

Robert Jackson

Fractional VP of Delivery

Aligning IT, Product and PMOs so AI-era teams ship the right thing

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SAFe Program Consultant (SPC6) · Former Director of Application Integration · Solution Train Engineer and Release Train Engineer · Developer turned delivery executive, still building with AI

What I Do

Most companies have a leader for what gets built (the VP of Product) and a leader for how it gets built and run (the VP of IT or Engineering). Very few have anyone who owns whether the two actually deliver together.

That's the seat I've occupied throughout my career: between the VP of IT and the VP of Product, coordinating the delivery teams and the PMOs that serve them both. As a fractional VP of Delivery, I own that space for organizations that need an experienced delivery executive but not a full-time hire.

I report to the outcome, not to either side. That neutrality is what lets both IT and Product trust the trade-offs I put on the table.

The Problem I Solve

When IT and Product aren't aligned, the symptoms are familiar:

- Product says engineering doesn't deliver what was asked for.
- IT says Product keeps changing direction.
- Several PMOs report different versions of the truth, and status stays green until it suddenly turns red.
- Delivery teams take direction from everyone and work from no single plan.

AI has made this gap more expensive. AI coding tools let teams build faster than IT and Product can agree on what to build. When an AI agent works from a vague requirement, its guess becomes working code across several teams before anyone notices they interpreted it differently. Product now expects AI speed, IT absorbs the extra review, security and integration load, and the PMO is tracking a plan built for the old pace.

The risk isn't only building the wrong thing. It's building the wrong thing faster, across multiple teams.

What Clients Get

- **One plan IT and Product both commit to.** A single planning rhythm where trade-offs surface early and are decided with evidence.
- **One version of the truth.** PMO reporting brought together into one set of predictability, flow and outcome metrics leadership can trust.

- **A specification practice built for AI.** Requirements become living, testable specifications that evolve with the code instead of being frozen up front, so teams and AI tools build from the same clear intent.
- **Deeper collaboration with stakeholders.** The business shapes what's being built throughout the quarter, not just at the final demo.
- **Capability that stays.** I coach release train leaders, Scrum Masters, Product Owners and program managers, and develop a permanent successor so the organization doesn't depend on me.

How I Work: Iterating the Specification, Not Just the Code

For two decades Agile taught teams to iterate the code. Now that AI can generate code quickly, the most valuable place to iterate is upstream, on the specification, alongside the code. And the specification is exactly where IT and Product have to meet.

This is not a return to waterfall. Waterfall froze the specification behind approval gates. In my approach, the specification and the code evolve together, and real user feedback is allowed to change both.

Area	Traditional approach	My approach for AI-assisted teams
Readiness	Is the work sized and small enough?	Is it testable? Clear acceptance criteria, constraints and interfaces before anyone builds
Dependencies	Team A needs something from Team B by a date	Teams agree on the behavior between their systems, who owns it, and when they'll test it together
Capacity	Faster coding means more committed scope	AI speed doesn't scale the whole organization; review, integration, security and business validation are planned as real constraints
Done	The code passes its tests	The specification and code stay aligned, and the result has been validated with real users
Review	Check that the work matches the plan	Study whether the outcome actually solved the business problem, and adjust both specification and code if it didn't

AI helps throughout: drafting specifications, generating test cases, surfacing hidden assumptions and mapping dependencies. People still own the decisions, and IT and Product answer the hard questions together before anything is built.

Engagement Options

1. Delivery Alignment Diagnostic

2–3 weeks, fixed fee

I interview the VP of IT, the VP of Product, PMO leaders and people across delivery, observe a planning cycle, and review intake, backlog and status artifacts. You receive an executive readout, the cost of misalignment in your own numbers, and a 90-day roadmap with the top three changes.

2. Fractional VP of Delivery

3–6 months, about 10–20 hours per week

I own the delivery operating model across IT, Product and the PMOs: one delivery forum for trade-off decisions, quarterly planning and review, the specification practice, unified executive reporting, and coaching for delivery leaders, including developing a permanent successor.

3. AI-Era Delivery Pilot

One product area, one quarter

A controlled trial on two or three features that span IT and Product, measured against a baseline for rework, blocked work, predictability and stakeholder acceptance. You receive a results readout and a playbook to scale it.

4. Program Rescue

Time-boxed

For a program already in trouble: stabilize the delivery rhythm, unify fragmented backlogs, map cross-team dependencies, and restore executive confidence.

Who I Work With

Sponsors	CIOs, CTOs and CEOs who are tired of breaking the tie between IT and Product
Partners	VPs of IT, Product and Engineering, and PMO leaders
Organizations	Mid-market and enterprise companies with multiple delivery teams across IT and Product, often with more than one PMO, and often adopting AI coding tools. SAFe experience helps but isn't required.
Industries	Financial services and wealth management, health insurance and healthcare, property and casualty insurance, aerospace and defense, logistics and B2B integration
Consulting partners	Firms that need a senior delivery executive to stabilize a client program

Why Me

I've been on every side of delivery.

- **Builder.** I started as a developer and integration engineer, working in ERP, EDI and enterprise integration. I know what it's like to receive a vague requirement and have to guess, and I still build software today with AI.
- **Technology executive.** As Director of Application Integration at Rollins, I managed 14 direct reports, including managers and business analysts, ran budgets of \$2.9M+ and \$3.5M, and reported to the CIO on special projects. At Catlin, I built and led the integration team for a \$77M Guidewire transformation.
- **Enterprise delivery leader.** I've led multi-team delivery as a Solution Train Engineer at Cigna and a Release Train Engineer at CareSource, First Advantage, Lockheed Martin (contract) and Osaic, and coached transformations at Verizon Telematics, Synchrony and Anthem.

Selected results

Engagement	Result
Osaic Consulting through Equillem	Stabilized an inherited modernization program, raising delivery predictability from roughly 40–50% to 85–90% within two planning increments. Delivery stability led the client to approve two additional workstreams, and my discovery work identified 12+ integration gaps that shaped a new modernization engagement.
CareSource	Designed a biweekly planning mechanism that reduced blocked work by 35% and eliminated recurring War Room escalations; created a Shared Services intake process governing demand across EDI, ESB, D365 and OnBase.
First Advantage	Established PMO processes, unified fragmented backlogs and introduced a consistent delivery cadence across Salesforce, AWS call-center and mobile initiatives.
Cigna	Mentored release train leaders across a solution train and implemented a product-request funnel and maturity assessments to govern intake.
Synchrony	Led a transformation covering 12 teams and 100+ people, coaching one RTE, six Scrum Masters and six Product Owners.
Rollins	Led a maintenance-system recovery that cleared 600 of 700 backlog items in six months, spending \$190K against a \$250K budget.

Credentials

- SAFe Program Consultant (SPC6), qualified to train and certify leaders and teams in SAFe
- Additional SAFe and Agile certifications, including SAFe Scrum Master (which I teach)
- BBA, Management Information Systems, University of Georgia
- IT Management Program, Georgia Institute of Technology

Let's talk

If your IT and Product leaders are working from different plans, or your output went up after AI and your outcomes didn't, I'd welcome a conversation.

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