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Thinking fast and slow

The theme of the APM Conference this year was 'Navigating Tomorrow: Future skills for project professionals', which naturally got the *Project* team thinking about what exactly these skills might be. Our quarterly editorial meetings are known to go on for some time (it's got to be said, we cover a lot of ground) and eventually we got caught on the idea of psychologist and Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman's book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, published in 2011. Distilling his life's work, Kahneman showed that there are two ways we make choices: fast, intuitive thinking and slow, rational thinking. When it comes to decision-making and running projects, you need to be adept at both.

It's no surprise that successful projects are often those that have been carefully prepared over time, then executed swiftly (listen to the APM Podcast with Professor Bent Flyvbjerg, in which he talks about this approach and his book *How Big Things Get Done*).

This issue of *Project* is jam-packed with stories that reflect the huge array of sectors that are now embracing the advantages of both the considered planning of project management and the nimbleness it can pivot towards when demands require it.

These are transferable skills that project managers can bring to any sector – a theme of APM's new report *The Golden Thread*. We take a look behind the stats to consider how you can best capitalise on the opportunities the profession can bring, and which skills you need to work on to help your future career fly, whether it is in defence, the arts or green energy. As a report issued in May by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee stressed, the UK's lack of skills and capacity to deliver major infrastructure projects demands the rapid upskilling and further professionalisation of project and programme management within the civil service and, by extension, elsewhere.

We've been careful to balance the optimism of *The Golden Thread* and the profession's growing reach into new territory with the continued problems and expense of infrastructure megaprojects in the UK. Are project professionals being set up to fail? And how does the UK compare to other countries?

It's something to consider if you're driving across Europe (or further afield) for your summer break. Whatever you do, don't forget to bring *Project* with you. I promise there will be something for you to enjoy inside.

Emma De Vita is Editor of *Project*

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: GUY BELL/ALAMY

Distilling his life's work, Kahneman showed that there are two ways we make choices: fast, intuitive thinking and slow, rational thinking

APM
Association for Project Management

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"People are at the heart of projects and my ideal project manager also needs to be able to lead, inspire and align people"

DELPHOTOS/ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK; BEN WRIGHT; CLAIRE WOOD; THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

Offline

The first US moon landing in half a century

"Houston, *Odysseus* has found its new home," said Tim Crain when the moon received a new visitor in February. Crain is co-founder and Project Director at US company Intuitive Machines, which landed its spacecraft near the moon's south pole. It was the first of a series of scientific scouting missions ahead of the planned return of astronauts in 2026 under NASA's Artemis lunar programme.

The robot lander did not enjoy a smooth touchdown after a problem with its on-board navigation system meant engineers at mission control had to resort to an untested workaround. *Odysseus* landed on its side after a wonky touchdown but managed to send back a couple of images, including the first ever close-up of the moon's surface.

The February landing was the first controlled descent to the lunar surface by a US spacecraft since NASA's *Apollo 17* landed in 1972, with astronauts Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt. *Odysseus* was sent on its way to the moon atop a Falcon 9 rocket launched by Elon Musk's company SpaceX from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral. It is carrying six scientific instruments for NASA that are focused on discovering more about the moon's surface, weather and environment for future landing missions.

The robot lander did not enjoy a smooth touchdown after a problem with its on-board navigation system

Perspectives

Gender equality • APM's new President • The Paris Olympics • Project skills: Like riding a bike?

Mike Hudson

Head of Strategic Planning and Project and Programme Management at the National Trust, Mike Hudson oversees a 400-strong team of project professionals at Europe's largest conservation charity

Q What does your current job involve?

A As it says on the tin, I'm accountable for our strategic planning and processes – how we translate our strategy into delivery – whether that's through our business-as-usual operations or through change through projects. I think of my job and my team's job as helping the organisation deliver some brilliant things by creating the processes, the environment and the capability to do that.

Q What benefits has the professionalisation of project management at the National Trust brought?

A We are now a project management organisation and we weren't when we started, so people really appreciate the value that project management brings and the value that really excellent project managers can bring. When we first started and we talked about business cases, gates, risk management and sponsors, it was a new language for people, who didn't really get it, and now it's a common language in the organisation. It has made a real difference.

Q When people think of the National Trust, they often think of historic houses, but how would you categorise the different projects you own and how might that change in the future?

A We have the ones associated with country houses and the conservation of those, sometimes just the ongoing maintenance of those – quite often, they might need a new roof – plus visitor infrastructure projects, so car parks, food and beverage, retail and all the associated infrastructure that goes with that. We then have our land and nature projects, so this could be the restoration of landscapes, which we tend to do increasingly at scale with partners. Another kind of project are those in more urban environments in partnership with other organisations, because a lot of the time we don't own land or houses there, but we can bring some level of expertise and work with others to try and bring access to green space much closer to people. We also have lots of IT projects for business transformation. One of the biggest ones that we've done recently is an upgrade to our CRM system. Given we've got six million members, that was a really significant undertaking.

Q What hard-won lessons would you pass on to someone in a similar role to you about running successful projects?

A It's the level of engagement that you need to undertake. You can't guarantee things are going to be successful, because the world is a complex place, but it's one of the things we're doing to give ourselves the greatest chance to be successful. You can't do that on your own either as an individual in an organisation or as an organisation, so that's why it's increasingly about working in partnership with others.

> We are now a project management organisation, so people really appreciate the value that project management brings and the value that really excellent project managers can bring

The time and the effort that you devote to that communication really pays back. When I was younger, I probably didn't appreciate that as much as I do now. That's relationship building as much as anything else... and is it genuinely a joint endeavour or are you just paying lip service to it? Are you really going to listen? Because people can see through it, so it's got to be really genuine. One of the things I talk to people about internally is that there is a really strong link between that and how success is defined on a project, because how do we know when we're successful? A lot of the time it's because it's about what others think – do they think it's successful?

