

THE GARTNER MOMENT.

A frank reckoning with what AI actually does to the PMM activity map — built by someone who manages one.

The Future of Product Marketing · A PMM Field Guide to the Agentic Era

37

PMM activities evaluated

53

SAP PMM org analyzed

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Executive Summary

In 2024, the author ran an analysis of his fifty-three-person product marketing organization at SAP against the Pragmatic Institute's thirty-seven-activity PMM framework, scoring each activity against three criteria: the probability that a capable AI system could execute it at eighty percent or more of human quality, the cost differential at scale, and the speed advantage. The results were uncomfortable enough to share with his entire team. This chapter shares them with you.

The headline is not that AI will replace PMMs. It is more specific and more actionable than that. The headline is that AI will replace a specific and identifiable set of PMM activities — the ones that most junior-to-mid PMMs spend most of their time on — and that the PMMs who have been doing those activities longest are the most vulnerable and, perversely, the least likely to recognize it.

The activities PMMs spend the most time on are the activities most at risk. The ones they spend the least time on are the most protected. This is not a coincidence — it is the shape of the problem.

- 1 The Pragmatic Institute's 37-activity framework maps cleanly onto an AI replaceability spectrum — and the distribution is not random.
- 2 There is a clear split between commodity work heading to near-zero cost and irreplaceable work that is growing in strategic value — and most PMM organizations are investing in the wrong one.
- 3 The vulnerability paradox — the PMMs most exposed are the least aware — has a structural cause and a practical remedy.

The Analysis

The Pragmatic Institute's framework has been the most widely used map of the PMM function for two decades. It organizes the work into clusters: market intelligence, product strategy, content and messaging, sales enablement, campaign and demand generation, and operational activities. The framework is not perfect — no taxonomy of a complex knowledge job is — but it is specific enough to be useful, and it is specific enough to run an honest analysis against.

The analysis assigns each activity a replacement probability score: the estimated likelihood that a capable AI system — not a future system, but a system available today using Claude, GPT-4, or their equivalents — could

perform that activity at eighty percent or more of the quality a skilled human PMM would deliver, at less than five percent of the cost, in a fraction of the time. The eighty-percent threshold is chosen deliberately. It is not the threshold for perfection. It is the threshold for 'good enough to act on,' which is the threshold that matters for procurement decisions, competitive intelligence, and content production.

Figure 1: AI Replacement Probability by Activity

AI Replacement Probability (% = likelihood of AI substitution at comparable quality)

