



AI fluency: The new product superpower

Helping product teams experiment, decide, and lead in the age of AI

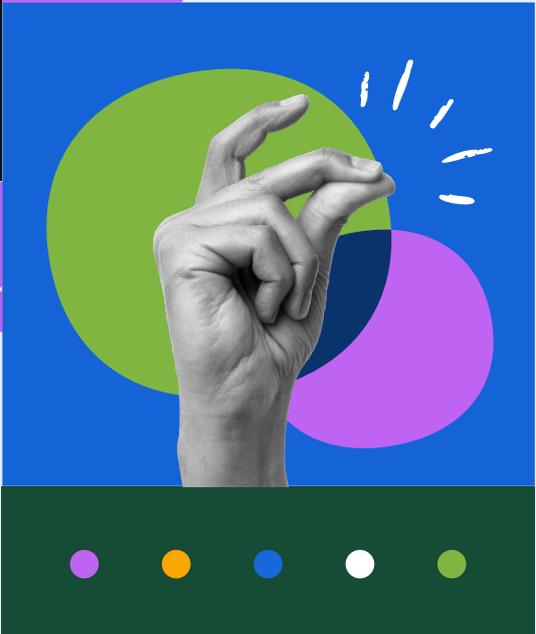
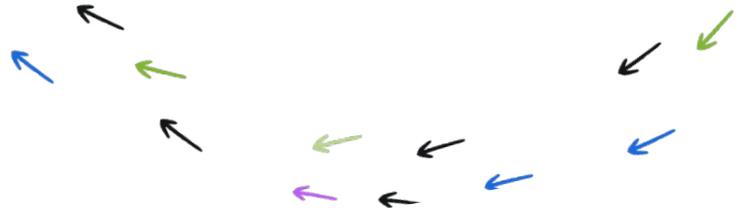
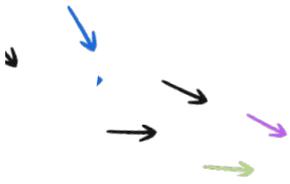


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The age of AI expectation

Just a year ago, leaders were dabbling with AI curiosity: running experiments, watching demos, and asking “what could this mean for us?” Now executives and boards expect results. Teams feel the squeeze: “Deliver 10x productivity!”, “Innovate faster!”, “Integrate AI everywhere!” Inside most organizations, it feels less like a rocket launch and more like turbulence: anxiety, uneven adoption, moments of brilliance followed by doubt.

To ground this conversation, Atlassian turned to real practitioners navigating these shifts every day. The perspectives here come from Atlassian's podcast, *Product in Practice*: long-form conversations with product leaders experimenting in real workflows. What follows are lenses to explore the transition: the messy middle between those first demos and lasting impact. These aren't laws to follow, but guardrails to help you navigate. The goal is for you to finish with sharper language, better questions, and a few action items to take back to your team.



Kene Anoliefo
Founder at HEARD



Laura Burkhauser
CEO at Descript



Aakash Gupta
Author of Product
Growth newsletter



Elena Verna
Growth at Loveable



Ravi Mehta
Product Advisor

The challenges leaders face today



Anxiety and overwhelm. As HEARD Founder **Kene Anoliefo** put it, this moment can feel like *Spider-Man's* origin story: We've suddenly been handed new powers with little instruction. That cocktail of excitement and uncertainty can tip into paralysis: "What should I learn? Which tools matter? What if I say the wrong thing?" Left unaddressed, teams oscillate between excitement and burnout. The leadership challenge is to metabolize uncertainty: Make space for it, name it, and convert it into focused exploration.

"If it feels like everyone is running faster than me, the trick is helping teams realize that feeling is normal," says Kene.

Identity threat. Designers, PMs, and engineers are quietly asking, "Who am I in the age of AI?" When AI models can write specs, generate designs, or run research, it's reasonable to worry that your craft is being automated out from under you. Kene's reframe acknowledges this discomfort and then points to a bigger identity: the person who designs the system and enables many others. Leaders who acknowledge the difficulty of that transition reduce defensiveness and increase contribution.

