

Project Management: Keep Projects Moving Without Chasing People

April 14, 2026 | Operations + Work Systems

Draft project updates, surface risks, and build accountability without constant chasing.

April 14, 2026

With Cheryl Thompson

Who it is for

Project managers and cross-functional project leaders

Inside this playbook

10 copyable prompts and practice blocks.

[Open the online playbook](#)

The recorded session

Watch the Learning Lab.

Follow the session, then use the playbook with your own work.

[Watch replay on Vimeo](#) ↗ ^[1]

What to take into your work

1. Turn project information into clear updates.
2. Surface risks and decide what needs escalation.
3. Agree on accountability without constant chasing.

Use the learning

Your playbook

Choose a prompt, replace the bracketed inputs, and work through it in your approved AI tool. Review the result and adapt it to your situation.

This playbook accompanies the April 14, 2026 session. Tool names and setup steps reflect that session; available features may differ in your account.

Welcome to Your AI Toolkit

You're supposed to be managing projects. Instead, you're chasing people. Status updates that should take 5 minutes take 45. Stakeholders who committed to deadlines go silent. And you spend more time writing follow-up emails than actually moving work forward. This playbook gives you three AI prompts that turn project communication from reactive to proactive: draft status updates and escalations in minutes, identify risks before they derail timelines, and build accountability without micromanagement.

- You don't need to use everything at once. Start with the one prompt that solves your most immediate problem.
- These prompts work across platforms: Copilot, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or your company's internal AI tool.
- Each prompt includes a main version (for licensed tools with full context windows) and an alternate version (for free Copilot or tools with limited input).

How to Use This Playbook

- **Start with Prompt #1.** Paste your project updates and let AI draft a concise status report, risk summary, and escalation email.
- **Get ahead of problems.** Use Prompt #2 to identify risks, dependencies, and blockers before they blow up your timeline.
- **Build accountability.** Use Prompt #3 to create a communication cadence that keeps people on track without you chasing them.
- **Give AI context before asking for help.** The more specific you are about your project, stakeholders, and deadlines, the more useful the output.
- **Review and refine.** AI drafts the communication. You know the politics, relationships, and priorities.

The Proactive Project Communication Framework

Most project managers are reactive - chasing updates after deadlines pass. Proactive PMs prevent problems with structured communication.

Communication Type	When to Use It	Audience	AI Can Help
Status Update	Weekly or bi-weekly, same day/time	Stakeholders, sponsors, team	Draft from bullet points in 2 minutes

Communication Type	When to Use It	Audience	AI Can Help
Risk Alert	As soon as a risk is identified, not when it becomes a problem	Sponsor, affected stakeholders	Structure risk with impact, probability, and mitigation
Escalation Email	When a blocker has been unresolved for more than one follow-up	Sponsor, blocking party's manager	Draft professional, firm escalation without burning bridges
Accountability Check	3 days before a deadline, not the day after it's missed	Task owner	Draft friendly-but-clear reminder that prevents the miss
Stakeholder Summary	Monthly or milestone-based	Senior leadership	Translate detailed project data into executive-friendly format

Key Insight: You're not chasing people because you're bad at project management. You're chasing people because the communication system doesn't prevent it. Fix the system and the chasing stops. The 3-Before Rule

- **3 days before** a deadline: Send a checkpoint message ("Just confirming - are we on track for Thursday?")
- **3 hours before** a meeting: Send the agenda with clear asks ("I need a decision on X and an update on Y")
- **3 minutes before** sending any escalation: Re-read it. Is it factual, not emotional? Does it propose a solution, not just a problem?

The AI Efficiency Ladder

Know where you are. Know where you're going.

Level	What It Looks Like	Time / Task
1. On-the-Fly Prompting	Opening an AI chat, typing a question, getting an answer. Starting from scratch every time.	5–10 minutes, inconsistent
2. Repeatable Prompts	Saved templates you fill in. Same quality every time because same structure.	2–3 minutes, consistent

Level	What It Looks Like	Time / Task
3. Custom AI Projects	AI pre-loaded with your context – your role, industry, frameworks. Works like a team member.	1-2 minutes, personalized
4. Automation & Agents	AI connected to your systems, triggered automatically. Runs without you.	0 minutes, scales

Your goal: Move from Level 1 to Level 2. The prompts in this playbook get you there.

