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Time for reflection

What can you learn from your 2023? This issue is packed with hard-won wisdom from those on the project front line. We'd like to end the year celebrating the many unsung successes that you've helped to pull off – and to create a sense of excitement for 2024.

To this end, we've brought you a celebratory round-up of the 2023 APM Project Management Award winners, all of whom have shown true dedication in delivering awesome projects, from our overall winner the National Trust, for its Future Parks Accelerator project, to Essex County Council to the Peruvian *La Autoridad para Reconstrucción con Cambios* programme to rebuild social infrastructure following the devastating flooding caused by El Niño. There is so much to commend and learn from, so I urge you to read on and feel proud about what your profession achieves. We'll be following up with the winners over the next year to find out the secrets to their success, so watch this space.

Amid the festive season, be sure to plan in some time to read the reflective thoughts that some of the profession's biggest movers and shakers have shared with us. What have they learnt from 2023? And what are they looking forward to in 2024? Artificial

intelligence features heavily and there's an appetite to rise to the various global challenges the profession faces. "As project managers, we will need to be brave, bold and innovative, and we will need to lean in and support fellow professionals," writes Sue Kershaw, APM's President.

It's this collective and supportive mindset that individuals need to adopt, if Saïd Business School's Alex Budzier's hopes are to be realised: "The world needs our major projects to be a force that addresses future and current global challenges, and that, when held to this task, the profession can deliver."

So what better way to achieve this than to step into 2024 collectively, "committed to fostering an environment where every voice is valued and every perspective is embraced without judgement, propelling us towards a more inclusive and innovative future in project management", as IJ Samuel, Director at Turner & Townsend, so eloquently puts it.

The team at *Project* hopes you enjoy a well-earned break and that the contributions we've gathered here might serve to inspire you to return in 2024 with big ambitions.

Emma De Vita is Editor of Project

There is so much to commend and learn from, so I urge you to read on and feel proud about what your profession achieves



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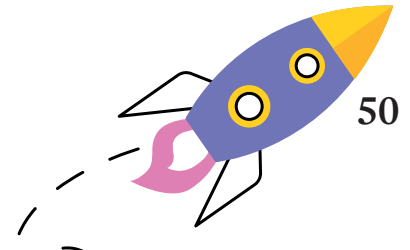
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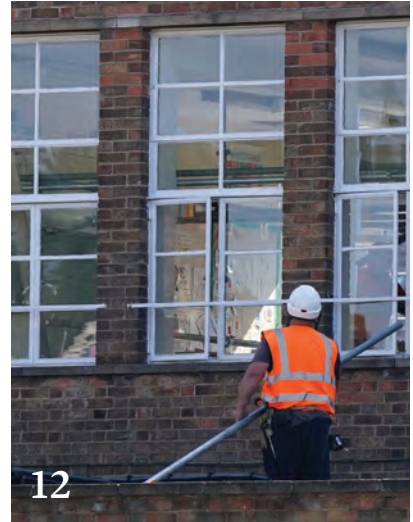
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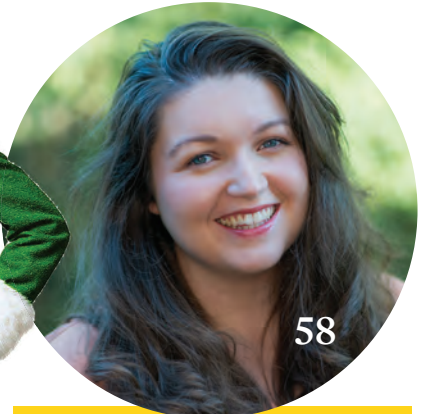
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Eyes in the sky

Launched in 1972 and still operational today, the Landsat programme – one of APM's 50 Projects for a Better Future – is the longest-running and most ambitious satellite imaging project ever attempted. Nine separate satellite launches to date have sustained this collaboration between NASA and the US Geological Survey, producing a detailed, ongoing record of changes affecting Earth's surface. The images captured by Landsat satellites, 438 miles above the Earth, have helped to track the progress of urban sprawl, deforestation, wildfires and the shrinking of glaciers and the polar ice caps. The image here shows northeast Greenland's two glaciers, Storstrømmen and L. Bistrup Bræ, and the rapid disintegration of sea ice surrounding them over a span of just a few days in July 2023.

This data can be accessed by governments, NGOs and individuals around the world free of charge, helping to shape policy responses and inspire behavioural changes. 2030 is the slated launch of Landsat Next, which will provide a host of new capabilities, including enhanced spatial resolution. While previous Landsat missions have all featured one satellite, Landsat Next will be a constellation of three observatories circling the globe in unison.

"Our mission right now is really a quantum step forward from previous Landsats," says Jim Pontius, NASA's Landsat Next Project Manager.



The images captured by Landsat satellites, 438 miles above Earth, have helped to track the progress of urban sprawl, deforestation, wildfires and the shrinking of glaciers and the polar ice caps



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With new episodes appearing regularly, our podcast features in-depth interviews with project professionals to find out how they tackle challenges from digital transformation to people management.

Our latest two episodes are:

- 'What artificial intelligence means for the future of project management', three project professionals with a deep interest in AI consider what impact this technology is having on projects right now.
- 'The origins of agile project management', a conversation with Professor Darren Dalcher who was there from the start of agile.



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Perspectives

The RAAC crisis • Improving data literacy • Black and ethnic minority representation • Career advice

The origin story of agile

Darren Dalcher, Professor of Strategic Project Management at Lancaster University, recalls the emergence of the agile movement in the early 1980s



Darren Dalcher was witness to the start of the agile movement some 40 years ago. He explains its roots in the world of computer software development and how it has gone on to take over the world of project management.

Q How did agile come about?

A [In the 1980s] computer technology was becoming more and more enabling. There was more that you could do with it, and it became all about how people could do their jobs better and what we could achieve for them through computers. It's only when we understand what we're trying to achieve that we can deliver something meaningful and useful to them. This, to a large extent, creates agile. This is prototyping; experimentation – it's something that people have been doing for a long time. Rather than have a fixed idea about what we could deliver and what needs to be done, it's playing with it a bit, and trying to make sense of what we're getting – and seeing if we can find a better solution.

We were being playful developers, and having a sense of a problem-solving cycle. We were moving a problem towards a solution and trying not to engage with the solution too early. We went through different modes of development. And to a large extent, computers enabled us to do a lot of things that we couldn't do before – to process large volumes of data, to do so very quickly, to do amazing calculations, to change how we implement systems, how we deal with people. So, I was involved initially in trying to utilise computers in useful

ways and trying to make sense of what is success and failure.

For me prototyping was very much an early precursor of agile. We were doing exactly what agile is doing. The challenge was that as soon as you introduce prototyping, as soon as you engage with the users, they want more, so the challenge was not a technical challenge, it was a management challenge. How do you control this effort? How do you structure it? How do we control this prototyping activity? Do we only allow three increments? ... So it was really imposing some kind of a managerial structure around it. And I was trying

We were being playful developers, and having a sense of a problem-solving cycle. We were moving a problem towards a solution and trying not to engage with the solution too early

to make sense of what seemed rather arbitrary at the time.

Q The Agile Manifesto was published in 2001. What was it trying to achieve?

A There were 17 people involved in its creation and what they had in common was that they all believed that there was too much structure and control and we needed to liberate ourselves a bit. The people that had come into the meeting, they'd all created their own methods but they all emphasised working with users.

They're not project managers, they're software developers. They're interested in software and they get together for a weekend and come up with a statement, saying we think we should be working in different ways. We should be using lighter methods, without the control, without the structure, without the imposition of bureaucracy.

Q How has agile influenced project management?

A If you ask the original people who attended the meeting and created the Agile Manifesto what they think about it, they hate it. Their view is that agile was this liberating activity and they don't like the scaling approaches. There are various methods that have been designed to do that, and they feel that they're adding a lot of structure, which you would need to do when you have multiple teams playing and having fun together – at the same time you want to control what's going on. You need to manage it.

So the challenge for project managers is to think what they can achieve through agile? It goes back to the skills of the project manager. How do we become pragmatic managers? How do we use our professional judgement and decide how to deliver, how to shape, how to deploy in meaningful ways? It's creating strategies that will allow the mix of different activities that need to take place to happen together at the same time.

Listen to APM Podcast's interview with Professor Darren Dalcher on Spotify, Apple or Google



5 lessons learned

Jim Crawford, Programme Director of the Transpennine Route Upgrade, and former Chief Programme Officer, Crossrail

What are the most important project lessons from Crossrail?

- 1 Build the right team.** For each stage of the project life cycle, and refresh and assess the team composition regularly.
- 2 Fixed end dates can be deadly.** Instead, commit to opening 'windows' that start wide and get narrower as the project proceeds.
- 3 One source of schedule truth should be communicated to all.** Visibility of the 'whole' is key to knowing your role in the execution of the programme.
- 4 Embrace transparency.** Create an open environment where people know that being the bearer of bad news is acceptable, but hiding it is not.
- 5 How long will it take, and how much will it cost, were the two big questions I had to answer as Programme Director for the Crossrail recovery.** These are actually the same question, because how long it was going to take defined how much it was going to cost. The key to answering them both was achievable productivity.

Download the report *Crossrail Project 2019–2023: Completing the Elizabeth Line*, published by APM, at apm.org.uk/resources/learning-legacy. Read Jim Crawford's Big Interview on page 26.



Myth Risk buster:

The APM *Body of Knowledge 7th edition* defines risk as: "The potential of a situation or event to impact on the achievement of specific objectives." A common myth is that risk is always perceived as a negative whereas in certain situations the opposite is true, as clearly laid out in the definition of 'risk analysis and management' as 'a process that allows individual risk events and overall risk to be understood and managed proactively, optimising success by minimising threats and maximising opportunities.' What's a 'risk response', we hear you ask? This is 'an action or set of actions to reduce the probability or impact of a threat, or to increase the probability or impact of an opportunity.'

Comment

What will it take to increase data literacy?

We need to lure more data professionals on to projects and to increase the data literacy and competency of project roles, argues Andy Murray



We no longer need to make the case for diversity as it is well proven that diverse teams deliver better results. One aspect of diversity requiring more attention is skills diversity. Projects often need a multitude of disciplines and skills to succeed, and one particular discipline seems to be underrepresented in projects – the discipline of data science.

It has been my experience that it is difficult to attract data professionals to the world of projects. Professionals and practitioners in data science are typically drawn to operational and functional aspects of businesses, principally due to their repetitive nature and short cycle times. But, given Deming's 'plan, do, check, act' cycle of project management, projects should be ripe for data-driven decision-making.

With regular use of automation, Power BI dashboards, the launch of ChatGPT in 2022, and the numerous Large Language Models (LLMs) that have been rolled out since, we are already seeing the application of data science bleeding into project management from general management. But how do we know if the LLM we are using as a project assistant has been trained on relevant data or whether the recommendation in my dashboard enabled by predictive analytics is based on dodgy data, or the degree to which it is influenced by error or bias?

Making the most of AI

To help us truly embrace AI and data analytics and use them to their full potential we need to find ways to lure more data professionals into working on projects and we also need to find ways to increase the data literacy

and competency of existing project roles – project controls, project management, project sponsorship etc – and at all levels.

The degree to which AI and data analytics will create new project roles and will need to be incorporated into the skills of existing roles is explored in APM's new report, *Developing Project Data Analytics Skills*, which was published in October. The report

The path to success lies in our ability to harness the power of data and analytics, leveraging them to drive transformation

builds on APM's *Getting Started in Project Data Analytics*, which came out in 2022, and aligns to the 'Manifesto for Data-Driven Projects' developed by the Project Data Analytics Task Force. *Developing Project Data Analytics Skills* includes:

- **Considerations regarding scale and complexity of your project and organisational context.**
- **A skills framework based on 11 data-related skills, such as data analysis, data integrity, data ethics, visualisation and story telling.**
- **Likely impact on roles – based on four personas.**
- **An approach to capability building.**

The four personas cover early career professionals, senior leaders, project specialists and data specialists. The report considers their 'ideal' use of data analytics and therefore the skills it will require. The report also distinguishes between data citizens, data consumers, data analysts and data scientists, recognising that the level of expertise

required across a spectrum of data analytics skills will vary significantly. Put bluntly, not everyone on your project needs to be a data scientist, but everyone will be a data consumer, and to get the most from the data analytics and insights available to them, they will need skills they don't have today.

The science of delivery

The days when project delivery decisions were based on intuition have passed, making project delivery more of a science than an art. A data-driven approach will give us greater visibility of each project's societal benefits, increased value for money, higher social value, lower environmental impact, enhanced productivity and better consumer experiences.

The path to success in this new era lies in our ability to harness the power of data and analytics, leveraging them to drive transformation and growth in our work. The first step is to be curious. The second step is to look at how to upskill in project data analytics, whether that is at a personal, team or organisational level.

The use of AI and data analytics is accelerating. You need to be ready for it. The *Developing Project Data Analytics Skills* report enables you to do exactly that!

Andy Murray is the Executive Director of the Major Projects Association, the Committee Chair of APM's Governance SIG, a member of the APM's Data Advisory Group and a member of the Project Data Analytics Task Force. *Developing Project Data Analytics Skills* can be downloaded at bit.ly/47H2SIt

Comment

On the RAAC

The RAAC crisis is a case study in failure to plan for the long-term implications of project decisions. Richard Young asks how the project management profession can help resolve the problem



“My first reaction to the issue was that it’s sad how easily things get politicised,” says Paul Morrell. He’s a chartered quantity surveyor who was the Government’s first Chief Construction Adviser, appointed in November 2009. In April 2021, he became chair of an independent review of current systems for testing construction products. “RAAC wasn’t an issue when I was in Whitehall 10 years ago – although at the time there was an expectation of a major renewal programme in schools, and it doesn’t help that that was stopped.”

He adds: “People want someone to blame, and they’re pointing the finger at ‘cowboy’ builders and politicians. But there are serious technical issues here that can actually help us learn from the crisis and improve. We talk excitedly about the madness of designing buildings with a 30-year life. But clearly we’re still using the product; and many of these buildings have been up for more than 30 years and are not at risk. It’s an industry problem that needs an industry solution.”

Defining the problem

Because RAAC is aerated, any water ingress around the structure can seep to the steel core of the beams; rust expansion of the rebar causes internal structural weakness without showing at the surface, allowing the rebar to sag as the concrete around it degrades.

“The way this concrete breaks down makes it harder to identify meaningful structural issues,” says Joe Woods, a Senior Project

Manager at Gleeds Management Services, currently operating as a Senior Project Manager leading the London Education team for the Department for Education (DfE). “That’s why we’re taking a blanket approach, erring on the side of caution. In many cases, the first step we take is proactively getting supports in place and moving classes into temporary accommodation.”

Where, what and how?

Morrell lays out the three stages for any project manager involved with RAAC-risk estates. First, do we know where it is? Some estates are maintained with a good record of construction approaches; but in others, the locations of RAAC beams will be hit and miss. Second, where it’s in place, is it still safe? If the bearings are good, if there’s no moisture, if there haven’t been alterations – it might be fine.

Then third, where it’s unsafe, what’s the remediation? “We need to project-manage our way through,” says Morrell. “But there will be a constraint on the quality of people available to demonstrate whether there is or isn’t an issue; and then set about the remedial work.”

Creating a strict project flow chart, then, is the main job of the project management teams right now. And from the moment the

We should take a lesson from the cladding crisis and not rush around ‘fixing’ things without really fixing them

crisis emerged, it was clear to Woods that planning the solution as a programme, not just discrete projects, would be the key.

“We can’t be in three or four places at once, but we’ve learned that when we’re building a number of schools in an area we can batch them together for planning purposes,” he explains. “We can tender for one contractor across a number of sites, and optimise all our other resources around their availability. That cuts back hugely on meetings, tenders, planning and approvals.

“But that does also mean making sure our technology is up to standard,” he adds. “That’s what allows us to coordinate more aggressively.”

The way ahead

Morrell argues that the focus now should be on looking ahead – in the short-term, addressing the issues with RAAC in existing buildings; and in the long-term addressing fundamental weaknesses in our approaches to building maintenance and risk management. In both cases, projects managers have a lot to offer – and a lot to learn.

“We’re often building with a demolition plan in place for 30 or 40 years hence,” says Woods. “But we’re building schools and handing over the estate to people who often have little facilities management experience, and for whom building maintenance is competing in the budget with other essential services – salaries and consumables and the rest.”

The good news is that – as Morrell’s stints working for

The government is erring on the side of caution in schools built using RAAC, and is putting supports in place

government agencies show – there has already been a change in approach. The use of building information modelling (BIM) to support the design, construction and long-term operation and maintenance of built assets is becoming more common. Morrell is a strong advocate, having publicly backed the use of BIM in 2010; it was made mandatory for all centrally procured public sector construction projects from 2016.

Lessons learned

Morrell wants government, the building industry and project managers to learn from recent disasters and embed learning processes more deeply into future projects. “We should take a lesson from the cladding crisis and not rush around ‘fixing’ things without really fixing them,” he says. “When you ask about how buildings that were dangerously clad were re-clad, we seem to be short of data as to what’s actually gone back. So let’s learn from that.”

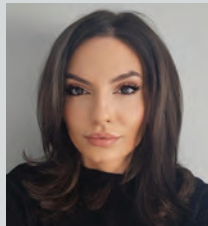
In the short-term, that means ensuring project managers like Woods are supported in diligent planning and remediation works that don’t sacrifice quality for speed. Longer term? “The big lessons are how you prove innovation; and the need to build resilience into the design of buildings that will not be optimally cared for in the long term,” says Woods. “You have to make sure different groups of people work together to fulfil that cycle of remediation and lessons learned.

Richard Young is a freelance business journalist and editor

Comment

How to enjoy a thrilling career journey

As a leader, manager and engineer, Flavia Popescu shares her story in the hope it might inspire the next generation to get ahead



Flavia Popescu is Lead Senior Project Professional at Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land

Ten years ago, I was a non-English speaking Romanian teenager, motivated, ambitious and with the desire to build a successful career. I started my career journey in the hospitality industry to learn English, then worked in various businesses providing administrative, finance and accounting support.

In 2015, I decided to challenge myself and to move into engineering and project management. I joined a large oil and gas project, which gave me the opportunity to establish a good reputation. Over the years, I continued to deliver complex engineering projects, which contributed to my professional development, success and career in defence, nuclear, oil and gas, and with government bodies.

In my first project management role, I had to step up to match my co-workers’ capabilities in a short period of time to help deliver a large oil and gas plant. This gave me substantial knowledge, skills and experience in dealing with complex challenges.

I have never feared the unknown and have always embraced challenges, which helped me when leading the Project Controls Fast Track Scheme in Defence. I was involved in planning/scheduling, risk management, resourcing, change, benefits, cost management, and supporting the improvement of processes, policies, strategies and tools. I went on to work in cross-functional roles and to support the development of junior personnel.

My ability to understand technical elements has been extremely helpful, especially when working on complex engineering projects, so I pursued formal professional recognition in engineering too. Over the past couple of years I have worked hard to obtain professional qualifications that enable me to wear multiple hats, from project management and engineering to leadership, while working in demanding and responsible roles to support the delivery of complex projects involving teams of between 100 and 600 people.

It has been a tough and incredibly challenging journey, from arriving in a foreign country far from the support of family and friends, having to obtain legal status and citizenship, securing a job, and looking at ways to progress. I am proud of my achievements, gained through hard work, dedication and commitment.

As a teenager I was very disciplined in how I used my time and got into the habit of taking advantage of information that is accessible and free in today’s world in order to gain skills and knowledge. My advice to those in the early stages of their career would be to have your big goal in mind but also to embrace reality, plan in small steps and celebrate your achievements. Be curious and appreciate any opportunities given, even when in some roles you don’t feel valued – everything contributes to your personal development.

Have your big goal in mind but also embrace reality, plan in small steps and celebrate your achievements

Comment

Revealed: hot topics for the next *APM Body of Knowledge*

Professor Carl Gavin, lead editor for the upcoming eighth edition of the *APM Body of Knowledge*, considers what lies on the horizon



Later in this issue of *Project* is a feature where contributors have been asked to reflect on their key lessons of 2023 and give their thoughts on what to look out for in 2024.

As lead editor for the upcoming eighth edition of the *APM Body of Knowledge* (APM BoK), scheduled for publication in early 2025, I'd like to contribute something similar, drawing from the feedback we've received in our recent consultation on the current edition. What would people like to see in the next edition? It's feedback that provides a sort of barometer for the current trends in the project profession.

Our consultation was live from July to August this year and focused on how APM can update or enhance the current edition's content, and what new topics are impacting the project profession now and in the future. Most importantly, what should be added to the APM BoK? Close to 500 people responded, with over 3,000 comments received.

Substantial effort

Overall, nearly half of respondents felt that no changes were required to the current edition, which is a strong recognition of the substantial effort made by its editors, Dr Ruth Murray-Webster and Professor Darren Dalcher, and their writing team. Of the remaining respondents, nearly one-third felt that the content could be improved or made clearer in its writing style and approach, and nearly 10% stated that there is missing content or

topics that should be added. These percentages were consistent across all 12 sections of the APM BoK.

