Stop Rewriting the Same Status Five Ways



One source, every shape, and the judgment that stays human

Bert Carroll · Ask the Human · workiscode.com

The Momentum Effect · PMI Co-Op Professional Development Day · October 27, 2026

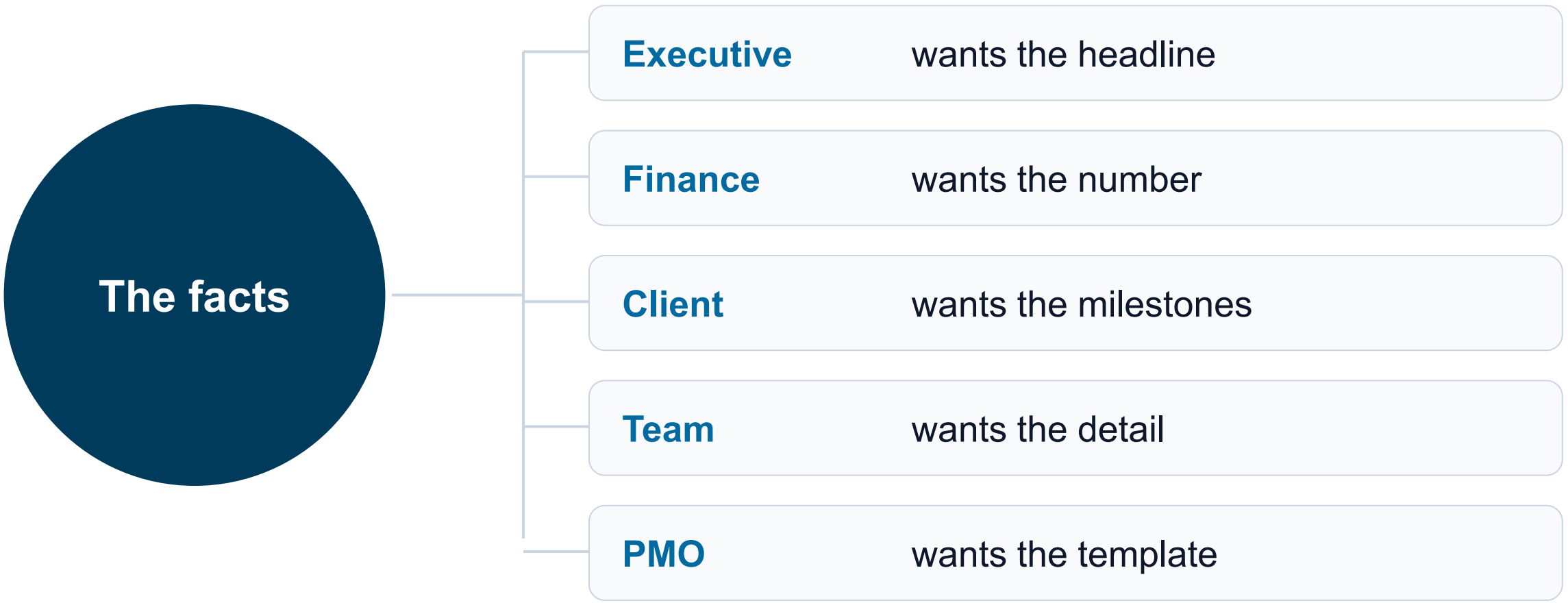
Quick poll: put a number in the chat



How many versions of the same status did you write last week?

Count every one: the exec email, the steering deck, the client update, the team recap, the PMO template.

One project. Five audiences. Five rewrites.



The tax is real

53%

of knowledge workers' time goes to busywork: communicating about work, searching for information, and chasing the status of tasks.

Chasing status is in the definition. That's the PM's week.

Source: Asana, State of Work Innovation 2024 (Global), 13,000+ knowledge workers. asana.com/resources/state-of-work-innovation