Coordination tax. AI compresses role boundaries. *Product Growth* newsletter author and podcast host **Aakash Gupta** notes that PMs, designers, and engineers increasingly overlap: a PM prototypes, a designer codes an interaction, an engineer synthesizes research. "AI is turning product teams into jazz bands where everyone can play more instruments," says Aakash. "That's exciting, but it's also noisy without a rhythm."

AI helps people move faster, but it also blurs responsibilities. Who owns what decisions? What counts as "done"? Without new norms, teammates with initiative can step on each other's toes. The fix isn't to bring back old silos, but to be clear about who does what and how work gets handed off.

As **Elena Verna**, the Head of Growth at Lovable, points out, when you're building AI-native products, the usual growth levers collapse. Sometimes, all you're working with is one prompt box. "That compresses the roles of marketing, product, and growth into one interaction – exciting, but also disorienting if teams don't reset how they coordinate."

Gatekeeping incentives. Gatekeeping rarely starts maliciously. It begins with people trying to defend their value in murky territory. Someone learns a powerful workflow and hoards it; prompt gatekeeping emerges ("only I know the secret spell"). The result is shadow gains that don't compound across the team. Leaders can change the

incentive ladder so the most rewarded identity is the person who documents, demos, and teaches.

“

AI isn't 100%. It's 'average intelligence' that can take you 40 or 50 percent of the way. The real lift still comes from human judgment layered on top.”

ELENA VERNA, HEAD OF GROWTH, LOVABLE



Expectation gap. Product advisor **Ravi Mehta** calls out a familiar gulf: boardroom expectations of “transformational productivity” vs. the messy reality of clunky workflows and brittle prototypes. The danger is turning AI into a KPI before foundations are in place.

The healthier stance is two-speed: give teams permission for scrappy exploration while protecting core quality, and translate wins into durable capabilities at a measured cadence.

“Leaders can't shortcut fluency,” says Ravi. “It's not about buying a tool; it's about building confidence, one workflow at a time.” Elena also cautions against magical thinking: “AI isn't 100%. It's 'average intelligence' that can take you 40 or 50 percent of the way. The real lift still comes from human judgment layered on top.”

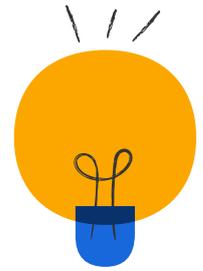
Together, these challenges are symptoms of the root transition from individual craft to organizational capability. That shift can be destabilizing, and profoundly liberating, depending on how leaders hold it.

To navigate this, leaders need a shared language. That's where the idea of AI fluency comes in: not technical mastery, but the confidence to use AI as part of everyday work.

“

Leaders can't shortcut fluency. It's not about buying a tool; it's about building confidence, one workflow at a time.”

RAVI MEHTA, PRODUCT ADVISOR



What Atlassian means by ‘AI fluency’

AI fluency is not technical mastery. It’s the practical confidence to use AI to think, make, and decide, and to know when not to. If proficiency is “I can execute tasks,” fluency is “I can converse, critique, and compose with this medium.”

Fluent teams share a few traits:

- They ask better questions of AI, moving from “do this task” to “help me reason about options,” “surface trade-offs,” or “generate counter-examples.”
- They understand limits and biases, treating outputs as proposals to be interrogated, not truths to be obeyed.
- They integrate outputs into real workflows, connecting drafts, analyses, and prototypes to the tools and rituals where work actually moves forward.
- They normalize experimentation. Trying, failing, and learning are part of the operating system, not extracurriculars.

Of course, not every experiment moves teams forward. Some patterns are useful, others are distractions. It helps to name the traps before diving in.

Watch out for the anti-patterns

As with any new technology wave, a few familiar traps are already showing up in how teams approach AI:



Tool tourism. Collecting logins like souvenirs – “we tried this one, and that one too” – without changing how work actually gets done. The illusion of progress masks the absence of impact.



Automation theater. Glossy demos that wow in a team meeting but collapse when asked to live inside the backlog or the customer workflow. They look transformative, but they don’t survive contact with everyday reality.



Prompt gatekeeping. Treating AI as arcane magic, where only the “high priests” with the secret prompts can make it sing. This hoarding of tricks slows down collective learning and turns potential accelerators into bottlenecks.

Fluency lives between these extremes. The center of gravity is grounded curiosity: try with intent, share what you learn, and point experiments at outcomes that matter.