The feedback confirmed the approach we wished to take with the eighth edition – that of evolution, not revolution. With the seventh edition having been a significant rewrite, the content of the next edition will be improved through measured and considered changes driven by the feedback we receive, by recent developments in project management practices

The feedback confirmed the approach we wished to take with the eighth edition – that of evolution, not revolution

and aligned with the recently published *APM Competence Framework* and APM guides.

New and revisited topics

Several topics stood out in the consultation feedback. Some of them are already in the current edition – the request being that these be revised and re-emphasised – and two topics would be new additions to the APM BoK. These are:

● **The use of artificial intelligence in project management and decision-making.** This was the most requested new topic for the APM BoK. Although respondents were not prescriptive as to what would be in this new section, it was strongly felt that the recent developments and impact in this area should be acknowledged.

● **The use of agile and hybrid approaches.** Although this is present in the current edition, respondents felt that more could be emphasised, particularly hybrid approaches.

● **Project data and analytics.** This would be a new topic for the APM BoK: the effective use of past and current project data in enabling decision-making and predictions of future project performance.

● **Sustainability in projects.** Although this topic is covered in the current edition of the APM BoK, respondents felt it should be updated and re-emphasised as it is more important than ever.

Other less-requested topics included systems thinking, the health and wellbeing of project professionals and leading remote/virtual teams. The topics mentioned above may not come as a huge surprise, with the feedback from the consultation reflecting trends we are seeing elsewhere in the project management field.

I consider myself honoured to have been selected to lead the development of the next edition of the APM BoK. Although the formal consultation period has finished, if you have any thoughts on the current edition and what you feel should be emphasised in or added to the next edition, please do get in touch with me.

Carl Gavin is Professor of Project Management at Alliance Manchester Business School, the University of Manchester

Comment

Black and ethnic minority representation

Emeka Okorochoa, Managing Partner at iStrat Consulting, wants the profession to paint a more accurate and inspiring picture



Picture a six-year-old girl looking at the cover of the autumn edition of *Project* that her dad had left on the breakfast bar. It celebrates the women that are breaking down barriers and demolishing stereotypes in construction. How inspiring, right? Let us adjust the lens slightly and picture the same scene with the girl and her dad from a black family. Would it still be inspiring? Would they still feel proud? Unfortunately, the answer to both these questions is not so much.

Underrepresentation of black and other ethnic minority groups can be seen in our profession. This raises the broader question as to how diverse it really is. Why don't we see this diversity represented better in our media? It may be attributed to several factors:

- **Lack of diversity in the profession.** Project management may historically have lacked diversity, with ethnic minorities underrepresented. While this may have improved over time, there is still an imbalance and a lack of awareness of the gap.

- **Implicit bias.** This is a challenging one to accept at times, but it is well documented that people feel more comfortable around those that look like them and this drives a bias in their decision-making. Perhaps it is time we started getting comfortable with being uncomfortable.

- **Limited networking opportunities,** specifically those that are representative of ethnic minorities – for example, an association or networking group for ethnic minority project managers.

- **Structural barriers.** Career advancement of ethnic minorities

may have been hindered by historical biases, making it more challenging for them to reach the same level of recognition as their non-minority counterparts.

- **Lack of representation in leadership roles.** Without ethnic minorities in senior project leadership positions there are fewer ethnic minority individuals seen as industry leaders and experts in the profession.

So how do we mitigate the impact of these factors? I recently attended an APM event for Black History Month on 'Accelerating Black Inclusion' with experienced panel members

role, rather than those that are a 'fit' for the organisation.

- **Make a shift from mentoring to sponsorship.** Moving from passive support to active support where those that are overrepresented actively promote the competence of ethnic minority talent – speaking about them when they are not in the room.

- **Honesty from organisations** about their successes and failures from an inclusion perspective and collaboration with underrepresented groups to find solutions to the failures.



The winter 2022 edition of *Project* featured an exploration of the issue of underrepresentation in the project profession, with a focus on black talent

exploring how inequalities in the project management profession can be tackled. They discussed and shared several avenues to explore and initiatives to implement that are proven to have an impact on inclusion and diversity. They include:

- **Leadership development from black talent.** Organisations should normalise the progression of black and ethnic minority individuals, review areas of overrepresentation and correct trends of promotion based on potential rather than qualifications.

- **Change outdated recruitment practices** that value confidence over competence. Hire those that are the most competent to undertake the

- **Champion the behaviours and initiatives** we want to see, using APM publications as a platform to present solutions to underrepresentation and to raise the profile of ethnic minorities in the profession.

While we can acknowledge that a lot has been done, there is still some way to go to normalise inclusion and representation of ethnic minorities in our profession. Our publications should lead the way in ensuring that the narrative is changed so it ceases to be part of the conversation and my children and other black children can see themselves being part of the profession in the future.

Professor Adam Boddison

Does project management have an image problem?

APM's Chief Executive considers how to get through to senior leaders



When it comes to being a CEO

or an executive leader, successful strategy delivery is a top priority. When strategies fail, this is typically due to poor execution. Given that it is delivery that is so crucial for leaders, why is the project management profession not yet seen as hugely relevant? After all, the project management profession is all about delivery assurance.

I am fortunate to meet many leaders in my role, and when we discuss topics such as stakeholder engagement, risk management, prioritisation or scheduling/phasing, they are interested. It is a core part of their role. When I suggest that project management brings together both the science and the art of these areas, they are often surprised. They tell me that project management is 'all about templates and paperwork' or 'somebody with no domain knowledge trying to tell me what to do'.

The image problem

Interestingly, if I frame my discussions using the terminology of 'strategy execution' or 'delivery assurance', leaders see our conversations as highly relevant. Once I talk about project management, there is a perception that this is administrative or technical, rather than strategic. In truth, the project management profession has an image problem with leaders.

It is now time for us to set the record straight. We are at a moment in time where successful project delivery is essential to

solving the problems we face in the world. We need leaders to see the value of the profession and to embrace it before it is too late.

I would also argue that the workforce itself is becoming more projectified. Whereas in the past people may have joined an organisation and spent their entire career there, we now see people deliberately taking on a role for, say, three years to deliver a particular outcome, then switching to something different. Effectively, they are delivering a project. It has a start and an end, with clear deliverables.

Projectifying leadership

There are many ways we can address this image problem. We can seek to influence and change the perceptions of leaders.

For example, one of my voluntary roles is as a Visiting Professor at the University of Leicester School of Business, where I have been lobbying the Director of the Global MBA programme to give project management an equivalent status to finance, HR and marketing. It's fair to say there was some scepticism about this, but it was eventually agreed that one of their residential weekends for their MBA students would be devoted to project management.

I worked with Dr Ian Clarkson from QA (APM's largest accredited provider) and academic colleagues at Leicester to develop a two-day project management workshop, which was delivered to more than 60 executive leaders. The outcomes were overwhelmingly positive.

Those executive leaders on the course could not initially see the relevance of project management to their roles, but as the workshop progressed, they became increasingly engaged. They recognised the projectification of leadership, with several executive leaders telling me that they would be making immediate changes to projectify their approach to strategy delivery.

Project management is clearly of significant importance to executive leaders, even if they don't know it themselves. Project management can be both generalist and specialist in the same way it can be both strategic and tactical. It is a discipline that improves organisational success (through project delivery and benefits realisation) and it deserves greater recognition from executive leaders than it currently has.

My ask is that we all more deliberately celebrate the

We are at a moment in time where successful project delivery is essential to solving the problems we face in the world

impact of successful project delivery and that we push to share this at the most senior levels in our organisations. Together, we can transform the image of project management, so it becomes an essential profession in the eyes of all executive leaders.

Challenges facing the African project profession

Project catches up with Rose Mirera of Afreximbank for an update on the state of project management across Africa



Q How would you describe the state of project management in Africa?

A It varies widely across the continent and across private and public sectors. In our interactions with African governments, we have noted that there is no shortage of great ideas. However, the challenge often lies with the transformation of ideas into projects and effective implementation of such projects. While the private sector in general employs good project management practices, some improvement is required in the public sector.

Africa is one of the world's fastest-growing regions and this growth is forecast to continue. Added to the relatively lower base of economic development, this means that there is likely to be continued growth in development projects. This, in turn, means a greater need for project management. To fully realise such growth opportunities, more African organisations are trying to build and enhance their project management capabilities.

Project management is also improving in Africa as individuals take up certifications to enhance their credibility and understanding of project management methodologies. Institutions like APM are at the forefront in offering memberships and certifications that assist in the standardisation of project management knowledge.

Q What are the key challenges for the profession in Africa?

A One challenge is low awareness and knowledge of project management as a discipline. The project management skill set is still in its growth stage, hence many organisations are incapable

of planning and executing projects efficiently.

There is also a lack of proper funding for projects. The annual infrastructure financing gap stands at US\$100bn, on average. Governments have great project ideas but are unfortunately unable to fund projects, or can only fund them for a certain duration. Therefore, most institutions are hesitant to employ project managers to save on project budgets.

Due to the unfavourable employment conditions for project management professionals in Africa, there has been a tendency to seek employment or better employment conditions in other parts of the world, resulting in a brain drain. This leads back to the issue of skill set through a self-fulfilling cycle and has contributed to Africa's skills gap in project management.

Q Why is developing the project management profession important in Africa?

A It is essential to ensure resource utilisation is optimised. With the resource constraints we face as a continent, it is important to monitor and plan to ensure there is no leakage of resources. According to a study published by *Harvard Business Review*, one in every six projects had a cost overrun of 200% on average and a 70% schedule overrun. This analysis, and considering our project management maturity level in Africa, demonstrates the dire need to manage projects well, and this can be achieved if project personnel develop the right skills to manage and close out projects.

Executing projects effectively and ensuring they are delivered within budget, on time, within scope and

to quality standards could increase investors' confidence in Africa, thus enabling economic growth.

Q Do you have any success stories from your institution that you could share?

A Afreximbank has been involved in the execution of several ground-breaking projects on the continent in the past few years. It set up the Projects and Initiatives Management Office (PIMO) in 2016 to improve project governance and discipline. Since inception, PIMO has brought about an improvement in project management at the bank, leading to successful delivery of several projects, including the African Quality Assurance Centre.

The main objective of the initiative was to facilitate the emergence of quality assurance centres in order to improve African countries' ability to comply with international standards and technical regulations of regional and global markets, with the aim of promoting exports and facilitating intra- and extra-African trade.

The purpose of the bank's intervention was to create confidence for importers, reduce costs for African exporters and enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of 'made-in-Africa' goods by ensuring that exported products meet international standards and technical regulations, to avoid rejection of shipments. Ultimately, this will also result in the growth of intra-African trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, in line with the bank's mandate.

Rose Mirera works within the Project and Initiatives Management Office at Afreximbank

Headline sponsor



Meet the APM Project Management Awards 2023 winners...

Innovation across all areas of project management was praised in this glut of best practice examples. An emphasis on social benefits was evident across a huge range of projects and programmes that came from a raft of public and private sectors, showing just how important the profession is to the future lives of every country involved. The judges were highly impressed, so congratulations! And thanks to headline sponsor RPC UK

Social Project of the Year Award & Overall Project of the Year Award

Future Parks Accelerator, National Trust

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The Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) was set up by the National Trust and National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) in 2018. Working with a cohort of cities, FPA deployed agile project management and encouraged innovative approaches to catalyse innovation and redefine the role

of urban green space, placing it at the heart of plans to create thriving future cities. In these cities, as a result of FPA, green space is better serving communities most at need, delivering access to nature and its benefits, from health to climate mitigation. All of this is underpinned by innovation to develop new funding and financing models. Blueprints from the programme will enable change to be delivered elsewhere across the UK.

A joint board comprised senior members of staff from the National Trust and NLHF. Each organisation had a co-sponsor (who alternated as chair) and co-client. This was critical to success, helping the blended project team to effectively prioritise, collaborate



and remain aligned with the partner organisations' strategic objectives. By establishing different governance and delivery structures to the norm, it created space for a quasi-autonomous, high-performing, blended team. This challenged established ways of working within each organisation, freeing the team to focus on facilitating innovation and delivering social value.

PESTLE analysis of the operating context and formative feedback from its evaluators allowed it to review and reshape plans, processes and structures continually in response to changing insight, which might affect the likelihood of success. It acted on a range of information across PESTLE factors. For example, scope expanded to focus on climate adaptation as a result of climate emergency declarations and access to green space close to home in response to COVID-19 lockdowns. A time extension was also required as a result of the challenges of delivering the programme through the pandemic.

The judges were impressed by the project's spirit of innovation and the resulting project solutions: "Innovation was key to the future use of green space and the success of the project... [there was a] very good level of knowledge and skills on show. This is almost transformational change across society".



Small to Medium Enterprise of the Year Award CPC Project Services

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Ministry
of Defence



CPC Project Services (CPC) manages complex construction, infrastructure and strategic change programmes across the UK. It's committed to an ethical approach to business and delivering sustainable social value. With more than 200 staff, CPC works in partnership with its clients to bring innovation, best practice and continuous improvement to project delivery. Creativity, new ideas and learning thrive in CPC's inclusive and

collaborative cultural environment. The 'CPC Way' delivers a bespoke framework to bring CPC's people, processes and technologies together to ensure projects are delivered consistently, safely, securely and effectively.

The judges were impressed by the way CPC operates in a wide range of project environments, aiding clients with varying levels of project management maturity. With less mature clients such as Braintree Council, CPC assists in embedding best practices and implementing efficient methodologies, as showcased in the council's £16m flagship Innovation Centre project, where CPC swiftly secured planning consent and garnered £7m in third-party funding. For more sophisticated clients such as Oxford University and British Land, CPC establishes a clear brief, offers strategic direction and integrates innovation to meet high standards.

"The firm also acknowledges the importance of staff development and training in keeping up with industry evolution," the judges said. "CPC's multifaceted learning and development platform involves a mix of formal learning, communities and experiential learning. Career progression is assessed objectively and mentoring programmes aid junior staff in career development. CPC maintains a competitive salary structure and embraces an agile working policy, which includes home working... The concerted efforts in various domains have reflected positively in increased diversity in recruitment and a conducive work environment."

Company of the Year Award KBR

KBR is a global business delivering science, technology and engineering solutions, with the motto 'We Deliver'. Through its UK Projects and Programmes Division, it delivers projects specialising in defence, nuclear and infrastructure, solving complex solutions for the UK Government and across the Europe, Middle East and Asia region. With an industry-leading combination of people, technology and innovation, it consistently achieved outstanding outcomes for its customers.

The division has a senior leadership team of capability leads, who oversee a departmental matrix structure that supports project delivery teams. Capability development teams such as the P3M team work as a holacracy (a method of decentralised management) in agile, self-organising groups, laterally connecting required skills with project tasks. KBR's matrix structure and approach to lateral engagement reinforces the clear message from its CEO that the organisation is a team of teams. It uses vision, mission, strategy,

objectives and tactics methodology when considering organisational development and transformation, working with departmental and capability leads to define change, prioritise milestones, apply resources and progress in sprints.

A dedicated quality and innovation manager oversees KBR's innovation capture process and manages requests for the development of innovations for projects. An innovation proving extremely successful is its P3M Hub – an automated project management system. In a process of iterative continuous improvement, project teams provide feedback into the Hub's features, which are then implemented for better project delivery and reporting insights.

The judges were impressed by KBR's "world-class development methods", clarity on project assurance and performance, how these fit into the organisation and its "strong, consistent and clear strategy and vision". Its submission was also the only one to put any focus on systems thinking as a signature and the judges liked how its P3M Hub acts as a "great conduit of information and sharing knowledge".



Not-for-profit Organisation of the Year Award National Trust

The National Trust has rebounded from a pandemic low in portfolio delivery to an all-time high of £285m (+140%) in two years, supported by a new Centre of Excellence in project management, started with just two staff in 2021. Highlights for the Trust include revitalised historic places (winning awards for Seaton's Curtain Rises and Sudbury Hall's Children's Country House); transformed access to green space through the Castlefield Viaduct sky garden and Future Parks Accelerator partnership; investments in the

environment through the Riverlands/Renewable Energy Programmes; and landing a complex CRM platform.

The judges were taken by the Trust's impressive list of courses, frameworks and routes to project management skills across the organisation, and its career road map supported at all levels of the organisation. "[It has] a healthy attitude and drive for improvement [which] is vital to any organisation's future," the judges said.

They also praised the clear strategy and vision for the organisation and the role of the project management community in delivering it. They liked "the way [the Trust] almost rebuilt the project management landscape in the

organisation, drawing on the skills and APM communities for guidance".

The judges added: "The organisation clearly embodies best practice for project management and it's impressive how this is applied to all levels of the organisation to ensure a strong training and consistency in delivery – undoubtedly contributing to organisational success."

The development of meeting strategies and the use of internal special interest groups is to be commended. Finally, it presented "sound evidence of a mature approach to environmental, social, economic and administrative sustainability from a forward-thinking and acting organisation".

Public Sector Organisation of the Year Award Essex County Council

Essex County Council (ECC) is one of the largest local authorities in England, serving a population of around 1.5 million. The range of transformation projects in the council is vast, from implementing innovative solutions for supporting vulnerable individuals to procuring contracts to effectively recycle household waste. As a result of transformation programmes, it has delivered savings totalling hundreds of millions of pounds, while continuing to prioritise residents, including maintaining an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating for children's social care.

The Transformation Delivery function was formed in 2009 and has grown to a team of more than 100 project management professionals. The maturity of project management in the council is among the most advanced in local government and it offers advice and support to other local authorities.

The challenges faced in Essex reflect the challenges of the nation, from climate change to economic growth and public health to levelling up the county amid economic and financial pressures. The level of

complexity and need for innovation is unprecedented. Transformation delivery plays a critical role in driving the decisions around alignment of strategy to the portfolio of change, as well as leading the delivery of change through project management practices.

"They are nurturing their teams to excel," said the judges. "What comes across particularly well is the continual improvement approach taken by ECC and a willingness to accept risk to unlock opportunity and greater benefits. It's clear that ECC is exploring the boundaries of what 'best' project management looks and feels like for them, and the specific challenges they face."

Engineering, Construction and Infrastructure Project of the Year Award Dorset Visual Impact Provision Project, National Grid

The Dorset Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project made use of a £500m allowance by Ofgem to reduce the impact of existing overhead transmission lines in English and Welsh Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks. It is one of the first in the world to replace part of the high-voltage electricity infrastructure with 108km of cables buried underground, permanently replacing 22 pylons over





an 8.8km section near Dorchester. It was a significant electrical and civil engineering project along a linear route of almost 9km. A major, complex electrical and civil engineering project in an environmentally important location, it is among the most transformative, stakeholder-led projects in a generation.

The project's governance was shaped and directed by national and local stakeholders. A national Stakeholder Advisory Group was formed in 2014 to promote the benefits of the scheme and lobby for funding. The group consisted of 25 leading national organisations with responsibility for our countryside, including the National Trust, Natural England, CPRE and the Landscape Institute. Following extensive optioneering, the section of line in Dorset was selected for removal. National Grid acted as the client, with Morgan Sindall Infrastructure the Principal Contractor.

The judges found the project “fascinating”, with a complexity and scale of stakeholder engagement (with 27 landowners) as “awesome”. The project “emphasised sustainability sensitivities (no excavated material was removed from site) and the importance of collaboration”. They found it to be “a project with challenges utilising a variety of expertise, collaboratively working alongside live power, archaeological finds, steep terrain, landowners, farming and accompanying wayleave negotiations with lawyers”.

Transformation Project of the Year Award West Airspace Deployment, NATS

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QINETIQ

The West Airspace Deployment (West) is the first of a series of changes making up the Civil Aviation Authority's Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS), delivering a once-in-a-generation change to modernise 54,000nm² of airspace above the UK, delivering reductions in CO₂, additional capacity and efficiencies in Air Traffic Controller (ATC) workload. One of the most technical and complex airspace projects ever undertaken by NATS, the West Airspace Deployment, delivered on budget in March 2023, two months earlier than scheduled, whilst enabling more benefits than identified at inception.

The project was established within the Airspace & Operational Enhancements Sub-Portfolio alongside other projects in support of the AMS, allowing detailed coordination between like but not necessarily interrelated projects.

Sponsored by the Head of Airspace Development, the monthly Project Review Board brought together both internal and external critical stakeholders (including impacted airport operators) allowing the project to make informed decisions in a complex, multi-agency landscape.

It was important for the project to maintain alignment with the board direction whilst also having the agility to act quickly and efficiently in overcoming issues. This led to the creation of a bi-weekly Project Control Team, which allowed project issues to be dealt with outside of the formality of the project board, expediting decision making and issue resolution.

The project followed standard project governance as defined in the NATS Management System, including Gate and Technical Reviews allowing independent scrutiny of the project throughout its lifecycle.