And every retype drifts

WHAT HAPPENED

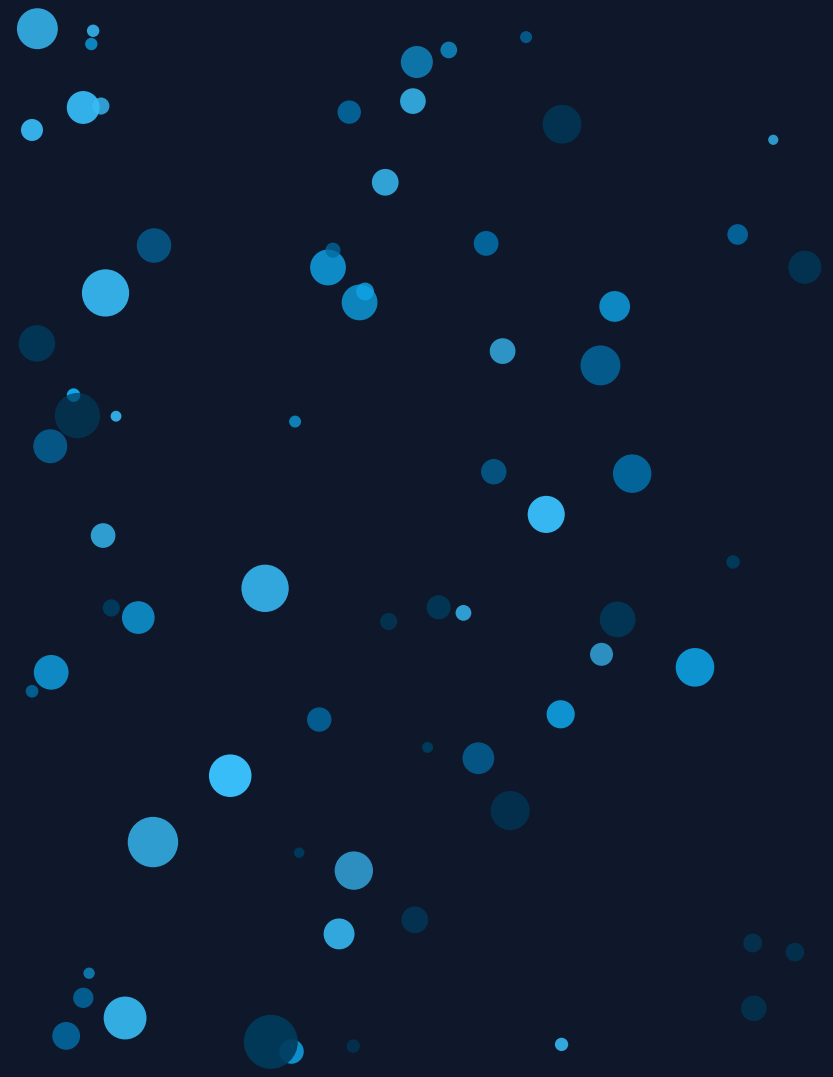
Go-live moved from Nov 20 to Dec 4 after a vendor delay. Budget unchanged.

Exec email	"Minor schedule adjustment"
Client update	"Go-live in early December"
Finance	"No budget impact"
Standup	"We slipped two weeks"
PMO template	Schedule: Amber

Not wrong. Just not what you meant.

01

AI made the rewriting free



Better in some ways. Worse in others.

In the chat: has AI made your status work better, worse, or both?

BETTER

34%

more issues resolved per hour by new support agents using AI

Brynjolfsson, Li & Raymond, NBER

WORSE

40%

of desk workers received AI "workslop" in the last month

BetterUp Labs & Stanford, 2025

Every one of these pens writes



Equivalent options don't help. They make you choose.

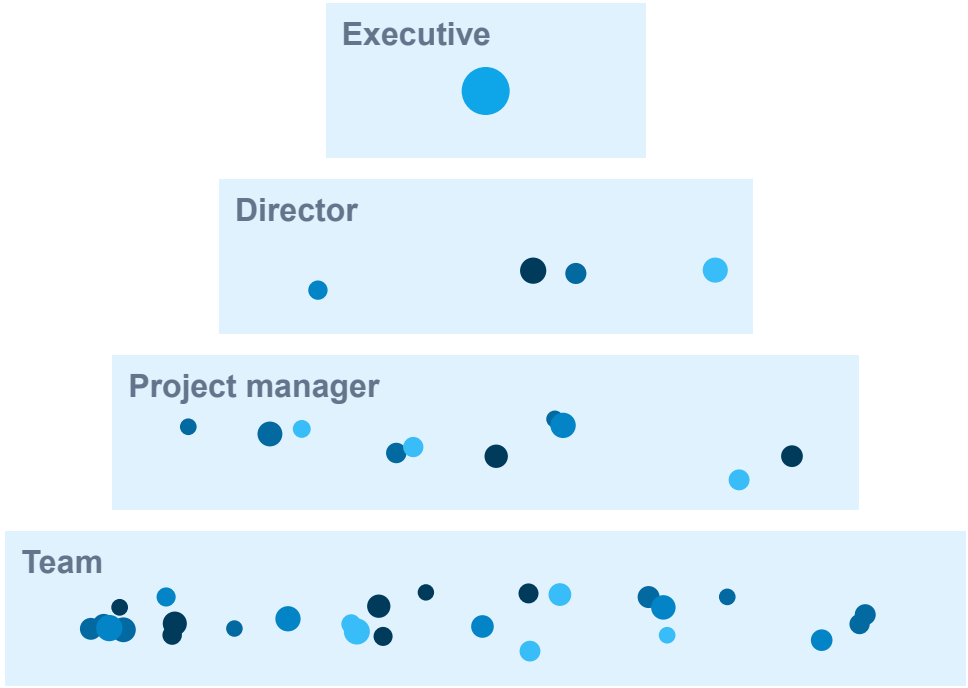
- Most people top out at 3 or 4 things at once.
- More choices add cognitive load, not better decisions.

