



PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

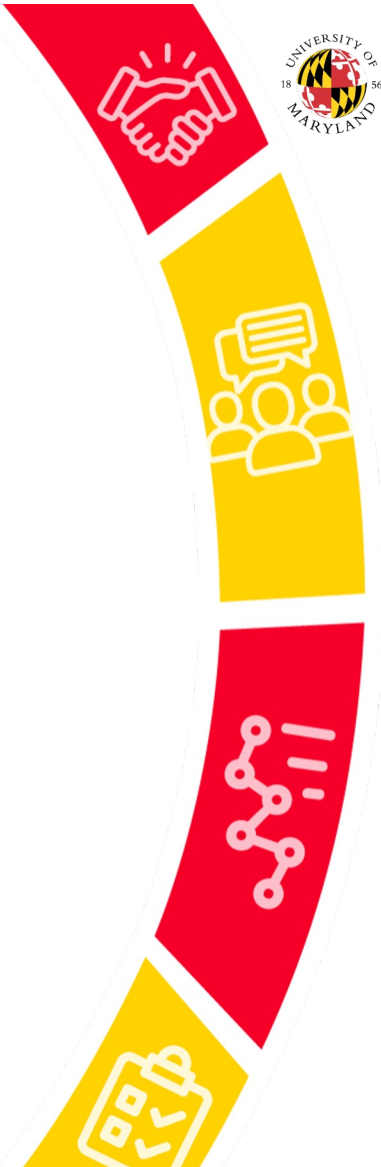
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
2026 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

# Starting Small with AI: Why Grassroots Beats the Enterprise Rollout

**Dan Stay, PMP**

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# About Me



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- 20+ years in media and live events — plus tech startups, government, and enterprise
- Fox News and NEP Group: where failure happens live with no second chances
- PMP certified 2021 - brought formal methodology to hard-won field experience
- Current: AVIT Project Manager  
Boeing Defense, Space and Security

# Sound Familiar?



- Your organization announces an “AI Transformation Initiative”
- Six months and millions of dollars later:  
adoption is at 12%
- The tool sits unused.  
Everyone is back to doing things the old way.
- Meanwhile, individual PMs are quietly using AI to transform their work
  - No permission, no budget, no fanfare - just results

# Why Enterprise AI Fails



## The Pattern:

**Executive mandate.  
Expensive licenses.  
Mandatory training.  
McKinsey 2025: 88% of  
orgs use AI in at least one  
function - but fewer than  
40% have scaled beyond  
pilot.**

## The Root Cause:

**Top-down rollouts start  
with a platform, not a pain  
point. They are solutions  
looking for problems.**

## The Result:

**42% of executives say AI  
adoption is tearing their  
company apart. 49% of  
employees are figuring out  
AI on their own anyway -  
shadow AI is already  
happening.**

# Grassroots AI: A Different Model



- Start with a pain point, not a platform
  - What task takes you the longest? What do you dread writing?  
Start there.
- Use free tools first — ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot.  
PMI members: [pmi.org/infinity](https://pmi.org/infinity)
- Demonstrate value through results, not presentations
- Build organic adoption - it spreads because it works
- **You do not need permission to be more effective**



# The 60–90% Rule

**60–90%**

**10–40%**

**AI gets you here**  
conquers the blank page

**You close it**  
judgment · context

Blank page → AI-drafted output

Your expertise closes  
the gap

The hardest part — starting — is already handled.

Your judgment, context, and priorities close the rest.  
You handle: politics, unstated constraints, priority decisions



## 01 Project charter

Generate a charter from scattered inputs

## 02 Risk identification

Identify risks from a charter or scope statement

## 03 Status update rewrite

Rewrite a technical update for an executive audience

## 04 Requirements list

Draft from stakeholder meeting notes

## 05 Communication plan

Create an outline for a new project

# Prompt 1: Project Charter From Chaos



- The Problem: Email chains, meeting notes, verbal requests — or a live transcription from your commute when you couldn't hit record
- "You are a PMP-certified PM. Draft a project charter: objective, scope, stakeholders, assumptions, constraints, and timeline. Input: [paste content]"
- AI organizes chaos into structure
- You add what AI cannot know: politics, real priorities, unstated context

# Prompt 2: Risk Identification



- The Problem: Risk analysis is important but articulating risks takes time
- "Review this project description. Identify top 10 risks with likelihood, impact, and mitigation strategy. Format as a risk register."
- AI finds patterns from thousands of similar projects
- You add risks only YOU know: the unreliable vendor, the scope-creeping stakeholder