Listen to APM Podcast's three-part miniseries on the National Trust on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or Google Podcasts

5 lessons learned

Adrian Baguley

The Ministry of Defence's Chief Project Delivery Officer

1 Get alignment. It is absolutely crucial to get alignment on a project if you are going to be able to deliver anything at pace, and I always tell senior responsible owners and project managers that their principal job is to get alignment. That can mean the political alignment of national interests and requirements in a multinational project, but also includes stakeholder, digital and capability alignment.

2 Every day matters. Initial mobilisation of a project is always slower than you expect. People think that decisions will be made faster and resources will arrive more quickly than they do. But if you don't maintain the attitude that every day matters, you can easily lose time that you will struggle to recover later on.

3 Really manage your risks... A risk register is necessary but in no way sufficient. If you aren't spending either financial or human resources on managing risk then you are not managing risk, you are admiring it. That in turn means relying on hope, which is not something we need in our toolbox.

4 ... but also manage your opportunities. Unanticipated threats and risks will occur. You need to identify a good stack of opportunities – things that can buy you back schedule and cost when you need to – and manage them just as actively.

5 Integration is where most projects come unstuck. Whether that's integration within the project boundaries, with adjacent projects or with legacy systems. Integration issues tend to arise quite late. Mobilising the amount of steel required for an aircraft carrier or submarine, for example, is challenging, but the systems within are where the real complexity lies.

Want to serve on the APM Board?

APM Full and Fellow members are invited to put themselves forward to serve on the APM Board. Nominations for this year's trustee ballot open on Monday 15 July and will see three members take on the role of trustee of APM.

As a charity and the chartered body for the project profession, APM is committed to promoting project management for the benefit of society. The Board plays a vital role in developing our strategy and supporting us to succeed. If you would like more information on the work of the Board, visit apm.org.uk/about-us.

APM recognises that diversity of thought is important in improving decision-making and we are keen to see a range of characteristics and skills. We would therefore love to see candidates from a broad range of backgrounds, sectors, experiences and project disciplines. We are looking for high-calibre candidates who can demonstrate a commitment to professional ethics, as well as the competencies needed to be a trustee. Experience as a director is not essential and training will be provided.

● Full and Fellow members will receive guidance via email soon. Queries can be directed to the APM Company Secretary: mike.robinson@apm.org.uk

BEN WRIGHT

Is AI all smoke and mirrors, or will it transform our profession?

Dr Nicholas Dacre, a speaker at APM's 2024 Conference, 'Navigating Tomorrow', is leading research commissioned by APM to investigate the impact of digital transformation on the profession, specifically in relation to the methods and skills required in the emerging AI economy for effective project delivery.

I've found myself being bombarded with messages about how artificial intelligence (AI) is going to revolutionise our profession. Every conference, webinar and article seems to be touting the transformative power of AI in project management. But is this all just hype? Are we witnessing the dawn of a paradigm shift, or is it a case of the emperor's new clothes? With every industry report heralding AI as the next big thing, scepticism is necessary. Don't get me wrong; I'm not dismissing the potential of AI. The critical stance isn't about undermining AI's potential but ensuring we approach its integration with a clear-eyed perspective, acknowledging both the challenges and opportunities.

Quick wins: why not?

Despite the initial scepticism, there are undeniable quick wins that AI brings to the table, from automating repetitive tasks to offering predictive insights that help navigate project risks proactively. These aren't just theoretical advantages; they're practical improvements that can be implemented today.

The automation of routine tasks, for instance, is not just about efficiency; it's about fundamentally increasing the bandwidth of project managers to focus more on strategic oversight and less on administrative tasks. Similarly, AI's impact on risk management isn't just about avoiding potential pitfalls but also about fostering a proactive culture that anticipates and mitigates challenges before they escalate.

The adoption of AI in project management also requires a shift in organisational culture and mindset.

Project teams must embrace a data-driven approach, leveraging insights from AI to inform strategic decisions and drive continuous improvement. This requires a willingness to experiment, learn from failures and iterate rapidly. Leadership plays a crucial role in fostering this culture of innovation and empowering project teams to harness the potential of AI.

How can you get started with AI?

As we navigate the AI-driven future of project management, there is the opportunity to take proactive steps to evaluate AI for our practices. Here are some actionable recommendations to get you started:

1. Identify the project pain points. Before diving into AI, take a step back and clearly identify the pain points and challenges in your projects. Analyse your project processes and performance to pinpoint areas where you think AI will make the most significant impact. Don't just use AI for the sake of it; ensure that it addresses specific problems and delivers tangible benefits.

2. Get your data AI-ready. Ensure that your project data is clean, organised and ready for AI integration. This may involve data cleansing, standardisation and structuring your data in a format that AI algorithms can easily process. Having high-quality data is essential to avoid a 'garbage in, garbage out' situation.

3. Start small. Begin with small, low-risk projects to test the waters and gain hands-on experience with AI tools and techniques.

4. Experiment with different AI tools. Take the time to explore and experiment with various AI tools and platforms. This will help you gain a better understanding of how AI can be applied in different project settings and identify the tools that best suit your project needs.

5. Collaborate and communicate. Engage with your project team to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned.

So, is AI in project management all smoke and mirrors? No, but it's also not a panacea. It's a tool that, when used properly, can help us drive better project outcomes. It's ultimately up to us as project professionals to employ it wisely and ensure that it serves our ultimate goal of delivering successful projects. The key to successfully integrating AI into project management is to approach it strategically and holistically by investing in the necessary infrastructure, skills and governance frameworks to fully realise its benefits.

The research team includes Dr David Baxter, Dr Hao Dong, Dr Al Mhdawi, Dr Ranga Abeysooriya, Yixue Shen and Ali Fuat Kuz. Want to learn more or contribute your insights? Email nicholas.dacre@southampton.ac.uk

Developing effective interventions for gender equality

Sara Hajikazemi, Associate Professor in Project Management at the University of the West of Scotland, has researched what works in UK construction project organisations

The fight for gender equality has always fascinated me. Having lived and worked in three different countries, I have encountered a complex blend of cultural norms, expectations and challenges as a woman. My lived experience as a working woman and my passion for research in project management prompted the idea for undertaking research on gender equality.