If anti-patterns show us what to avoid, frameworks give us ways to move forward. Leaders Atlassian spoke with offered different lenses on how teams can raise their fluency.

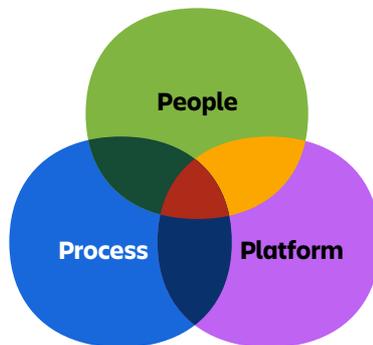
Frameworks for raising AI fluency

There isn't one playbook for building fluency. What Atlassian heard from leaders are different lenses: ways of looking at the shared challenge of helping teams work with AI confidently. Each lens emphasizes a different bottleneck; together, they form a more complete picture.

Kene Anoliefo

The 3Ps: People, Process, Platform

Kene has led product and design at companies like Google, Spotify, and Netflix, and now focuses on helping teams thrive in the AI era. She suggests thinking about adoption through the 3Ps:



People

For many designers, PMs, and engineers, the quiet question is, “Who am I if AI does this part of my craft?” Kene invites a shift from gatekeeper (guarding knowledge) to architect (designing systems others can use).

“

The moment someone realizes their value is in enabling ten others, the team moves faster.”

KENE ANOLIEFO, FOUNDER, HEARD

Process

AI changes the speed and shape of work, which means quality norms can't stay static. “Is 75% quality acceptable if it's 50% faster? That's a leadership call,” Kene says.

Make the trade-offs explicit so speed doesn't erode trust and perfectionism doesn't stall momentum.

Platform

Tools are tempting, but Kene warns against starting there: "People reach for platforms first. But if you don't align identity and process, you end up with expensive shelfware." Platforms should amplify intent, not determine it. She advises leaders to resist the gravitational pull of shiny features until the organization knows how it wants to use them.

Kene stresses that the 3Ps are an interdependent system. "When adoption stalls, it's almost never the model's fault. It's usually because one of the Ps is underfed," she says. "Maybe people don't feel safe, maybe process norms are fuzzy, maybe the platform landed before the ground was ready. Diagnose that, and fluency starts to grow again."



Takeaways for leaders

Recognize new role models on your team. Celebrate architects who enable many, rather than gatekeepers who guard a few tricks.

Laura Burkhauser

Simulate → Automate → Delegate

At Descript, **Laura Burkhauser** has seen creative and product teams wrestle with the same question: How do you go from dabbling with AI to relying on it? For her, confidence comes in stages.



Teams usually begin with **simulation**. They try things out with general-purpose tools: drafting a PRD in Claude, pulling highlights from research transcripts in ChatGPT. "When teams first try AI, they're not looking for efficiency yet," Laura says. "They're trying to see what good even looks like."

From there, patterns emerge. People notice the repetitive tasks that eat their attention: weekly progress updates, changelogs, customer summaries. At this point, **automation** starts to pay off. "The real question becomes: What are the things we should never waste human attention on?"

Eventually, some workflows mature enough to hand over. **Delegation** involves AI taking on whole streams of work, with humans setting direction and applying judgment.

“

Delegation isn't abdication. It's giving AI the stage so humans can play a higher note.”

LAURA BURKHAUSER, CEO, DESCRIPT

Laura emphasizes that not every team moves through the stages at the same pace. Some spend months experimenting, others leap quickly to automation. The role of the leader is to notice where the team is and draw out the right learning at that stage. “What matters is not racing ahead,” Laura says, “but making sure each step leaves you stronger for the next one.”



Takeaways for leaders

What if progress wasn't judged by speed, but by how much your team learns at each stage before leaping to the next?

Ravi Mehta

Access + Expectation + Challenge

Ravi, a Product Advisor and former CPO at Tinder, suggests that AI fluency depends less on individual skill and more on the culture leaders create around it. He points to three levers that shape that culture.



Ravi starts with **access**. He has watched teams stall when experimentation requires workarounds or shadow logins. “If every experiment needs a procurement request, people just give up,” he says. The easier it is to reach for AI inside everyday tools like Slack, Figma, and Jira, the more likely experiments will stick.

