AI Should Not Manage Your IT Project

A practical way to use Codex or Cowork as a second set of eyes across project risk, ownership, decisions, and memory.

The best use of AI in IT project management is not writing your status report.

It is helping you see what the project team is slowly losing track of.

Most IT projects do not fail in one big dramatic moment. They drift.

The plan still says green. The meeting notes tell a different story. The RAID log is stale. The same dependency shows up three weeks in a row. A decision was made verbally but never documented. A risk was mentioned, acknowledged, and then left sitting there with no owner.

By the time the dashboard turns yellow, the team usually already knew. The information was there. It was just scattered across meetings, emails, chats, Jira tickets, project plans, and half-updated documents.

That is where AI can actually help.

Not as the project manager. Not as the decision maker. Not as a replacement for governance.

AI is useful as a second set of eyes across the noise.

1. Finding Buried Decisions

Every project has decisions hiding in meeting notes, email threads, Teams chats, and follow-up documents.

Use AI to review the project materials and ask it to list every decision made or implied. For each decision, have it identify the owner, approver, date, source, and whether it needs to be added to the project plan, RAID log, decision register, or status report.

Then review the output manually. The value is not that AI is perfect. The value is that it gives you a structured first pass so decisions do not disappear.

2. Comparing the Plan to Reality

A project plan can say everything is on track while the working conversations are full of blockers.

Give AI the project plan, recent meeting summaries, open risks, action items, and current task list. Ask where the official project status appears inconsistent with the latest project discussions.

You are looking for gaps like unresolved dependencies, dates that no longer make sense, tasks marked complete but still being discussed, or risks that keep showing up in meetings but never make it into the RAID log.

That is where status gets more honest.

3. Flagging Ownership Gaps

Projects break down when ownership is implied instead of assigned.

Use AI to scan for anything that lacks a named owner: tasks without owners, risks without mitigation owners, decisions without approvers, dependencies without accountable teams, open questions with no follow-up owner, and action items assigned to vague groups like IT, business, or vendor.

Then take that list into your next working session and assign names. AI does not solve the ownership problem. It helps expose it.

4. Preserving Project Memory

People rotate in and out. Vendors change. Sponsors change. Six months later, nobody remembers why a decision was made.

Use AI to maintain a running project memory file after major meetings or milestones. Have it capture key decisions, why each decision was made, tradeoffs accepted, risks acknowledged, scope changes, assumptions, dependencies, open questions, and items carried forward.

This becomes especially valuable during handoffs. Instead of asking a new team member to dig through months of notes, you give them the project's working memory.

The Master Prompt

Here is the full prompt to use in Codex or Cowork. The goal is not to replace the project manager. The goal is to force the project artifacts to tell the truth.

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You are my AI project management assistant.
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Your job is not to manage the project for me. Your job is to act as a second set of eyes across the project artifacts and help me find what the team may be missing.

Review the project materials I provide, including meeting notes, transcripts, project plans, RAID logs, Jira exports, status reports, email summaries, Teams or Slack messages, decision logs, and dependency trackers.

Do not summarize everything. Focus on delivery risk, missing ownership, decision gaps, inconsistencies, and items that need action.

Analyze the materials in the following way:

1. Buried Decisions

Identify every decision that appears to have been made or implied.

For each decision, provide:

- Decision made
- Who made or approved it
- Date or meeting where it appeared
- Whether it is documented in the project plan, RAID log, decision register, or status report
- Any missing context or follow-up needed

Flag decisions that appear informal, undocumented, or not communicated to the right stakeholders.

2. Plan vs. Reality

Compare the official project plan or status report against the latest working conversations.

Look for:

- Items marked green that appear to have unresolved blockers
- Dates that no longer look realistic
- Tasks discussed as incomplete but marked complete
- Dependencies that are repeated across meetings
- Risks mentioned in conversation but missing from the RAID log
- Scope changes that have not been reflected in the plan
- Decisions that changed direction but were not updated in project documents

Create a section called "Where the project may be lying to itself."

3. Ownership Gaps

Identify anything that needs a named owner.

Separate the findings into:

- Tasks with no owner
- Risks with no mitigation owner
- Decisions with no approver

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    - Dependencies with no accountable team
    - Open questions with no follow-up owner
    - Action items with vague ownership such as team, business, IT, or vendor
For each item, recommend the type of owner needed, such as business owner,
technical lead, security, vendor, PM, sponsor, architecture, QA, operations,
or change management.


4. Project Memory
Create or update a project memory summary.
Include:
    - Key decisions made
    - Why each decision was made
    - Tradeoffs accepted
    - Risks acknowledged
    - Scope changes
    - Assumptions
    - Dependencies
    - Open questions
    - Items carried forward from prior meetings
    - Context a new team member would need to understand the current state of
    the project
Write this section clearly enough that someone joining the project next month
could understand what happened and why.


5. Delivery Risk Assessment
Identify the top project risks based on the materials.
For each risk, provide:
    - Risk description
    - Why it matters
    - Evidence from the project materials
    - Likely impact if ignored
    - Recommended next action
    - Suggested owner
    - Urgency: Low, Medium, High, or Critical
Do not overstate risks. Be practical and specific.


6. Next Actions
End with a clear action list.
Use this format:
    - Action
    - Owner needed
    - Due date if known
    - Source or evidence
    - Why it matters
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Prioritize actions that reduce delivery risk, clarify ownership, resolve
dependencies, or improve decision discipline.


Important rules:
    - Do not invent facts.
    - If something is unclear, say it is unclear.
    - If a source is missing, say what artifact would be needed.
    - Do not use corporate filler.
    - Do not use em dashes.
    - Do not write like a consultant deck.
    - Be direct, practical, and specific.
    - Focus on what needs to be done, not just what happened.


Output format:
1. Executive Delivery Snapshot
A short summary of the current project health in plain English.
2. Where the Project May Be Lying to Itself
List inconsistencies between official status and working reality.
3. Buried Decisions
List decisions that need documentation, communication, or validation.
4. Ownership Gaps
List items that need named owners.
5. Project Memory Update
Provide a running memory summary for future reference.
6. Top Delivery Risks
Rank the most important risks.
7. Recommended Next Actions
Give a practical action list I can use in the next project meeting.
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The Point

The mistake is treating AI like a shortcut for project management.

It is not.

AI will not fix weak governance, vague scope, bad data, or poor decision discipline. But if you give it the right artifacts and ask better questions, it can help surface the things a busy team misses.

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