Having spent most of my career researching and working within the male-dominated construction sector, the initial research idea gradually shaped into looking at gender inequality in the sector. Through this project, I feel lucky to have had the chance to speak to many individuals (both men and women) who shared their valuable experiences and perceptions on gender equality within the construction sector in the UK.

Women benefit from training too

The challenge involved with research, and indeed the beauty of it, is the way the findings can change the researchers' beliefs and perceptions.

While our research intended (and has to a great extent succeeded) to identify the most effective/ineffective gender equality interventions in the UK construction sector, we learnt through the research that we cannot overlook the fact that the effectiveness of any intervention is highly dependent on a number of factors, including the organisational culture, the buy-in from those with authority and power within the organisation, and the individuals' perception of how certain interventions intend to address biases and promote gender equality.

Our findings also showed that while the common perception is that gender equality interventions, and specifically training and awareness-raising interventions, are mainly aimed at men, women equally benefit and in cases need that training alongside men. In male-dominated professions, women may over time feel the need to adapt or assert themselves differently, hence unconsciously becoming

Not all women feel equally included and other characteristics besides gender play an important role

a collaborator in creating an environment that is unwelcoming to other women.

Raising awareness can help recognise such behaviours and help women navigate their own biases. Women supporting women was highlighted as an important intervention through our research.

Unite men and women

Another finding is the important role men can play in this field. Many women we spoke to stated that their most trusted and helpful ally at work has been a male colleague with an open mind regarding the capabilities of women in the workplace. While

some interventions are intended to enhance gender equality, they tend to build walls between men and women, rather than bridges.

Men can be powerful allies in the journey toward equality and understanding, and it is important that gender equality narratives unite rather than divide. It is crucial that gender equality interventions are introduced and implemented in a manner that emphasises that gender equality benefits everyone. Men, too, gain from a more equitable workplace. When we recognise shared goals, it fosters collaboration.

Intersectionality plays a key role

An important finding that also informs our agenda for future research is the recognition that gender equality intersects with other forms of inequality (race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, age, etc.). Not all women feel equally included and recognised and other characteristics besides gender play an important role in their experience of gender equality. It is important for organisations to recognise the need for interventions to be as inclusive as possible.

We've made significant strides toward gender equality, but the journey is far from over. It is our duty, regardless of gender, to continue to challenge norms, break down barriers and work together to create a world where everyone's rights and opportunities are respected.

Developing Effective Interventions for Gender Equality in UK Construction Project Organisations by Sara Hajikazemi, Giorgio Locatelli and Kate Lawrence can be found at bit.ly/49ZqFnB

SHUTTERSTOCK

Comment

Meet new APM President Dr Yvonne Thompson CBE-DL

As Sue Kershaw steps down, Dr Yvonne Thompson focuses her mission on eight critical areas to help take APM boldly forward

Stepping into this role, I have some big shoes to fill after the incredible work and legacy that Sue Kershaw leaves behind. I find myself at the helm of a ship sailing towards the uncharted waters of the future, filled with both challenges and opportunities. I'm delighted to share my vision and highlight the eight areas that I feel are the priorities for APM to successfully navigate an uncertain future.

1 Embracing innovation. My commitment is to encourage APM to explore and embrace new methodologies and digital frontiers, ensuring that, as a community, we remain adaptable and therefore always relevant. The adoption of innovative practices and state-of-the-art project management tools means we are at the forefront of the professional agenda, enhancing our efficiency and effectiveness in the project management ecosystem.

2 Diversity and inclusion. I have been a champion in this space for over 40 years, and I will continue to emphasise the benefits of its promotion. I am optimistic to see that APM has taken diversity to the heart and head of the business. I am also proud to have been nominated as the President Elect to Sue Kershaw, making me not only the second woman, but also the first woman of colour in this position, showing that diversity and inclusion are at the heart of this vibrant and adaptable community. My vision includes fostering an environment where diverse voices are amplified across all strands, enhancing our collective creativity and innovation, and reflecting the rich tapestry of the project management profession.

It's not only a good thing to do – it's also good for an organisation's bottom line.

3 Championing sustainability and green initiatives. At the top of every organisation's priority list should be the sustainability of our planet – without this, there is no future. Project management plays a huge part in this. It's imperative that we, as project managers, leverage our influence and champion green initiatives. My aim is to integrate sustainability deeply into our core practices, making environmental stewardship a hallmark of our members' professional identity.

4 Networking: local presence, global reach. So often, networking is viewed as a "can do", but it should be a "must do". I envision

My vision includes fostering an environment where diverse voices are amplified across all strands

APM as a thriving hub of networking opportunities, facilitating connections not just locally but globally. Through a blend of in-person and virtual events, we'll build bridges within our community, fostering a supportive and collaborative environment.

5 Professional development. A lifelong learning journey is the path to professional growth that is endlessly fulfilling. I am proud of the forward-thinking courses, programmes and training dedicated to enhancing the professional development of our members – from certification programmes to cutting-edge workshops, many recognised with the Continuing Professional

Development certification, attractive to many organisations.

6 Navigating remote work. The shift to remote work has reshaped the landscape of project management. Together, we'll explore strategies for managing remote teams effectively and mitigating risks in these still uncertain times, ensuring resilience and adaptability across projects.

7 AI and technology. My aim is to focus on integrating these technologies to automate routine tasks, enhance decision-making and predict project outcomes, preparing our members for a future where technology drives efficiency. There will be a balance to strike. We will endeavour to ensure the balance is for good. APM's strategy includes leveraging digital platforms and tools to streamline our operations, improve access to resources on demand and enhance the overall member experience.

