether repeat usage comes from genuine recurring value or from notification pressure.

Tactical Playbook

1. Slow AI down for executive work.

“Speed is a microwave, and executives can taste it from across the table.” [3]

Matt Wensing’s method is to treat Claude like a talented new hire: feed context one artifact at a time, do not let it race into drafting, and keep iterating until the output reflects the organization’s real context [3]. He argues a deck built over “two hundred passes” beats a clean first draft because executives detect flattened context quickly [3]. **How to apply:** stage context ingestion, force multiple passes, and ask AI for supporting assets—like a talk track—that add information instead of repeating the slides [3].

2. **Use JIT planning instead of long-range document cycles.** Fung says her team moved from a six-month roadmap to lightweight monthly planning in a simple spreadsheet, with likely weekly priority checks, and explicit permission to kill processes that no longer serve [1]. **Why it matters:** fast-moving product areas can outrun heavy planning rituals. **How to apply:** shorten planning horizons and review one expensive process each month.

3. **Make discovery proactive, not ticket-driven.** A practical cadence from r/ProductManagement: check whether users complete key workflows in the data, run 3-5 interviews per segment, hold monthly stakeholder check-ins or office hours, shadow users, and track feedback in one place so repeated patterns stand out [4, 5]. **Why it matters:** important pain points often never become formal tickets. **How to apply:** pair workflow data with a light but regular qualitative loop.

Case Studies & Lessons

- **AI as a management surface, not just a coding surface.** Fung runs a Claude Code remote session with access to repos, Slack, and tracked metrics, then uses shared monthly sessions to review shipped products, how they performed, feedback channels, and quality hotspots from incidents [1]. **Lesson:** AI can compress review and synthesis work for PM and engineering leaders, not just code generation.
- **Same-day roadmap assembly.** In one example, Wensing started with an engineering demo recording and a strategy document with three annual bets, had Claude reshape the demo into the language of those bets, built slides from that, then fed screenshots back into the same chat to generate a non-duplicative talk track before an 11am all-hands [3]. **Lesson:** when time is short, start from raw strategic inputs instead of asking AI for a blank-sheet narrative.

Career Corner

- **Internal AI PM roles can be a strong skill bet—with tradeoffs.** One PM considering a role building predictive credit models for data scientists was told the work may feel closer to project management, with less business-strategy control and looser success metrics [6]. Discovery in that setting may center on feature engineering and balancing fairness with credit quality [7]. Commenters still argued the AI/ML exposure can improve future employability [8]. **How to apply:** when evaluating AI PM roles, weigh business ownership against the long-term value of model and ML experience.
- **Expect AI product work to feel more like research than standard software delivery.** A commenter compared AI development to drug research: many ideas fail, many require constant adjustment, and the right PM posture is continuous re-evaluation and comfort with failure [9]. **How to apply:** set planning and stakeholder expectations accordingly.

Tools & Resources

- **The Hooked model** is a reusable framework for teams trying to build repeat engagement beyond consumer social products [2].
- **Lenny’s conversation with Fiona Fung** is a strong resource on hiring, planning, and managing AI-heavy product teams [10, 1].

Sources

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