The Prompt Structure

Every strategic prompt has four parts:

Part	Purpose	Example
ROLE	Who should AI pretend to be?	"You are a project management assistant for automotive programs..."
CONTEXT	What does AI need to know about you?	"I manage a cross-functional launch program with 6 workstreams and a Q3 deadline..."
REQUEST	What specifically do you want?	"Draft a status email, risk summary, and one escalation message..."
QUESTION	Invite the AI to get as much information from you as possible.	"Please ask me any clarifying questions."

Key Prompts from This Lab

This lab teaches three prompts that work as a sequence - Report, Anticipate, Prevent.

Prompt #1: The Status Report & Escalation Drafter

What it's for: Taking your raw project notes, updates, and meeting outputs and turning them into a polished status report, risk summary, and escalation email - in minutes instead of hours.

When to use it: Weekly, before your status update goes out. When you need to escalate a blocker professionally. When your boss asks "Where are we on this?" and you need a clean answer fast.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini)

Use when you can provide full project context.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini)

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE

You are a project management communication assistant for automotive programs. You specialize in turning raw project data into clear, professional communications. You understand that status updates should be concise, risks should be quantified, and escalations should be factual and solution-oriented — never emotional or accusatory.

CONTEXT

I manage a project with multiple workstreams and stakeholders. I need to communicate project status regularly, and I need help turning my notes into professional, ready-to-send communications.

REQUEST

Based on the project updates I provide, create:

1. STATUS EMAIL

- Subject line that tells the story in 8 words or less
- Executive summary (3 sentences: where we are, what's on track, what needs attention)
- Workstream update table: | Workstream | Status (●/●/●) | Key Update | Next

Milestone | Owner |

- Decisions needed (if any)
- Next steps with owners and dates
- Total length: under 300 words

2. RISK SUMMARY

For each risk identified in my notes:

| Risk | Impact (H/M/L) | Probability (H/M/L) | Mitigation | Owner | Target Date |

- Include one sentence explaining each risk in plain language
- Flag any risk that has gotten worse since last update

3. ESCALATION EMAIL (if needed)

- Professional, factual, solution-oriented

PROMPT TO COPY

- Structure: What the issue is → What we've tried → What we need → By when
- Tone: firm but respectful. This is about the issue, not the person.
- Include a proposed solution, not just a complaint

4. PRE-MEETING AGENDA

If I have a project meeting coming up:

- Timed agenda with clear objectives for each item
- Pre-read requirements (what people need to bring/prepare)
- Decision items clearly flagged
- "Parking lot" section for items to defer

FORMAT

- Status email: ready to paste into Outlook
- Risk table: ready for a PowerPoint or Excel
- Escalation email: ready to send after one review

IMPORTANT

If I have already provided project details, notes, or context above, go ahead and generate the deliverables immediately — do not ask questions I already answered. If I have NOT provided project details, ask me the questions below before generating anything. Either way, keep each section concise — no section longer than 150 words. I will ask for more detail where I need it.

QUESTION

Ask me:

1. What project is this for? (brief description)
2. What updates do you have? (paste your raw notes, bullet points, or meeting notes)
3. Any blockers or issues I should know about?
4. Who is the audience for the status update?
5. Is there anything you need to escalate?

Alternate Version (Copilot Free / Limited Context)**PROMPT TO COPY**

I manage a project in [AUTOMOTIVE ENVIRONMENT].

Here are my raw project notes and updates:

[PASTE NOTES]

Create:

1. A status email (under 300 words) with executive summary, workstream table (status, update, next milestone, owner), and next steps
2. A risk summary table (risk, impact, probability, mitigation, owner)

PROMPT TO COPY

3. An escalation email for this blocker: [DESCRIBE] — professional, factual, with a proposed solution

Make the status email ready to paste into Outlook. Keep the tone professional and concise.