8 Preparing today for success tomorrow. The future is full of possibilities, and staying ahead means being prepared for emerging trends and technologies. I am convinced APM has the answers to keep at the forefront of these developments, ensuring our members are well equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

During my tenure, I am eager to explore the potential for impact, working closely with both staff and members. My appointment highlights APM's dedication to expanding engagement with previously unreached communities. It also underscores our commitment to using project management as a tool for inspiring societal change.

Sustainable Olympic Games or game for urban sustainability?

As France spends its summer celebrating the Paris Olympics, Bill Morris argues for the consideration of a bigger question

Paris 2024 promises the most sustainable Olympic Games to date – and they make a good case. It will be the first aligned (appropriately) to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and operating to an organisation-wide carbon budget. Using 95% existing venues and 100% renewable energy, Paris targets 50% carbon cuts compared with London 2012. There are sustainable food policies and long-term nationwide commitments for daily exercise programmes in schools and workplaces.

Mega-events as catalysts for sustainability

But even Paris surely won't silence the perennial debate on whether mega-events are sustainable. I'm pondering if that's even the right question. The demand for "I was there" experiences and ever more spectacular events keeps growing. So while the events sector continues to get its sustainability house in order, perhaps it's also time to look through the other end of the lens.

The world continues to urbanise at breakneck pace. The cities and nations that eagerly pitch to host Olympic Games, expos and World Cups also face the daunting challenges of meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – not just global box-ticking, but, for many, a measure of survival against the environmental odds.

With this backdrop, what leap of imagination or paradigm shift of project management is required for mega-events to transform from sustainability bogeymen to potent catalysts, helping cities meet their own SDG ambitions?

It's a question that I and some colleagues from the University of

Oxford set as a research hypothesis. Through extended interviews with nearly 40 of the most senior figures in Games organisation, city leadership, event franchises and academia, we asked if mega-events had the power to drive such change and, if so, how? The answer: a resounding "yes" – the Olympic Games can inspire proverbial mountains to move, but only if:

- event franchises continue to adapt towards prioritising long-term impacts over vanity construction
- premeditated governance structures elide seamlessly from planning to delivery to legacy
- public funding is hypothecated towards long-term positive impacts over plugging last-minute holes

Events as urban development

But the biggest 'if' turned out to be one of ambition. Mega-events, the experts concluded, could drive fundamental sustainability only if city leaders view them not just as events, but as 20 or 30-year urban development projects. Communities must assess the big-ticket items they need to nail before 2050 – perhaps climate change or the transition to public transport, sustainable housing, public health or community cohesion. And events aren't panaceas, so communities should prioritise and assess whether hosting could be the pivot for real change. If dispassionate analysis

agrees, then (and only then) the community should seek the event and the franchise reward them.

To test our expert views we applied them to case studies of the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Of all the long-term impacts imagined in both Games, the QE Olympic Park in East London continues to shine brightly, 20 years after its conception – clear in vision, still thriving through pragmatic governance.

Our full research will be published shortly, but more evidence of fresh project thinking around major events can be found in the recent 'Inquiry into the Power of Events – Spirit of 2012', where I was also a commissioner. Spirit (a London 2012 legacy lottery grant giver) took evidence over 12 months, concluding that: "Long-term impact and a clear plan for 'what next' must be the driver for the decision to bid or host a major event." Spirit is now working with government, cities and franchise owners to bring about policy change and optimise the value of events for citizens.

While we gasp at astounding sport in Paris and admire innovation that makes their Games the most sustainable so far, think ahead to 2032's Olympic Games in Brisbane. There, city leaders, encouraged by the International Olympic Committee's new 'dialogue' process, opted not just to host a Games, but to help build the urban community they want for the next 30 years – a Games not just to inspire "faster, higher, stronger" athletes, but sustainable cities of the future.

Bill Morris is International Events Consultant and Senior Expert Advisor to the International Olympic Committee

DELPHOTOS/ALAMY

Comment

The evolution of project management through AI

Nicola Benjamin, an Associate at Arup and founder of Project Management Global, considers an optimistic future for AI in the profession, so long as it's collaborative

Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands poised to revolutionise the practice of project management, reshaping both its challenges and opportunities. While the trajectory of this transformation remains uncertain, one thing is clear: AI will fundamentally alter the profession. Having worked in project management for over 20 years, the changes that I am witnessing are unprecedented.

At the heart of the discussion lies a dichotomy of perspectives. On one hand, there are those who foresee wide-scale job displacement, highlighting concerns about the disruptive force of AI. On the other hand, there exists a camp of optimists who herald AI as a catalyst for unprecedented efficiency and creativity in project delivery.

Taking an optimistic stance

These divergent viewpoints underscore the complexity of the issues at hand and the imperative for a nuanced understanding of AI's implications. I am firmly positioned in the second of these two camps. And while I am cautious of the industry's readiness for the changes to come, I am highly optimistic that, as a collective, we will take the opportunities that AI and digitalisation present.

In recent months, industry forums and symposia have become breeding grounds for dialogue surrounding AI's role in project management. Questions abound, ranging from organisational preparedness for AI integration to its potential to enhance the performance of project teams and leaders. Additionally, there is a pressing need to equip current and future professionals with the requisite skills to leverage emerging technologies effectively. As the pace of change accelerates, the quest to harness AI's transformative power within the realm of projects grows increasingly fervent.

AI holds the promise of reimagining the execution of project tasks with unprecedented efficiency. Experts within the field project incremental improvements in output efficiency on a scale that dwarfs current capabilities. While strides have already been made in areas such as data analysis and reporting, significant gaps remain in predictive analytics, data quality for aspects such as risk management and solution optioneering. The precise mechanisms through which AI will achieve these advancements remain opaque, leaving room for both speculation and exploration.