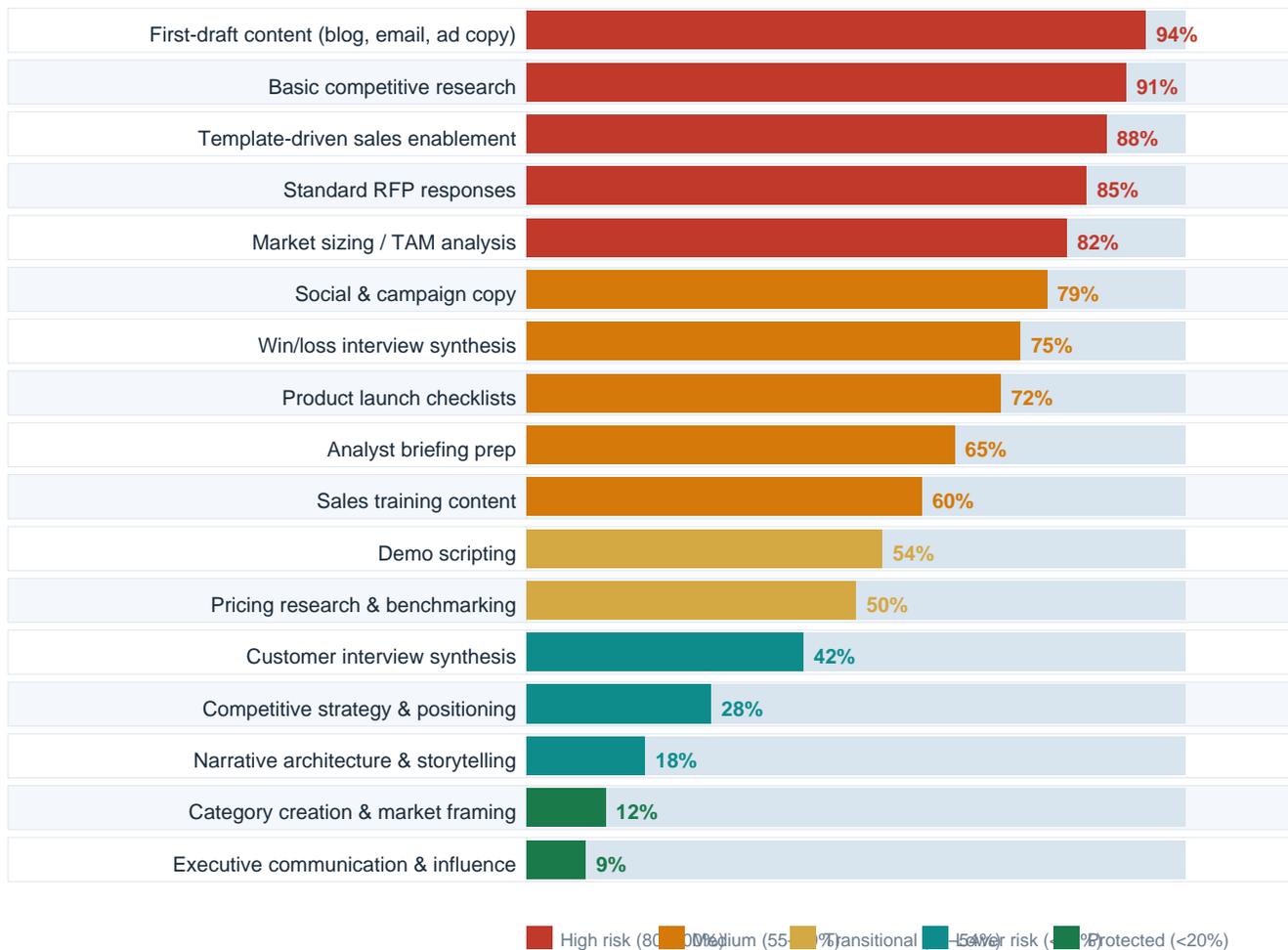


Figure 1. Seventeen of the thirty-seven activities ranked by AI replacement probability. The full list of thirty-seven includes operational activities (budgeting, tool management, meeting facilitation) scored in the 30–45% range. Activities at 80%+ represent the work where AI substitution is not a future possibility — it is an available option today.

The distribution has a shape that matters. The activities with the highest replacement probability — first-draft content, basic competitive research, template-driven enablement, standard RFP responses — are also the activities that consume the most time in a typical PMM week, particularly for PMMs in the first five years of their careers. The activities with the lowest replacement probability — narrative architecture, category creation, competitive strategy, executive communication — are the ones that most PMM organizations treat as advanced

specializations rather than core competencies.

The distribution is not random. AI is replacing the work that feels most like work — the volume, the drafts, the research — and leaving intact the work that feels most like thinking.

The Activity Matrix

Replacement probability is one axis. The other is strategic value — how much does this activity actually move the needle on the outcomes that matter to the business: revenue, win rate, market share, competitive position? Plotting the two axes produces a matrix that is more diagnostic than either axis alone.

