

Product Brains, Context Packs, and the PM Taste Advantage

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The latest signals point to a new PM operating model: build a trusted organizational context layer, specify problems crisply, and use judgment to select what AI-generated work should survive.

Big Ideas

The PM advantage is moving from prompt skill to context engineering and taste. Jeff Dean describes AI progress as the system around the model—retrieval, tools, memory, and orchestration—and says any team with a model API can improve by running real tasks, observing failures, and encoding better guidelines or skills. [1] In one PM’s self-reported experiment, a month of building a memory layer—35 pages, 23 daily notes, and 14 analyses—made the same model and prompt produce specific, context-aware actions instead of generic discovery advice; the layer captured failed paths and stakeholder history that ordinary document retrieval misses. [2] The practical implication is to ingest meeting notes, Slack activity, and daily notes, classify them with recurring tasks, and require source references for stored claims. The PM’s distinctive contribution is curating and codifying judgment so the AI can reuse it. [2]

Build cost changes the PM job. As spec-driven development makes experimentation cheap, the PM shifts from owning only a six- or 12-month roadmap to deciding which of many experiments deserve to endure—based on customer resonance, strategic coherence, and technical solidity. [2] A parallel emerging direction is realistic simulation: Scott Belsky expects simulations of how people think, decide, and behave to become a commonplace way to test important decisions before launch. Simile AI says it raised \$200 million at a \$2 billion valuation to pursue simulation at population scale. [3, 4] Treat this as a pre-launch

scenario-testing layer, not a substitute for real customer evidence.

Tactical Playbook

Standardize the handoff, not every PM’s workspace. A team moved context from Jira and Confluence into structured GitHub files because connectors returned noisy, stale information and consumed too many tokens—but recognized that this could damage human collaboration. [5] A better operating pattern is:

1. Let teams work in the tools suited to the conversation.
2. Publish an approved initiative pack containing the current problem, decision log, constraints, owner, and source links.
3. Generate the pack automatically, but require one human approval; surface changed decisions, unresolved conflicts, and stale links for review.
4. Version it in GitHub only when engineering or agents need that interface. The test is whether a new person and an AI tool can reconstruct the latest decision from the same pack. [6, 7]

Case Studies & Lessons

Lassie: automate the job, not the interface. Its founders worked inside dental practices and saw a highly rated dentist spending 200 hours a month on paperwork; conversations with other doctors confirmed the pain, and several gave the founders access to their finances and operations. [8] They built the context layer and tools first, then acted as the humans in the loop until they could automate their own work. They aim for roughly 95% automation before selling a job, rather than waiting for perfect coverage. [8] The first agent was priced in five figures for about 30 hours of monthly labor against roughly 200 hours of administrative work. Onboarding connects the bank account, system of record, and insurance portals in a near-self-serve flow, with strict ICP selection and measured checkpoints. [8] The lesson for PMs: in an SMB, there may be nobody available to operate a tool; define value as labor removed and treat integrations and onboarding as core product work.

Career Corner

Entry routes remain adjacent, but not closed. One community commenter calls PM a senior role and recommends business/product analysis or assistant-PM roles; another says multiple internships and APM programs can lead to direct offers. [9, 10] Smaller companies reportedly favor former software engineers or business analysts who can run with a feature immediately, making internal transfers a practical route. The eventual division of product work between humans and AI remains unsettled. [11, 9]

A separate PM discussion is an organizational-health warning: commenters distinguish hard trade-offs from treating people poorly, while one reports a culture

increasingly rewarding louder, angrier PMs and another describes burnout affecting physical and mental health. [12, 13, 14] Be ruthless about prioritization, not about people.

Tools & Resources

Use a product-first spec workflow for coding agents. A practitioner’s lightweight pattern is: write a thorough product brief, ask the AI to identify gaps and questions, then produce the technical implementation plan. Another workflow uses brainstorming and MoSCoW, keeps “what” separate from “how,” and only then hands the result to OpenSpec for implementation detail. [15, 16]

Sources

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