Human–AI collaboration

Central to the discourse is the question of human–AI collaboration. Will AI augment human capabilities, or does it threaten to supplant them altogether? Many within the industry assert that AI will never replace human ingenuity but will instead serve as a catalyst for its

augmentation. By automating routine tasks, AI potentially offers the goal of liberating project professionals from the shackles of tedium, enabling them to focus on value-added activities such as stakeholder management and creative problem-solving. In this vision, AI becomes an enabler of enhanced project outcomes, rather than a threat to human relevance.

However, the successful integration of AI into project management is not without its challenges. Ethical and security considerations loom large, with concerns ranging from data privacy to the potential for algorithmic bias. As professionals, it is incumbent upon us to remain vigilant in addressing these risks and to advocate for the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies.

Taking a collective approach

In navigating the evolving landscape of AI-enabled project management, agility is paramount. Both individual practitioners and the organisations to which they belong must remain agile in their approach, adapting swiftly to the changing technological landscape. Education and collaboration will be key, as professionals seek to stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices.

The advent of AI heralds a new era of possibilities for project management. And while the road ahead may be fraught with challenges, it is also brimming with opportunities for innovation and growth. By embracing the transformative potential of AI and navigating its complexities with diligence and foresight, we can position ourselves at the forefront of the profession's evolution.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Professor Adam Boddison OBE

It's like riding a bicycle... and that could be a problem

APM's Chief Executive on the changing skills needed to be effective at project delivery

I'm sure many people will be familiar with the expression, 'It's like riding a bicycle'. For those who haven't heard this before, it is essentially a way of saying that there are some skills that you remember forever once you have learnt them. Even if these skills are not used for long periods of time, when the moment comes that they are needed again, they can be recalled instantly. This is because the learning is deeply embedded and the skill has become second nature.

The four stages of mastery

From a learning perspective, this deep learning is akin to the 'unconscious competence' level of the four stages of mastery:
- **unconscious incompetence**
- **conscious incompetence**
- **conscious competence**
- **unconscious competence**

To explain this further, let us use the riding a bicycle analogy. When somebody first attempts to ride a bicycle, they might expect it to be easy because they have seen others do it, but in truth they have not yet learnt the skill (unconscious incompetence). They try to ride the bicycle a few times, but they struggle with balance and realise it is harder than it looks (conscious incompetence). After practising several times, they get better. They can balance and ride, but they need to concentrate on what they are doing (conscious competence). Over time, riding a bicycle becomes second nature and they can do it automatically without really having to think about it (unconscious competence).

The demand for new skills

Traditionally, mastering a skill to the level of unconscious competence has been viewed as a good thing, but I would like to suggest that, in some instances, this could present a problem. I'm arguing that learning skills that become deeply embedded is fine in the short term, but likely to be difficult in the long term. In fact, the more deep-rooted the skill, the greater the challenge.

The skills needed to be effective at project delivery are changing. For example, the emergence of new technologies like generative artificial intelligence (AI) and changing societal expectations around the future of work both require project professionals to use new skills and to develop new ways of working to be successful. In practice, project professionals will need to become well versed in how to learn, unlearn and relearn when it comes to having the right skills for the future.

The challenge of unlearning

From a mastery perspective, this means moving backwards from unconscious competence to conscious competence. This is not easy and demands an effort that is both determined and deliberate. To achieve this, project professionals will need to have a thorough understanding and awareness of their own metacognitive strategies.

Unlearning is not easy. It is a little like when somebody says 'don't think about pink elephants' and then immediately it is the only thing you can think about. Even as you read this, I suspect the image of pink elephants is in your mind. The same is true with unlearning. If you think about the skill you are trying to unlearn, it is likely to be stubbornly hard to change. One approach is to overwrite the old skill with the new skill. Another approach is to focus on the process of unlearning itself and to master this as it will come up time and time again.

A balance between mastery and agility

As you learn new skills in 2024, it is worth considering how you might strike the right balance between mastery and agility (small 'a'). Depth of learning is important, but are there measures you could put in place from the outset to ensure the route back from unconscious competence to conscious competence is as easy as possible?

A *Forbes* article from November 2023 stated that project management will be the third most in-demand skill in 2024. But we know that the skills required for project delivery are changing and we know that the operating environment is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. So the need to learn, unlearn and relearn is arguably more present than ever before. The question is: do you have what it takes to learn a new way of riding a bicycle?

> Depth of learning is important, but are there measures you could put in place from the outset to ensure the route back from unconscious competence to conscious competence is as easy as possible?

THE GOLDEN THREAD AND FUTURE SKILLS

TRANSFERABILITY

PROJECT MA

STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

New APM research shows optimism and growth in project management in the UK, but what do you need to do in your career to capitalise on a maturing and growing profession? Emma De Vita finds out

As an ambitious project professional, what might the future hold for you? APM's new report *The Golden Thread: A study of the contribution of the project profession to the UK's economy* picks up where its 2019 counterpart left off, providing updated data on the contribution of the profession to the UK economy and society. It reveals how macroeconomic and social trends will impact on the growth of project management, so that you can hone your future skills to capitalise on the changes to come.

The report, carried out by APM, PwC Research and an Academic Advisory Group, found that, since 2019, the project profession has created an additional 190,000 UK full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, taking the total number to 2.32 million employees, with annual project management gross value added (GVA) growing by 19% to £186.8bn.

Reason for optimism

This is great news, particularly for those working in professional and business services, which remains the largest project management sector. Construction, hospitality and leisure, and the less established sector of IT, also experienced notable growth (the

COMMUNICATION

DATA LITERACY

NAGE MENT SKILLSET

RISK
MANAGEMENT

AI CURIOSITY

STRESS
MANAGEMENT

MOTIVATING

latter roughly doubling its GVA to £14.3bn and 164,657 full time employees).

There's a real reason for optimism. In the report's survey of 567 UK businesses, 51% predicted growth in project-based activity and 45% predicted an increase in average project budgets (both figures more optimistic than the 2019 study).