Figure 2: The PMM Activity Matrix

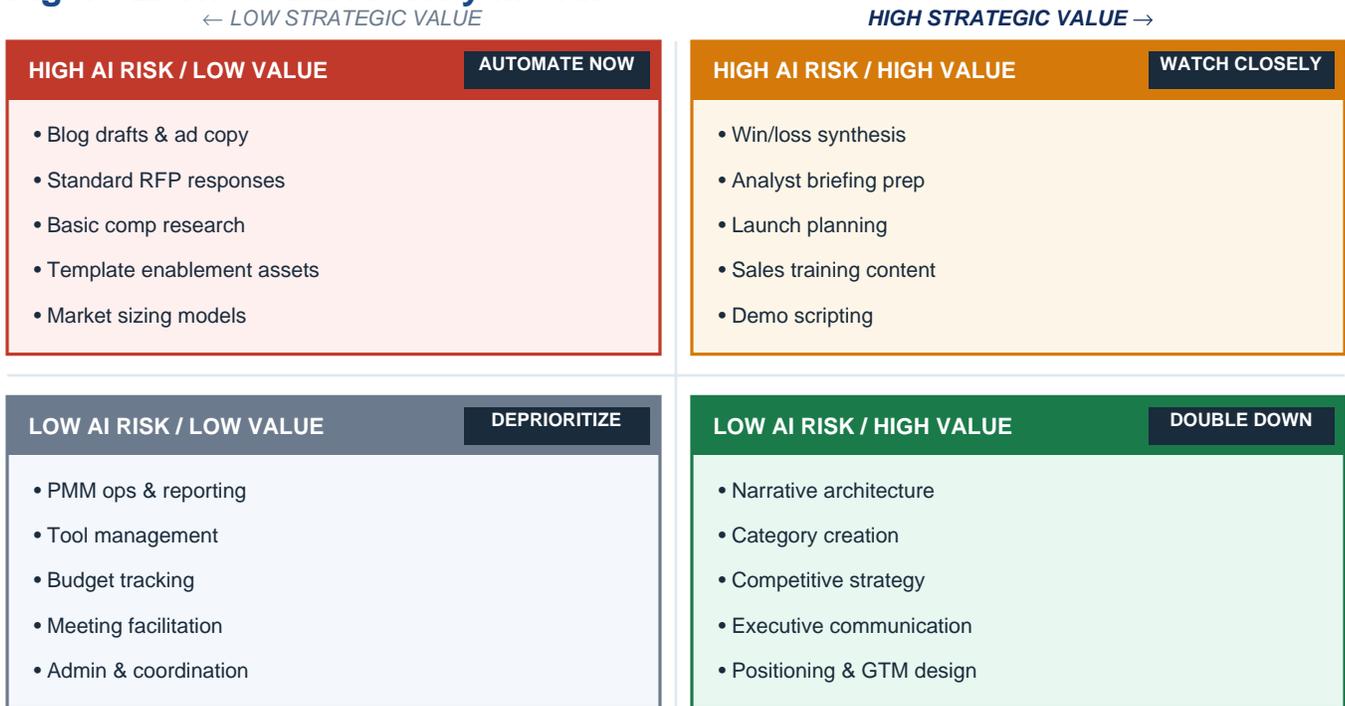


Figure 2. Activities plotted on two axes: AI replaceability (vertical) and strategic value (horizontal). The quadrant labels — Automate Now, Watch Closely, Deprioritize, Double Down — are prescriptions, not descriptions.

The most dangerous quadrant is the upper right: high AI replaceability combined with high strategic value. Win/loss synthesis, analyst briefing prep, launch planning, and sales training content all live here. These are activities that PMMs rightly invest in because they matter strategically — but they are also activities where AI

can now do the underlying execution work at a fraction of the cost. The PMM who still does all of this manually is not being thorough; they are being inefficient in a way that will become increasingly visible.

The lower right is where the real career leverage is. Narrative architecture, category creation, competitive strategy, executive communication — activities that are both high in strategic value and genuinely hard for AI to replicate, because they require the kind of contextual judgment, political awareness, and market intuition that accumulates over years of doing the job. These are the activities that PMMs should be protecting and investing in, not crowding out with volume work.

The Two Halves of PMM

The matrix simplifies cleanly into two halves. There is the commodity work — the content that gets produced, the research that gets synthesized, the templates that get filled — where AI is already competitive with human execution and will only become more so. And there is the irreplaceable work — the narrative that gets architected, the category that gets created, the executive conversation that shifts a strategic decision — where human judgment is still the core of the value.