“A complex project that exceeded the original benefits and delivered two months earlier – well done NATS!” said the judges, who found it to be “a compelling, groundbreaking and truly transformational initiative”.

It was praised for its “good collaboration and stakeholder engagement” and is “a project to truly be proud of”.

Technology Project of the Year Award

2022 Commonwealth Games Telecommunications Infrastructure Project, Fujitsu

This project provided telecommunications infrastructure and associated services, which enabled both in-venue and Commonwealth Games-wide connectivity, critical communications and internet access services to support the Commonwealth Games. Fujitsu had 137 working days to deliver the solution. The previous supplier had failed to deliver its obligations and were terminated in January 2022. This provided Fujitsu with limited time to deliver the project, which was originally planned for 18 months; the go-live date was immovable for the Opening Ceremony on 28 July 2022. Given the successful delivery of



the project by Fujitsu to time, scope and budget, it was an immense achievement. It was a great example of integrated project management working in tandem with the customer, receiving their highest praise.

In all, the Fujitsu project included delivery to a final total of 30 sites and venues, supporting the 72 Commonwealth Countries' teams taking part in 20 sports (including para-sports).

The sites and venues included new builds, such as the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, as well as others repurposed from the 2012 Olympics or engaged specifically for the duration of the Games. The project was divided into two phases. The first recovery phase, where the intended plan was created against the key dates provided by the Birmingham Commonwealth Games Organising Committee, was completed on time. The approach in phase two moved to dealing with implementation and later decommissioning activities.

"Well done on rescuing the situation from the previous supplier for such an important event," said the judges. The project's use of agile working was applauded by the judges. "The legacy benefits around sustainability and future use of technology for use in other areas is recognised as a good social benefit," they added.

APM Sustainability Award

Jacobs' approach to embedding sustainability into every project

Consultancy Jacobs recognises that environmental, social and governance (ESG) are increasingly driven by global macroeconomic issues such as climate change, pandemics and geopolitical conflicts. To respond to these external pressures, it has created a focused sustainability approach, founded on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To address the challenge of creating a culture where sustainability is embedded in everything it does, Jacobs recently enhanced its global sustainability strategy, PlanBeyond 2.0, which integrates its sustainability objectives into its operations and client solutions in alignment with the SDGs.

The launch of PlanBeyond was followed up by engagements across various platforms and backed up by online and hosted training programmes that upskilled its people

on how they can deliver smarter, more sustainable solutions.

At Jacobs, every employee takes responsibility for sustainability in their job, regardless of their role. This means employees are constantly learning as Jacobs transforms its culture to incorporate sustainability into the planning of every project, programme and portfolio it is working on. Every project embeds the SDGs from its inception, with every bid needing to declare which SDG is most aligned to the scope of work. Through this, the proportionate and appropriate sustainability initiatives for every project can be planned and prepared for. This includes, yet is not limited to, Social Value Plans and carbon reduction and/or minimisation plans.

"This project showcases a commendable commitment to sustainability, integrating it into every aspect of operations, project management and client solutions. The clear organisational design, innovative tools and measurable outcomes highlight the effectiveness of its approach," said the judges.

Safe Project Management Award

Cavendish Nuclear Defence Programme

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Cavendish Nuclear (CN) is delivering a programme that's of critical importance and which ties into the UK's defence strategy. In 2021, it won a contract to design, supply, install and commission hazardous component handling equipment at a project in Aldermaston. This project is tied into the UK's defence strategy and consequently the strategic significance, timescales and complexity placed considerable pressure onto the delivery partners involved in this project. CN has the experience and technical capability to deliver the project but had never before delivered this work to this scale and under these pressures.



A real mental health and wellbeing risk to the people engaged had been identified. To help combat this, CN implemented a stress survey, training of mental health first aiders, an intranet hub for ongoing support and a monthly 'time to reflect' session for the team to discuss topics in a safe environment. Implementing this has led to no ill health/errors caused by stress in phase one of the project.

The judges praised the programme for "bringing together many best practice approaches to project and team health and safety, and then packaging them into a coherent cultural development programme". They especially appreciated its emphasis on mental health and psychological safety as being given equal priority to physical health and safety, which can be culturally challenging, as it is a different approach to many project teams. They admired its "clear commitment to developing a safety excellence culture across the team and evidence of bespoke interventions from management to drive cultural change... its approaches to employee engagement and recognition were creative, immediate and interesting."

PMO of the Year Award **Project Delivery &** **Infrastructure, UK** **Research and Innovation**

The Project Delivery & Improvement (PD&I) PMO operates within the national funding agency, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which invests in science and research. Over the past year, it had transformed how it supports UKRI, resulting in a 100% success rate in getting major project business cases approved through government approvals first time, and a significant increase in P3M maturity from level two to level three. Alongside delivering more than 300 projects and programmes, it has equipped its organisation to become better at project delivery through a portfolio management approach, new tools, a centralised hub and providing over 250 hours of CPD.

Its team of programme managers, project managers and business analysts were instrumental in delivering exceptional results across a wide range of initiatives, including for the National Quantum Computing

Centre, where it successfully completed the establishment of the National Quantum Computing Centre, a £93m UKRI investment that positions the UK as a global leader in quantum computing research and development.

It also successfully delivered the project to implement the government's UK Global Talent Visa Scheme, attracting top international talent to the UK and supporting innovation and growth in key sectors.

"An excellent submission," found the judges. "It was clear that this is a very effective and highly motivated PMO (to quote 'where work should be fun'), who have achieved great results and benefits, building a firm legacy whilst contributing to both the project management community and the wider organisation."

In addition: "The work to expedite the business continuity approval processes within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is to be applauded and those saved weeks have probably paid for many of the staff in terms of avoided delays and inflation."

Innovation in Project Management Award
Low Crosby Flood Risk Management Scheme, Environment Agency

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Low Crosby is located on the right bank of the river Eden, 5km north-east of Carlisle in Cumbria. It has suffered from repeated flooding, most notably following Storm Desmond in December 2015 when 60 properties were flooded. Following the flooding, the Environment Agency began a project to improve

the flood defences to the village of Low Crosby to better protect homes, businesses and communities.

The objectives for a scheme to reduce flood risk were set in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They were to deliver key flood risk management outcomes, protect and enhance the environment, promote health and wellbeing, and implement a sustainable low carbon solution.

Through exemplary collaboration and engagement, the Low Crosby Flood Risk Management Scheme implements an entirely nature-based, carbon sequestration solution to reduce flood risk to 95 properties, deliver £15m of benefit and provide long-term climate resilience. To better plan and adapt to increasing flood risk, this project takes

a radically different approach. Instead of building ever-higher defences, the entirely nature-based solution involved lowering a 3km private embankment on the opposite bank of the river to reconnect 185ha of historic floodplain. This maximises the natural conveyance capacity and reduces flood levels.

The solution was only possible with the support of the landowner, whose agriculture business had benefitted from the embankment, Natural England and affected residents and businesses. Support was gained through focused engagement and a shared view of a sustainable future for the community.

The judges praised the project for its “highly innovative approach to reducing flooding by implementing an entirely nature-based solution”.

Project Professional of the Year

Jimmy Nguyen, Turner & Townsend

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Jimmy Nguyen was the project manager on the Bromford & Castle Vale Flood Risk Management Scheme for the Environment Agency. The scheme aimed to reduce flood risk from the River Tame to 1,589 homes and 121 non-residential properties in north Birmingham, resulting in £321m of flood damages avoided. The £35m project included a 2km earth embankment flood defence and large flood walls on the left bank. Nguyen successfully dealt with stakeholder pressure, garnered support from the local MP and formed a high-performing team to deliver this project for the overall benefit of the local community.



Young Project Professional of the Year

Kathryn Williamson Hall, Leonardo UK



Kathryn Williamson Hall is the Programme Manager for Radar Production at Leonardo UK, responsible for delivering

E-Scan radars for Eurofighter Typhoon. Her programme consisted of several projects to deliver E-Scan radars to numerous countries. The key project deliverable in 2022 was the production and delivery of radars for Qatar. The Qatar Radar Production deliveries she led had direct and important impact on the Qatar operations, delivering world-leading radar technology and capability, and utilised in the World Cup air policing. The political and reputational importance of Williamson Hall’s project was also significant for UK and European industry.

Chartered Project Professional of the Year Award

Ed Mason-Smith

As Director of Project Services at his company CBO, Ed Mason-Smith has a passion for improving project management across the Channel Islands and beyond. At CBO, he has built a growing team of knowledgeable, qualified and respected project professionals while also delivering a range of high-profile projects, including the replacement of an electric vehicle charging technology platform for an island nation. As Chair of APM’s Channel Islands Branch, he leads a community of project professionals who come together to share best practice and improve the understanding of the profession. He says that one of his proudest areas of work is leading the development of the Guernsey project management apprenticeship and its potential local impact on the profession.





ALAMY

Judges' Choice Award Shell Polymers Monaca Project

In late 2022, Shell commenced operations at its new state-of-the-art polymers plant, completing the transformation of a century-old, disused zinc smelter in a region of western Pennsylvania impacted by the downturn in the steel industry. A mega engineering and construction feat, the new multibillion-dollar Shell Polymers Monaca Plant represents the first major polyethylene manufacturing complex in the north-eastern US. According to an economic impact study, it is poised to help add nearly US\$4bn dollars to the state's economy each year, delivering significant short- and long-term value to nearby communities as well as regional and national economies.



Programme of the Year Award Autoridad para la Reconstrucción con Cambios

In 2017, Peru suffered devastating flooding from the El Niño weather phenomenon, which brought torrential rains to coastal regions of the country. The flood waters destroyed homes, roads, schools and hospitals, and many lives and livelihoods were lost in the tragedy. In response to this, the Peruvian government set up the *Autoridad para la Reconstrucción con Cambios* programme in 2018 to rebuild the social infrastructure, schools, hospitals and flood protection measures. This programme is a Peruvian/British government-to-government agreement (G2G), a knowledge transfer and technical partnership built on international standards but coordinated with local needs and with capability building at its core.

There were 137 projects in its G2G framework, including 74 schools, 19 hospitals and integrated flood defences to 17 rivers. Roads, housing, education and school improvements were included in the non-G2G framework, all in remote areas of northern Peru. The outcomes will be resilient for future generations to recover and live without fear; flexible, so that they can be easily expanded and therefore maximise operational life;

functional to achieve the best outcomes for the communities; human-centred so to be focused on users and diversity; and sustainable so as to provide the longest life for the infrastructure.

This unique programme has already started delivering benefits and is the top-performing government entity in Peru's public sector. It has shown significant success, with 30 operational schools, five operational hospitals and flood protection infrastructure under construction, alongside thousands of completed community and regional projects. This success has now been replicated in other Peruvian G2G programmes, built on the foundations of its success.

The judges said: "The programme has already delivered significant benefit to the community in Peru, in addition to providing significant work to the local contractors. Long-term outcomes have been clearly defined due to the large nature of the programme. The key benefits to the customer (the Peruvian government) are clear: the infrastructure covering schools, hospitals and water defences have been a success."

They added: "This submission exemplifies a remarkable programme that not only delivers tangible outcomes and benefits but also serves as a model for effective programme management and collaboration in the public sector."



Jim Crawford

Andrew Saunders meets the new Programme Director of the Transpennine Route Upgrade, who was previously appointed Chief Programme Officer of Crossrail in 2020, to find out his most important lessons from the turnaround of the troubled Elizabeth Line project

The ability to learn from our mistakes may not be unique to humans, but it is certainly an important factor in shaping our lives and the world around us. This applies from the basic – not sticking your finger into a flame more than once – up to the very complex – such as how to avoid repeating costly errors on major infrastructure projects.

With plenty of major projects making headlines due to delays, changes in scope and cost overruns, it's a rich field of study for those with a mind to improve what is known in the trade as the learning legacy. Take Jim Crawford, for example, a man with decades of experience of successful major rail projects, including the rebuilding of Blackfriars and London Bridge stations in the capital, and whose next gig will be the long-awaited upgrade to trans-Pennine rail routes.

But what he is perhaps best known for in the industry is his role as Chief Programme Officer of the team appointed to rescue Crossrail in 2020 and bring the troubled line successfully to completion after years of budget and schedule alterations. It is this experience of successfully turning the project around

that led him to become involved in the Crossrail Learning Legacy, co-authoring the paper *Crossrail programme recovery* within a report published jointly by APM and Crossrail. The learning legacy aims to identify not only what went wrong, but how it was put right and how future projects can minimise the chances of requiring a similarly extensive salvage operation.

Crawford's interest in improving the learning legacy derives from his own approach to tackling any new project. "Whenever I take over a job, I start with lessons learned," he says. "I go and talk to people who have done it already – clients, the supply chain – and find out what I can learn from them."

It's an approach based on a fundamental truth that project managers often overlook, he adds – even on a complex and innovative project, most of the problems you encounter will have already been faced by other teams on other projects; you just have to find them. And despite the fact that Crossrail was undoubtedly a complex programme – building one new railway to connect to two existing ones, with



The Big Interview

three signalling systems and a host of stations bristling with new technology, all of it in the extremely crowded underground environment beneath the streets of London – what emerges from the report is not a tale of novel solutions to hitherto-unknown problems, but rather a parable of the virtues of established project management techniques, judiciously applied.

As the report's abstract states: "There are no groundbreaking or extraordinary insights here; rather [it serves as] a case study of how the deployment of programme management tools and recovery techniques can result in an extraordinary outcome despite the challenges." Big projects rarely go wrong for a single reason but rather because of a number of issues, which gradually compound. But, says Crawford, the early stages are vital because it's surprising how many problems that don't crop up immediately can nevertheless be traced back to the initial phase of a project.

"Start at the end and work backwards... If I was a young project manager that's a piece of advice I would hold onto"

In Crossrail's case, mistaken early assumptions about how long the civil engineering – the tunnels and concrete – would take relative to the mechanical and electrical engineering – integrating the signals, monitoring systems and platform screen doors, for example – meant that the intended schedule was never realistic. "They simply didn't understand the complexity of the integration activity, so the durations they had allowed for themselves were never achievable, even on day one," he explains.

The lesson here? "Don't start until you are ready. It's no good having 95% understanding of the civils if your mechanical and electrical engineering is only at 30%." It sounds deceptively simple, but is harder than it seems, he cautions. "There is often pressure to start,

because if you don't start you will be late. But that lateness could be a fraction of how late you will be if you get some information halfway through a job that you could have had right from the start."

Being the one who says that it's better to be a bit late now than very late in a few years' time is not easy, however, especially if the eyes of the world are upon you. "It can be a lonely place when you have to make that decision. That's why it's important to support the programme leadership team with experienced people and robust gates, so that you have the evidence you are at the appropriate point," Crawford says.

The urge to start before you are really ready can also be staved off by thinking more about the destination than making the first steps on the journey. "Start at the end and work backwards to the beginning," he says. "If I was a young project manager that's a piece of advice I would hold onto." Why? Because it's the end use that influences every previous stage – take the example of building one of Crossrail's 10 new stations. The concrete may have to be poured before the electrics go in, but you can only get the concrete right if you've thought ahead about what comes next. "You need to get lighting, PA and fire systems in later. So what size of conduit will you need and where? Who's going to install the systems and how? It all flows through from right to left, rather than left to right."

Spending more time thinking about the end of the project while you are still at the beginning can also inform smarter thinking about how contracts are devised and packaged to manage risk.

"The more digital a railway becomes, the more challenging the integration," he says. In an effort to share risk on Crossrail, a lot of the responsibility for that integration was pushed down to the 31 tier one contractors, who then struggled to achieve it because they were being asked to address problems that in reality only the client could solve. "The perception was that risk was transferred, but actually the risk was not transferable," says Crawford.

The answer is not to rely on cleverly drafted contracts but rather to create an environment in which contractors working on inter-reliant systems can

CV: JIM CRAWFORD

2023 Programme Director, Transpennine Route Upgrade

2020 Chief Programme Officer, Crossrail

2014 Managing Director, HS2 Phase One

2009 Major Programme Director, Thameslink (Network Rail)

Early career Quantity surveyor, Turner & Townsend, Railtrack

collaborate effectively and overcome shared difficulties. "If you are trying to integrate the signalling, the power and the tunnel ventilation, for example, and they are all separate contracts, you can either be very transactional about it or you can have a non-contractual environment where the best decision for the overall project is taken. But the client and the project management team have to create that environment."

Project managers can also fall foul of what you might call the Nick Leeson effect. This is the sort of wishful thinking that, in the 1990s, led the former financial trader to double down on failed bets in the erroneous belief that he could win back his losses and no one would be any



the wiser. A cycle which ended with his then employer, Barings Bank, going bust back in 1995.

Similarly, when a project starts to run late or over budget, it may be comforting for the team to imagine that they can keep quiet and catch up further down the line, but the facts very rarely bear this out, says Crawford. Transparency and a strict

“These projects are massively sensitive to productivity and duration assumption – for me, cost is an end product”

focus on actual rather than hoped-for performance will help keep teams clear-eyed about how they are actually performing, rather than what they hope they will be able to achieve.

“Demonstrated performance does not lie. If your data is telling you that you’re hitting 30% productivity, and it needs to kick up to 60%, what is going to change to make that happen? A trend for low productivity will continue unless you do something absolute to change it. So sometimes you need people who will call the leadership team out and say: ‘That’s not what the data is telling you.’”

As Programme Director for the Crossrail recovery, the two big questions Crawford had to answer were: ‘How long will it take?’ and ‘How much will it cost?’

“A trend for low productivity will continue unless you do something absolute to change it”

These are actually the same question, he says, because how long it was going to take defined how much it was going to cost. The key to answering them both was achievable productivity, he adds. “You know the scope and the design. So what is the productivity you can achieve within the access footprint you have got?”

“On Crossrail we weren’t doing bills of costs, we were doing volume-based output planning. How long will the contractor be there? These projects are massively sensitive to productivity and duration assumption – for me, cost is an end product,” he explains.

The biggest single lesson from Crossrail that he has taken into his new role as Programme Director of the Transpennine Route Upgrade is to concentrate on the success of the whole project rather than any particular component parts. “We have to integrate a whole railway solution, and that means being very clear on what we as a client need to do and what the supply chain needs to do. My job is to create an environment where people can be successful.”

His hope for the Crossrail Learning Legacy report is that it will enable future teams on similar large-scale projects to avoid some of the same mistakes and to create their own environments for success. But when it comes to propagating the lessons from past projects as widely as possible, the industry could do more to help, he concludes. “There should be an absolute requirement that clients have to disseminate the lessons learned from a project. More projects should also have a formal gateway to demonstrate due diligence – that they have actively gone and looked at what can be learned from other similar projects.”

Download the Crossrail Learning Legacy report at apm.org.uk/resources/learning-legacy

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What did we learn from 2023? And what might 2024 bring?

PROJECT SPEAKS TO THE GREAT AND THE GOOD, ASKING THEM TO REFLECT ON THE OFTEN TUMULTUOUS PAST YEAR AND TO TELL US WHAT THEY'RE EXCITED ABOUT FOR THE COMING NEW YEAR



Sue Kershaw
President, APM

This year has been one of enormous change and uncertainty in this sector. Many major procurements have either been delayed, deferred or cancelled, and bidding costs have escalated to unprecedented, unaffordable levels because of this. Simultaneously, the pipeline has shrunk beyond all recognition. Too many construction companies have become bankrupt and too many people have lost their livelihoods. There has been a shift in emphasis from major capital delivery

BEN WRIGHT; LOUISE HAYWOOD-SCHIEFER

to operations and maintenance, and there has been a resurgence in the aviation and port sectors, which has provided more opportunities for work. There has been a seismic shift in funding to the regions across all transportation modes, which is demonstrably firing up re-leveling of the UK.

To deal with this constant change, agility, clarity of intent, collaboration and emotional intelligence have been critical to succeeding.

I fear 2024 will be a flatter year than 2023. The significant financial impact of delaying major projects will become evident, as will the negative impact on the workforce and supply chain. The general election will distract from decision-making and delivery.

However, I believe the housing sector will be revived and more money will be spent in the north, providing the beginnings of an integrated transport system. We'll need to lean on the resilience we've developed in 2023 to survive and prepare for the upturn in 2025. As project managers, we'll need to be brave, bold and innovative, and we'll need to lean in and support fellow professionals.



Milla Mazilu
Chair, APM

One of the key projects I led in the past year focused on using enhanced reporting analytics to support executive decision-making. This involved working closely with stakeholders across multiple departments and disciplines, as well as leveraging modern

technologies and tools to analyse complex datasets. Despite experiencing several challenges along the way, I'm proud of the work my team and I accomplished.

In 2024, I feel that sustainability and social responsibility will continue to be major trends in the project profession. This is especially the case as organisations become more aware of their environmental and societal impact, which will drive increased focus in all areas, including project planning and execution. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I also expect to see increased adoption of emerging technologies such as advanced analytics, blockchain and even quantum computing, which have the potential to revolutionise how projects are managed and executed.