Example

"Here are my raw notes from this week's APQP launch status calls: B-pillar reinforcement tooling: 2 weeks late. Supplier says steel allocation issue from their mill. Progressive die Station 4 cavitation problem found during tryout. They want to skip run-at-rate to make up time. Our QE said absolutely not. No revised timeline committed yet. I need to escalate this. Door hinge PPAP: Due in 10 days. Supplier has not submitted samples. When I called Tuesday they said 'we're working on it.' No commitment. This is a repeat issue — third time they've been late on sample submissions. SQA needs to get involved. Rocker panel dimensional: Results from last trial run showed 0.4mm deviation on profile at the B-surface. Supplier claims it's within spec using their fixture. Our CMM says otherwise. Need to align on measurement methodology before next trial. Customer milestone: OEM moved the PPAP review up one week. New date is March 28 instead of April 4. This compresses everything. I haven't told the suppliers yet. Paint shop: Running at 97% capacity. If we need to accelerate anything to make up for tooling delays, paint is the bottleneck. Overtime would cost ~\$45K/week and still only buys us one extra shift. Program timing: 16 weeks to SOP. No float left. Any slip from here cascades."

Prompt #2: The Risk & Dependency Spotter

What it's for: Analyzing your project plan, timeline, or task list to identify risks, dependencies, and potential bottlenecks before they become emergencies. **When to use it:** At project kickoff, at each phase gate, or whenever something feels off. When you want to ask "What am I not seeing?" and get a structured answer.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini)

Use for a comprehensive project risk analysis.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini)

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE

You are a project risk analyst for the automotive industry. You specialize in identifying risks, dependencies, and failure points in complex programs — before they become crises. You think in terms of critical path, resource contention, stakeholder alignment, and schedule compression. You've seen enough automotive launches to know where things typically go wrong.

CONTEXT

I want to stress-test my project plan. I'll share my timeline, milestones, and task list, and I want you to find the problems I'm not seeing.

REQUEST

Based on my project information, provide:

1. RISK ASSESSMENT

| Risk | Category (Technical/Resource/Schedule/Stakeholder/External) | Likelihood | Impact | Early Warning Sign | Mitigation |

- Identify 5–10 risks, ranked by combined likelihood and impact
- Include at least 2 risks I probably haven't considered

2. DEPENDENCY MAP

- Which tasks depend on other tasks completing first?
- Where are the single points of failure? (one person, one approval, one vendor)
- Which dependencies cross team or department boundaries? (these are the dangerous ones)

3. CRITICAL PATH ANALYSIS

- What's the actual critical path? (the longest sequence of dependent tasks)
- Where is the schedule most fragile? (least float/buffer)
- What would happen if [specific task] slips by 1 week? 2 weeks?

4. STAKEHOLDER RISK

- Who could block this project if they're not aligned?
- Where is decision authority unclear?
- Which stakeholders need to be engaged NOW vs. later?

5. PRE-MORTEM

"It's 3 months from now and this project has failed. What went wrong?"

- Give me the 3 most likely failure scenarios
- For each: what caused it, when the warning signs appeared, and what we should do NOW to prevent it

IMPORTANT

If I have already provided project details, notes, or context above, go ahead and generate the deliverables immediately — do not ask questions I already answered. If I have NOT

PROMPT TO COPY

provided project details, ask me the questions below before generating anything. Either way, keep each section concise — no section longer than 150 words. I will ask for more detail where I need it.

QUESTION

Ask me to describe the project, share the timeline/milestones, and tell you what worries me most.

Alternate Version (Copilot Free / Limited Context)**PROMPT TO COPY**

Here is my project plan:

[PASTE TIMELINE, MILESTONES, AND KEY TASKS]

Analyze it and tell me:

1. The top 5-10 risks I should be watching (with likelihood, impact, and what to do about each)
2. Which tasks depend on each other and where the single points of failure are
3. Where the schedule is most fragile
4. A pre-mortem: "If this project fails in 3 months, what went wrong?" Give me the 3 most likely scenarios and how to prevent them

Be specific. Include risks I probably haven't thought of.

