AI Agents in Practice: What Every AEC PM Can Start Doing Immediately





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Meet The Speakers



Nick Heim, PE
Engineering Management Institute



Frank Lazaro
Terracon



Markus Weidner
STV

Learning Objectives

At the end of the session, you will learn to:

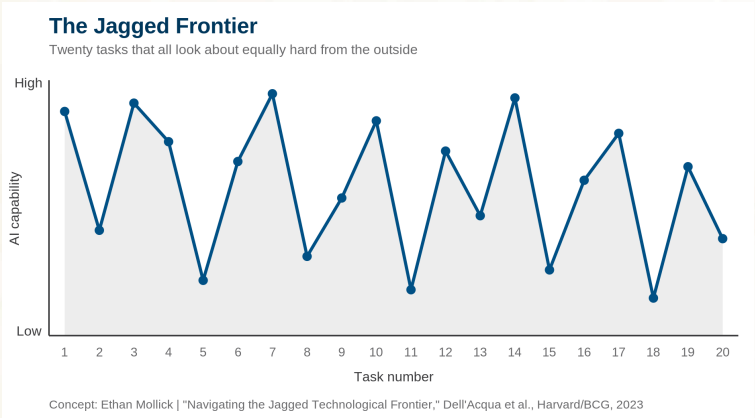
- Define an AI agent and identify where agentic AI can be applied within common AEC workflows.
- Map an example agentic workflow to tasks and responsibilities within their own project management work.
- Evaluate potential uses of agentic AI within their organization based on current tools, processes, and approval constraints.
- Develop key talking points to communicate the potential value of agentic AI to organizational leadership and support internal buy-in.

Will AI Replace Us?

In short, probably not.



Every career is a series of tasks. Some are **strong AI candidates**. Many aren't.



WEAK

"Write me an email to the City Engineer saying you're going to miss the next critical milestone of the project."

STRONG

"Review our 30-page proposal against our stated design standards and flag any inconsistencies or missing components."

Why Time Is Still on Our Side

INERTIA

Codes, standards, and laws still require licensed PEs.

TALENT GAP

Hard to find good engineers. Harder to find ones equipped to use these tools. Being in this room is a head start.



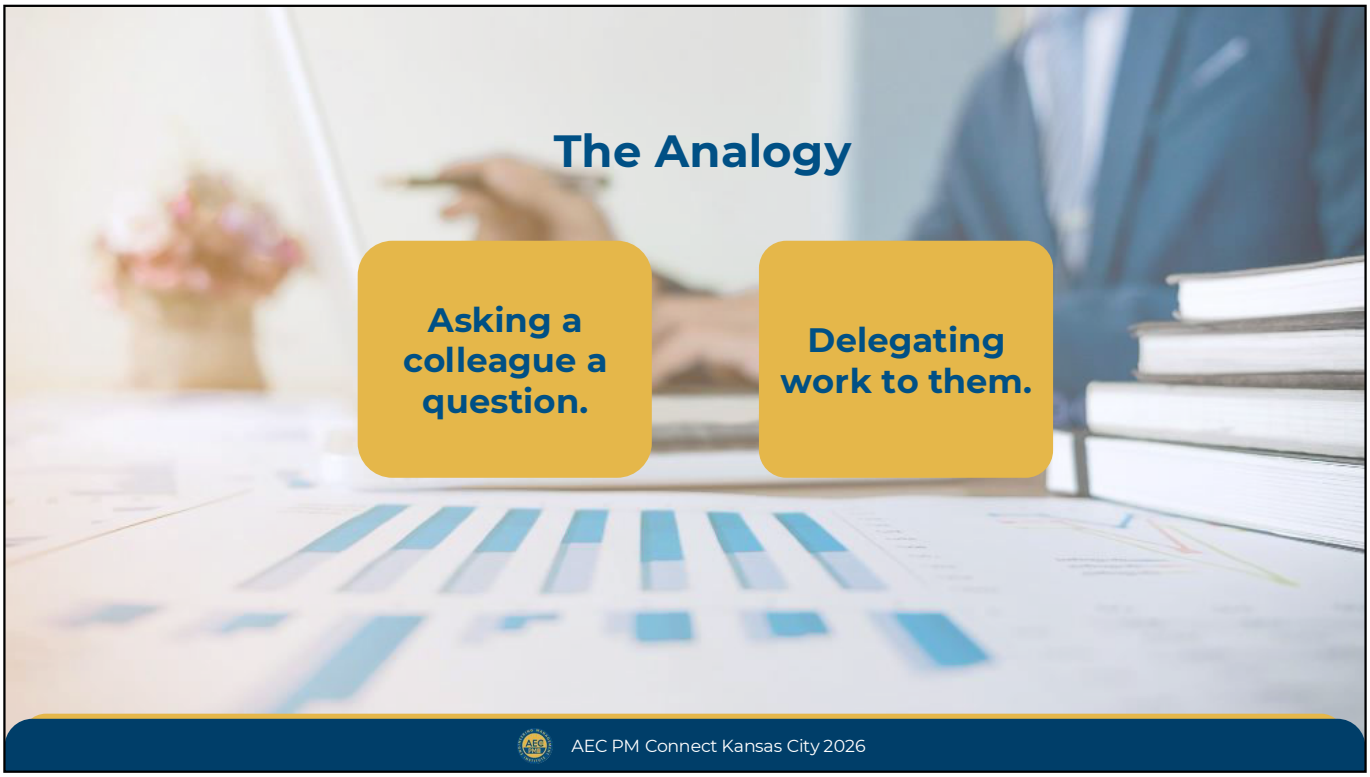
Chatbot vs. Agent

CHATBOT

- Answers questions.
- Provides information.
- Waits for your next prompt.