Creative media and fixed capital projects are predicted to be important drivers of this increase, with six in 10 organisations involved in these areas expecting an increase in project-based activity. There is also a similar optimism in budget expectations, with nearly half of businesses in 2023 predicting increased project budgets – a rise from a third of businesses in 2019.

According to the report, this growth is mainly attributed to a wider recognition of project management's value. Sixty-six per cent of businesses surveyed were optimistic that an increasing appreciation of the impact of project management – as well as an increase in the number of larger and more challenging projects – will drive further growth in the profession over the next five to seven years. The growth of the 'green economy' in the UK will also be important.

How to boost your career

What do these trends mean for you as a project professional? Well, you should feel very wanted. "A prominent concern in this report is the looming talent shortage, as 56% of businesses anticipate difficulties in attracting new talent, posing a significant barrier to the profession's expansion," writes Professor Adam Boddison OBE, Chief Executive of APM, in the report's foreword. An estimated 25 million additional project professionals will be needed globally by 2030, according to a 2021 PMI report. While this might cause headaches for those tasked with finding the right people with the capabilities and knowledge for their projects, it places you in a strong position to take advantage of this demand.

Don't be fooled into thinking now is the time to sit back and relax. Project professionals who are avid upskillers, ready to transfer from one sector to another, and who are smart at negotiating the stresses of their job are the ones who will be most in demand. Previous APM
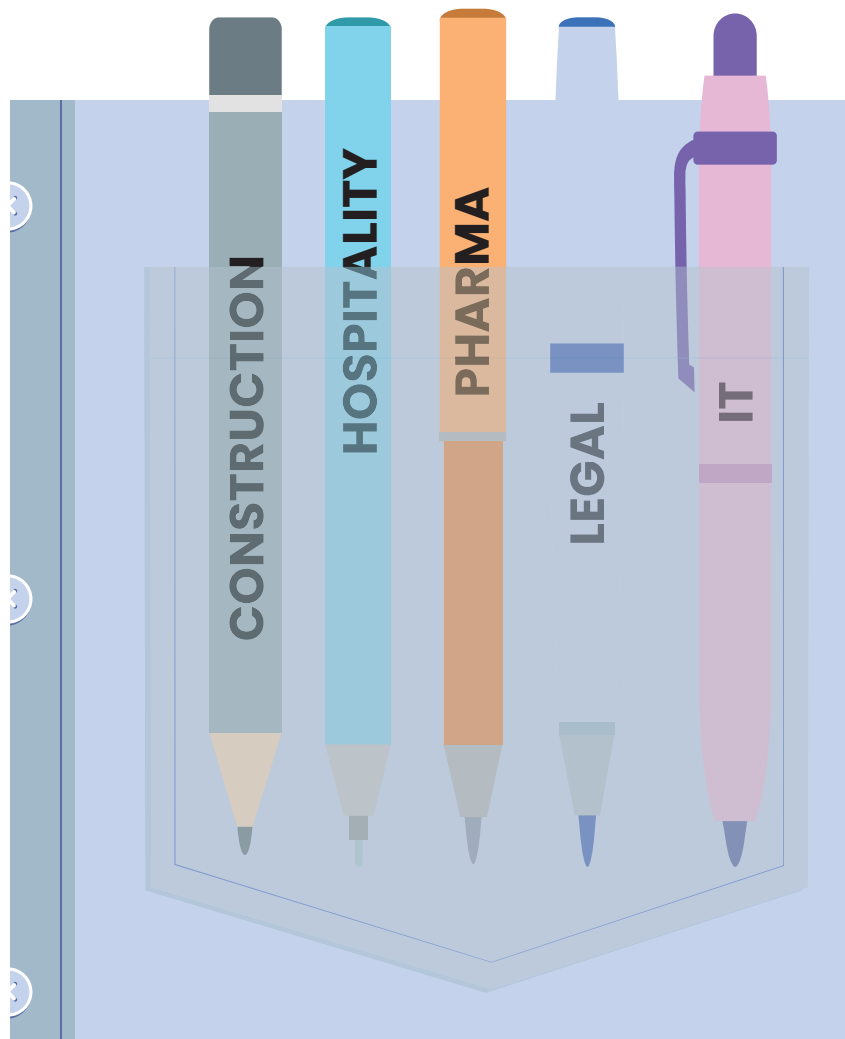
research has shown that project managers will need to ensure they are upskilled in key areas including digital skills, communication and adaptability. There is a need for both fast and slow thinking, including technical versus people skills.

Transferable skills

"It's a much broader canvas of skills and knowledge that is being brought into force," says Dr Andrew Schuster, a Partner at PwC Canada, Visiting Fellow at Cranfield University and co-author of the report. He encourages project professionals to make the most of their transferable skills. "Here's an opportunity to take your project skills and apply them in a different sector," he says. "If you think of programme and project management as a profession and you manage your own career, that opens up lots of doors – you can work in any industry you want and migrate into these different areas.

"Where one sector drops, another grows, so you need to be able to work in another sector. The opportunities are broad and, if you have that mindset, you

can take your kit-bag and you can migrate with it."

And the opportunities will only grow – Dr Schuster believes that, as the profession matures, it will go from a peripheral profession to something that is more central to organisations.

"Now you see the emergence of chief transformation officers – just like you have CEOs and CFOs. More of those executive positions are coming to the fore, and it's very much about programme and project management as part of that," Dr Schuster says. "The skills, the breadth, the depth, the type of project management knowledge need to continue. It's not just about learning a couple of processes, it's about resilience, leading and about management more broadly... you need to tool up or create capability for yourself to be part of this massive, important thing. It's about having those fundamental skills and applying them to any sector."

Ditch the labels

Lorraine Bellinger, Head of Legal Project Delivery at Bird & Bird, is

a "huge advocate" of hiring project professionals with no previous experience of the legal sector. "I almost deliberately go and look for somebody with a different background," she says. Project management within legal firms is growing fast – Bellinger now has a team of 15 project professionals, of whom only one had a legal project management background.