Example

"New vehicle launch program - crossover SUV platform. Production start: 16 weeks out. Workstreams and current status:

1. Tooling validation: 3 suppliers, 14 tools total. 9 tools approved, 3 in tryout (including the B-pillar progressive die that's 2 weeks late), 2 haven't started tryout yet.
2. PPAPs: 12 total. 4 approved, 3 submitted awaiting customer approval, 5 not yet submitted. Earliest PPAP submission gap is the door hinge bracket - 10 days to deadline, no samples.
3. Trial runs: First full trial run scheduled Week 10. Requires all tooling validated. If B-pillar tooling stays 2 weeks late, trial run pushes to Week 12 minimum.
4. Quality wall: Setup starts Week 12. Needs production-representative parts from trial runs. If trial runs slip, quality wall setup compresses into SOP week.
5. Operator training: 45 operators need training on 6 new stations. Training starts Week 13. Training materials require finalized work instructions from trial run findings.

6. Logistics: Packaging specs pending for 4 parts. Returnable containers ordered but lead time is 8 weeks. If not ordered by end of this week, they won't arrive before SOP. Key dependencies:
- Everything downstream depends on tooling validation
 - Trial runs depend on all 14 tools approved
 - Training materials depend on trial run results
 - Quality wall depends on production-representative parts
 - SOP date is fixed - customer won't move it People: 8 workstream leads across engineering, quality, manufacturing, logistics, purchasing, and HR. Communication is weekly status emails. Half respond on time. Two never respond without chasing."

Prompt #3: The Accountability System Builder

What it's for: Creating a communication cadence and accountability system that keeps people on track without you having to chase them - including pre-deadline reminders, check-in templates, and follow-up sequences. **When to use it:** At project kickoff to set expectations. When people keep missing deadlines and you're tired of being the bad guy. When you want accountability without micromanagement.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini)

Use to build a complete project accountability system.

Main Version (Licensed Copilot / ChatGPT / Gemini)

PROMPT TO COPY
ROLE You are a project accountability coach for automotive programs. You build communication systems that keep people on track without the project manager having to chase, nag, or micromanage. You understand that accountability isn't about pressure — it's about clarity, visibility, and making it easier to deliver than to dodge. CONTEXT I manage a project where I spend too much time chasing people for updates, reminding them of deadlines, and following up on commitments. I want a system that makes accountability automatic. REQUEST Based on my project structure, create: 1. COMMUNICATION CADENCE A schedule of all project communications:

PROMPT TO COPY

| Communication | Frequency | Audience | Format | Day/Time | Purpose |

- Daily standup or async check-in
- Weekly status update
- Bi-weekly stakeholder review
- Monthly executive summary
- Ad-hoc: risk alerts, escalations

2. PRE-DEADLINE REMINDER SEQUENCE

For every major milestone:

- T-minus 7 days: Friendly check-in ("Just confirming we're on track for...")
- T-minus 3 days: Specific ask ("Can you confirm completion of X by Thursday?")
- T-minus 1 day: Final confirmation ("Confirming — this is due tomorrow. Any blockers?")
- T-plus 1 day (if missed): Factual follow-up with escalation path

Include draft messages for each.

3. MEETING EFFECTIVENESS TOOLKIT

- Standard agenda template with timing
- Action item capture format: | Action | Owner | Due Date | Status |
- Follow-up email template (sent within 2 hours of meeting)
- "No update? Here's what happens" escalation protocol

4. ACCOUNTABILITY WITHOUT MICROMANAGEMENT

5 techniques for keeping people on track without hovering:

- Making commitments public (team-visible task boards)
- Peer accountability (paired ownership)
- Progress visibility (dashboards, not email threads)
- Consequence clarity (what happens when deadlines slip)
- Recognition (celebrating on-time delivery, not just firefighting)

FORMAT

- Templates should be copy-paste ready
- Tone: professional, supportive, clear
- Designed for automotive project environments (launches, APQP, cross-functional programs)

IMPORTANT

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QUESTION

Ask me about my project: team size, stakeholders, current communication habits, and biggest accountability challenge.

Alternate Version (Copilot Free / Limited Context)

PROMPT TO COPY

I manage a project with [NUMBER] stakeholders in [AUTOMOTIVE ENVIRONMENT].