# Prompt 3: Stakeholder Communication



- The Problem: Same information needs different framing for different audiences
- "Rewrite this status update for a C-suite audience. Focus on business impact and decisions needed. Eliminate technical jargon."
- Same content, completely different framing - in seconds
- Then: "Now rewrite for the technical team implementing the solution"



# Application to offer — in one week

## PLAN

Success criteria  
AI knowledge base  
Target roles

## EXECUTE

Tailored resumes  
Strategic targeting  
Not spray and pray

## RESULT

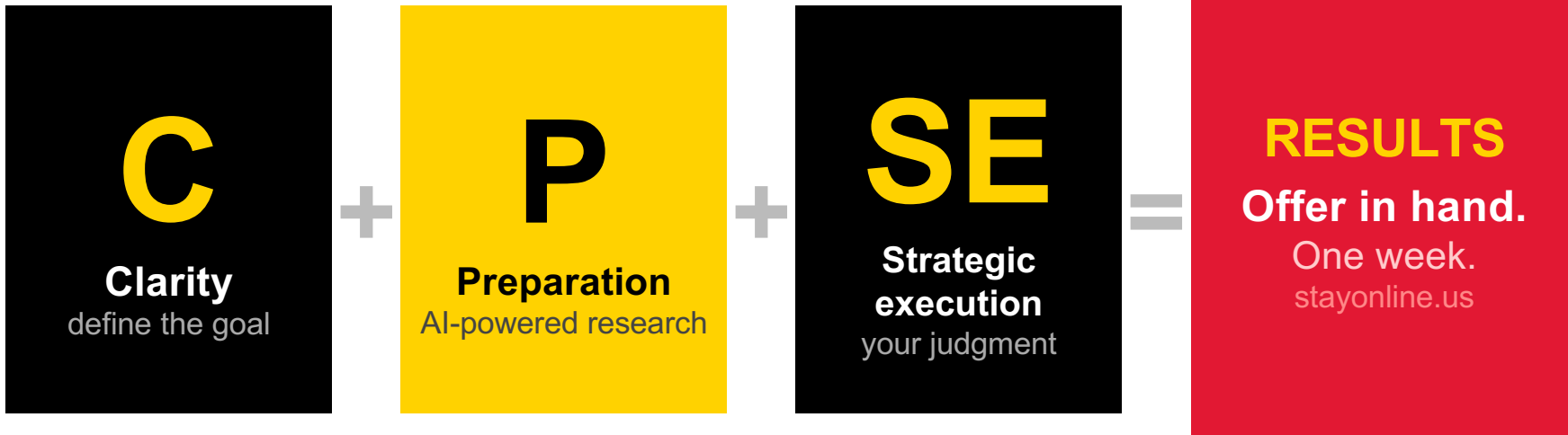
# 1 WEEK

application → offer  
in this market

PM methodology applied to yourself — define success criteria, build your knowledge base, execute strategically.



# The formula that works



Full methodology and article at [stayonline.us](http://stayonline.us)



## Prompts 4 & 5: Requirements and Communication Planning

- Prompt 4: "My stakeholder meeting notes. Draft a requirements list. Flag anything vague or untestable."
- AI structures the notes — you validate against what you actually heard
- Prompt 5: "Project description and stakeholder list. Draft a communication plan with cadence for each group."

# AI: When It Helps vs. When to Be Careful



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## AI Works Great For:

**First drafts. Pattern recognition. Reformatting content. Brainstorming. Generating structured documents from unstructured input.**

## AI Needs Your Help:

**Organizational politics. Unstated constraints. Priority decisions. Validating accuracy. Anything that requires knowing YOUR team.**

## Always Verify:

**Treat public AI tools like an open channel. Sanitize names, contract numbers, and client details before prompting. Would not put it in an unclassified email? Do not put it in the prompt. Check your organization's data policy.**

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# Your Action Plan: Start Tomorrow



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- Today: Identify ONE task you dread - a report, charter, or status update
- Tonight: Try ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini — free, no budget needed. PMI members: [pmi.org/infinity](https://pmi.org/infinity)
- Next month: When a colleague asks how you got that done so fast, show them
- **You do not need permission to be more effective**



# Questions & Evaluation

## Evaluate Session:



## Contact Information:

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