Next is **expectation**. Leaders send a powerful signal just by asking the right questions. “The fastest way to show that AI belongs in the workflow is to bring it up,” says Ravi.

When managers regularly ask, “How did AI help here?” or “What could we try with AI next time?”, it frames AI use as a norm rather than a novelty.

The third lever is **challenge**. Ravi encourages leaders to raise open-ended prompts: “How could we do this faster with AI?” or “What part of this workflow could we reimagine?” He stresses the importance of recognizing effort as well as outcomes.

“

Fluency grows when people feel safe to share the half-finished attempts. That’s how you discover the surprising wins.”

RAVI MEHTA, PRODUCT ADVISOR



Takeaways for leaders

To accelerate fluency, make AI easy to reach, set the expectation it will be used, and keep challenging teams to stretch.

Ravi’s model is less a checklist and more a set of cultural levers leaders can keep pulling. Together, they create the rhythm where experimentation feels normal, and confidence has space to compound.

Aakash Gupta

The Builder’s Path

For Aakash, fluency isn’t earned in theory. It comes from building. “Every prototype is a question in disguise,” he says. And the courage to ask those questions is where fluency begins.



The builder’s path is the journey to AI fluency through making things. Teams often start with quick **prototypes**: chatbot mock-ups, automated research digests, feature specs drafted in minutes. The value lies in speed: surfacing what might work without committing real resources.

As prototypes pile up, teams start to stitch them into **workflows**. A rough experiment becomes a repeatable process that saves time every week. “That’s where the leverage shows up,” Aakash explains. This is the murky in-between: not polished, but already changing how work gets done.

Over time, some workflows prove valuable enough to harden into **code**. That could mean a custom integration, an internal tool, or embedding AI into the product itself.

“

Fluency is the courage to take what worked in a prototype and make it real at scale.”

AAKASH GUPTA, PRODUCT THINKER AND WRITER OF THE PRODUCT GROWTH NEWSLETTER



Takeaways for leaders

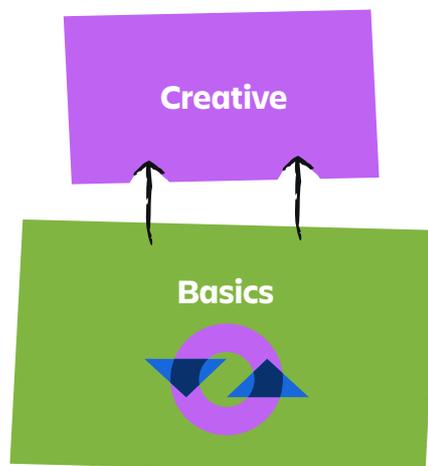
Where is your team on the builder’s path today: prototyping, stitching workflows, or ready for code? And what’s the smallest step forward from there?

For leaders, the builder’s path is both a map and a mirror. It shows where the team stands today – dabbling in prototypes, relying on workflows, or ready to invest in code – and hints at the next step forward. As Aakash puts it, “You don’t skip the messy middle. That’s where fluency actually forms.”

Elena Verna

Automate the Basics, Elevate the Creative

Elena has led growth at Dropbox, SurveyMonkey, Miro, Amplitude, and now heads growth at AI-native startup Lovable. Her lens is simple: AI should free humans from the repetitive “growth 101” playbook so they can focus on creativity and strategy.



Automate the 101

Most companies hire growth leaders to do the same baseline optimizations: onboarding flows, email lifecycles, AB tests. Elena argues that those should be codified into products themselves, so growth experts can work on innovation instead of repetition.

Solve the empty-state problem

Humans struggle with a blank page. Elena encourages teams to treat AI as the “first 40%,” producing a baseline draft, prototype, or spec. People’s authentic judgment and creativity then shape the second half.

Hire AI-native talent

Graduates and startup veterans who have never known a pre-AI workflow can accelerate adoption across the org. “They infuse incredible energy... if the rest of the team is willing to listen.”

Loosen the guardrails (temporarily)

Rigid procurement slows exploration. Elena urges leaders to allow bottom-up experimentation before standardizing. “Yes, you’ll feel pain on budgeting and compliance, but you can tighten up later. The next six months are about letting employees explore.”