One potential challenge to look out for in 2024 is managing supply chain disruptions caused by natural disasters or geopolitical tensions. This will need increasingly resilient supply chains that can adapt to changing circumstances and ensure that critical resources are available when needed. I also expect an increased need for project professionals to be skilled in risk management and contingency planning to minimise the likelihood and mitigate the impact of unexpected events on project scope, safety, budgets and timelines.

Nick Smallwood

**CEO, Infrastructure and Projects Authority, and
Head of Government's Project Delivery Function**

You'll have noticed a lot of noise in the news about the effective delivery of the UK's biggest projects and programmes. While we cannot ignore the fact that the pandemic and war in Ukraine have created further complexity for major projects, the reality is that we must persevere, adapt to new ways of working and find innovative solutions to the challenges we're facing.

Growth must now take priority and that means delivering projects that represent value for the taxpayer, while achieving economic and social benefits. That may look like making tough decisions on major projects, such as the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2 – a lesson to all that we cannot rest on our laurels. We must keep assessing the effectiveness of our projects, so they're nothing short of world-class.

We need the right skills, tools and methodologies to meet this ambition. That's why we're aiming for better outcomes, skilled and valued people, efficient and modern delivery, data-driven performance and influential leadership under the first-ever Government Project Delivery Function Strategy.

I'm also thrilled that our newly launched assessment and accreditation scheme, which allows government professionals to assess their skills at four different levels, has now accredited approximately 700 civil servants. We have big ambitions for this to become a government-wide standard going forward. IPA's Annual Report 2022/23 recorded the biggest-ever portfolio of projects on record (244) and that's why it's right that we strengthen the profession across government and have a sharper focus on readiness to proceed.



Yetunde Adeshile

**CEO and Founder,
The Next Chosen Generation**

This year has brought continued growth to the project management profession. I'm particularly pleased to see change agents and those in the not-for-profit industry picking up on implementing project management as their delivery model.

This goes to show that project management methodologies can help every organisation and in every industry to succeed.

During this past year, I've heard and seen more organisations talking about diversity, equality, inclusion and belonging (DEIB), with many training and academic institutions also promoting learning on this. The main concern here, though, is that a lot of organisations are talking about it but implementation strategy is slow, with little or no change in organisations. The slowness in the implementation of DEIB in organisations may also be causing a high turnover with Black, Asian and Ethnic (BAE) professionals. Conversations with a few senior professionals indicate that they're beginning to get worried that DEIB will become bottom of the priority lists, with other factors such as AI moving to the top of the agenda.

In 2024, I'm particularly looking forward to DEIB remaining on the top of the agenda for all organisations and in the project management delivery. The implementation of excellent DEIB strategies in organisations and projects management has the potential to deliver successful outcomes. In the year ahead, I'm also looking forward to the fruitful outcome of the work that APM is doing to help organisations embed DEIB to their project management practices.

WILL ANLOT

Growth must now take priority and that means delivering projects that represent value for the taxpayer, while achieving economic and social benefits



Bill Ochs

Project Manager, James Webb Space Telescope, NASA

More and more exciting new tools are becoming available to leaders for improving their ability to communicate and manage small through to large-scale projects. To me, though, the fundamentals of my personal management style never truly change. The ability to truly listen to those around you, making yourself available, motivating a team and the value of humour in leadership are still the basics of my being successful.

As I look forward to 2024, I'm still concerned with the aftermath of the pandemic, the desire of team members to work from home and the benefits of being in the workplace. If not properly balanced,



James Garner

Global Head of Data, Insights and Analytics, Gleeds Cost Management

The year 2023 could be aptly described as the year AI broke through into the mainstream consciousness in the realm of project delivery and the wider world. Large language models such as GPT-4 became not just technological marvels but pivotal tools that project professionals leaned on for a myriad of tasks – from automating mundane administrative activities to sophisticated data analysis.

The rise of these new technologies also sparked an understandable concern. Ethical implications, data protection, job displacement and the sheer unpredictability of AI outcomes became hot topics of conversation. Over the past year, there's been a significant increase in the adoption of AI tools by companies and professionals, often without a comprehensive understanding of their intricacies or limitations. This trend, however, raises concerns about the potential gaps in knowledge and the risks associated with it.

As we step into 2024, I foresee the narrative around AI in project delivery following the contours of the Gartner hype cycle closely. Following the peak of inflated expectation, we're approaching what could be termed the trough of disillusionment, where the initial enthusiasm might wane as the limitations and practical difficulties of implementing AI become more apparent. However, this phase is crucial as it lays the foundation for a more comprehensive discussion about the role of AI in our profession.



there'll be an impact on the ability to build outstanding teams capable of conquering any challenge. The James Webb Telescope team wouldn't have made the progress it did during the pandemic if not for the professional and personal relationships that had been built over the years of working closely together.

It's the side conversations, hallway meetings, etc where typically problems are solved and a team strengthens. Humans are social beings and whereas working from home can help balance professional and personal lives, there's always been a social aspect to our work lives that now seems to be getting lost.

Mike Bourne

Professor of Business Performance, Action, Execution and Implementation, Cranfield University

Widespread change in project leadership doesn't happen overnight but the turn of the year is a good time to reflect on recent developments and aspirations for the future. From my position running the government's Project Leadership Programme at Cranfield University, I meet a lot of civil and public servants who are leading and delivering large and complex projects across the public sector.

The costs involved are often immense and, as they are spending taxpayer money, there's a huge emphasis on spending it wisely and delivering value. As one NHS IT project director put it: "every pound we spend on a project is coming from the resources available for someone's hip



replacement, so it must deliver value". But many things aren't known in advance, circumstances change and there's a need to explore different approaches. Some of this can be seen as inefficiencies, but it's essential if the project is going to progress and deliver its outcomes and benefits.

Those initiating projects can provide purpose and direction, but they must rely on those delivering the project to produce the ultimate solution. That requires less focus on traditional project management measures of time, cost and quality, and a greater and continuous focus on delivering the outcomes and value. Success comes from project leaders at all levels working together, combining their different perspectives and knowledge to work through to a viable solution.

Dr Alex Budzier

CEO, Oxford Global Projects, and Fellow in Management Practice, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Looking back at 2023, I see a period of great uncertainty. Yet, with all uncertainty comes great opportunities that make me look forward to 2024. The beginning of 2023 was a period of high inflation. Construction materials were expensive, energy prices shot up and labour was less available. Of course, an inflation spike like that creates headaches for projects – the impact of which sets many projects and the UK's ambition for more offshore wind back. Yet, therein lies also an opportunity. Suddenly, there was a positive business case for diesel-free construction sites. HS2 has made great strides, which are good for the environment and will offer great value in a few product generations and hopefully see future adoption.

Similarly, the Construction Innovation Hub launched the Value Toolkit in 2022 and the IPA published the Transforming Infrastructure Performance Roadmap the year before. In 2023, I saw more projects using these tools – shifting thinking to infrastructure not as the provision of assets but to the provision of future services and making more complex trade-offs between decisions that balance money, environmental, social and human impacts of projects.

There are great project successes to celebrate. The Edinburgh Tram extension was completed on budget and on time this year. The Kansas City Airport in the US was also successful, with an incredible story of how to stimulate local economic growth and deliver human value. The world needs our major projects to address global challenges.



There are great project successes to celebrate. The Edinburgh Tram extension was completed on budget and on time this year

Paolo Quattrone

Professor of Accounting, Governance and Society, Alliance Manchester Business School

Major programmes never look what they seem. A high-speed railway could be thought of as an infrastructure project but the moment in which one does that, one forgets that it's much more. It's a tool for policy and politics, a way to level-up the country, a way to launch an electoral campaign.

Programme management tends to struggle with this ambiguity and uncertainty. The year that's about to end has finally shown the limitations of various exercises that seek to reduce

this ambiguity. Consider stakeholder management. Stakeholders are in a continuous state of flux or don't have a voice (as is the case for Nature) or are not even born. And yet, they silently pose interesting questions and challenges for those managers who have to take decisions in their interest.

I hope that in 2024 we will finally come to terms with the realisation that when taking decisions in major programmes, even the most concrete as bridges, airports and the like,

IJ Samuel

Director, Programme Management, Turner & Townsend

As we approach the end of 2023, I reflect with pride on the strides made in fostering diversity and inclusion (D&I) in project management. Diversity isn't just a buzzword; it's integral to fuelling innovation and overall project success. In 2023, organisations globally made strategic commitments, implementing inclusive hiring practices, diverse taskforces and mentoring groups, including celebrating several D&I awards, to foster an environment where every voice feels valued and heard. The narrative of belonging and inclusive decision-making has never been more critical. While progress has been made, challenges persist within the project management framework, including the leaky talent pipeline and the need to diversify project leadership at the highest levels up to the boardrooms.

For 2024, my focus remains to empower underrepresented groups to take on leadership roles, thereby fostering an inclusive working environment that integrates diverse perspectives for robust project strategies; leveraging AI tools and data-driven insights to eliminate unconscious biases and promote fair project management practices that reflect the rich tapestry of our global society. Embracing technology-driven solutions for inclusive decision-making will be a key area of focus in 2024 and pledging to continue championing diversity and inclusion, not as an



obligation, but as a cultural shift necessity to attract, retain and nurture a diverse range of perspectives in our profession.

Collectively, let us step into 2024 committed to fostering an environment where every voice is valued and every perspective is embraced without judgement, propelling us towards a more inclusive and innovative future in project management.

The narrative of belonging and inclusive decision-making has never been more critical

imagination is possibly more useful than representation.

The meaning of data is not only given but also attributed by those who create and analyse these data. The truth is in that ambiguous space in between data as given and data as attributed. If project management has to evolve, it needs to develop tools, principles and mindsets that make inquiries in this ambiguity, knowing that it cannot be eliminated but also that its presence is what makes them so interesting and the profession so attractive.



Jo Jolly

Head of Project Futures, Infrastructure and Projects Authority

Over the past year, the challenges across the world have got bigger, tougher and more harrowing. This affects the delivery of projects in every way imaginable and it affects the wellbeing and resilience of the people who deliver projects. And with the nature and climate emergency happening all around us, those challenges are only going to get bigger, tougher and more harrowing.

So, given this seemingly hopeless challenge, why am I so full of hope and determination to make the best difference I can? First, because I believe we have an opportunity to get this right and make a vast difference for good through every single project we deliver, simply through the choices we make every day. But it will take courage, collaboration and a profound mindset change.

Second, because there's a community of bold, experienced leaders who feel the same and who all want to make the best difference they can in these last best years. With care for each other and by never losing touch with our compassion, I know we can make a change for the better.

MIND THE GAP

DAVE WALLER CONSIDERS HOW THE PROJECT PROFESSION CAN ADDRESS ITS SKILLS GAP TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF A WORLD WHERE CHANGE IS CONSTANT AND ACCELERATING

For the past couple of years, Ignacio Herrero has been on what he calls a ‘crusade’ to boost the number of Chartered Project Professionals at Mott MacDonald, where he serves as Technical Principal in project management. He’s doing very well. When he gave himself the challenge, there were only 17 Chartered Project Professionals at the company. At the time of writing, there are 89. And thanks to Herrero’s efforts to encourage and guide regular cohorts through the chartership training, the total should shoot up to 115 within a few months.

“I’ve seen quite a few people whose careers have rocketed in a short time, because chartership gives them more credibility and confidence,” he says. “It’s the most rewarding part of my job.” If ever the project profession needed a crusader like Herrero, it’s now. UK projects are in the midst of a profound skills gap. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, project-based work has exploded thanks to a shift to remote and hybrid models, the continued rush of technology and the need to get products and services to a broader marketplace more quickly. According to the Project Management Institute, the world will need a whopping 88 million project professionals by 2027 – and 25 million more by 2030 than it currently has.

Skilling up

And it’s not just about getting fresh talent through the pipeline. Many of those already in roles lack the skills required to run projects effectively today, as organisations of all kinds – from IT giants to SMEs and charities – experience change at a breakneck pace.

“Thirty years ago, professionals were generally expected to deliver business as usual,” says Professor Adam Boddison, Chief Executive of APM. “Today, the vast majority spend most of their time

delivering change, whether that’s moving to an artificial intelligence [AI] world or delivering on net zero and other sustainability ambitions. Projects provide a really excellent framework to achieve what we need. But we have to respond to these demands as effectively as possible.”

“I’ve seen quite a few people whose careers have rocketed in a short time, because chartership gives them more credibility”

The stakes are certainly high. In the latest *APM Salary and Market Trends Survey*, 61% of respondents had fears that the shortage of skilled project professionals will result in projects not being delivered successfully. When it comes to recruiting for future projects, the risk is heightened, with 67% expressing concern.

“The attraction of working on a ‘mega’ project, as I did earlier in my career, is to develop skills and gain experience of managing in an alternative level of complexity,” says Glyn Jenkins, Senior Project Manager at Northumbrian Water. “This has led to a drain in available project management resources, particularly in the regions, which have been attracted to

GETTING STUCK IN AS A GRADUATE

Lauren Thornton is global HR project manager at an international law firm. She studied history before taking a law conversion course.

“As a graduate, I had no idea what project management was, let alone that it would become my career. But in my first PA role, my chief operating officer had a project team beneath her. I had to be involved in all areas of her work, so I had close contact with them.

“It was a fantastic introduction, seeing a project team in full flight. I’m very much about rolling my sleeves up, and I like continuous learning. I was pulled into lots of smaller projects, like supporting HR in implementing agile working and introducing artificial intelligence. It was the perfect environment to develop skills, like how to get stakeholder buy-in.

“After starting on small projects, it really built. I delivered a programme to champion women in leadership in the legal sphere. I then moved on to a regulatory project with a £5m budget. At my last firm, I coordinated the remediation and reoccupation efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic for over 2,000 staff across 27 offices in 13 countries.

“I’m now doing my PRINCE2 training, which went on hold when I had my daughter. When you’ve seen the principles applied in practice, understanding them and learning them formally makes much more sense.”



Lauren Thornton



Beth Armstrong

CHALLENGE YOURSELF – DON'T HOLD BACK

Beth Armstrong was previously working as a PA at law firm Bird & Bird before transferring into a legal project manager role within the company in 2021.

“I worked as a PA at various law firms after I finished school. During this time, I performed certain project management-related tasks, such as tracking fees, managing budgets and coordination. This made me think about project management as a career path, as I realized I had the

transferable skills needed. I was excited at the prospect of working closely with the lawyers and clients, having the responsibility to manage a project from start to finish and introduce efficiencies and better ways of working. In project management, there are so many opportunities to work with

different clients and lawyers. As an example, I recently undertook a virtual secondment to work with one of our clients, which resulted in me gaining insights that I was able to relay back to the lawyers working with them. If you're interested in project management, don't hold yourself back due to a different academic or professional background. Learn as much about the career path as you can and make an informed decision. It can be really rewarding to push and challenge yourself.”

the likes of the HS2 project. However, it is possible that the uncertainty surrounding such big-ticket schemes could lead to talent looking at more solid work pipelines, with a range of projects in the millions to hundred-million-plus, such as we are developing here for our AMP8 2025 to 2030 capital workload.”

Against this shifting backdrop, project management, too often tacked onto people’s existing roles, needs to become what Professor Boddison calls “a strategic function with broad applicability right through someone’s career path”. The good news is that organisations are on the case. Mott MacDonald is just one example of a company taking a proactive approach to skills.

Plugging the gaps

Herrero’s self-developed scheme involves five chartership cohorts every year. Project managers who put themselves forward are assessed for their core skills against the APM Competence Framework and then encouraged to work on any gaps – for example, by talking to clients to gain exposure to contract management or stakeholder management skills. When ready, they’re added to a cohort and given extensive one-to-one feedback, peer reviews and interview preparation.

“It’s important to get project managers thinking about their skills from the moment they join the company, rather than suggesting their development hinges on having years under their belt or reaching a certain pay grade,” says Herrero. “Chartership gives them confidence and credibility beyond the day-to-day development they learn on the job – and the core skills are going to be required whatever sector they go on to.”

Transport for London (TfL) is another organisation that is busy professionalising its project management community. It has offered project management apprenticeships since 2014 and has also just restarted its graduate scheme, with 15 new starters joining in September.

Its current focus is on project managers’ agility, moving them around the organisation to broaden their base of skills. Traditionally, project management at the organisation has often been handled in silos. Now, a new initiative seeks to bring all its project professionals together into one

community, encouraging them to work on a full range of projects – from Silvertown, the new tunnel under the Thames; to the £1bn Piccadilly Line upgrade, Oyster card implementation and cycle hire.

“It’s about people finding their experience through moving around,” says Michael Cooper, Director of TfL’s Programme Management Office and leader of the new initiative. “The question is how we trust our teams to get that experience, because it’s only through living and breathing it that they can learn. It’s OK to make mistakes as long as it’s safe and doesn’t waste resources. So let’s expose them to that.”

TfL is actively encouraging its project professionals to pursue APM qualifications and chartership so they can gain the pride that such recognition gives them. The organisation also recently became an APM Corporate Partner, extending its practice of liaising with other

“Project management labours under the sound of its own name... For lots of people, it’s still hard hats and hi-vis”

organisations, both within and beyond the transport sector, to improve the flow of project expertise.

“Sometimes we can become very internally TfL-focused,” says Cooper. “With APM, we can enter an ongoing process of knowledge sharing and learning. We will go and speak at APM events, and APM will come and speak to us. That’s the idea going forward – to explore how we can bounce off each other and work closely with external organisations through the APM network.”

The skills gap is a conscious focus for APM too. As well as recently updating its Competence Framework to reflect today’s need for diversity and inclusion and sustainability, the association recently produced two data-related publications: *Getting Started in Project Data and Analytics Skills* and *Developing Project Data Analytics Skills*. “It’s not that everybody needs to be a data analyst, but we do need project professionals to be data literate,” says

Professor Boddison. “And those who qualified some time ago may well have some gaps. Project professionals now have to be learning, unlearning and relearning continuously.”

Appealing to the young

APM uses campaigns to tackle the skills gap from a number of angles. Project:You was designed to bolster the pipeline of talented people coming into the field. It makes project management more visible to those still in education.

“Not many Year Tens wake up thinking: ‘I want to be a project manager,’” says Caspar Bartington, Head of Commercial Partnerships at APM. “The Project:You content is part of a programme where advocates with real-life project management experience talk to young people about their journey. APM also uses Instagram and TikTok to get the future workforce thinking about project management in a way that’s relatable.”

All of which highlights a key factor in plugging the skills gap: perception. “Project management labours under the sound of its own name,” says Bartington. “For lots of people, it’s still hard hats and hi-vis. But if we talk about change and transformation, and show that projects can relate to everything from sport to climate and AI, it feels more visceral and enticing.”

University-level education is being targeted too. In August, Professor Boddison worked with Ian Clarkson, Practice Director in Project and Programme Management at education provider QA, to develop a project management module for the MBA at the University of Leicester School of Business. The idea: to make it easy for people to bolster the skills and strategies they’ve established in their roles with project management-specific tools and techniques.

Capitalising on experience

“It really adds value to look at work through a project lens,” says Clarkson. “People can apply the skills they’ve already got to a particular activity as a project. In the module, we covered things like the Project Canvas framework, breakdown structures for scoping and other techniques to improve delivery.”

Such campaigns, along with APM’s work encouraging people back into



Robert Brewer

project management after career breaks, are helping to resolve some key demographic issues in the project management skills picture. Many project professionals are ‘accidental project managers’. They’ve ended up in the role through sector-specific expertise and lack the broader skills required to deliver projects effectively.

Clarkson himself landed in project management accidentally, when he was asked to run a project as a young engineer at an automotive company. He was lured by the promise of a pay rise, but soon found himself receiving a hard lesson in soft skills. “An experienced guy there was managing things on the back of a beer mat,” he recalls. “I got asked to go in and run it. So I went up to him and said: ‘Hello, I’m your project manager’. He simply looked at me and said: ‘My son’s older than you.’ Knowing about risk and quality management was not going to help me in the slightest. Project management was all about people skills.”

Drawing skilled people in

Project professionals need these more holistic abilities – leadership, teamwork, entrepreneurialism, problem-solving, innovation and creativity. All of which can be found in the world beyond project

“I went up to him and said: ‘Hello, I’m your project manager’. He simply looked at me and said: ‘My son’s older than you’”

management. “People coming in from outside the project environment can bring those skills with them,” says Clarkson. “Kids doing A-levels will be learning a lot of it. They just need to learn how to apply it through a project management lens of finite deliverables and timeframes.”

The World Economic Forum’s *Future of Jobs Report 2023* predicts a 15% increase in global job creation for project managers between now and 2027. It’s a matter of drawing skilled people into the project sector. And it’s about encouraging those newcomers, and everyone already here, to professionalise themselves for the changing skills required.

“From school leavers to charterships, there’s now a project management career path that allows people to come into the profession, develop and excel. We just need to make sure project management gets the kudos it deserves,” says Clarkson.

MOSAIC OF MENTORS

Robert Brewer did a project management graduate scheme, having studied economics. He now works for Parliament in its digital transformation programme.