Biggest problem: [DESCRIBE YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY CHALLENGE]

Create:

- 1. A communication cadence (what to send, when, to whom)
- 2. Pre-deadline reminder messages: 7 days out, 3 days out, 1 day out, and if missed
- 3. A meeting follow-up email template with action item tracking
- 4. 5 techniques for accountability without micromanagement

Make all templates copy-paste ready. Keep the tone professional and supportive, not nagging.

Example

"I manage an APQP launch program with 8 workstream leads. None of them report to me — they all report to different functional directors. My only leverage is the program timeline and escalation to the launch steering committee. Current communication cadence: I send a status request email every Monday asking for updates by Wednesday. 3 of the 8 respond on time. 2 respond late (Thursday/Friday). 2 respond only after I chase them individually. 1 (purchasing) almost never responds — I have to walk over to her desk or call. Meeting structure: Weekly 60-minute launch meeting. Half the time is spent going around the table asking 'What's your status?' which people could have sent in advance. The other half is reactive problem-solving on whatever blew up that week. No proactive risk discussion. What I've tried: I've sent reminder emails. I've cc'd their directors. I've escalated twice to the steering committee. Each time it works for one week then reverts. I don't want to escalate every week — it burns political capital. What I need: A system that makes the status updates automatic, the reminders feel like process not nagging, and the meetings productive. I want to stop being the professional follow-up artist."

Prompt #4: The Stakeholder Update Translator

What it's for: Taking detailed project data and translating it into the format each stakeholder actually wants - executives want the headline, technical leads want the detail, sponsors want the risk. **When to use it:** Before stakeholder reviews or executive presentations. When you need to tell the same story to different audiences.

Main Version

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE

You are a project communication strategist. You translate project status into the format each stakeholder cares about. You know that a VP wants 3 bullets, an engineer wants the Gantt chart, and a sponsor wants to know what's at risk and what they need to decide.

CONTEXT

I need to present the same project update to different audiences. Each needs a different version.

REQUEST

Based on my project update, create:

1. EXECUTIVE VERSION (VP / Director level)
 - 3–5 bullet points maximum
 - Overall status (●/●/●), key risk, next decision needed
 - Under 100 words
2. SPONSOR VERSION
 - Status summary with risks and mitigations
 - Decisions needed with options and recommendations
 - Budget and timeline impact
 - 200–300 words
3. TEAM VERSION
 - Detailed workstream updates
 - Action items with owners and dates
 - What's blocking us and what we need from others
 - As detailed as needed
4. ONE-SLIDE SUMMARY
 - Design a single slide layout:
 - Top: Overall status and headline
 - Left: What's on track
 - Right: What needs attention
 - Bottom: Key decisions and next steps

IMPORTANT

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QUESTION

Paste your detailed project update and tell me who your audiences are.

PROMPT TO COPY**Alternate Version (Copilot Free)****PROMPT TO COPY**

Here is my detailed project update:

[PASTE UPDATE]

Create three versions:

1. Executive (3-5 bullets, under 100 words, overall status + key risk)
2. Sponsor (status + risks + decisions needed, 200-300 words)
3. Team (detailed action items with owners and dates)
4. A one-slide layout (status headline, what's on track, what needs attention, next steps)

Example

"Situation: Our B-pillar reinforcement tooling supplier just confirmed they'll be 2 weeks late on tool completion. Root cause is a steel allocation issue at their mill combined with a cavitation problem on Station 4 of the progressive die found during tryout. This pushes our first trial run from Week 10 to Week 12 minimum, which compresses quality wall setup and operator training into the final 4 weeks before SOP. I need to communicate this to three different audiences today: Audience 1 — Plant Manager (my boss): He cares about production impact, headcount planning, and whether SOP date is at risk. He has an operations background. He wants the bottom line: are we launching on time or not, and what's it going to cost? Audience 2 — Customer Program Manager (Ford): She cares about revised PPAP submission dates, whether production-representative parts will be available for her validation, and risk to her vehicle launch timing. She's already nervous because we moved dates once before. Every communication needs to show a recovery plan, not just a problem. Audience 3 — Corporate VP of Operations: He's reviewing all launch programs at Thursday's ops review. He wants: risk level (green/yellow/red), financial exposure, and whether this needs steering committee intervention. He reads 15 program updates in one sitting so mine needs to be one page max."