Give them the items that matter.

Cowan, 2010; Vogel & Machizawa, Nature, 2004

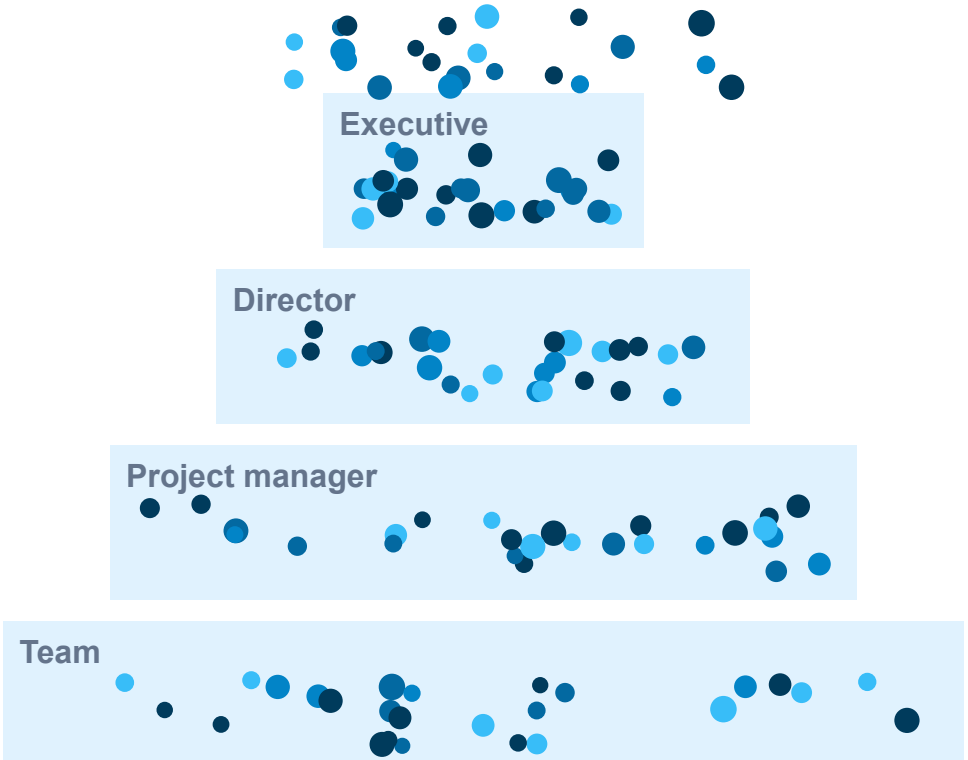
The firehose points up the pyramid

Each layer filters



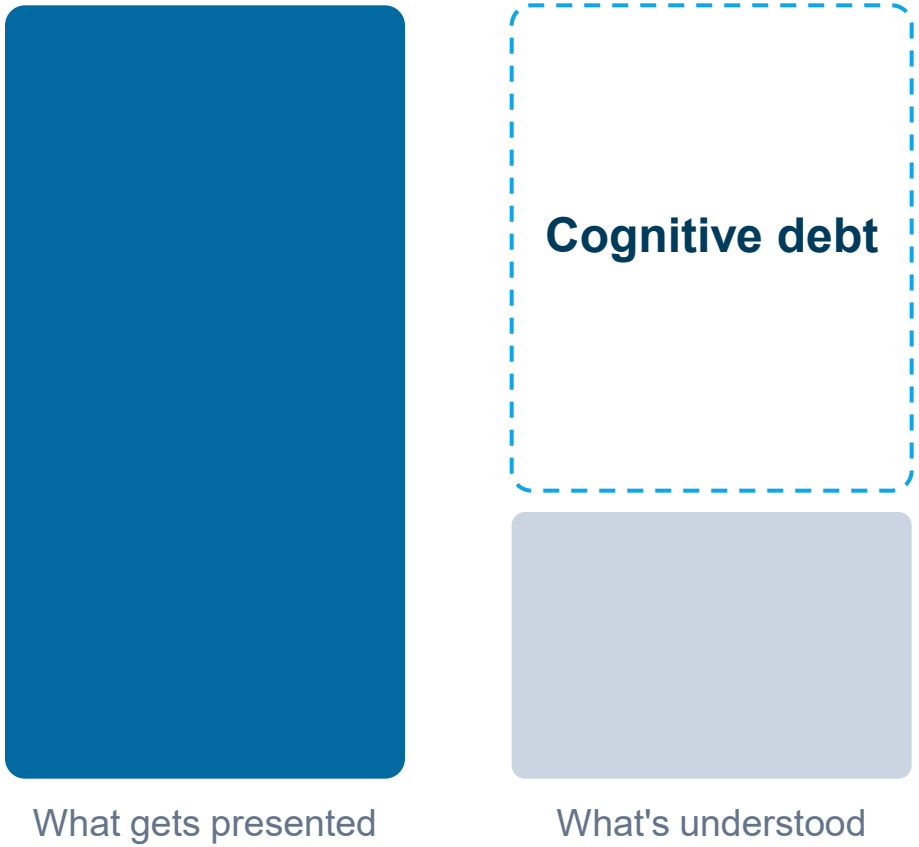
One decision reaches the top.