“Mentoring is massive. We can all wear the coat of project, programme or portfolio professional very differently. Development is about having access to role models who have come into the profession from a range of backgrounds and have carved out their own way of inhabiting their role.

“I am a mosaic of the best of a whole range of incredible project and programme people I’ve worked with, who’ve applied things in totally different ways to suit their natural style. One director in particular has had a transformational impact on my career. She has worked for multiple organisations, and was a Chartered Engineer, an APM Fellow and an active sponsor to my career. I worked for her for a number of years and learned so much.

“These people have meaningfully impacted the career routes I’ve chosen. At the start, I assumed the path would be more linear. I’m glad it hasn’t been. I’ve had an interesting career working on capital investments, infrastructure, digital and security, in projects, programmes and portfolios. It’s just about figuring out which of the coats aligns to your natural style and values.”

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GOOD GOVERNANCE

IT HAS BEEN 20 YEARS SINCE APM INCORPORATED THE GOVERNANCE SIG, WHICH PUBLISHED *DIRECTING CHANGE: A GUIDE TO GOVERNANCE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT*. IT'S TIME TO REFLECT ON HOW PROJECT GOVERNANCE HAS EVOLVED, WRITES RICHARD YOUNG

Directing Change: A guide to governance of project management, APM's guide to project governance, was published in 2004, and it has been 20 years since the establishment of APM's Governance Specific Interest Group (SIG), which formulated the guide's contents.

"It started organically as a community of practice – relatively senior people in public bodies, the interface between boards and their projects, wanting to explore better decision-making and accountability," says Andy Murray, a member of the SIG and Executive Director of the Major Projects Association.

Large-scale governance failures in the 1990s had led to new general corporate rules in the UK (starting with the Cadbury Code) and the US (with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act). "But they were only really talking about business as usual in corporates," says Murray. "Projects and change are more risky than regular operational routines, but these codes were pretty silent on them."

Directing Change described the principles of effective project governance, and what intelligence a board needs to

feel confident that projects are aligned to their wider governing principles.

"This always comes back to: does the organisation really understand what governance is?" says Estelle Detrembleur, Associate Director, Project Controls, at Mace and a Governance SIG committee member. "Sometimes it pays to go back to basics. Because in many organisations, the tools and techniques just aren't there."

Basic instincts

One feature of good governance not vested in policy or procedure is people.

"I always ask how much experience the board has around change and governance," says Detrembleur. "And the teams supporting them – I've seen senior project managers promoted into those crucial roles, bringing a misunderstanding about governance at different levels. Delivery, programme and portfolio all have different demands."

She emphasises that organisations can train and support people through those transitions – and around specific evolutions of governance thinking.

"Having the right people in the right places has a huge impact," she says. "Having a competent board and

team around them is key to making that happen." Indeed, the third edition of APM's guide, published in 2018, included a new section on culture and ethics.

Says Murray: "In terms of the substance, it was focused on ethics – and behaviour, which is critical. In a situation like Crossrail [see box], all of the controls were in place, and the governance was a model for co-owned projects. But the culture was wrong."

The past 20 years have been about designing a governance approach that can encompass that nebulous idea of 'culture' and the sheer variety of projects. So, like the UK versions of the corporate codes, the guidance is built on principles, rather than rules. That offers huge benefits.

"I went into one organisation that ran 60 project reviews a year over an eight-year period because that's what the governance policies required," says Murray. "But with an integrated assurance and approval plan – using the same principles – we got it down to about 20% of that without reducing the level of control at all. It was far more empowering for the team, less intrusive, more efficient – and just as likely to produce good decisions."

You still need oversight. The corporate codes have beefed up the role of non-execs as guardians of shareholder

"Sometimes it pays to go back to basics. Because in many organisations, the tools and techniques just aren't there"



value, and they play a similar role in project governance.

“[The non-execs] also need the experience to know what to look for; and to make changes where needed,” says Rachel Bain, Project Director for Crossrail at the Department for Transport. “Ultimately, it does come down to the sponsor.”

Context is king

Finding a balance between controls, reporting and assurance is also crucial. Problems can arise from having too much of each of them, as well as too little.

“For example, there is a dilemma in terms of how much scrutiny you put on early gates or decision points,” Murray says. “You might turn off projects too soon; or you might end up with a sunk cost fallacy, where you end up pushing on regardless.” Organisations with lots of resources can tolerate greater

risk and perhaps relax some of the decision-making; those without can’t be as opportunistic – and for them, the governance decision will be different.

The other risk from imbalance in those levers is that they adversely affect behaviours. “If the control regime is actively hostile, there’s a risk you create an environment where it’s better to hide than confess,” says Murray. “So your governance regime needs to offer psychological safety. And we haven’t solved the problem of whistle-blowing – where whistle-blowers still usually end up vilified rather than celebrated.”

A willingness to speak up about unjustified bullishness (among other things) in senior project management is one of the lessons from Bain’s analysis of Crossrail’s governance set-up.

“It has changed a bit since my early days working on projects,” Detrembleur says. “It’s more common now to see

people make it clear when there’s been ‘over-optimism’ or to flag up key barriers and risks to the project.” Board-level concerns over organisational reputation in the social media age have certainly strengthened the hand of the realist.

Consistency of message

But, she adds, we should train people explicitly in the organisational governance culture to prevent misunderstandings.

“You need to adapt your approach based on your industry and the project – and make sure everyone understands what failure looks like,” she says.

“Then, how is this communicated, both top-down and bottom-up?” A clear set of roles and responsibilities for project sponsors makes all the difference. That tends to be more obvious in major projects with experienced project or programme management offices (PMOs). In smaller organisations, it’s rarer.

CROSSED WIRES AT CROSSRAIL

“Governance of projects matters because there is a strong correlation between good governance and project success,” Martin Buck, Crossrail Transition and Strategy Director, told an APM Governance SIG meeting in December 2014. He described a governance structure designed for the challenges of managing multiple stakeholders; and the benefits of formal agreements to manage the project.

In 2016, a report on Crossrail’s governance lauded “the arrangements that have stood the test of time and the clarity provided through the project agreements with respect to... risk”. It listed 19 governance lessons, including sponsor alignment through formal structures, strong non-exec oversight and advice, and integration of stakeholders.

Yet still something went wrong. Instead of opening in 2018, the Elizabeth Line was more than three years late. Rachel Bain, Project Director for Crossrail at the

Department for Transport, was tasked with finding lessons from those intervening years. “I wasn’t involved in the issues that they had in 2018 and 2019 with the project resets, but I’ve been extracting information from the people who were,” she explains. The report she co-wrote – *Governance Arrangements to Complete the Crossrail Project* – came out earlier this year.

“You need to review suitability of governance as you go along,” Bain says. “A lot of what we’ve learned from Crossrail was about switching around the people working on the project to make sure you have the right people at the right time.” The change from the joint sponsor team to two separate sponsorship groups in 2020, for example, made a big difference. With Transport for London taking more of the accountability for getting the line into operation, progress sped up.

Andy Murray, Executive Director of the Major Projects Association, reckons the key problem was

cultural. He argues that project teams blooded on the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games moved across wholesale and remained in deadline-at-all-costs mode; but the final ‘product’ had much more complex dependencies. “It moved from being a civil engineering project to a functioning railway,” says Bain. “Changing the leadership positions to people who understand those different stages of the project, and had delivered them before, made a lot of sense.”

Bain is clear that the Crossrail lessons have relevance across sectors and project types. She boils the 2023 recommendations down to three core ideas:

- 1 Adapt processes and relationships before shifting governance arrangements. Governance resets are hard; can you tweak elsewhere more easily?**
- 2 Ensure changes to governance give sponsors what they need (as well as what the project needs).**

Even there, it's crucial to find the golden thread from actions on the ground to project stage-gate, broader project goals, the overall programme and, ultimately, the strategic objective. "When you're applying governance principles, can you demonstrate alignment?" Murray asks. "Does every decision fit with that golden thread? It's a very simple governance test."

That's one reason academics are starting to change the terminology, too. "There's a move to use the term 'governing' rather than 'governance,'" says Murray. "One is ongoing, the other is static. The governance for any project will evolve over its life."

Bain agrees: "You set the governance up at the start, but you don't know how it's quite going to go. The danger is that you stick with that governance model – and the people and processes – all the way through. You need to review it, ideally before anything goes wrong."

"If the control regime is actively hostile, there's a risk you create an environment where it's better to hide than confess"

There's also a risk if you fossilise too many layers of governance between the requester of a decision and the final decision-maker. If each layer of governance 'endorses' a decision – but with changes that need to be reconfirmed – you never get to a final 'go'. One solution is to shorten that governance gap between requester and approver – and get all the intermediate endorsers to feed back at the same time, consolidating changes in parallel. "And if you're treating stage gates or project board meetings as stakeholder

engagement activities, you will fail," says Murray. "That's got to happen outside of those points – ideally before them."

Adds Detrembleur: "You need a good PMO to manage the information flows – helping the board get the right information at the right time. That agility is a feature of effective governance." Murray adds that: "A lot of this comes back to making good decisions transparently and with accountability. How can project professionals apply a well-formulated framework for decision-making to their board and other stakeholders? Simply put, governance is designed to deliver the right projects in the right ways.

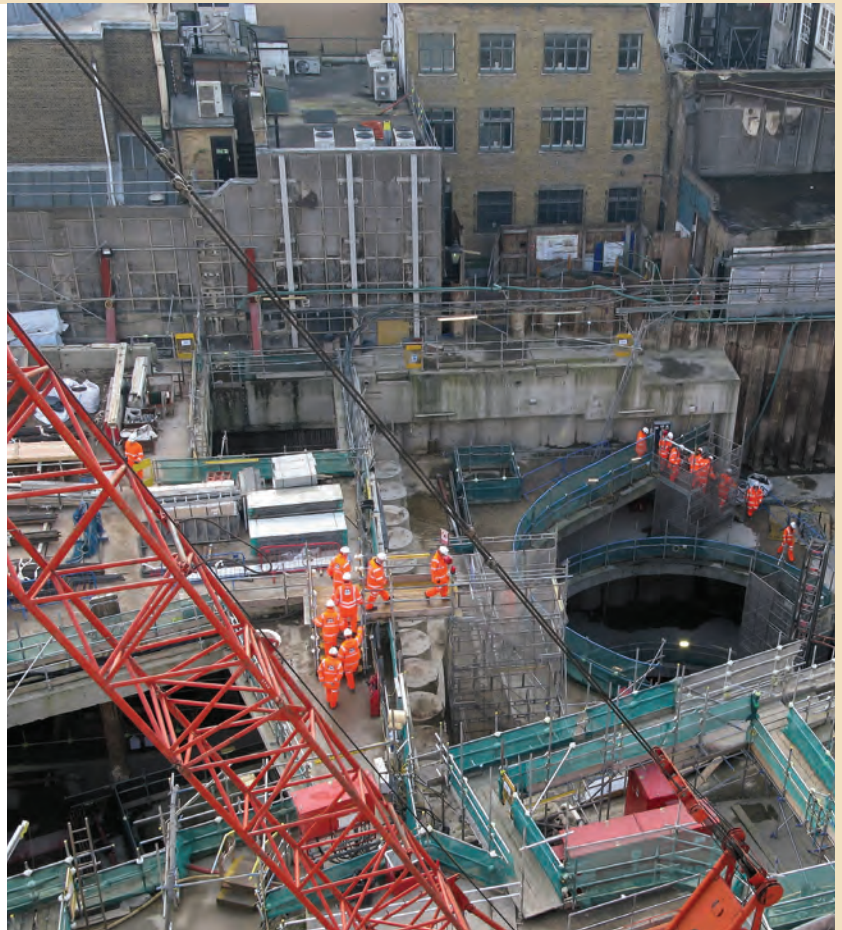
"It is how you work every day; it has to be workable," he concludes. "And people must remember, especially on larger projects: it's OK for you to be an exception. Find the best approach; don't apply rules just for the sake of it. It will be much more effective."

You don't want to blur sponsors' remits or hurt transparency.

3 Joint sponsorship models can work. But even where their interests align, governance must ensure accountability and responsibility are in the right place.

"There needs to be clarity, so everyone understands each other's interests and concerns – whether it's between sponsors, or from sponsor to project manager," says Bain. Culture sits at the heart of governance, but what Crossrail showed was that it covers a number of areas – communication, behaviours, relationship-building and more. "These issues overlap; they're often interlinked," she adds. "And without trust, you can have all the governance structures you want, it's not going to work as well as it should."

Bain is hoping to have issued a more in-depth analysis of sponsorship and governance by the time you read this. It promises to be a fascinating document for anyone involved in major project governance.



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PEER TO PEER

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY SWITCH SECTORS

THE BEAUTY OF A CAREER IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT IS BEING ABLE TO JUMP FROM ONE INDUSTRY INTO A COMPLETELY NEW ONE, BUT FINDING YOUR FEET QUICKLY AND THRIVING IN YOUR NEW HOME REQUIRES SOME PREPARATION, FINDS DAVE WALLER

We're in a time of great upheaval

in the workplace. Working and communication patterns are shifting alongside economic fortunes and the tech landscape, and work is becoming increasingly project-based. Skilled and experienced project professionals are in demand, which means the opportunity is there to scratch the adventure itch and explore fresh avenues within the profession.

It doesn't take much to see how a project professional with an open

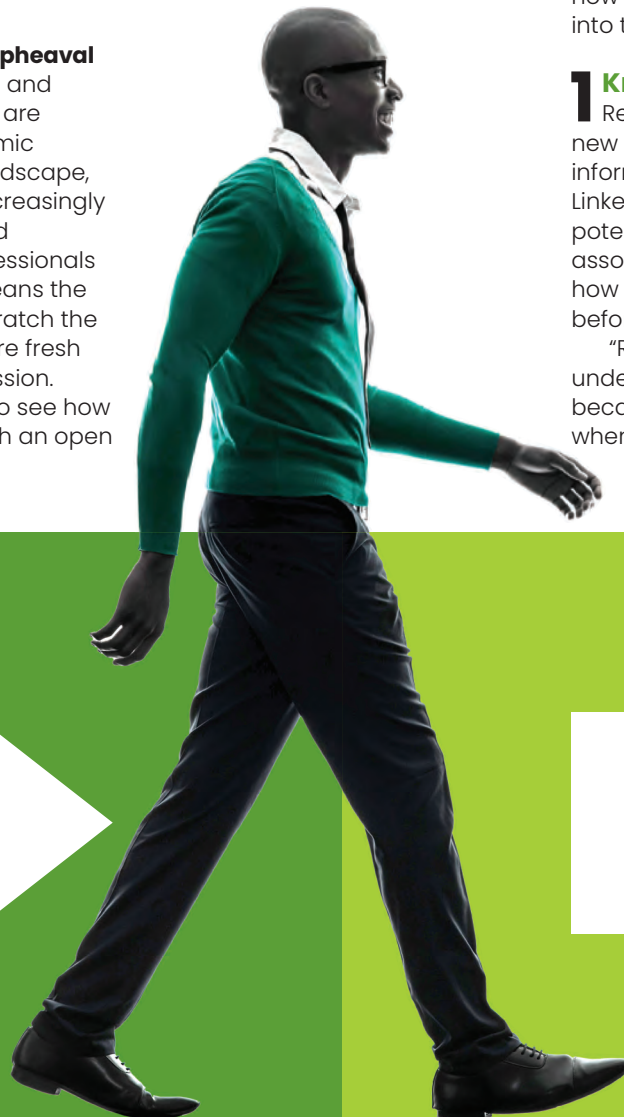
mind and a deep skillset – even one developed in one particular sector with its own unique demands – can add great value to organisations elsewhere. Here's how to approach manoeuvring into that new project lane.

1 Know your stuff going in

Research is key. Look up your new sector online. Gleaning information from news sources, LinkedIn or the websites of potential employers and industry associations will help you gauge how you can apply your toolkit before you even start.

"Read up on the sector to understand what's important there, because if you're completely green when you get the job, it's not a

GETTY IMAGES



good start,” says Susanne Madsen, programme and project manager, mentor and coach.

For this reason, it may be worth approaching things as a consultant first. When Madsen herself became a project professional in financial services, she did so after completing three different projects in the financial services sector as a project consultant for JP Morgan. She was then approached by another bank for a project management role. She says she was “lucky”.

“I had no financial services experience, but I worked there as a consultant for a year and a half,” she says. “Then Standard Bank approached me, and I ended up working there for five years. Financial services is really hard to get into if you don’t have the experience. But as a consultant, you often don’t need that sector-specific knowledge.”

As well as gaining knowledge of the new sector, you should ensure you understand your own motivations. One potential stumbling block when looking to shift sectors is standing out as a candidate in the first place. If you’re coming from another sector and are untested in that space, interviewers are unlikely to see you as the obvious candidate. They will want to know why you’re looking to switch. You’ll need a good answer. Is it because you feel that you’re no longer growing? And why are you attracted to that particular industry? Be specific.

2 Be confident in your knowledge and abilities

You should enjoy stepping outside your comfort zone. Don’t let fear stop you from sharing the experience and fresh perspective you offer. That means trusting your experiences of work and your project management toolkit. Project managers have a huge range of valuable skills, from communication to conflict management. Shifting sectors is about adapting them to new realities.

Take the basic project management principles of how to manage projects and get things done. These are eminently transferable. Wherever you go, the APM’s 29 competences will be needed – whether that’s the ability to define scope, manage risks or balance resources.

Marion Thomas, a specialist in leadership training for project professionals, also once moved into financial services, from manufacturing. At first, she says, it was “like being dropped from the top diving board into the sea”. But despite the abundant differences, she soon found commonalities that meant her skills and expertise easily translated.

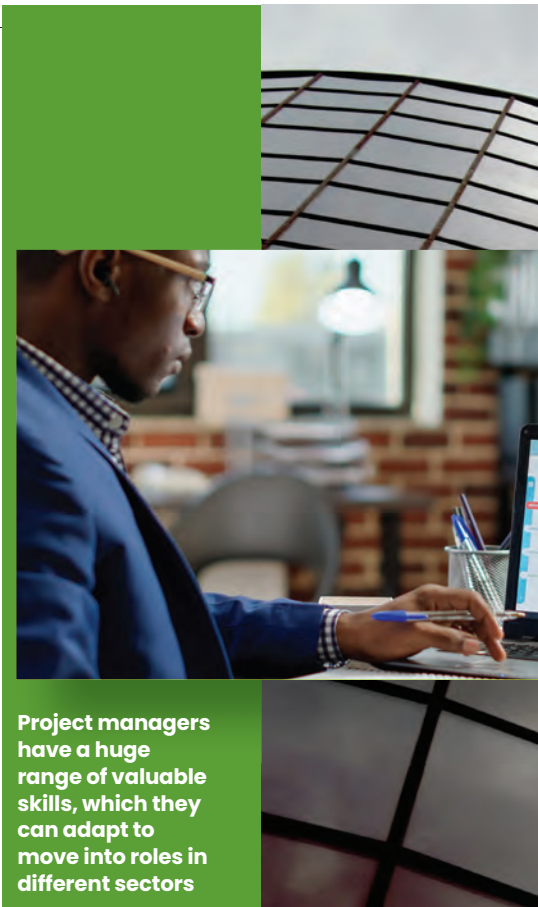
“Building a picture in the new role is about filling in the gaps,” she says. “It will probably mean taking jigsaw pieces from your previous experience and building on what you already know. That means having the confidence to trust yourself and to know you’re adding value – and that you’re there because people want you to be.”

3 Use your existing networks – and build

Who you know is vital when looking to enter a new sector. It’s much easier to get a foot in the door if you have contacts who can give advice and insider information on what will be important in your interview. Networks are also key once in the job, for getting up to speed and benefiting from mentorship and encouragement.

But it’s not just who you already know. The same logic applies to finding new people who can give you ongoing support. So you need to be proactive about finding and

Your network of support ... should be anyone in the business who can help you navigate the new sector



Project managers have a huge range of valuable skills, which they can adapt to move into roles in different sectors

connecting with people who will explain things to you. Take time to have coffee with people, to make those connections, and do so in a way that shows you’re genuinely interested in them.

Project professionals often need to expand that network wider than they may first think. Your network of support isn’t just the people directly on your project, or your immediate circle of technical expertise. It should be anyone in the business around you who can help you navigate the new sector.

That means finding and wooing the subject matter experts and the experts on processes. Every organisation has certain ways things get done, and these can seem arcane. Whether you’re moving into a project in manufacturing, financial services, rail infrastructure or IT, certain people in the business, from the PAs to the senior managers, will know how you really get things done there.

“It’s always helpful to make friends with the people on



you're serious about wanting to make that switch." Hold on to that beginner's mindset for as long as you can. That confidence will shine through, and the rewards will soon come.

5 Keep taking notes It's down to individual choice how we gather new information in new environments, and no one's going to be checking you're taking everything in. So how will you stay on top of everything? Pen and paper note-taking may feel old school, but it's an incredibly powerful tool when absorbing the vast amounts of new information that switching sectors entails.