Prompt #5: The Post-Mortem / Lessons Learned Generator

What it's for: Running a structured project retrospective that captures what worked, what didn't, and what to change - without turning into a blame session. **When to use it:** At the end of any project or major milestone. After a project failure or near-miss. Quarterly for ongoing programs.

Main Version

PROMPT TO COPY

ROLE

You are a project retrospective facilitator for automotive programs. You help teams capture lessons learned in a way that's constructive, specific, and leads to real changes — not a generic "communication could be better" document that gets filed and forgotten.

CONTEXT

I've completed a project (or major phase) and I want to run a structured lessons learned session. I'll share what happened, and I need you to help me organize the insights.

REQUEST

Based on what I tell you, create:

1. RETROSPECTIVE STRUCTURE

- What went well (keep doing)
- What didn't go well (stop doing)
- What should we start doing
- What surprised us

For each item: specific observation, root cause, recommended action

2. TOP 5 LESSONS

The five most impactful lessons, ranked by "if we fix this one thing, it prevents the most problems next time."

3. ACTION PLAN

| Lesson | Specific Change | Owner | Implementation Date | How We'll Know It Worked |

4. TEAM RETROSPECTIVE AGENDA

A 45-minute session plan I can facilitate with my team, including:

- Opening question to set the tone
- Structured activities for each section
- How to keep it constructive (not a blame session)
- Closing commitment

IMPORTANT

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QUESTION

Ask me what went well, what went wrong, what surprised us, and what I wish we'd done differently.

Alternate Version (Copilot Free)

PROMPT TO COPY

I just completed a project. Here's what happened:

What went well: [LIST]

What went wrong: [LIST]

What surprised us: [LIST]

Create:

1. A structured lessons learned document (keep doing, stop doing, start doing)
2. Top 5 lessons ranked by impact
3. An action plan table (lesson, specific change, owner, date)
4. A 45-minute team retrospective agenda I can facilitate

Keep it constructive. No blame. Focus on systemic fixes, not individual mistakes.

Example

"Program: Previous model year instrument panel carrier launch. Plant: our Tier 1 stamping and assembly facility. What happened:

- Program launched 6 weeks late vs. original SOP date.
- Tooling was 4 weeks late. Root cause: supplier selected based on price, not capability. They'd never built a progressive die that complex. Tryout took 3 additional iterations.
- 3 of 12 PPAPs were still incomplete at original SOP date. Dimensional issues on two parts required tool rework. One supplier missed the material certification deadline and had to resubmit.
- First trial run found a welding fixture issue: the B-pillar subassembly didn't locate properly in the fixture. Root cause was a GD&T conflict between the stamping supplier's parts and our fixture design. Took 2 weeks to resolve with fixture modification.
- Customer changed specs mid-program (moved a mounting hole 8mm) which required tool modification on 2 parts. Change came at Week 12 with no timeline relief.
- Overtime costs: \$380K. Premium freight to recover schedule: \$125K. Total unplanned cost: ~\$505K.
- No formal post-mortem was ever conducted. Leadership wants to know what happened and what we do differently next time. What went right:
- Quality wall caught 3 defects during pre-production that would have been customer complaints.
- Operator training was effective — zero quality issues attributed to operator error after SOP.
- Paint shop managed the compressed schedule with minimal overtime."

Quality Check - Before Sending AI-Generated Project Communications

- [] **Are the facts correct?** Verify every date, number, status, and owner name. AI can guess wrong on specifics.
- [] **Is the tone appropriate?** An escalation to a VP should sound different than a reminder to a peer. Match the formality to the relationship.
- [] **Is it concise enough?** Your stakeholders are busy. If your status update is more than one scroll, shorten it.
- [] **Does the escalation propose a solution?** Never escalate a problem without recommending a path forward. That's what separates project managers from complainers.
- [] **Would you be comfortable if the entire team saw this?** Project emails get forwarded. Write accordingly.