AI forwards everything



The top clogs. Decisions slow down.

Cognitive debt



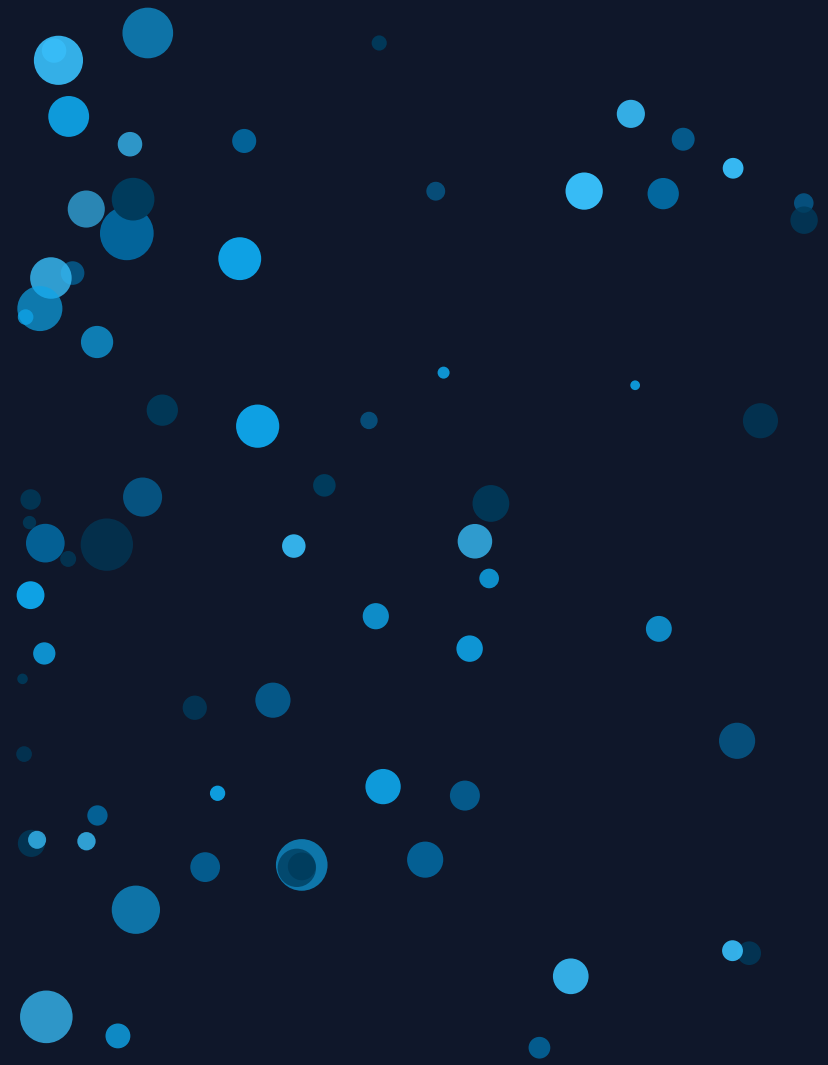
Polished packages go up. The understanding doesn't.

In an MIT study, people who wrote essays with ChatGPT struggled to quote their own work.

Kosmyna et al., MIT Media Lab, 2025. Early study, 54 participants.

02

Design for the decision, not the document



The teams getting results changed the work

Significantly changed their workflows



Your compelling reason: it's the workflow, not the tool.

Wharton & GBK Collective, via WSJ, Oct 2026

Be the filter. Embrace the pull.

WHAT GOES UP

1. The decision you need from them
2. Your recommendation
3. What you already resolved at your level

WHAT STAYS IN THE SOURCE

Every detail, current and complete, open the moment they ask.

They choose to look. You don't push it at them.

Ask. Answer. Prove.

1

Ask

The right questions of the right people

2

Answer

Understand it well enough to decide

3

Prove

Acceptance criteria show it is done

That's judgment. It's the answer to cognitive debt.