You don't want to be seen asking people the same thing twice. And rather than getting sucked into your phone notes when someone's giving you the low-down on new sector-specific insights, the act of listening and writing in pen suggests you're being respectful: you appear to be actively listening, because you value their information. And not only does a physical notebook provide a lasting resource you can easily find later, using a pen and paper has been shown to aid memory, so you may be less likely to need to refer to it anyway.

Thomas explains how she often has two notebooks – one for matters that relate to the project and actions she needs to take, focusing very much on the project. The other is full of need-to-know things she's learned that she will want to refer back to. Both books are full of notes and diagrams.

"I have one notebook where I've written all the abbreviations, all the organisational charts, the main business departments and processes, and the names of who's who and how everyone connects," she says. "So as I'm going around and talking to my connections, and they're sharing their insights and expertise about the business, its processes and its products, I have all that intelligence in one big book I can always refer to."

the administrative side of the business," says Thomas. "They can explain everything from how you get a cup of coffee, to how you raise an order for a £3 million piece of equipment. That person can point you to somebody who's friendly in procurement, and get you the inside track."

4 Be humble, curious, and open to learn Confidence is no doubt a desirable quality in project professionals in any sector. But when switching, it should be tempered with a strong dose of humility. You're unlikely to know as much about your new sector as your new peers, who won't take well to a know-it-all joining the company saying they've seen it all before.

The key is to strike the balance between showing up as confident, and being humble and curious with it. Embrace being the newbie by proactively starting conversations and asking questions from day one. Extrapolate from your knowledge

Confidence is no doubt a desirable quality in any sector. But when switching, it should be tempered with a strong dose of humility

and previous experience, but keep in mind that you're in a different territory. One way to do so may be to say: "I've seen something similar elsewhere, but can you explain how we do it here?"

That humility may have to carry over into your expectations – even around things such as salary. "If I'm a product manager in one industry, I can't expect to become a programme manager in another," says Madsen. "That's just not realistic. Nor is expecting to go in at a higher level than you were at before. If you move horizontally into a new sector, you may have to be prepared to take a slight pay cut. That indicates to your employer that

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BOOST YOUR CREATIVITY TO GET UNSTUCK IN YOUR PROJECTS

GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR MORE ARTISTIC SIDE TO MAKE YOUR WORK FLY, ARGUE ANTHONY GAFFNEY AND CARO RUTTLEDGE, PARTNERS AT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY GATE ONE, WHO SHARE THEIR TIPS ON HOW TO UP THE CREATIVE MOJO AT WORK

We have all been there. That feeling of being stuck. Unable to define that key problem, let alone solve it. Transformation projects rarely travel in a straight line, and with digital innovation and ambiguity becoming constants in today's workplace, traditional approaches only count for so much. To encourage fresh perspectives and ideas that can super-charge success, creativity is a secret sauce that is too often overlooked. Here, we share eight practical tips for how you can inject creativity into your projects and transform your team environment in the process.

1 Foster a culture where everyone feels safe

At the heart of any successful project is a high-performing team culture. To unleash creativity in your project team, make every effort to create an environment of psychological safety where diversity of thought, open communication and vulnerability are commonplace:

- **Create an ethos of openness where people feel safe to contribute.** Simple things such as ensuring everyone has their voices and opinions heard without fear of recrimination.
- **Build cognitive diversity in your teams.** Ensure your project team includes a mix of styles, personalities and backgrounds. This will foster a wider range of perspectives so creativity can thrive.
- **Everybody, including leaders, should try to role-model vulnerability.** Don't be afraid to admit mistakes and limitations. Seek advice from team members. Pivot publicly when you realise your earlier course of action wasn't the best one. Doing so will lead to a healthy and trusting team environment.

2 Use guided visioning to create a compelling north star

Successful teams (in business, arts, sport and beyond) share a common view of success. Building a real and achievable vision can be a team game, drawing on the many strengths and perspectives a diverse team brings. Your visioning

process should draw inspiration from countless places and stimuli. Try some of the following techniques to build a meaningful, and broadly bought into, vision:

- **Ask your team to write a future newspaper headline.** Then get them to call out the headline to the room and explain the key points of the supporting article, outlining reasons for success.
- **Embrace roleplay and deliver a public address.** Pretend you are at an industry conference of peers in three years' time and you have to take to the stage. Take two minutes to deliver your address to the room describing your project success. Seeing (and feeling) is believing!
- **Co-create vision boards to paint the end state.** Use cut-outs, images from magazines, artwork – whatever gets the juices flowing. Develop your vision board as a team. When you are done, hang it for future visibility on a project room wall (physical or virtual).

3 Be clear why you are solving something

As Einstein said: "If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions." In project environments, we're often pre-disposed to jumping to solutions. However, without investigating the problem fully, we often design around the wrong exam question. Tips to better define the problem include:

- **Start on the same page.** Clearly articulate the challenge in a concise and agreed problem

statement. This might not feel particularly creative, but doing so will provide clarity among your team, save time and resource, and set the scene to ensure your future creative efforts are pointed in the right direction.

- **Get under the skin of the problem.** First, use root-cause analysis to probe the question robustly. Second, ask your 'five whys' to tease out the key issues. Third, use a fishbone diagram to unearth the challenges at play.
- **Be curious and think like a scientist.** Start with your hypothesis, test it, then pause, pivot, continue. Too often stakeholders come together to try to prove their previously held ideas with conviction. Instead, create a test-and-learn cycle that allows for challenging the thinking (not the people) and builds towards a better outcome.

4 Use design thinking to develop customer-centric solutions

All projects have customers and end users. Put yourself in their shoes from the outset and throughout, frequently asking: what would my customer think, feel, want? With its origins in architecture, design thinking is a human-centric approach to defining and solving problems with empathy. It's especially relevant in the design of technology solutions and allows for people to develop better solutions and launch plans that meet user needs:

- **Use personas to get to get to know your customers better.**

Too often stakeholders come together to try to prove their previously held ideas with conviction

Encourage a philosophy of experimentation to explore better ideas and solutions

Paint a picture of your customers to better understand their needs and challenges. Have some fun. Make up identities. Bring them to life. What is their name? Who are they? Where are they from? What do they like and dislike? What are they passionate about? What are their priorities? Make them real and test your solutions around their pain points and needs.

- **Brainstorming.** No idea is a bad idea. Use techniques such as crazy eights, LEGO/Play-Doh builds, reverse brainstorming – there are lots of ways to generate ideas. Let your team play, with a guiding principle to hear everyone's voice.

- **Make room for playtime through prototyping.** Encourage a philosophy of experimentation in your project to explore better ideas and solutions. Build tangible examples of the result where possible and test, validate and iterate. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's research on creativity suggests, something the most successful creative people have in common is the ability to throw away poor ideas fast in the pursuit of better ones.

5 Jazz up your planning sessions

Transform your workshops from ordinary to extraordinary. At Gate One, we pride ourselves on curating and facilitating Accelerator events with our clients (virtual or face-to-face). We spend a lot of time thinking about the participant experience and making events immersive, creative and inspiring. Ideas you can put into practice to dial up the fun factor include:

- **Get in the zone, and breathe.**

Begin your session with meditation and breathing exercises. This is a proven way to shift the cobwebs and focus the mind. Another technique is to use 'walk and talks' in pairs rather than sitting at a table; research suggests that walking meetings with fresh air can increase creativity by up to 80%.

- **Use speed-dating games across workstreams.** Get team members up and around the room (you can use virtual networking platforms to do this online) so different workstreams can interact, connect and get a more holistic understanding of the project plans, dependencies and risks. We've uncovered surprising interdependencies from running speed-dating exercises like this at the programme mobilisation phase.

- **And, of course, have those tunes playing.** Lighten the mood with some background music; curate a playlist and share with attendees afterwards.

6 Use your imagination to envisage the risks you may face

Who has felt the energy drain out of the room when people arrive to attend yet another risk management meeting? Too often, issues occur because people ignore and do not show up to the initial risk discussion! Sound familiar? The following creative practices to risk management can provoke more effective outcomes:

- **Start with a pre-mortem.**

Immerse yourself in failure and collectively think about all the ways something might go wrong (get dark – think with a catastrophic lens!) and generate a broader list than normal. Programmes too often repeat the same mistakes, and running a pre-mortem is an ideal way to uncover new/niche risks and address root causes early.

- **Rose, thorn and bud.** Evaluate ideas, plans and processes by identifying positives (roses), negatives (thorns) and opportunities (buds). This is a great evaluation technique to test an idea or risk and see if you have the right approach to revolve.

- **Create happy and unhappy plans.** When you're moving to periods of high risk, get your team to scenario-plan, including 'unhappy plans' where things might go wrong.

7 Be a storyteller

Everyone enjoys stories. They trigger emotions and allow us to imagine. Project communications are too often mundane, being overly focused on data, milestones and KPIs. Audiences are more engaged and likely to act if they are drawn into an emotional narrative that includes vision, impacts on people (internal and external) and personal stories about what this means in reality. Cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner has proven that people are 22 times more likely to remember information or facts if they are told as part of a story.

- **Train your team in a preferred story-telling model.**

Select a model (e.g. sparklines, hero's journey, converging ideas, golden circle) and help team members apply this to project communications.

- **Tell personal anecdotes and analogies.** When speaking about the programme in meetings and presentations, role-model and include your flavour of storytelling.

Audiences are more engaged and likely to act if they are drawn into an emotional narrative



Every one of us can be creative, we just need the right environment to flourish – the culture, time and permission

kills fun more than a diary filled with back-to-back planning and crisis meetings; balance these with space to connect, think, laugh and create.

As legendary choreographer Twyla Tharp purports: “Creativity is a habit, and the best creativity is the result of good work habits.” As we plan and execute our programmes, we know that discipline, planning and risk management are critical to ensuring success. And so too is thinking outside the box. Every one of us can be creative, we just need the right environment to flourish – the culture, the time and the permission. When the conditions are right, creativity can unleash so much potential, freedom and fresh thinking into your programmes and organisation, for years to come.

And it’s fun. If we leave you with one action, it’s to open your calendar now and block out time for creativity. Think big, start small, start now.

● Celebrate success and tell stories of individual and team accomplishments regularly.

Use video content, get people to share their perspectives and describe the who and the why. You are guaranteed to connect better, and key messages will have more resonance.

8 Embrace your inner child and play

Our programme environments work better when we embrace humour, fun and a childhood sense of play. Edward De Bono (of ‘the six thinking hats’ fame) is quoted as saying: “Creativity and lateral thinking have exactly the same basis as humour.” When we laugh, we release dopamine (we’re happier), release oxytocin (we’re more trusting) and lower cortisol (less stress). In a professional setting, laughter matters. It changes the

Laughter matters... It changes the brain chemistry of how we feel, and therefore how we connect

brain chemistry of how we feel, and therefore how we connect, problem-solve and create. Keep a sense of playfulness across your programme team:

- **Maintain regular team connection events** – from all-in celebrations to simply checking how people are on a Monday morning.
- **Don’t be afraid to force the fun.** Ask everyone to share a funny story, have team competitions for the funniest childhood photo. Get cheesy!
- **Create some space.** Nothing

Gate One is a digital and business transformation consultancy, part of the global marketing and communications firm, Havas. It works with the leaders of some of the world’s most innovative and influential organisations to conceive and deliver the big ideas that will bring about meaningful and lasting change. Get in touch by emailing anthony.gaffney@gateoneconsulting.com and caro.ruttledge@gateoneconsulting.com or visit gateoneconsulting.com

PREPARE, PROTECT, PROMOTE: PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST DURING PROJECT INITIATION

A STUDY INTO MAJOR PROJECT INITIATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, PUBLISHED BY DEFRA, THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROJECTS AUTHORITY AND PA CONSULTING, GIVES VALUABLE LESSONS ON HOW TO START A PROJECT THE RIGHT WAY

A fundamentally challenging and critical phase of any project is the initiation, as it sets the strategic direction for the project. Complexity arises from ambiguity in the desired outcomes, and stakeholders who have diverse interests and conflicting priorities can hinder consensus and lead to delays in decision-making.

Within government departments, this complexity is heightened by high project budgets and political stakeholders needing to demonstrate value for taxpayers' money. Further to this, as the Infrastructure and Projects Authority's (IPA's) *Annual Report on Major Projects 2022-23* notes, the impact of current inflation has brought further challenges to delivering to plan and to budget, for both government and industry.

The UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is home to a vast range of

Delivering business change through a project is a team sport which requires a cohesive approach

critical projects geared towards creating policies and strategies that improve and protect the environment. Delivering business change through a project is a team sport which requires a cohesive approach; however, this can often be difficult to achieve.

Pivotal to the success of any project are the people behind it. Individuals are vital to navigating the ambiguity of project initiation through a resilient and adaptive mindset. To achieve optimal outcomes during project initiation, a three-pronged approach needs to be implemented: prepare, protect and promote.

1 Prepare for uncertainty by bringing together stakeholders

There is always going to be uncertainty during project initiation, which must be dealt with effectively. The *Defra Project Initiation: Lessons Learned Report – An insight study into major project initiation in the public sector* highlights the importance of anticipating uncertainty and being proactive with forward planning in the initial stages to 'price in for uncertainty'. Stakeholder buy-in is central to

It is critical for leaders to have a plan in place so that they can start to see where uncertainty lies

combatting uncertainty, but it is often not prioritised in the initial stages, which can lead to a sporadic approach. To overcome this, securing dedicated resource to undertake stakeholder engagement and consistent engagement efforts throughout are needed to achieve buy-in.

It is critical for leaders to have a plan in place so that they can start to see where uncertainty lies and where it can be mitigated. In the initial stages, using data and analytics can aid evidence-based decisions and offer assurance that decision-making is sound. This will promote collective confidence within a project. Programme leaders have a crucial role and should speak to stakeholders to help manage uncertainty. Once they are on board, project stakeholders have an increased collective sense of responsibility in dealing with uncertainty.



HOW TO GET PROJECT INITIATION RIGHT



Empower leadership to manage workforce strategically

- A** Understand your required capabilities and recruit the right resources.
- B** Create a purposeful and accessible leadership team that sets the tone for the programme team.



Focus on the content rather than the template

- A** Establish a project initiation document as an engagement tool to ensure the programme purpose and scope are clearly understood.
- B** Design and implement effective knowledge management processes.



Create a safe environment to bridge the divide between 'policy' and 'delivery'

- A** Put psychological safety at the heart of the programme culture.
- B** Ensure 'deliverers' are in the room before any policy is created.
- C** Establish open and transparent information-sharing.



Accept and manage uncertainty

- A** Front load resource to account for uncertainty.
- B** Prioritise early stakeholder buy-in with consistent engagement efforts throughout.
- C** Ensure political stakeholders place trust in programme teams.



Build and demonstrate confidence

- A** Create a compelling vision and clear articulation of the purpose of your programme.
- B** Establish open governance forums that can hold programmes to account effectively.



2 Protect project outcomes through effective resourcing

Effective resourcing – getting the right people and right skills at the right time – is vital in achieving successful project outcomes. Resource pools are finite and resourcing processes often lack agility. This leads to tension at the start of the programme.

The ability to effectively resource can be adversely affected by factors including a lack of clarity over project scope, fluctuations in budget and needing to anticipate future demand, which can be difficult for leaders in a dynamic project environment. There is much uncertainty at the start of a project, in particular the scope, so making decisions about the type of specialist resource needed and for how long can be a challenge.

Establishing correct resourcing profiles within Defra was made

more challenging by a policy and delivery divide; without the ‘deliverers’ being part of the policy creation process, the ability to understand the resourcing requirements and act on this is diminished, which can result in a policy being undeliverable. Our findings demonstrate that effective resourcing can be achieved through matching subject-matter experts to projects with the most aligned expertise. This may seem like common sense, but it is quite difficult to achieve due to competing priorities.

When done well, it allows subject-matter experts to leverage experience to play a crucial role in what good looks like. Building broad capability for a project must be achieved through prioritising upfront workforce planning before then empowering leadership to have access to the capabilities. Within the leadership team, it is

essential that senior responsible owners and programme directors have both necessary and clear roles and responsibilities.

Achieving effective resourcing will later pay dividends for the project through having an accessible leadership team who set the tone for the project and a wider project team who can plan with realistic timelines to achieve project outcomes.

3 Promote success with a compelling vision

Successful programme teams know their critical stakeholders, consult with them and collaboratively build a vision tailored to their desires and differing stakeholder priorities. Through creating a common goal, a sense of collective purpose is built among the project team with a clear understanding of how individual roles contribute to wider project goals.

THE RIGHT KIND OF LEADERSHIP

It is critical to create a purposeful and accessible leadership team that sets the tone for the programme team, and to ensure senior responsible owners and programme directors have clear roles and responsibilities. Protected capacity enables leadership to work faster in a cohesive way.

As noted by the IPA in its *Principles for Project Success*, clearly defined roles and responsibilities within a programme are vital to delivery success. We have observed that multiple, poorly defined delivery management roles within senior leadership can have a detrimental impact on programme teams through escalation channels being unclear.

Put in place a purposeful leadership team by clearly defining roles and responsibilities while ensuring senior responsible officers and programme directors have protected capacity to be accessible to programmes. This will prove hugely beneficial, allowing the programme to progress at

speed by removing duplicate roles and ensuring dedicated senior leaders keep the programme moving at pace. A Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed (RACI) matrix can provide clarity on respective responsibilities of leaders.

Provide further detail on leadership responsibilities within delivery by using a Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RAM), which combines both the organisation breakdown structure and work breakdown structure. Once a RAM is produced, a cost breakdown structure can be created. This will offer definition of leadership responsibilities that are specifically aligned to work

packages and budgeting for projects/programmes.

We have observed that a key requirement when defining senior leadership roles and responsibilities is documenting clear delegation and ensuring balanced capabilities between senior responsible officers and programme directors. This will ensure gaps between them can be covered and that they have a sufficient grounding in delivery to provide strategic direction. Delegation offers a balance between delegated authority and accessibility to leadership, which allows the programme team to feel empowered to deliver and drive progress. Bringing both these elements together will create an effective breakdown of roles and responsibilities.

Source: Defra Project Initiation: Lessons Learned Report

It is important to adapt leadership styles to continue selling the vision across all stages of the project

It is important to adapt leadership styles to continue selling the vision across all stages of the project. During the early initiation stage and once the compelling vision is defined, leaders must adopt a ‘salesperson’ approach to promote the vision with both clarity and enthusiasm. Once this has been established, they can shift style with a focus on communicating the intricacies of the project.

Empowering leadership to define and communicate a compelling vision will enable the

foundations for success to be put in place, including uniting the team around a common goal and providing vital clarity for strategic decision-making to remain aligned against.

As project complexity increases, there is a heightened risk of failure and successful project delivery will be difficult to achieve. By implementing an approach of prepare, promote and protect, with people at the centre, senior responsible owners and programme directors can navigate the uncertainty of project initiation.

With each study undertaken with the IPA and government departments, there is an opportunity to build an understanding of the similarities and differences between initiation lessons across government departments. In turn, this will contribute to project delivery excellence within the public sector.

Co-authored by Kalpesh Patel, Project Delivery Advisor, the IPA; Steve Vine, Portfolio Director, Defra; Charlotte Ludford, Deputy Director, Project Delivery Centre of Expertise, Defra; Sean McDaniel, Defence and Security Expert, PA Consulting; Sophie Brotherton-Burns and Joe Nolan, Public Sector Experts, PA Consulting



The jointly published Defra Project Initiation: Lessons Learned Report is available to download at gov.uk/government/publications/defra-project-initiation-lessons-learned-report



HOW TO BEAT THE COMPETITION

(AND MAKE MINCEMEAT OF COMPLEXITY)

KATHRYN WILLIAMSON HALL TOOK THE GLORY OF THE 2023 APM YOUNG PROJECT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD. CHARLES ORTON-JONES MEETS THE HIGH-FLYER WITH SERIOUS AMBITION

There's nothing like a deadline to get the adrenaline pumping. Kathryn Williamson Hall worked to fulfil a contract knowing that the project was being watched by five governments and absolutely had to be delivered on time. Zero flexibility.

Williamson Hall works for the UK arm of Leonardo, the European defence giant. Her mission: to manufacture and install a brand-new radar system into the nose cone of the Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft for delivery to the Qatar Emiri Air Force. The catch? Delivery absolutely had to be in time for the FIFA World Cup, hosted by Qatar in November 2022, to play a crucial role in the air security for the event. A delay could have meant Qatar launching the US\$220bn sporting showcase without the new radar on-board.

"We had a lot of pressure," recalls Williamson Hall. "We had a lot of very senior people, internal and external, asking for updates. I'm talking multiple calls a day. It was a moment of high stress."

In lock step

"Eurofighters are made by a consortium of companies from Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK," explains Williamson Hall. "Then each part of the aircraft is split up. We are Euroradar, which is also run as a consortium, with

Leonardo as the lead." Parts of the radar are made across four nations, and shipped to the place of construction. The radar is a major upgrade. "It's called the E-Scan. It replaces the M-Scan. The antenna of the radar will move inside the nose cone differently to offer an advanced wide field of regard." This novel design meant new components, new teams and new assembly methods, involving engineers across four nations.