She believes having a team from different backgrounds brings diversity of thought, which is important to project success. Project professionals shouldn't hesitate to transfer to another sector, she says. "Don't close yourself out because you don't understand that world. You're not there to provide technical advice in that particular industry. You're there to provide the support and structure around it," she says. "Don't be held back by the likes of 'legal', 'construction' or 'IT' – or whatever label is in front of 'project manager'."

Protect your wellbeing

Bellinger looks for candidates to have strong communication skills. "You can build the snazziest project plan in the world, but if you can't communicate with people, that's no good," she explains. Adept stakeholder management, the ability to delegate well and being resilient are also high on her list of must-have skills. "We're all human. We all get stressed and we all take it out on the wrong people at the wrong time at some point or another, so you need that resilience. You need to not take things too personally – you know it's not directed at you."

Her comments tap into another theme of the report, which is around stress management and wellbeing in the profession.

"A lot of employers these days have safeguards in place – mental wellbeing support hubs, helplines – but you ultimately are responsible for looking after you. It's important to have boundaries, and that might be around working hours. Yes, you're sometimes going to have to deviate a little bit, but set your boundaries, and do your work within them. If there's a reason you can't get your work done within those boundaries, whatever they are, flag it,

escalate it. If there's a capacity issue, that needs to be raised as well."

Bellinger has worked in legal project management for 15 years and says the UK is leading the world in this sector. "It's growing massively," she says. "I just can't see it going away – I see it evolving."

Technical and soft skills

Dr Karen Skinner is Chief Project and Portfolio Officer at LifeArc, a medical research charity. She says project management is firmly embedded in the world of pharmaceuticals, necessitated in part by the complexity of bringing a product to market.

"You need strong project management in order to work with all those stakeholders and, as well, because a lot of the time it doesn't work. When you're doing medical research, a lot of things fail because you're trying things out and seeing what works. You need strong project managers because it's very difficult for scientists to drop their own baby."

She adds: "In terms of project management, you need to be good at

a lot of things, but those things are the same in a lot of sectors. You need the technical skills – task management, time management, resource management, risk management – and soft skills. Communication is such a big thing, as are negotiation skills, critical thinking and being able to motivate and inspire the team. All of that applies everywhere."

Learn and upskill

When it comes to evolving your skills, the obvious starting point is data literacy. "It's becoming more integral to decision-making across the board, so really understanding data and analytics – data protection measures, privacy regulations. Artificial Intelligence and machine learning are going to be applicable everywhere."

Project managers, Dr Skinner advises, need to constantly learn and upskill. Those who can display a breadth of skills will be successful in transferring between sectors.

She doesn't experience any trouble recruiting project managers in part because of the robust career structure LifeArc offers. "We've got apprentices, project managers, senior project managers, portfolio managers – so you're not on your own. There's an opportunity to learn. That's quite attractive for people, thinking that they can develop their careers within an organisation. These days they expect their job to give them opportunities. So we work hard on that."

And it's time to work hard on yourself if you want to make the most of the opportunities that exist out there.

Download *The Golden Thread: A study of the contribution of the project profession to the UK's economy* at apm.org.uk/resources/research/the-golden-thread

A walk on the cultural side

What does it mean to be Project Director on a capital works programme for a cultural institution, where Leonardo da Vinci masterpieces, world-class opera singers and the world's first periodic table are some of the most important project considerations you'll have? Emma De Vita goes behind the scenes

Sarah Younger, Project Director of the National Gallery's NG200 programme, which marks the gallery's bicentenary this summer, meets me in her yellow hard hat, fresh from a meeting with the project's architect and the gallery's Director. Work is underway on a suite of capital projects that will improve the visitor experience, including the creation of a second (underground) link between the gallery's original 1838 Wilkins Building and the Grade I listed postmodern Sainsbury Wing, opened in 1991.

All this while one of the world's most important art collections remains open to the public, clamouring this summer to see Caravaggio's last work *The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula* of 1610. One of Younger's biggest concerns is the everyday challenge unique to a gallery construction project. "Vibration against pictures is our core problem here. If you've got a Leonardo da Vinci cartoon, if it vibrates, it will be damaged," she explains. It's not your typical project headache, but the pressure is on.

Turning a masterpiece vision into reality

Younger's role is to mastermind the delivery of the project and work closely with National Gallery Director Gabriele Finaldi, the board of trustees and contractors, including the architect and project management consultancy Gardiner & Theobald, to ensure the project lives up to expectations. She has been tasked to translate Finaldi's vision into a workable project process that can be delivered to budget and on time. Its scope includes the transformation of the Sainsbury Wing entrance and all its public and visitor amenities, along with the creation of a new Supporters' House and Research Centre.

"It's about putting the bits of the jigsaw together," says Younger, describing herself as a puppeteer, who has brought together a design team, the architect, cost consultants and external project managers, among others. She works closely with a small internal project team as well as with Jason Waddy, a Partner at Gardiner & Theobald. She describes her role as "around comms, advocacy, managing trustees, governance... making sure we get the right decisions at the right time". Divided into two phases, the project has a budget of £95m.

Changing expectations

Since the Sainsbury Wing opened more than 30 years ago, gallery visitor numbers have doubled to six million a year – and their expectations have ramped up. "The way visitors interact with institutions has changed pretty dramatically," Younger explains. "We want people to feel that they can come in, have a coffee, buy a book, ideally go and see a picture but maybe not even do that," she says. Raising revenues is also a motivating factor for NG200. The drop in government subsidies means the shortfall has to be plugged by visitor food and drink sales, tours, events, corporate hires and lectures.

Sarah Younger

"Vibration against pictures is our core problem. If you've got a Leonardo da Vinci cartoon, if it vibrates, it will be damaged"

A gallery's desire to start a capital works project is "usually driven partly through necessity and need, but there's usually a kind of broader ambition about making a shift in the organisation and wanting to change", she explains.