Share what you learn



No one company can figure this out alone. She calls for cross-company knowledge sharing (failures as well as successes) to create network effects that move the industry faster.

Anchor in what doesn’t change

Amidst all the flux, three things remain core for product managers:

1

Talking to customers directly.

2

Crafting a unique product vision (AI can’t set your destination).

3

Understanding how to differentiate and distribute in markets where commoditization is accelerating.



Takeaways for leaders

Where can you automate the “growth 101” in your org so your people spend more time on the work only they can do?

Which framework is best for my team?

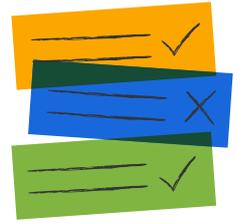
There isn't one right way to raise AI fluency. The best framework depends on where your team is starting from.



- **If you're leading anxious or resistant teammates** → **Kene's 3 Ps** help unlock adoption.
- **If your org is curious but not yet fully bought in** → **Laura's** acceptance curve gives you tools to nudge people forward.
- **If you're setting company-wide direction** → **Ravi's** strategy lens helps you play offense, not just defense.
- **If you're a hands-on product team** → **Aakash's** builder path is your on-ramp.
- **If your team is stuck repeating "growth 101" basics** → **Elena's** automate-and-elevate lens shows how to free up time for creativity and vision.

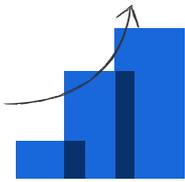
These frameworks provide perspective. But leaders also asked for something more tangible: small moves they could try inside their own teams. Here is some guidance drawn from those conversations.

Practical moves leaders might try



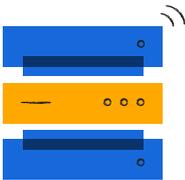
If frameworks offer lenses, these moves are realistic ways leaders might create an environment where AI fluency can take root. Each is an invitation you can take and adapt to your context.

Channel anxiety into progress



Kene reminds us the AI landscape is meant to be overwhelming right now. Instead of trying to sweep anxiety under the rug, leaders can use it as energy to move forward. Consider a recurring, time-boxed forum where people name worries, share near-misses, and convert them into questions worth exploring next week. The goal is to keep moving together.

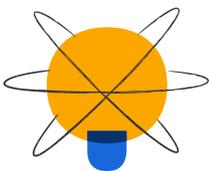
Build context libraries that make quality scalable



Kene's idea of "context enablement" is simple: Make the implicit explicit. Capture product strategy, design principles, domain language, and customer truths in living documents. These become "context libraries," or shared references that both people and tools can draw on. Elena notes that without a clearly codified vision and differentiation, teams risk converging toward sameness: "If everyone leans on AI averages, we all end up building the same product. The human job is to set a distinct destination."

The easier it is to find and use context, the more consistently teams produce high-quality work, and the faster fluency grows.

Run rituals that reward curiosity



Ravi points to the power of small, social loops. What if your team held a 20-minute weekly showcase where PMs, designers, and engineers demo an AI assist that saved them time or failed interestingly? Over time, the ritual builds a library of patterns and makes experimentation normal, not heroic.

Incentivize sharing over hoarding



Gatekeeping slows the compound gains of AI. What if your performance rubric explicitly rewarded “architect” behaviors (see Kene’s framework on page 7): documenting a workflow, recording a five-minute Loom, or pairing with a peer to replicate a result? Small, visible rewards (recognition in team meetings; a tip callout in the newsletter) change how your team views status.

Start with high-leverage use cases that create momentum



Not every workflow needs AI tomorrow. But you can pick a few where the benefits are felt quickly and the risks are low: drafting specs and changelogs, synthesizing customer research, prototyping designs or data flows, generating internal reports. Elena highlights PRD drafts and prototypes as especially fruitful: Rather than starting from a blank page, let AI create the baseline, then refine it with your team’s authentic expertise.

The aim is to build shared muscle and judgment you can use to tackle harder problems later.

Measuring progress



Measurement should clarify, not police. The point is to see whether fluency is changing how your organization learns and ships. Treat metrics as conversation starters: a way to notice what to amplify or adjust.

Start with baselines. Before you launch big initiatives, capture a snapshot: How many people are using AI weekly, where does work slow down, how consistent is quality? Even a rough baseline makes change visible later.