Williamson Hall manages the team in Edinburgh which assembles the radar, as well as handling communication with other Eurofighter Typhoon teams inside Leonardo UK. She works with consortium partners in Spain, Germany and Italy to ensure production is happening in lock step. "There's no point having lots of parts ready in one country when there's a shortage of a component somewhere else," she says. "We need to make sure all partners are working together."

Williamson Hall's job even involved testing the radar. The E-Scan radar required brutal on the ground checks to ensure each unit is able to cope with high-G manoeuvres in a dog fight. "We do extensive testing," says Williamson Hall. "The units get tested down to -40°C and up to 40°C. We have environmental stressing which mimics what

happens on an aircraft, including vibration tests." There are even logistical considerations: "These are secret items. So we need to think about how we move things around."

All on the same page

The obvious question is: how did she learn to control so many teams within a year of joining Leonardo UK? "As a non-technical person, it can be challenging," says Williamson Hall. "I'm always open. I don't pretend to be an engineer. I take the view that it's important for me to gain as much of an understanding of how a radar works as possible, and how they are built, without getting into the weeds of it."

Add up the roles and at times it can feel like Williamson Hall is doing the work of multiple project managers. To cope she stays close to her colleagues – engineers, finance teams and logistics: "My style is about relationships and

"It's important for me to gain as much of an understanding of how a radar works as possible, without getting into the weeds of it"



CV: KATHRYN WILLIAMSON HALL

Current job: Programme Manager, Leonardo UK

Previously: Amey, Project Manager (2016–2019); Interpol (2014–2015)

Hobbies: Target shooting, formerly competing for Team GB

Education:

- MA, International Relations and Middle East Studies, University of St Andrews
- Currently undertaking an MBA at Edinburgh Business School

Qualifications:

- APM Member
- PRINCE2 practitioner
- People Management Programme (Institute of Leadership)

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people. It's not highly process driven. Obviously we have frameworks, for good reason, but I believe it's about the team working together, all on the same page." She's a believer in regular meetings and frank feedback. At every cycle there would be lessons learned meetings, often with facilitators to ensure the deepest involvement and to avoid groupthink.

Williamson Hall championed Integrated Production Planning in the Typhoon radar programme. She asked: why not coordinate all plans, so production machines can be prioritised correctly? It's more complex but more efficient. She led

"Ben Wallace, the former Defence Secretary, went on the record to compliment the delivery"

a campaign to unite all activities across the four nations in the radar consortium to work under a single plan. This also allowed stakeholders, such as the Qataris, to have greater visibility.

Under budget

The result of Williamson Hall's efforts? The Eurofighters were

delivered with time to spare. The World Cup skies were patrolled by aircraft with her E-Scan radars in the nose cone. "Ben Wallace, the former Defence Secretary, went on the record to compliment the delivery of the aircraft," says Williamson Hall, with justifiable pride. This was a large military project delivered on time and under budget.

Williamson Hall won the 2023 APM Young Project Professional of the Year Award amid stiff competition. Her mastery of this extraordinary role, of the highest technical and organisational complexity, made her highly worthy of the accolade.

KATHRYN'S TOP TIPS

1 No such thing as a silly question

If you don't understand something, ask. And if you still don't understand, ask again. I am shameless. I entered an industry which I hadn't worked in before, alongside engineers with a specialist vocabulary and lots of acronyms. I needed to learn fast. So I asked whatever I needed to know. There's an embarrassment factor. But so long as you ask for the right reason, and have done the obvious things such as use a search engine or look at the company library, then no one will look down on you. I guarantee there will be others in the room grateful you've asked the question!

2 Book regular meetings with peers

I thought everyone did this, but apparently not. I have regular catch-ups, which are diarised, with everyone in my team. I book time, normally once a month, with my direct reports, and everyone else at the same level as me in a function. It may seem pushy, especially if the person is senior. But no one has ever refused me. You can meet in person or online. When people ask how I got up the knowledge curve so fast, these regular conversations with colleagues are a big reason.

3 Always have a mentor

I've always had mentors. They've been so important to me. I have had formal mentors through a mentorship programme and informal mentors through just talking to people. My advice is to be open. It's only by being open that you get something useful out of the relationship. You can have more than one mentor. At Leonardo internally our financial director is a mentor. This gives me a great insight into how our business works. I have a former boss, who gave me this programme role, whom I stay in touch with. And I have just got involved with the Women in Defence mentoring programme, which puts the private sector in touch with the Ministry of Defence and civil service.

4 Know your processes

Project management is a technical discipline, so you need to know your processes. These can be abstract theoretical concepts, which you can bring to bear in your organisation. There are also internal processes you need to grasp. When you understand processes you can work without being controlled by them. Processes are guidelines. They offer boundaries. But there is flexibility

to work innovatively within them. There will be times when, if you have a good reason, you can challenge and improve processes. Processes should not be a tick-box exercise. If, at any point, they stop serving their purpose then you are entitled to question them. A good project manager knows their processes, and also how to work with them.

5 Trust your safety net

Fast promotions are nerve-racking. At 21 years old, I worked at Interpol and was one of the youngest in my organisation. Here at Leonardo I took on a big role in an industry I was new to. Moments like this can feel daunting. But the truth is: you have a safety net. Your colleagues are there to support you. It's incredibly rare to be in a situation where there isn't a support mechanism for you to turn to when you need it. And if there isn't that support, you can ask for it. I've been able to progress fast in my career because I'm willing to take on new challenges and new projects, knowing I'll have supportive colleagues who will be there when I need them. This mindset means you can say yes to whatever comes your way.

PUBLIC REGISTER OF ChPPs

The following individuals make up the latest cohort to achieve Chartered Project Professional status with APM. Congratulations to you all, from those based in the UK and the US to Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago! Full details of the criteria for achieving chartered status and the routes to get there can be found at apm.org.uk/chartered-standard, where you can also view the full Register of Chartered Project Professionals.



Name	Country	Name	Country	Name	Country
Marie Aston	UK	Carrie-Ann Hill	UK	Olga Pushkina	UK
Marc Baldwin	UK	Maria Holley	UK	Bilal Rasool	UK
Carolyn Bellars	UK	Edwin Hopper	DEU	Craig Renney	UK
Gurnek Bhachu	UK	James Howard	UK	Jon Rhodes	UK
Oliver Bloomfield	SGP	David Hudson	UK	Mark Rice	UK
Daniel Blue	US	Asrar Hussain	UK	Hollie Ryan	UK
Steven Booth	UK	Ruhali Imanov	AZE	Andrew Saddington	UK
Caroline Boughton	UK	Thomas Inglis	UK	Naira Sadimlija	UK
Matthew Boyd	UK	Siraj Kabir	NLD	Oskar Schwarz	CAN
Katie Brooks	UK	Monika Kojak	UK	Carla Scowcroft	UK
Aimee Brown	UK	Antonios Kounavos	UK	James Sewell	UK
Sean Campbell	UK	Henriette Kruimel	UK	Gerard Shore	UK
Romano Capocci	UK	Zalani Lalim	BRN	George Smart	UK
Reece Carlisle	UK	Akber Latif	UK	Rachel Strickland	UK
Jessica Chaffer	UK	Nicholas Launder	UK	Richard Sutton	UK
Kyle Clough	UK	Catherine Lough	UK	Carl Syer	UK
Matthew Coe	UK	Belinda Lunn	UK	Nick Tattersall	UK
Danielle Connah	UK	Jeff Mace	UK	Leia Thornton	UK
Chris Corkhill	UK	Steven Makin	UK	Philip Tulitt	UK
Shaun Cridland	UK	Anna Matthews	UK	Suhel Uddin	UK
Brierley Davies	UK	Joe McHenry	UK	Oi Mee Voon	BRN
Stuart Davies	UK	James Meyers	UK	James Walsh	UK
Peter De Horsey	UK	Marina Miguel	TTO	Ben Waters	UK
Adam Dear	UK	Ross Miller-Green	UK	Daniel Webb	UK
Clare Delaney	UK	Robert Minshall	UK	Robert Welsh	UK
Louis Doyle	UK	Thomas Moor	UK	Nicola Young	UK
Nick Elbourne	UK	Sophie Mulgrew	UK	Rashad Zein	US
David Evans	UK	John Jo Murray	UK		
Zichuan Fan	UK	Steven North	UK		
Leslie Fenner	UK	Dee Nunn	UK		
Paul Glaysher	UK	Chris Obin	UK		
Ricardo Gollo	NLD	James O'Brien	UK		
Vishnu Gouthaman	UK	Nicola O'Connell	UK		
Matthew Griffin	UK	Kanayo Okoli	UK		
Umar Hafeez	UK	Airaf Patel	UK		
Matt Hampson	UK	Andrew Philpotts	UK		
Gavin Hay	UK	Jennifer Platt	UK		
John Henderson	UK	Michael Preston	UK		

DEAR SUSANNE

I work for a boss who micromanages me and who won't give me the freedom to try out new approaches. I feel stuck and am losing my self-confidence due to her lack of trust in me. What can I do?



Susanne Madsen is an internationally recognised project leadership coach, trainer and consultant. She is the author of *The Project Management Coaching Workbook* and *The Power of Project Leadership*. For more information, visit www.susannemadsen.com

I can understand how challenging the situation must be for you. Autonomy, growth and contribution are basic human needs we all have, so it's easy to end up frustrated and demotivated when your manager dismisses your suggestions and your initiative.

Find your glow!

First, I recommend you address your lack of confidence, which is fundamental to your wellbeing. Set 15 minutes aside to remind yourself of everything you're good at and all the value you're adding. Simply brainstorm everything you bring to work – all your strengths, your experiences and all the positive feedback you have ever received.

Capture them on a piece of paper and then take emotional ownership for each item by feeling a warm glow in your heart space. Of course, there will always be things you can improve on, but that's for another day. Right now, you need to find strength inside yourself.

Grown-up conversation

Having an open and truthful conversation with your manager is essential. The most effective approach is an adult-to-adult conversation where you clearly express how you experience the situation and what the impact is on you. Not because you want to criticise your manager, but because you want to explore the situation and gain new insights that can serve both of you. I learnt about this communication approach from my Dutch colleagues. They're often so much better than us in the UK at saying things the way they are.

Finding blindspots

It's possible that your manager is unaware of her controlling and micromanaging tendencies. In that case, bringing it to her attention can be very helpful because you're pointing out a blindspot. It's also possible that your manager is conscious about her approach and deliberately uses this style with you.

If that's the case, you need to find out what her motives are so that you can understand the root cause and improve your working

Calm down your nerves, find your inner confidence and choose to openly collaborate with your manager

relationship. Who knows? Perhaps you have a blindspot that she has been unable to communicate to you in a constructive way.

When you're ready to have the conversation, be as open as possible. You simply want to express how you experience the situation and how you feel. To express yourself as objectively as possible, use examples. For instance: "Last Friday, when you gave me very detailed instructions on how to run the kick-off meeting, it had quite a negative effect on me. It made me feel demotivated and gave me the impression that I'm not trusted to run the team. I wonder how you experienced it."

Can you see how this kind of opening addresses the elephant

in the room in a non-judgemental way and has the potential to build greater understanding between you? When you experience conflict, it can be very tempting to go into fight, flight, freeze or fawn mode – either confronting the other, running away from the conflict, ignoring it or becoming overly pleasing towards your manager.

Don't react – collaborate

But the most effective action is to not react, but to consciously choose how to respond. Calm down your nerves, find your inner confidence and choose to openly collaborate with your manager. Based on her responses to your feedback, you will know what is really unfolding and how to proceed.

Do you have a question for Susanne? Email mail@susannemadsen.com

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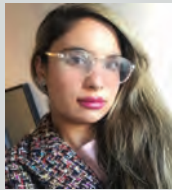
PROJECT ME

WE ASK PROJECT PROFESSIONALS TO SHARE THEIR BIGGEST LESSONS FROM 2023, AND WHAT THE PAST YEAR HAS TAUGHT THEM ABOUT THEIR WORK AND CAREERS

Working twice as hard

Nafisa Kiani, Project Support Officer, UK Parliament

Coming from an ethnic minority background means I have to work twice as hard to obtain a promotion. Despite graduating with a postgraduate degree, I found that it is important to undertake an apprenticeship with a project management qualification to gain further insight into how projects are delivered. I learned that it is ideal to attend site visits, discussions and training sessions to gain a better understanding of project delivery, be part of the team and get hands-on experience.



Use proper change management methodologies

Dimitrios Felekis, Project Manager, NHS Business Services Authority

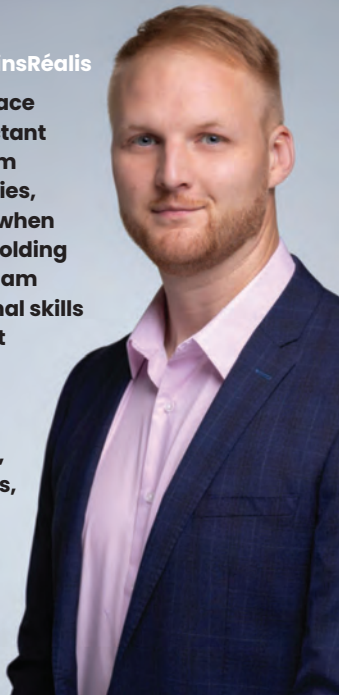
People are usually resistant to change, as we all like to keep doing things we are used to. In 2022, I underwent training to learn a proper change management methodology. It was time well spent! Projects bring change – the value of structured change management has significantly increased the success of any delivery I managed in the past year. I have learned how to be versatile, accept the new things that are being implemented and appreciate the future benefits that can be realised – with the extra benefit being that this can be applied in many aspects of my day-to-day life. My lesson from 2023? Use proper change management methodologies and track these throughout the whole life cycle of the project. Your end users will appreciate it.



Embrace AI

Jason Wylie, Associate Director, AtkinsRéalis

My biggest lesson has been to embrace artificial intelligence (AI). I was reluctant when AI first appeared. Probably from watching too many Terminator movies, I had made AI into a fictional villain, when there was a much more real villain holding my projects to ransom. The 'villain' I am referring to is the ongoing professional skills shortage, which is escalating project costs, delaying completion, stifling innovation and hampering growth. Utilising AI software, I was able to drastically improve my productivity, allowing more focus on key decisions, continuous improvement and innovation. This has kick-started several AI-led initiatives in our business, making sure that we have Arnold Schwarzenegger fighting with us and not against us!



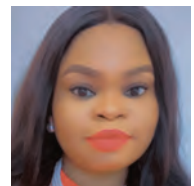
Keeping positive

Chibuzo Doris Ikeh, Project Manager, RJ Emmanuel

I have learned valuable lessons in resilience, maintaining a positive spirit and embracing gratitude. Resilience enables me to face challenges head-on, bounce back from setbacks and adapt to unexpected circumstances. Keeping a positive spirit has been another lesson.

A positive mindset can transform difficult situations into opportunities for growth. Gratitude has also played a crucial role in my learning journey. I have discovered the importance of appreciating the present moment,

counting my blessings and expressing gratitude for the people, experiences and opportunities in my life.





Take care of your health

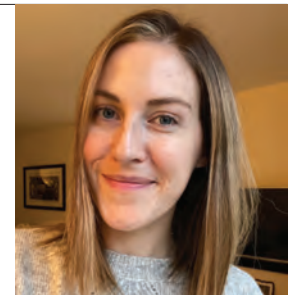
Narinderpal Sindhar, Project Manager, Heathrow Airport

Following a car accident where I suffered severe whiplash, I returned to the office in January 2023. Although I went through a personal low period, I have come through it positively. My focus for 2023 has been consistency, health and self-belief. I've worked on being consistent in attending the gym and this has helped immensely especially on days where the motivation just hasn't been there. The incident knocked my confidence completely, so I took a conscious decision to make the time to work on rebuilding it and believing in myself once again. Attending APM seminars has given me the opportunity to network and has helped my learning. Meditating has helped calm my mind. Take care of your health, and then everything else will follow.

Switching was worth it

Louise Wylie, APM Associate

I became a project manager in the software industry in late 2022 after years running my personal training business. I drew from my coaching experience, where I worked with diverse clients, to enable effective communication and collaboration with cross-functional teams in my project role. Applying these skills to a new industry highlighted the importance of staying true to the core functions of a project manager. Being from a different industry can mean a fresh perspective, innovation and creativity.



Put project managers in charge

Mike Chavez FAPM

I've been struck by the seemingly non-stop news of climate disasters during 2023, with an increasingly tragic human cost. Disaster management and recovery then entails massive financial costs and major and lengthy disruptions to normal life. Yet still we see governments taking short-term policy approaches, not considering the long-term risks and not learning the lessons. That's a tragic shame because there are many things we as project professionals could teach politicians when they are developing policy, such as assessing benefits, value, consideration of whole-life costs, risk and issue management, contingency planning, change management and the many other things we do really well. We'd have a better world if we dropped many of the current politicians and just put project managers in charge.

Strong relationships matter

Yinlong Thatiyanantabhorn, CBO Projects

This year I moved from Thailand to Guernsey. The biggest lesson I have learnt is the value of building strong relationships. I have had the privilege of diving into a new culture and discovering the genuine warmth of the Guernsey people. Guernsey is a small island where you know everybody, which has highlighted the importance of forging strong relationships. I can see that this is the same for project professionals, where your projects are their own unique islands and that building a genuine rapport with people from diverse backgrounds and knowledge can be a cornerstone of success.



PROJECT: FIND FAME IN AN EXTREME METAL BAND

IT PROJECT MANAGER LUKE FABIAN WORKS AT ORDNANCE SURVEY, BUT IS MAKING IT IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS AS BASS PLAYER AND TOUR MANAGER FOR HEAVY METAL BAND PUPIL SLICER



As well as being an IT Project Manager at Ordnance Survey, I'm a self-taught bass player and have played for 20 years. Alongside my career, during the last decade, I have consistently played in bands and consider myself a committed musician and passionate music fan.

I am the bassist in Pupil Slicer, a hardcore/extreme metal band based in the Home Counties, formed in 2017. We are signed to Prosthetic Records and have received critical and street acclaim for both our albums. We've played at major UK and EU festivals, and have been featured on the cover of *Kerrang!* magazine. We are currently preparing to hit the road on a UK tour in support of our latest LP, *Blossom*.

My project management skills have been highly beneficial to Pupil Slicer. Using core project competencies and knowledge, I have been able to influence the organisation, operation and progress of the band.

'You're in a band? Wow, there must be so much excess and partying! When are you quitting the day job? You must make loads of money playing concerts.'

These are the things my colleagues say and they are commonly held misconceptions. There is a mountain of admin, organisation and planning, more akin to a work assignment than 1970s-style rock and roll antics.

Planning: 'Let's make an album!'

The business of most projects is to produce a product in a repeatable fashion with a consistent methodology. The cycle of creating an album is much the same, the process being write, record, release, promote/tour. Like a project, from ideation ('I've got some riffs') to delivery (album released on X date), the album requires an objective, a defined budget, desired outcomes and a route to market. The cycles can take from 12 to 36 months and often happen in parallel.

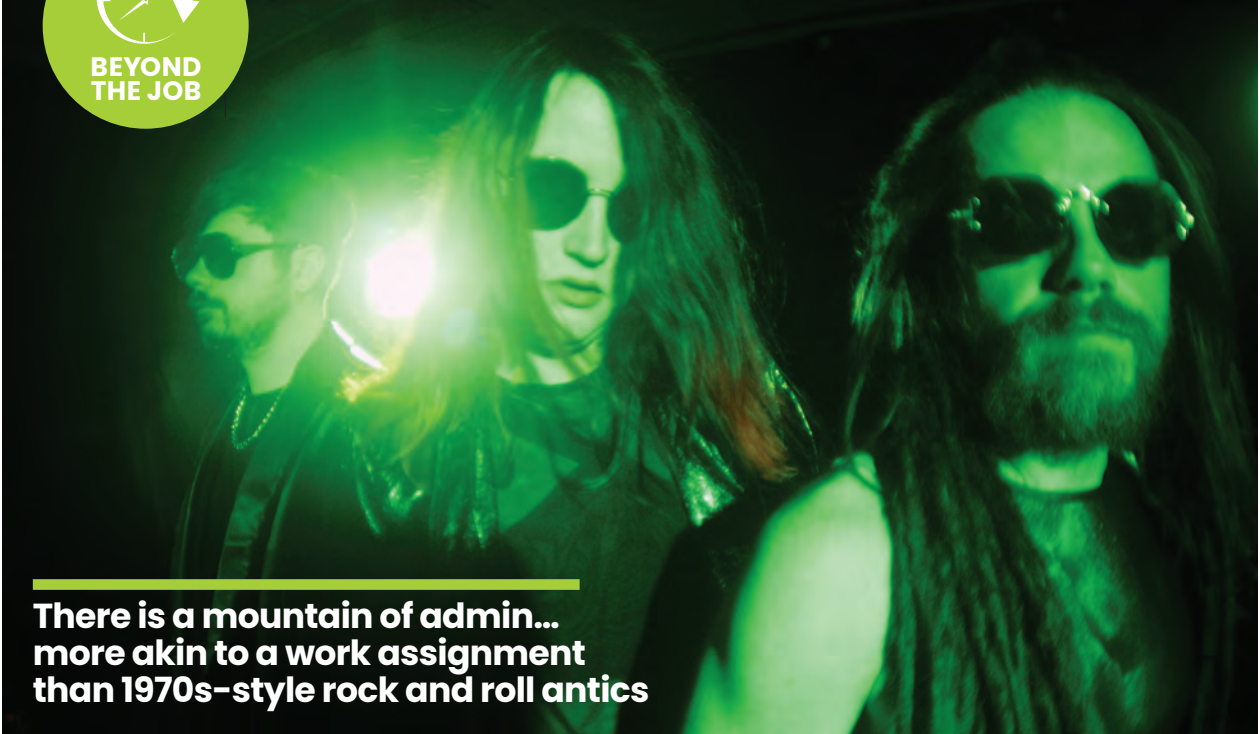
To pull this off, a great deal of planning is required, and a label would expect a band to have rough long-term plans (roadmaps) agreed. Appreciating this from a project management point of view has allowed me to interact in a more confident way with the record label (or 'project sponsor')

and guide the band to think about long-term cycles. Our second album, released in June 2023, was planned in 2021; as we continue through the current promote/tour segment, we are at the start of the process for our third album.