AI can carry the volume. Understanding still means leaning in.

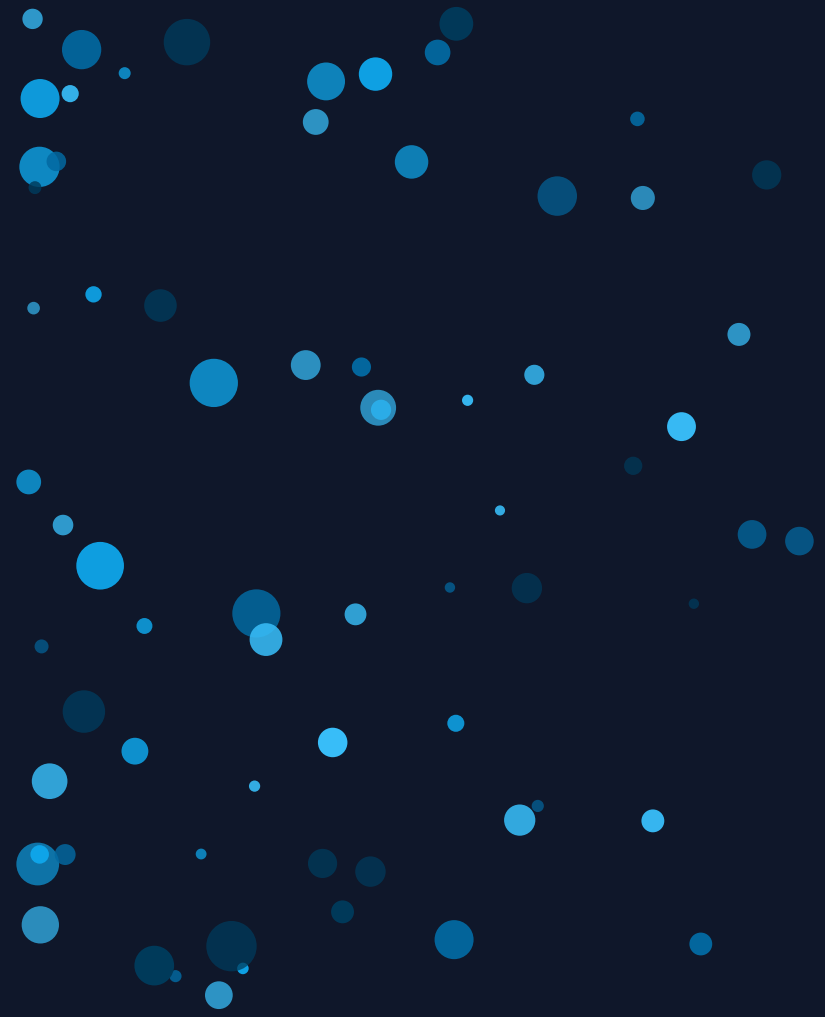
The machine compiles. The human exercises judgment.

Your job moves from translator to editor: what gets seen, by whom, and when.

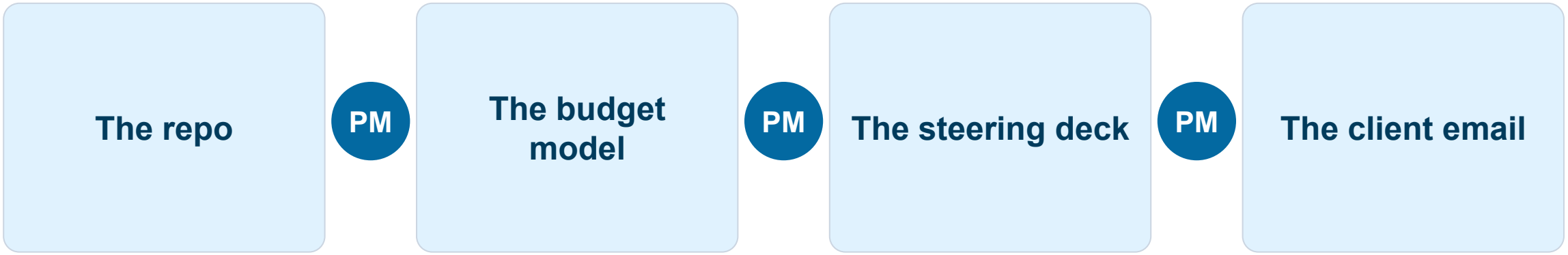


03

Hold everything. Serve what's needed.



The format is the lock



Each format can only be read by the people who live in it. Nobody designed that. The tools enforce it.

Project managers sit at every boundary, translating.