Blend leading and lagging indicators. Leading indicators tell you if behavior is changing; lagging indicators tell you if outcomes are improving.



Fluency (leading). Track the share of the team that uses AI weekly for core tasks, the number of shared workflows in circulation, and the spread of contributions (is it the same three enthusiasts, or broadening?). Look for narrative signals too: how do people describe the value – speed, clarity, exploration?

Velocity (lagging). Watch cycle times on repeatable tasks (spec drafts, QA summaries, weekly updates). You’re not chasing speed at any cost; you’re checking whether reclaimed time is being reinvested in higher-value work.



Quality (lagging). Check whether outputs match product strategy and customer truths. Does the “voice of the product” (the tone, style, and perspective that make it recognizable) hold steady when AI is in the loop? Because quality is measured after the fact, you need safeguards in place: context libraries to anchor outputs, and light reviews to catch drift early.



Culture (leading). Use short pulse surveys to sense anxiety, confidence, and psychological safety around AI. You might ask people to rate how much they agree with a statement like, “I feel comfortable sharing an AI experiment that didn’t work.”

Avoid vanity metrics. Total prompt volume and model tokens consumed can be curious, but they rarely predict value. Opt for measures that connect to customer outcomes or team learning.

Cadence matters. Review monthly to steer behavior, and quarterly to make bigger calls (e.g., which pilots graduate into platforms). Share what you learn; fluency spreads faster when people can see the story their data tells.

A note on what Atlassian is *not* saying

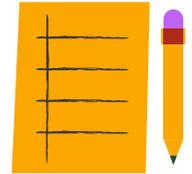
That every workflow should be automated tomorrow.

That leaders must pick one framework and follow it step-by-step.

That anxiety can or should be eliminated; it’s part of the terrain.

That tools are irrelevant. They matter, but they’re not the starting line.

The work ahead



Most technology shifts look like a tooling story from far away and a leadership story up close. AI is no different. The tools will keep changing. What endures is the environment leaders create: the incentives, rituals, and language that make experimentation safe and shared understanding possible.

So, a few ideas to take back to your team:



If AI is electricity, your org chart is a wiring diagram. What circuits are you energizing, and which are still dark?



If “architect” is the new high-status identity, how will someone earn that status on your team?



If anxiety is the price of admission, what will you do to turn it into focused exploration rather than quiet avoidance?



If shared understanding is the edge, what’s the first thing you’ll document or codify for your team this quarter?

Raising AI fluency isn’t a destination. It’s a posture: Stay open, stay honest, and keep layering small wins into bigger ones. The organizations that cultivate it won’t just ship faster. They’ll think more clearly, decide more bravely, and build teams that get better together.

Glossary of handy terms



AI fluency

Not technical mastery, but everyday confidence in using AI to think, make, and decide – and knowing when not to.

Architect

A teammate who shares knowledge and builds systems others can use. High-status not because they hoard tricks, but because they enable others.

Average intelligence

Elena Verna's phrase for what AI does best: generate the baseline or "average" of known patterns, not breakthrough creativity or vision.

Automation theater

Flashy AI demos that look transformational but collapse when used in day-to-day workflows.

Context library

A living set of references – product strategy, design principles, customer truths – that both people and AI can draw on to keep quality consistent.

Coordination tax

The friction that shows up when AI blurs roles. Without new norms, teammates step on each other's toes about ownership and "done-ness."

Empty-state problem

The paralysis of starting from a blank page. AI helps by producing a first draft so humans can react and improve, rather than begin from zero.

Gatekeeping / Prompt gatekeeping

Withholding knowledge, prompts, or workflows to protect personal value. It slows collective learning and keeps wins from compounding across the team.

Tool tourism

Collecting logins for lots of AI tools without actually changing how work gets done.

Vanity metrics

Numbers that look impressive (like total prompts run or tokens consumed) but don't connect to customer value or team learning.

Vibe-coding

Creating apps or prototypes using natural language prompts instead of traditional code. A low-stakes way to get hands-on with AI.

Voice of the product

The recognizable tone, style, and perspective of a product. A check to make sure AI-generated outputs still feel on-brand.

**From ideas to impact,
build what matters**

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