Figure 3: The Two Halves of PMM

COMMODITY WORK — Going to Near-Zero Cost	IRREPLACEABLE WORK — Growing in Value
<p>First-draft content</p> <p>Blog posts, emails, ad copy, social — AI produces 80%+ quality d</p>	<p>Narrative architecture</p> <p>Making a technical product feel like an obvious choice. AI can draft; it cannot</p>
<p>Basic research</p> <p>Competitive monitoring, market sizing, analyst synthesis — all age</p>	<p>Competitive strategy</p> <p>Pattern recognition across markets and buyer psychology built from years A</p>
<p>Template enablement</p> <p>Standard battlecards, RFP boilerplate, comparison tables — struc</p>	<p>Category creation</p> <p>Naming new markets requires cultural authority and persuasive leadership L</p>
<p>Production copy</p> <p>Localization, versioning, format adaptation — pure volume work w</p>	<p>Executive communication</p> <p>Influencing a C-suite under pressure, with incomplete data and political stak</p>
<p><i>If AI can do it, AI will do it — faster, and cheaper.</i></p>	<p><i>AI makes the irreplaceable PMM 10x more effective.</i></p>

Figure 3. A direct split between the commodity work heading to near-zero cost and the irreplaceable work growing in value. The distinction is not about effort or quality — PMMs can do both kinds of work excellently. It is about replaceability.

The important nuance is that 'going to near-zero cost' does not mean 'no longer needs a human.' It means no longer needs a human to produce the first draft, do the initial research, or fill the template. It still needs a human to review, judge, direct, and connect the output to strategic context. The PMM who understands this becomes a director and editor of AI output rather than a producer of content. That is a different, and more valuable, role — but only if they recognize the transition is happening.

The Vulnerability Paradox

The most uncomfortable finding in the analysis is not the replacement probability scores. It is the correlation between career stage and exposure. The PMMs who are most at risk of AI substitution are, by and large, the PMMs who have spent the most time building expertise in exactly the activities that AI is replacing. And because that expertise feels hard-won and valuable — because it took years to develop and clients have paid for it — those PMMs are the least likely to perceive the threat.

Figure 4: The Vulnerability Paradox

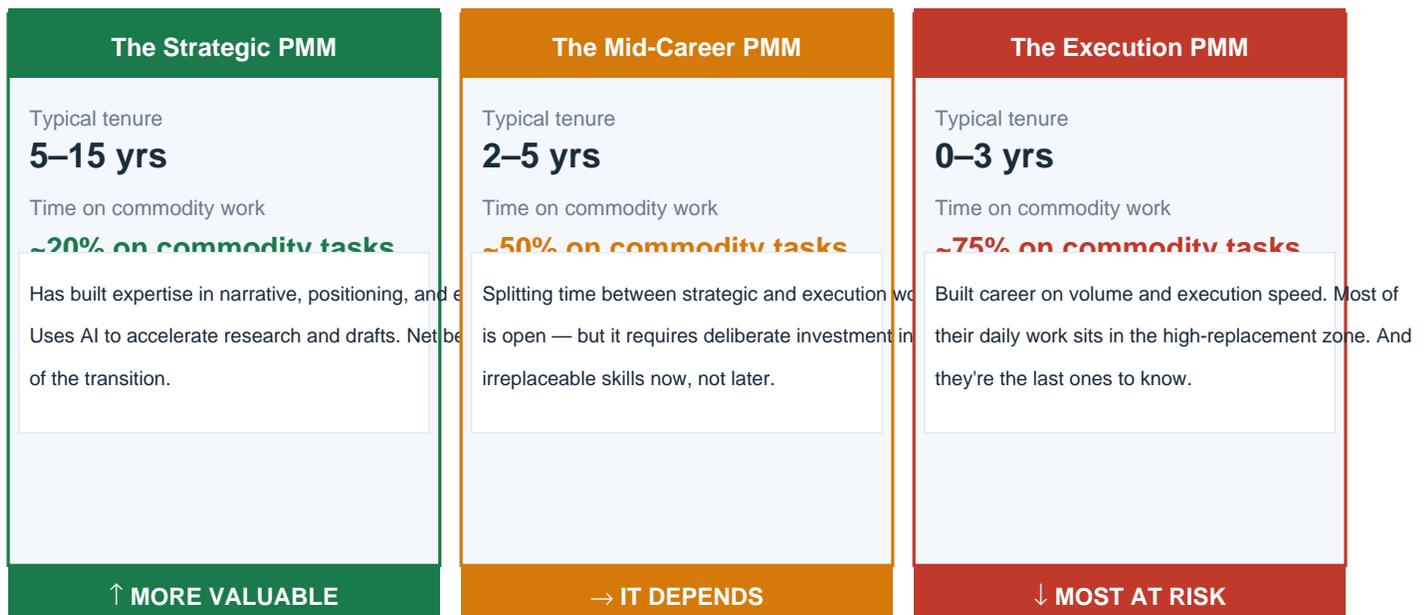


Figure 4. Three PMM career profiles mapped against commodity work exposure. The 'Execution PMM' — typically 0–3 years in, spending ~75% of their time on commodity tasks — carries the most risk while possessing the least perspective to recognize it.