Same data, different clothes

THE TEAM SEES

- Sprint 7 board
- 34 of 40 stories done
- Velocity holding at 38

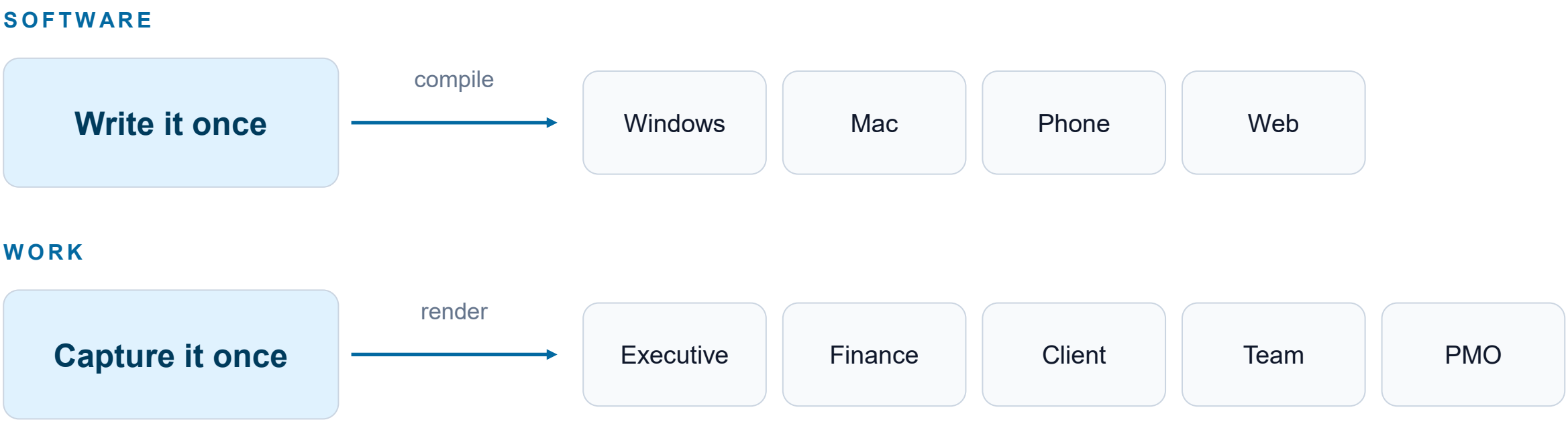
One project

LEADERSHIP SEES

- Go-live: Dec 4
- Forecast: $236k of $240k
- One decision needed

Agile inside, waterfall at the top. Not competing plans. Two views of one source.

Your work is code



Nobody hand-writes machine code anymore. Work is following the same path: one source, rendered for whoever needs it.

Start with one source

A source is just the facts, kept current, in one place you control.

EXAMPLE PROJECT · FIELD SERVICE APP, PHASE 2

Status	Amber: schedule. Budget and scope green.	**Budget**	$240k · $182k spent · $236k forecast, amendment included
Go-live	Dec 4 (was Nov 20; vendor delay)	**Decision**	Approve $14k vendor amendment by Oct 30. No change request.
Training	Weeks of Nov 9 and Nov 16	**Build**	Complete; waiting on amendment sign-off
Client ask	Final user list by Nov 6	**This week**	Dry run: Priya · Training deck: Sam · Amendment paperwork: Lee
Risks	Migration test window; trainer availability	**Blocker**	Test data refresh, IT ticket · Priya · unblock Thursday

Who's asking? The executive

WHO'S ASKING?

- **Executive**
- Finance
- Client
- Team
- PMO

THREE LINES AND A LINK

Go-live moved to Dec 4 (was Nov 20).

Forecast $236k of $240k.

Need from you: approve the $14k vendor amendment by Oct 30.

Everything else is in the project source if you want it.

Same source. Nothing retyped.

Who's asking? Finance

WHO'S ASKING?

- Executive
- **Finance**
- Client
- Team
- PMO

THE NUMBERS, NOTHING ELSE

Approved	**$240,000**
Spent to date	**$182,000 (76%, calculated)**
Forecast at completion	**$236,000**
Vendor amendment	**$14,000, inside forecast**
Change request needed	**No**

Same source. Nothing retyped.

Who's asking? The client

WHO'S ASKING?

- Executive
- Finance
- **Client**
- Team
- PMO

MILESTONES AND WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Go-live: December 4

Training: weeks of November 9 and November 16

We need from you: your final user list by November 6.

Same source. Nothing retyped.

Who's asking? The team

WHO'S ASKING?

- Executive
- Finance
- Client
- **Team**
- PMO

THIS WEEK

- Dry run · Priya
- Training deck · Sam
- Amendment paperwork · Lee

BLOCKED

Test data refresh: waiting on IT ticket. Owner: Priya. Unblock by Thursday.

Same source. Nothing retyped.

Who's asking? The PMO template

WHO'S ASKING?

