

From Prioritization to Curation, and Better AI Workflows for PMs

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This brief highlights a shift from backlog prioritization to product curation, plus practical AI workflows for better PM judgment, discovery, and execution. It also covers lessons on empathy-led product discovery, search as a core feature, team learning, and a curated reading list for PM growth.

Big Ideas

- **The PM job is shifting from prioritization to curation.** Ravi Mehta argues that when specs, prototypes, and code get cheaper, PMs spend less time ranking scarcity and more time deciding what deserves a place in the product [1]. AI speeds up execution, but the bottleneck moves to customer understanding, alignment, and judgment [1]. He frames the new work as closing three gaps: signal, evidence, and continuity [1]. **Why it matters:** faster shipping raises the cost of weak selection. **Apply it:** keep a live stream of customer input, require evidence for roadmap changes, and preserve the “why” from discovery through delivery.

“A feature is not done when it ships. It’s done when customers get value from it.” [1]

- **Empathy beats passion in early product building.** Scott Branson says passion-led teams often launch something “30° off” product-market fit if they anchor on a solution instead of user reality [2]. In Behance’s early research, creatives said they did *not* need another network; deeper interviews surfaced the actual needs: attribution, discovery by strangers, and ways to publish joint work [2]. **Why it matters:** users often reject your proposed solution while clearly describing the problem. **Apply**

it: interview for pains, workarounds, and missing outcomes—not feature validation.

Tactical Playbook

1. **Use AI-native design as a product process, not a prompt trick.** Sachin Rekhi’s 10-step sequence starts with identifying a manual problem, mapping the current workflow in detail, and gathering real inputs and edge cases. Only step 4 is the actual AI prototype; the rest is testing, integration, rollout, adoption, contribution, and value capture [3]. **Why it matters:** most AI projects fail in process design, not model choice. **Apply it:** spend the bulk of the work on workflow mapping and edge cases before worrying about scale.
2. **To avoid AI “slop,” feed context in layers.** Matthew Wensing describes Claude as a brilliant junior hire that sprints before it understands the full problem [4, 5]. His pattern: inventory raw material first, start abstract so the model doesn’t snap to a generic template, add rules gradually, reorganize source material around a framework, and only generate talk tracks after the slides exist [5, 4]. **Why it matters:** executives filter out polished but shallow work quickly. **Apply it:** prefer iterative working sessions over one-shot prompts, and verify any non-deterministic analysis before it goes into an executive document [5].

Case Studies & Lessons

- **Customer.io’s AI stack is a strong template for PM leverage.** Wensing describes three internal tools: a Slack/Snowflake analysis bot for natural-language data queries with human verification, a Slack scanner that surfaces threads where product input is needed, and Chiefys, which checks new work against strategy and operating docs for contradictions [5]. **Why it matters:** the best PM AI use cases keep leaders close to data, customer problems, and company context at the same time. **Apply it:** look for one tool each for analysis, signal detection, and consistency checking.
- **Search becomes the product sooner than many teams expect.** In products with large content libraries, the hard part is often not storage but helping users find the right thing fast [6]. Once there are thousands or millions of assets, users care more about discovery than another feature [6]. Complaints like “I can’t find anything” or “the platform feels slow” can actually be search and metadata problems [6]. **Apply it:** treat metadata structure as a product decision, and invest early before categorization debt compounds [6].

Career Corner

- **Small-group learning is often the highest-yield format for PM teams.** Teresa Torres says it creates accountability, shared momentum, and better application to real work than purely self-directed learning, while also working better than mass training when teams are at different stages [7]. **Apply it:** pilot new methods with duos or trios, keep coaching groups tight, and use book clubs or course cohorts to turn learning into practice [7].
- **Do reference checks early enough to learn something.** Julie Zhuo shares David Fischer’s view that late-stage reference calls mostly confirm decisions already made [8]. His calibration question: *If you were starting a company tomorrow and making your first sales hire, would this person be it?* [8] **Apply it:** move at least one reference conversation earlier in senior hiring loops.

Tools & Resources

- **A practical reading list for whatever skill you need next.** Lenny Rachitsky’s latest roundup organizes durable books by job-to-be-done: design, taste/craft, influence, starting a company, and career growth [9]. Useful anchors include *Don’t Make Me Think* for UI judgment, *Never Split the Difference* for collaborative negotiation, and *The Effective Executive* for focusing on the highest-leverage work [9]. Full list: Part 2 [10].

Sources

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