AGENT

- Takes action.
- Uses your files and tools.
- Works toward completing a task.



What's Already on the Shelf

ChatGPT Work

Claude Cowork

Copilot Cowork

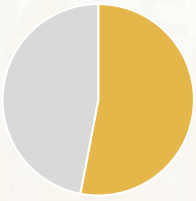
Grok Bot

Chances are your firm already has an AI tool, or will soon.

The opportunity isn't finding another tool.

It's learning how to use the one you already have.

The Real Gap



53% of daily AI users report high or transformational productivity gains.

0% of non-daily users do.

The gap isn't the technology. It's how you apply it.

Source: EMI & ActionsProve, 2026 Present and Future of Work in Engineering and Architecture



Lead with the problem, not the logo.

Use what's off the shelf before anybody builds anything custom.

Automation vs. Agent

AUTOMATION

- Follows the same steps every time.
- Best for repeatable processes.

AGENT

- Makes decisions.
- Adapts based on context.
- Handles work that changes.

Practice on Your Own

No firm access yet?
Practice at home.

"It's changed my life for the better."

— Nick

Personal vs. Enterprise Accounts

PERSONAL

- Great for learning
- Individual subscription
- Your own files
- Review privacy settings carefully

ENTERPRISE ACCOUNTS

- Managed by your company
- Security and compliance controls
- Approved data policies
- Connected to company systems

A free/personal account and a centrally managed enterprise AI are two different animals.

Different rules govern the agreement between the account holder and the model provider.

Know Your Firm's AI Acceptable Use Policy

Know your firm's AI Acceptable Use Policy before feeding it company data. If you don't have one...keep it simple: **one page to start,** can always be expanded on later.



3 Questions

Does your firm have an AI use policy?

Have you read it in the past month?

Can you name the most significant action it prohibits?

For the Next Hour…

Let's set aside "***my company won't let me***" — for now.

They hopefully will, soon.

Explicit vs. Tacit Knowledge

EXPLICIT

Written down.

TACIT

What we know but never found a way to write down.

Example: Engineering judgment comes from years of experience.
"*Trust your gut*" = knowing what you are doing, based on years of accumulated experience.



Transcripts are gold.

A meeting transcript is about as close as we get to pulling context straight out of people's heads — short of a neural interface.

Two Guardrails

1

Don't automate a process that already doesn't work.

2

AI assists your work, it doesn't replace your professional responsibility.

Linear vs. Exponential

Linear Work

Never compounds with AI:

- Town meetings
- Networking
- Mentoring
- Walking the site
- Bringing your staff up

Exponential Work

Where an agent multiplies you:

- Tracking
- Summarizing
- Formatting
- Synthesizing



The Goal:

Move your share of time from the exponential work to the linear work.

More fun that way.

Case Study and Materials

https://tinyurl.com/AIAgentsEMI

How We'll Tackle Each One

1. What you're trying to do
2. What context you have at your disposal
3. What the output is

Live Demo

Two AI Agents, Two Everyday PM Tasks



- **Kickoff Prep:**

  Project details → internal kickoff agenda

- **Meeting Follow-Up:**

  Meeting notes → client follow-up email with action items

How Each Example Is Set Up

1

1-Prompt

What you want done

Your instructions, and when to check in with you

2

2-Template

Your firm's standard form

The form everybody already uses (e.g., EMI 8.1, 7.0)

3

3-Inputs

The context you already have

PM Short Form, team roster, meeting transcript

4

4-Output

First-pass DRAFT

Ready for your review. You're still the PM

Same 4 folders, both examples: Ex. 1 Kickoff Meeting Prep · Ex. 2 Meeting Notes → Action Items

Your Turn: Finding Your Own Use Cases

The Four Questions

1. Where does the work need my format but not my judgment?
2. What do I rebuild from a template every time?
3. What am I synthesizing from multiple sources?
4. Where am I the bottleneck on time rather than expertise?

Be in small groups

Come back with one case your team could realistically implement.



Final Takeaway

1. Start with the problem, not the tool.
2. Use AI to handle repetitive work—not professional judgment.
3. Practice now so you're ready when your organization scales AI.
4. Small improvements, repeated consistently, create the biggest productivity gains.



QUESTIONS

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Complete Survey
To get 1 PDH
AEC PM Connect Kansas City 2026