The strategic PMM — five to fifteen years in, having built a practice around narrative, positioning, and executive influence — is a net beneficiary of the transition. AI handles the research and first drafts that used to eat a third of their week. They now get that time back to do more of the irreplaceable work. The execution PMM, by contrast, is watching the specific activities they have optimized for become cheaper and faster than

anything they can personally deliver.

The tragedy is not malicious. The execution PMM built their career on activities that were genuinely valuable — and they were right. Those activities are going to zero in cost because the tools finally got good enough, not because the work was ever easy.

Three Moves

The analysis points to a clear set of actions for any PMM who takes the data seriously. None of them are complicated. All of them require intentionality, because the default — continuing to do the commodity work because it is always there and it always feels urgent — is the path that leads to the most exposed position in the transition.

Move 01: Run Your Own Activity Audit

Map your last thirty days of PMM work against the thirty-seven-activity framework. Estimate, honestly, what percentage of your hours went to high-replacement activities versus protected activities. Then ask yourself whether you would be comfortable with your manager seeing that distribution. Most PMMs who do this exercise are not.

01

Action Item

Target: under 30% of your time in the high-replacement zone within twelve months.

Move 02: Delegate Up the Stack

Every hour you spend on a commodity task is an hour you are not spending on the irreplaceable work that makes you strategically indispensable. The habit to build is not efficiency in producing commodity work — it is the discipline to hand commodity work to AI, review the output for judgment and context, and reinvest the recovered time in the protected activities. AI handles the first draft. You handle the direction.

02

Action Item

Identify three commodity tasks you can hand to AI this week. Track the hours recovered and reinvest them deliberately.

Move 03: Invest in the Irreplaceable Skills

Narrative architecture, competitive strategy, executive communication, and category creation are skills that compound with deliberate practice. They also happen to be the skills that most PMM organizations chronically underinvest in — because the commodity work always feels more urgent, and the irreplaceable work rarely has a deadline attached to it. The PMMs who develop these skills before the transition is complete will have a compounding advantage that is very hard to close.

03

Action Item

Name one irreplaceable skill you will develop deliberately in the next ninety days. Block time for it.

The Stakes

The Gartner moment — the point at which a technology's impact on a job function becomes impossible to dismiss as hype — has arrived for product marketing. The analysis in this chapter was built from real data, inside a real PMM organization, by someone who had to explain the results to the people most affected by them. It is not a consulting firm's projection. It is a practitioner's reckoning.

The PMMs who emerge from this transition in the strongest position will not be the ones who were most productive at commodity work. They will be the ones who recognized the transition early, invested in the irreplaceable skills, and used AI to buy themselves time to do more of the work that compounds. That is the story this chapter is trying to tell — and the analysis it is trying to arm you with.

The prescription isn't to fight AI — it's to use AI to free time for the irreplaceable work that compounds into career-defining leverage.

Chapter Takeaways

- The Pragmatic Institute's 37 PMM activities map clearly onto an AI replaceability spectrum. The distribution is uncomfortable but actionable.
- The activities PMMs spend the most time on are the most replaceable. The activities they spend the least time on are the most protected.
- The Vulnerability Paradox: PMMs who have built careers on commodity execution are the most exposed and the least likely to know it.

→ Move 01: Run your activity audit. Move 02: Delegate up the stack. Move 03: Invest deliberately in irreplaceable skills.

→ The PMMs who act on this now will have a compounding advantage that is very hard to close once the transition is complete.

Next: Chapter 3 — The Six Percent Problem · futureofpmm.com · Chris O'Hara · March 2026