Copilot Basics (If You Use Microsoft 365)

- **Work Mode vs. Web Mode:** Work mode searches your company's Microsoft 365 data (emails, files, Teams). Web mode uses the open internet. For project management, Work mode is powerful - it can summarize email threads, pull action items from Teams chats, and draft status updates based on recent communications.
- **When to use each:** Use Work mode when you want to summarize a week of project emails or pull action items from meeting chats. Use Web mode with the prompts in this playbook for building templates, analyzing risks, and drafting new communications.
- **How to save prompts:** Copy your most-used prompts (especially the Status Report Drafter) into a Word document or OneNote page. Use them every week so your status updates are consistently structured.
- **Reminder:** Be careful pasting project financials, customer data, or confidential timeline information into external AI tools. Use your company-provided tools for sensitive project data.

What to Try This Week

- [] **Draft one status update with AI.** Paste your raw notes and see how fast you get a clean status email. Compare to how long it usually takes you.
- [] **Run a risk assessment.** Use Prompt #2 on your current project. Find at least one risk you hadn't considered.
- [] **Set up the 3-Before System.** For your next milestone, send the T-7, T-3, and T-1 messages. See if the deadline gets hit without you chasing.

- [] **Write one escalation you've been avoiding.** Use Prompt #1 to draft it. Make it factual, solution-oriented, and professional. Then send it.
- [] **Time yourself.** How long does your status update take this week vs. last week? Track the savings.

Resources & Next Steps

- [Link to AI Learning Lab Library](#) ^[2]

Key Frameworks from This Lab

- **The Proactive PM Communication Framework** defines five communication types (Status, Risk, Escalation, Accountability Check, Stakeholder Summary) and when to use each.
- **The 3-Before Rule** (3 days, 3 hours, 3 minutes) prevents missed deadlines with pre-deadline check-ins instead of post-deadline chasing.
- **Escalation ≠ Complaining.** A good escalation is factual, proposes a solution, and is about the issue - never about the person.
- **AI handles the writing. You handle the judgment.** Draft status updates in minutes so you can spend your time managing risks and relationships.

What We Didn't Cover (Yet)

- Using Copilot to review your actual project trackers - your PPAP log, APQP timeline, or open issue list - identify what's overdue or at risk, and draft targeted emails to each owner with only their specific items, part numbers, and due dates. You saw us build the prompts today. The next level is pointing AI at your actual shared files and letting it tell you who needs a nudge - and writing the nudge for you.
- Using AI to analyze historical project data and predict timeline risks.
- Building project dashboards that update automatically from AI-summarized data.
- Advanced stakeholder management techniques for politically complex programs.

Next Steps

- Use Prompt #1 for every status update this month. Build the habit of AI-assisted communication.
- Run Prompt #2 on your highest-risk project. Share the results with your team.
- Set up the pre-deadline reminder system from Prompt #3. Test it for one milestone cycle.

Questions or feedback? cheryl@cherylthompson.net ^[3]

The Mental Model - Report, Anticipate, Prevent

Today's session was built on one idea: the best project managers don't spend their time chasing people. They build systems that make accountability automatic and communication proactive.

Step	Prompt	What It Does
Report	Prompt 1 - Status Report & Escalation Drafter	Turns raw project notes into polished status updates, risk summaries, and professional escalation emails.
Anticipate	Prompt 2 - Risk & Dependency Spotter	Analyzes your project plan to find risks, bottlenecks, and failure points before they derail your timeline.
Prevent	Prompt 3 - Accountability System Builder	Creates a communication cadence with pre-deadline reminders that keeps people on track without chasing.

You became a project manager to move work forward - not to write follow-up emails. Now you have the tools to get back to the work that matters.

Stop chasing. Start leading:

- Draft one status update with AI this week.
- Set up the 3-Before System for your next milestone.
- You now have the tools to manage projects proactively — not reactively.

Related resources

Keep working with the material.

The prompts and exercises are included above. Save a useful prompt and return to it with your next task.

Links and resources

These links are clickable in the PDF. For a paper copy, use the numbered references below.

[1] <https://vimeo.com/1183141073/64fdac1827>

[2] <https://www.cherylthompson.net/learning-labs#browse>

[3] <mailto:cheryl@cherylthompson.net>