- Executive
- Finance
- Client
- Team
- **PMO**

THEIR REQUIRED FORMAT, FILLED FROM THE SOURCE

Overall	**Amber**
Schedule	**Amber**
Budget	**Green**
Scope	**Green**
Decisions pending	**1**

Comment: Build complete, waiting on amendment sign-off.

Same source. Nothing retyped.

Right data. Right time. Right format.

1

Right data

Only what this person needs to act

2

Right time

When the decision is in front of them

3

Right format

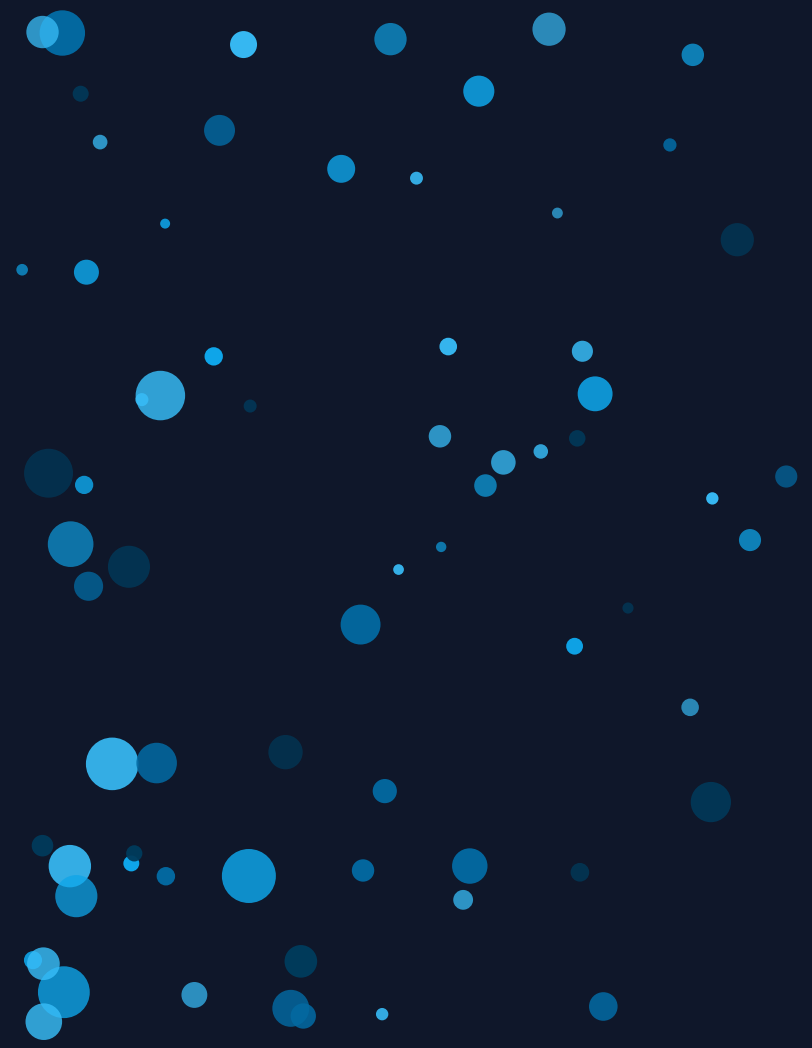
The shape they already read

...with the rest one ask away. They should feel the depth is there, without being handed it.

