

Judgment, Context, and Discovery as AI Reshapes PM Work

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This brief focuses on three shifts shaping PM work: judgment becoming more valuable than artifacts, context becoming a key execution bottleneck, and discovery getting more evidence-driven. It also includes a practical validation case, career signals from the AI job market, and a new learning resource for PMs.

Big Ideas

- **AI is raising the value of judgment, not removing it.** John Cutler argues that creating an OKR is intellectually simple; the hard part is building judgment through discussion with other people, supported by AI, rather than box-checking forms [1]. Hiten Shah makes the same point from another angle: AI-generated work can look clean and shippable yet still miss the product point, so taste and design judgment need to stay in the loop while code is changing [2]. **Why it matters:** faster drafting and coding shift PM leverage toward critique, framing, and decision quality. **Apply it:** keep review loops close to live work and treat AI outputs as proposals to pressure-test, not decisions to accept.
- **Product context is becoming a bottleneck.** In small SaaS teams, tickets and PRs often still need someone to reconnect the customer problem, expected behavior, edge cases, prior decisions, review concerns, and open release questions before work can ship [3]. The core issue is that product context often does not travel once it leaves the PM or founder's head [3]. **Why it matters:** even when production speeds up, missing context still slows review, QA, and release. **Apply it:** map where your team repeatedly has to “rebuild” context and use that as the signal for process fixes.

- **Delight starts with choosing who you serve.** Teresa Torres highlights Petra Wille’s view that you cannot design an experience that makes everyone happy; instead, design for choice, niche audiences, delight, and even awe when the extra investment is justified [4]. **Why it matters:** this is a reminder that better product design is not generic polish; it is intentional design for a specific audience. **Apply it:** when evaluating a feature, ask who it is really for and whether the added effort creates differentiated value for that group.

Tactical Playbook

1. **Share heuristics, not just priority lists.** Cutler describes writing down internal scoring heuristics in plain language and sharing them as a markdown file, including ideas that score well and poorly, so teammates can understand and iterate on the thinking [1]. **How to apply:** write 3-5 criteria in story form, add examples of ideas that pass and fail, then let teammates test their own ideas against the heuristic.
2. **Use AI to build rubrics where you are not the expert.** For survey design, Cutler asks AI to assemble a research-backed heuristic, reviews the work himself, compares his assessment with AI’s output, and then refines the response [1]. **How to apply:** first generate a rubric from existing research, then do your own pass, compare gaps, and only then decide.
3. **Use AI with teams, not only solo.** Cutler cites research showing individuals paired with AI can approach team-level output, while teams paired with AI can produce up to 3x outcomes [1]. **How to apply:** bring AI into live workshops to run scenarios, ask disconfirming questions, and keep momentum instead of sending someone off for hours or days of research.

Case Studies & Lessons

- **Discovery message shift: from selling to learning.** One B2B AI accounting startup got nowhere with 1,000 cold emails and 100 InMails, receiving only “not interested” replies. It switched to plain LinkedIn connection requests asking ICPs for advice, kept the exchange to three validation questions, and got about 18 replies, 7 video calls, 2 referrals, and 1 buyer call from roughly 60 outreach attempts [5]. **Takeaway:** discovery improves when the conversation is about the customer’s problem and purchase intent, not your pitch [5].
- **From team intuition to repeatable coaching.** Cutler describes recording a live objection-handling role play, turning it into a first guide, grading examples against best practices, and then building an AI skill that analyzes calls and suggests improvements in Slack [1]. **Takeaway:** useful AI systems often start by capturing how the team actually works,

then turning that into a repeatable feedback loop.

Career Corner

- **Expect sharper AI demands in PM roles—and screen for them.** Community signals show companies increasingly expect PMs to accelerate work with AI, audit AI-generated requirements that can be “confidently wrong,” and sometimes even “vibe code” functional prototypes [6, 7]. In weaker setups, leaders may assume six months of work can be compressed into six weeks, or demand large backlogs with no onboarding and “just magically use AI to do it all” [8, 9]. **How to apply:** in interviews and new roles, clarify whether AI output still needs formal review and sign-off, how much ramp time exists, and whether prototype building is part of the PM remit.

“Ask, ‘What can I do about it? What is within my control?’” [10]

That advice, from Anthropic’s Nardi Yogi, is Lenny Rachitsky’s featured antidote to AI-related fear and change resistance [10]. For PMs, the practical version is to focus on the skills and responsibilities you can deliberately strengthen as expectations shift.

Tools & Resources

- **AI 101 for PMs** is a free, open-source course built by a PM to make concrete AI issues easier to understand, including latency, model regressions, hallucinations, and multilingual cost tradeoffs. It includes 25 concepts across 4 chapters, interactive in-browser widgets, no signup, and offline/local progress support [11]. Course: <https://trippinwithpuneet.github.io/AI-101-for-PMs/> [11] Code: <https://github.com/trippinwithpuneet/AI-101-for-PMs> [11]

Sources

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