

Friction Logs, Comprehension Metrics, and AI Workflow Shifts

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This brief covers practical PM methods for capturing real user friction, measuring comprehension beyond completion, and adapting workflows as AI changes design, engineering, and compliance. It also includes design-partner tactics, a model-pricing case study, and a sober read on PM upskilling.

Big Ideas

- **Completion is not comprehension.** A user can finish a flow and still not know what happened, what comes next, or whether they did the right thing [1]. This shows up in banking, healthcare, government services, insurance, onboarding, document submission, claims, and approvals [1]. **Why it matters:** completion dashboards can look healthy while understanding is broken [1]. **Apply it:** add checks for whether users can explain the outcome, predict the next step, and understand why the system asked for specific information [1].
- **The design-code handoff is being redesigned away.** Figma's code layers bring live executable code onto the canvas, so designers and engineers can view the same implementation at the same time [2]. Figma also introduced AI skills so teams can package their own workflows and conventions into reusable agent instructions connected to tools like GitHub, Notion, and Slack [2]. **Why it matters:** sprint planning, design reviews, and even the definition of "done" change when design and code no longer live in separate places [2]. **Apply it:** pilot one workflow where design review ends only when the live implementation is visible in the same workspace.
- **AI regulation is becoming a product architecture question.** The

EU AI Act simplification package delays high-risk system requirements to Dec. 2027, while transparency rules apply in Aug. 2026 [2]. Connecticut’s CART Act requires employers to disclose AI use in hiring, performance reviews, promotions, and terminations, and says AI is not a defense to discrimination claims [2]. **Apply it:** if your product touches employment decisions, instrument model behavior, log how decisions are made, and treat compliance as part of the product design rather than a last-minute legal review [2].

Tactical Playbook

- **Build a friction log before the next roadmap meeting.** A friction log is a brutally honest record of one real user’s full path—from problem recognition through onboarding, first “wow,” and possible churn [3]. It is not a bug list; it also captures experiences that are “working as designed” but still make users bail [3].

“Empathy is the fuel, but influence is the point.” [3]

How to apply: 1. Pick one recent user journey end to end. 2. Record each hesitation, confusion, workaround, and drop-off—not just defects [3]. 3. Bring the step-by-step evidence into prioritization discussions instead of arguing from opinion [3].

- **Tighten design-partner outreach.** Personal outreach, network activation, and in-person channels beat broad cold pitches for “design partners” [4, 5]. Messaging should focus on the problem solved, not the feature list [4]. **Apply it:** offer one painful workflow teardown to one specific role, then ask for the three ugliest steps they would pay to delete [6].
- **Protect a weekly vision loop as the company scales.** Reserve time each week to review customer calls, deal blockers, and what the team learned from the market [7]. **Why it matters:** it keeps product vision from drifting even when leaders cannot own every product detail [7].

Case Studies & Lessons

- **Google: friction logs can change the roadmap.** One PM reported seeing friction logs work “beautifully” at Google and help drive meaningful product strategy direction [3]. **Takeaway:** one well-documented user journey can carry more weight than a room full of abstract opinions [3].
- **Anthropic’s new default Sonnet model: lower cost can unlock new workflows.** The model is priced at **\$2 per million input tokens** and **\$10 per million output tokens** under introductory pricing through Aug. 31, while performing close to Opus 4.8 on most tasks [2]. Early testing cited by Zapier’s engineering team found that “a two-part job that

used to stall halfway now finishes” [2]. **Takeaway:** re-test previously marginal agent features when both reliability and unit cost improve [2].

Career Corner

- **Treat taste as a product skill, not just a design instinct.** One definition worth borrowing: taste includes systems thinking, direction-setting, and how to present something to users—not only aesthetics [8]. **Apply it:** in reviews, critique not just how something looks, but whether it fits the larger system and clarifies where the product is going.
- **Be selective about PM course spending.** In a difficult PM market, commenters argued that expensive courses around **\$2k** are hard to justify when similar content exists free or cheaply through options like Coursera [9]. They also noted the market is tough even for people with **10 years** of direct PM experience, and far harder for candidates with zero YOE [10]. **Apply it:** only buy training tied to a specific gap, a clear application plan, and—if relevant—a deductible professional expense [11].

Tools & Resources

- **Figma code layers + AI skills** are worth hands-on testing if you work across design and engineering. Use them to reduce handoff translation and encode repeatable team conventions into reusable instructions [2].



How Figma and Anthropic are accelerating product teams | Now Shipping (2:10)

- **Anthropic's new default Sonnet model** is worth benchmarking for agentic PM workflows that were previously too expensive or unreliable [2].
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Sources

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