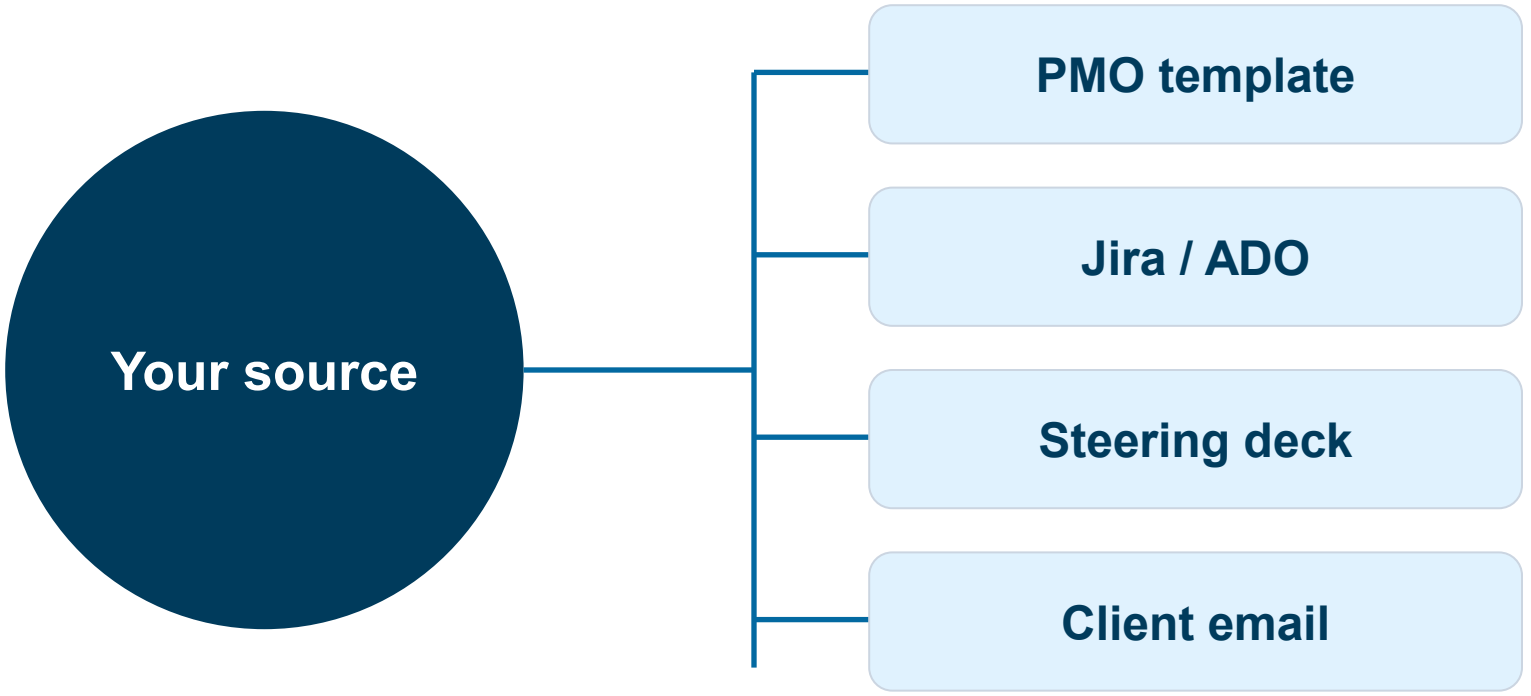
"Overview first, zoom and filter, then details on demand." Ben Shneiderman, "The Eyes Have It," 1996

04

You can't change the system. You don't have to.



The required report is one more audience



Keep filling the template. Stop thinking inside it.

No permission needed. The system of record stays. Your thinking moves upstream of it.

Give AI a process, not a pile

A PILE

Paste everything in.
Ask it to "write a status."

It guesses. It fills the gaps.
It sounds sure.

That's how you get slop.

A PROCESS

A source. A template.
Rules it has to follow.

Consistent. Checkable.
The same every week.

Write prompts like a recipe: named blanks, no room to improvise.

Carroll, AI as Translation Layer, workiscode.com

Render it the trustworthy way

1

Known formats get a fixed template

The PMO report is the same shape every week. Don't regenerate it; fill it.

2

Prompts use only facts in the source

No source, no claim. Blank beats invented.

3

You read it and sign before it goes

Your name is on it. That's the point.

TRY THIS PROMPT

```
"Using only the facts in this
source, fill in our PMO
status template. Leave blank
anything the source doesn't
cover."
```

Change minds with evidence, not argument

Add one line under the field

"Amber: build complete, waiting on amendment sign-off." Same template, more truth.

Run yours alongside theirs

Log the official status, the real breakdown, and what actually happened.

Measure decision speed

"Our pack sends 40 items up and gets 3 decisions back, two weeks late."

Ask small

One project, one sponsor, one quarter. Hard to say no to.

Sell it in the KPIs they already track

WHAT LEADERS MEASURE	WHAT YOU BRING
Hours saved per employee per week	Your rewrite tax: versions times hours
Reduction in error rates	The versions that drifted from the facts
Reduction in task completion time	Time from status sent to decision made
Reduction in operational overhead	Status meetings and packs you can retire

Skip "output volume." That's the firehose.

Wharton Human-AI Research & GBK Collective, annual enterprise AI study, Oct 2026 (via WSJ)

Start on the rung you're on

Agentic tools — Drafts itself from your documents on a schedule. You still sign.

Saved context — Keep the source loaded in a project or custom assistant. No re-pasting.

Chatbot — In your approved tool, paste the source. Ask for each audience's version. Edit, then send.

Every rung gives you time back. Every rung stays inside your company's AI policy.

Monday

1

Count your rewrite tax

List every version you send, who gets it, and how long it takes. Versions times hours is your tax.

2

Start one source

One project. The facts, kept current, in one place.

3

Check before anything goes up

Is this theirs? What do I need? What do I recommend? What did I resolve? Where's the detail?

The constraint was never the knowledge. It was never the people. It was always the format.

Prompt kit and slides: in the session materials.
More at workiscode.com/talks/stop-rewriting



Questions



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