Tour management

In addition to being a band member, I am also our tour manager, which involves:

- Before the tour, fielding offers from our agent and working with them on shows, deals and logistics.
- Agreeing a rehearsal schedule and booking rehearsal sessions.
- Sourcing and contracting crew (driver, merchandise, sound engineers).
- Booking accommodation and transport (flights, van hire).
- Creating 'tour books' – detailed, day-to-day itineraries containing information on timings and locations.
- Documentation – providing advance information (technical, rider, etc.) to specified deadlines pre-show and producing invoices.
- Merchandise – stock levels; designs completed, printed and delivered.



There is a mountain of admin... more akin to a work assignment than 1970s-style rock and roll antics

● Acting as the key point of liaison before, during and after the tour between the other bands, the venues, promoters and agents.

This is a non-exhaustive list and the number of dependencies at play is staggering; it can be a little overwhelming. My project management skills allow me to manage the challenges and demands presented by touring. The key transferable project skills that I draw on include:

● **Problem-solving.** As with projects, unforeseen events often transpire, forcing a change of plans. Misplaced passports, belligerent border force agents, broken or missing equipment – all require quick thinking, option analysis and decision-making.

● **Budgeting.** There are many financial aspects to the band, such as recording, merchandise, incoming fees, outgoing payments, royalties, etc. As with project budgets, finances can be a limiter to, or an enabler of, further success. Bad financial management has derailed many bands and spelled financial ruin for individuals. Financial management is therefore key for the band. On this cycle, we

have agreed a payment plan with milestones for advance physical stock from our label. This was a strategy to help cashflow and was negotiated with the label owner.

● **Communication.** Keeping the band aligned on long-term objectives, airing grievances to avoid conflict, agreeing division of labour and celebrating success together – these are essential aspects to keep the culture of the group healthy. I ensure we maintain an open dialogue to achieve this.

● **Hybrid working.** The band completed an EU tour in spring 2023. On tour, the drummer, Josh, and I worked our day jobs remotely (on the bus, in hotels, at venues). This is the reality for many bands and a reflection of how music is highly unlikely to provide a sole income stream. On a more positive note, the working-on-the-road arrangement is also evidence of increasing tolerance from employers, perhaps more so post-COVID-19. In this case, both our current employers agree that the traditional 9-to-5 can be adapted to accommodate individual needs, with a mutually agreed 'as long as the job gets done' attitude.

The above examples are small to medium scale when looking at the full extent of the music industry. But the principles and transferable project management skills are relevant for those promoting, facilitating and performing at the biggest level possible. Perhaps, in the future, if Slicer's fortune continues, I could use my increased experience and benefits from touring, recording and connections to become a tour or production manager. Likewise, I believe that, as I work towards a senior or programme manager role in my career, my band experience will help me.

Although being in a band is incredibly rewarding, it is also a serious grind. It is increasingly financially difficult, especially at the medium, semi-pro level. So please do go and financially support the bands, artists and general creative content that you consume, because they need the support.

In finishing, and true to the nature of hybrid working, this article was largely written on the bus while we travelled to play Soul Crusher festival in October in the Netherlands. See you in the pit!

OFFLINE

WHERE PROJECT MANAGEMENT MEETS POPULAR CULTURE

elf

SOME PROJECTS ARE SO TOUGH THEY PROBABLY NEED TOTAL DETACHMENT FROM REALITY TO GET OFF THE GROUND, WRITES RICHARD YOUNG

Wanna feel old? *Elf*, the US\$220m Christmas blockbuster that routinely hits the top five in lists of best festive movies... was released 20 years ago. Ouch. Zooey Deschanel plays the romantic lead Jovie, the love interest of toymaker Buddy (Will Ferrell), a human adopted as a baby by elves, but who leaves Santa's workshop to discover his human roots.

This personal journey might be project enough for us to analyse here. But Santa gives his human a meatier task. The real project is rekindling the Christmas spirit in both Buddy's father (Walter, played by James Caan) and among humanity as a whole. (Well, New Yorkers, anyway. Tough crowd.) Through several sub-projects, the film offers us some reminders about team diversity, purpose and the importance of valuing your project's 'side-effect' achievements.

1 Business as usual is not a project

The life of an elf working in Santa's workshop is blissfully simple. As Buddy's adoptive father Papa Elf (Bob Newhart) explains, they only have three jobs:



Jovie becomes elf-conscious, a goal that was never in the project plan

making shoes at night, baking cookies in trees and building toys. Sure, we can cast the elves' celebration of a job well done on Christmas Day as some kind of post-project review, but the reality is nothing ever changes for them. They just immediately start work on next year's toys.

It's the very definition of business as usual. Even the tweaks – a training session on chip design for computer games, or the use of a jet engine on Santa's sleigh – are incremental changes to the mission. The only fly in the ointment is Buddy himself, a physical giant next to the 'real'

elves, and commensurately terrible at the jobs they do.

That, though, is a reminder that, in some environments, diversity can be a negative. We talk a lot about the risks of groupthink in projects. But with a clear mission, fixed deadlines and unchanging infrastructure, deviation from the standard can be disruptive to business as usual. When we get into project work later in the film, we discover that change does demand out-of-the-box thinking from project manager Buddy. But here at the North Pole? No thanks.

2 Sometimes the project's stated goal is only half its benefit

Buddy's huge stature compared with the real elves makes his late realisation that he's different somewhat surprising. Credit to Santa's diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) culture, though: he doesn't feel alienated despite his obvious differences, so the DE&I officer is doing something right.

Once he's aware of his past, however, his project is clear: find his birth father



Some project cultures embrace non-traditional office attire, especially around Christmas. Inset: Walter starts the movie on Santa's naughty list.



Buddy's enthusiasm and ability to transfer expertise ensure his project keeps momentum, even when the principal objective is elusive

and learn about his other identity. The film cleverly adds in foreshadowing for two other 'spin off' outputs from the project: get his father off Santa's naughty list (Walter is an exploitative workaholic in charge of a children's publisher); and restore enough Christmas spirit to ensure Santa's sleigh is able to fly properly.

Buddy's haphazard journey to New York – not the first place one should pick to encounter humanity for the first time – reminds us of three things. First, we rarely nail all the project goals in a kick-off meeting. It's important to keep an open mind about how key stage gates will be met; and what might later be called 'successes'. Yes, be clear on the big rationale for the project and its major milestones, but we should be open to other wins.

Second, project managers grow and change as a result of their work. That includes developing a new appreciation from people on the ground or supply chains as to how the project might be delivered. Being open to personal growth opportunities is a valuable trait.

And third, a well-motivated project manager can achieve a lot, even without domain-specific expertise or experience – and Buddy knows nothing about human society. That's not to say you should avoid experts. But Buddy's naïve enthusiasm and ability to transfer expertise (like creating a sensational Christmas tableau in a department store overnight) ensure his project keeps momentum, even when the principal objective – Walter's love – is elusive.

Assaulting fake Santa is excusable because the concept is utterly alien... forcing people to eat maple syrup spaghetti is a massive personality flaw

3 Great project managers form alliances...

Buddy seems all alone in this project, but he knows how to find allies on the business-as-usual team to help him keep up momentum – his supervisor at the department store, Jovie, and his half-brother, Michael. Both are sceptical at first, but they are won over by Buddy's hard work, charm and clarity of motive.

More importantly, they also help him to frame his own (seemingly unrealistic) project goals in a much more useful way, defining them against a context that they understand, but he – as an outsider – doesn't. He fights with the 'fake' Santa in the store, for example... and which of us can say we've never gone into an organisation and put noses out of joint simply through misunderstanding the prevailing culture or tone? But he learns from them.

4 ... and know when to tweak the project as a result

Make no mistake: Buddy is incredibly annoying. Assaulting fake Santa is excusable because the concept is utterly alien; but forcing people to eat maple syrup spaghetti is just a massive personality flaw. This is a question every project manager should ask: is it right to forge ahead with the initial project design regardless of what we encounter on the ground?

There are almost always ways to dovetail a project's goals and methodologies with the reality of their context. The real skill is knowing when to stick to your guns and when to



You couldn't ask for a more seasoned project sponsor than Santa

compromise; then how to adapt. For example, Buddy bonds with Michael by using his supernatural North Pole skills in a snowball fight; but he adapts his approach when Michael reciprocates by explaining how he might ask Jovie out on a date.

And it's the blend of human and elf that wins Jovie over. She changes, too – proving the project is delivering one of those ancillary goals – but only because Buddy also adapts.

5 Often a project's value is in the process, not the outcome

Spoiler alert: despite all the gaucheness and misunderstandings (insulting a talented author by calling him an 'elf' because he's a person with dwarfism – Peter Dinklage in an early movie role),

Walter ends up acknowledging Buddy as his son. But although that was the project's original goal, the film presses home the point that the process of meeting a stage gate can open up other benefits from a project.

In this case, Buddy is then able to rescue Santa's crashed sleigh from Central Park by getting his team – all the people he's touched – to reignite the Christmas spirit of jaded New Yorkers. Without winning over Jovie and Michael through adaptation, without merging his human (business-as-usual) and elf (project management) sensibilities, this wouldn't have been possible. No one could have foreseen the project's wider outcomes based on its kick-off meeting or its early setbacks. But at each stage gate, Buddy has built engagement with counterparties that allows the true benefits of the project to evolve. The business-as-usual team has bought into the change the project manager presented, and the results are better than anyone could have imagined.

That blend is most visible at the very end of the movie. Back in Santa's workshop, Buddy and Jovie are visiting Papa Elf with their new baby in tow. Buddy's project to find his father has revealed his human side. But Jovie has become extremely elf-conscious, a goal that was never in the project plan – but is a great result, nonetheless.

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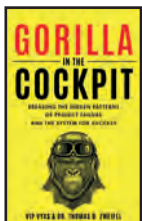


NEW BOOKS, RECOMMENDED FAVOURITES AND PODCASTS TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED

IT'S TIME TO TACKLE THAT TROUBLESOME GORILLA THAT'S WRECKING YOUR PROJECTS, ARGUES MARK FULTON, WHILE THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT WHEN GIVING FEEDBACK

Gorilla in the Cockpit: Breaking the Hidden Patterns of Project Failure and the System for Success

Vip Vyas and Thomas D Zweifel



Gorilla in the Cockpit isn't your typical textbook on managing mega projects – it's a helpful eye-opener, thrusting the reader into the heat of the action and unpacking what's happening in the project's 'black box' along the way.

The authors use vivid examples that many will be able to relate to, including drawing from areas of recognised best practice. The book also provides powerful models, enabling readers to expose and identify the hidden patterns that may unknowingly destroy performance on their current projects.

Moreover, *Gorilla in the Cockpit* doesn't just tell, it augments the narrative with useful diagrams, tables, references and quotes that light up the dark corners

of project management. All these neatly zipper with the reader's experience. It pulls lessons from sectors like aviation, defence, iconic infrastructure and sustainability initiatives to underscore one key message: big project challenges are universally not technical but in the invisible human machinery behind our behaviours.

The book could be one of the missing manuals for project professionals. It cuts through the noise, offering clarity and actionable insights amidst the complex, often chaotic world of project delivery. Every chapter is tuned to resonate with experienced and other professionals. Its readability and unique approach make it a significant contribution to project and change management. Professionals seeking to improve their strategic approach to project assurance and success will find this book informative and instrumental in helping them de-risk their project flight paths.

Would I delve into its pages again and apply its teachings? Unequivocally, yes. As a resource for infrastructure delivery

professionals, it's an essential part of the toolkit. Is the investment of time and money justified? Absolutely – and it may be a stocking filler or your secret Santa gift for 2023.

Review by Mark Fulton, Pivotal Management Consulting



Giving Good Feedback

Margaret Cheng
(Economist Edge)

Any request that includes the word



'feedback' has many of us running for the hills. Feedback is often associated with giving or receiving bad news about performance. Like many organisational processes, it's intended to produce

a positive result but in most cases the reverse is true. As soon as an interaction is billed as feedback, we all seem to lose our ability to communicate with our colleagues.

This book unpicks the reasons why giving and receiving feedback is difficult, and provides models and checklists on how to improve your skills. Cheng emphasises that feedback is just communication in the workplace. In other words, not so very difficult. However, there are lots of reasons why communication about performance can go wrong and the book gives practical guides on how to manage the situation when this happens.

This book unpicks the reasons why giving and receiving feedback is difficult, and provides models and checklists on how to improve your skills

My Bedside Books

Lynn Wheatley, Senior Project Manager, AtkinsRéalis

The Penguin Dictionary of Building (Penguin)

My first job in the construction industry was managing a responsive maintenance helpdesk for a local authority. This dictionary saved me many a time with its easy explanations of techniques, materials and building pathology. It allowed me to bluff my way through until I was more knowledgeable. Each entry is accompanied by a concise but comprehensive analysis. The book provides historical context, architectural features and even anecdotes that bring the built environment to life. It will undoubtedly enrich your understanding and appreciation of the remarkable buildings that shape our world.

The Art of War Sun Tzu (Capstone)

This is a timeless masterpiece that offers profound insights into the strategies and tactics of warfare. Written more than 2,500 years ago, this ancient Chinese military treatise continues to be relevant and influential in the modern world. *The Art of War* offers valuable insights into leadership, decision-making and strategic thinking. Sun Tzu advocates for the importance of self-awareness, adaptability and critical thinking to achieve success. His emphasis on the psychological aspects of warfare, such as morale and deception, speaks to the complexities of human nature and the dynamics of conflict. His profound understanding of strategy, human psychology and leadership make this book a must-read for anyone interested in the art of winning at work.

The Secret History Donna Tartt (Penguin)

A mesmerising and haunting novel that delves into the dark underbelly of academia and the complex lives of a group of privileged students. Spanning multiple genres, including mystery, psychological thriller and *bildungsroman*, this book is a literary masterpiece that kept me captivated from start to finish. Tartt's writing style is exquisite, with beautifully crafted sentences and vivid descriptions that bring the setting of the story, a liberal arts college in Vermont, to life. As the story unfolds, Tartt skilfully weaves together themes of friendship, betrayal, obsession and the blurred lines between right and wrong. The visceral ending still stuns me today in the same way it did 30 years ago. Without doubt, one of the greatest novels of the 20th century.

For me, the highlights of the book included placing feedback in the context of a learning organisation (i.e. the only point of feedback is to enable people to learn and grow); emphasising that feedback is a two-way process (a discussion not a transmission, making the reader reflect on the biases and assumptions that they bring to the feedback session); and the point that to give good feedback you need to know your team as whole people rather than just a resource to be managed.

Although there's a great deal of good information, the book didn't leave me enthused about giving feedback or with that single nugget where I think, "Yes I want to put that into practice straight away." Giving good feedback requires a lot of work. I'd have liked to see a clearer delineation between performance-enhancing feedback within a team, versus performance-correcting feedback from a manager to a subordinate.

Review by Sarah Walton, Extraordinary Project Management



We're all ears – podcasts to listen to

APM Podcast

There's a bumper crop of project and work-related podcasts for you to catch up on this winter. Listen to our podcast on how to manage menopause in the workplace, with loads of great advice from a menopause health expert and project managers who are directly affected by it. It's a must-listen.

If you're after something a little different, then listen to Professor Darren Dalcher explain the origins of agile in 1980s software development. He was involved in the tech scene right back when it was taking off and his first-hand accounts make for riveting listening.

FT Podcast:

'Why successful companies need to be good at failure'

Amy Edmondson, a professor of leadership and management at Harvard Business School, talks to host Isabel Berwick about her new book, *Right Kind of Wrong*. Berwick argues that companies can only hope to succeed when they make it psychologically safe for their teams to fail. It's an interesting listen for project managers who want to cultivate an open and transparent culture.

In Machines We Trust

A podcast by *MIT Technology Review* about the automation of everything, *In Machines We Trust* examines the impact of artificial intelligence on our daily lives and covers breakthroughs and watershed moments within the field.

How artificial intelligence filled the skills gap

EDDIE OBENG ASKS: IS IT TIME TO HANG UP YOUR PROJECT MANAGER BOOTS AND SHRED YOUR CERTIFICATIONS?

It's a cold evening in November 2024 and I'm hailing a cab outside the APM offices, where I've just attended a party to mark the end of the association. It had to close because applications for certification had fallen by 99% and practically no organisation is hiring project professionals. The slump has hit project software, training and skills providers. And sales of my books have ceased!

"Nothing good lasts forever," I mutter to myself, climbing into the cab.

I keep reading how artificial intelligence (AI) is so skilled it will replace humans and take most of our jobs. And I also keep reading how there is a massive skills gap in project management that can only be filled through significant investment and training.

Parker and Hart's cartoon, *The King is a Fink*, has the king on the castle ramparts. The first messenger announces: "Sire, the moat monsters are starving". The second messenger: "Sire, the peasants are without water". The king smirks, thinking to himself: 'We may be able to work this one out yet!'

But is it so simple? The science of project management is often depicted as a body of knowledge, an encyclopaedia of facts and skills to be learnt and understood, containing everything from managing risk to creating and tracking plans for value delivered. The art of project management is a set of leadership skills that must be mastered.

AI is misnamed

Everyone knows what AI is, or claims to. It's this amazing way of providing answers faster and more comprehensively and without as many grammatical mistakes.

We can work this one out yet... 'train' AI on the project management body of knowledge and a bunch of leadership texts and it will know all there is to know about projects. 'Train' it on live projects and it will provide management information during a project and guide and prioritise what is to be done, by whom

and when. So, is it time to hang up your project manager boots and shred your professional certifications?

AI is misnamed. 'Artificial' refers to the mimicry of real human neurones in the neural networks constructed to run calculations. We humans can't help ourselves – we anthropomorphise everything. So, when we can communicate with a system that replies in sentences or pictures, we can't help but be fooled. We're certain it's an advanced intelligence to rival ours.

AI says 'intelligence' on the tin, but it's not intelligence. AI is just fast and comprehensive computational iteration of interpolation within the data training set with the odd side order of hallucination. Popular incarnations like ChatGPT rely on our 'word thinking' to interpret the amazingly accessible answers it provides.

A solution without a problem

I define 'movie' projects as projects where the method or technology is decided upon before the goal is established. Today, the vastly

AI is just fast and comprehensive computational iteration of interpolation within the data training set with the odd side order of hallucination



Professor Eddie Obeng HonFAPM is an educator, TED speaker and author. You can join his masterclasses, courses and workshops on the QUBE #SuperReal campus: <https://QUBE.cc>

lowered cost of graphics cards that are lightning-fast at solving four-dimensional matrices has made the decades-old idea of machine-learning available as modern AI. And so, in AI we have a movie project: a solution looking for a problem.

I don't claim to know where AI will find its home. But I would advise that you begin with your real problems and see if AI fits, rather than jumping on the hype-wagon and trying to apply it 'somewhere'. And I would suggest that there are two types of problem it would be unwise to delegate to AI. The first is mission-critical decisions not overseen by a human. The second is activities that require embodiment – like project leadership.

Project management and leadership are practical activities. Leadership arises from the combination of thinking, emotions, behaviour and actions. Leadership is seeing outside the data set for insights, creativity, human endeavour based on relationships. And that, so far, is a human domain.

So, keep going. Build skills and get accredited. Demonstrate knowledge and capability through successful delivery. Most of all, master the art of project management. Even if AI nibbles at the science, it might be a while before your unique leadership comes under any competition at all.

And with any luck, I'll never have to hail that cab!



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Changing 'if' to 'when'

Levelling up your organisation is easier when you have a clear measure of your performance.