Younger is an old hand at leading big cultural projects, including at the Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Tate St Ives and the Royal Opera House. Her career in directing cultural projects started at the Tate Modern 18 months before its opening, when its Director Nicholas Serota gave her a budget of £5m to furnish and fit the building out. Expecting 900,000 visitors in its first year, the gallery ended up welcoming more than five million.

"We opened in May 2000, so I was given £5m and a brief of finishing the building… and that's when I created my first ever enormous Excel spreadsheet that encompassed everything," she says. After Tate Modern, Younger travelled with her husband's work (he's the former head of MI6) and ended up working on enormous trade shows and a museum in Dubai. Returning to the UK, she worked on capital projects at Tate Britain and Tate St Ives. She then became Project Director of the Royal Opera House's Open Up project, where she worked over five years to deliver the project, before taking on NG200, which was kick-started after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Royal Opera House project was about prompting a shift in culture within the organisation, she explains. "Instead of being somewhere that opened just before a performance, it became somewhere that opens its doors at 10 o'clock in the morning until 11 o'clock at night. So if you're shopping in Covent Garden and you happen to have a child who's into ballet, you could buy things in the shop… You can go into all the spaces, book yourself onto a tour and go into a

"You're part of that culture – you live the highs and lows – the amazing acquisition or the opera singer who falls over"

A mock-up of the newly configured lobby area within the National Gallery's Grade I listed Sainsbury Wing

rehearsal… On every project I've been working on, the main driver is usually about broadening audiences, giving people a better quality of experience, but definitely not far down the list of importance is upping the revenue."

Managing cultural projects the right way

Younger has learnt "to be incredibly honest about everything… When I'm managing upwards, I always try and be very straightforward about what is going on, and what's working and what isn't." She meets fortnightly with the Chair of the Trustees. "I tell him what's in the back of my notebook, things that are worrying me. I'm not expecting him to have solved those for me but he quite often has wise words and useful insights… You get this no-blame culture if you surface problems as early as possible while giving them the confidence that you're solving those problems," she reflects. "It's really useful to be embedded in the exec level."

Younger has become a "mini expert in my strange field. There aren't many of us." She's referring to project directors within cultural institutions – and what's unusual for capital works projects is that so many are women. She clearly loves her work, embedding herself into the heart of the place. "You're part of that culture –

you live the highs and lows – the amazing acquisition or the opera singer who falls over."

No roadmaps ahead

Jason Waddy has worked on a number of museum and archive projects. "These projects are quite unusual and infrequent – often the projects are once in a generation. There isn't a roadmap," he says. Sometimes he'll be parachuted into a project, offering 'first aid' to get it back on track, while with others – like with NG200 – he is involved from the start, helping to shape the project and get under the skin of the organisation to deliver the best results.

"What I always say [to clients] is: when we're clinking a glass of champagne at the opening party, what are the things that we will say to ourselves that we know means the project was a success? Is it going to operate well? Is it going to make money? Are people going to feel welcome? Are you going to hit your target audiences?

"You somehow have to gather and understand those qualitative and quantitative measures because if you can't articulate those, then you can't

Jason Waddy

communicate that to an architect, an engineer or a builder so they know what's important. You have to define what's important to the organisation to get that [project] success. Miracles can happen, and there are lots of examples where amazing buildings came out of a very chaotic gestation, but I wouldn't rely on luck," he reflects.

Bridging two worlds

Waddy views himself and Younger as a bridge between the "contractual, commercial, dirty construction world and the arty, public benefit-driven world". There are sparky tensions between competing interests to manage, whether that's between a curator objecting to a shop in a particular location and the commercial team wanting to earn the income to support the gallery – or security wanting to put up physical barriers where the public engagement team want to break down barriers to get people through the door.

Big museum projects, he explains, will have the resources to engage a full-time project director. "We say to clients, you can have the best consultants in the world but what you get out of the project is what you put into it," he explains. "I have worked with some organisations where they've literally got no capacity and I'm going way beyond [the remit], shaping the project and making the project happen... I'm very lucky. I work on amazing projects."

Waddy gets his kicks from working on public-spirited projects that deliver a social purpose, but among the special ones he has worked on is the Abba Voyage experience in Stratford, where he found himself pushing through building control sign-off on the day of opening. He's motivated by problem-solving and delivering financial value for a project, as much as his deep appreciation of old buildings kept alive with new purpose (he's an archaeologist by training) and

"You can have the best consultants in the world but what you get out of the project is what you put into it"

fine architecture. "I say to my team, treat the money like it's your own," he says.

Used to working on Grade I listed buildings like Westminster Abbey (where he's now on his fourth project), Waddy says the fact that the National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing is also Grade I listed fascinates contractors working on NG200, who have to be reminded that even the 1990s plasterboard is protected. "It's very difficult to understand that a great building that is so recent can be so important," he says.

Project managing the life scientific

Sian Williams is Programme Director of the Science Museum Group's One Collection programme, due to complete at the end of 2025. This has involved the move of 300,000 scientific artefacts from the Science Museum Group's original store at Blythe House in London to a purpose-built store in Wiltshire. The £65m programme will have taken seven years to complete and is on time (a one-year pandemic-related delay accounted for) and on budget.

Williams started her career as an accountant and has been Finance Director at both Tate and the V&A , and has spent over 25 years working in museums, only broken by a brief stint at the 2012 Olympic Delivery Authority. "If you don't work in museums, you don't realise how much time they spend doing capital projects, whether that's putting up an exhibition, redoing a gallery or building an extension or a new museum," she says. She switched from finance to project management because, "I thought: 'I'm tired of trying to balance the budgets. Let's go and spend some money for once,'" she laughs.

Was it hard making the switch? "I don't think I realised until I stopped holding the purse strings how much power comes with holding them," she reflects. "When I was a finance director, people used to do things for me more
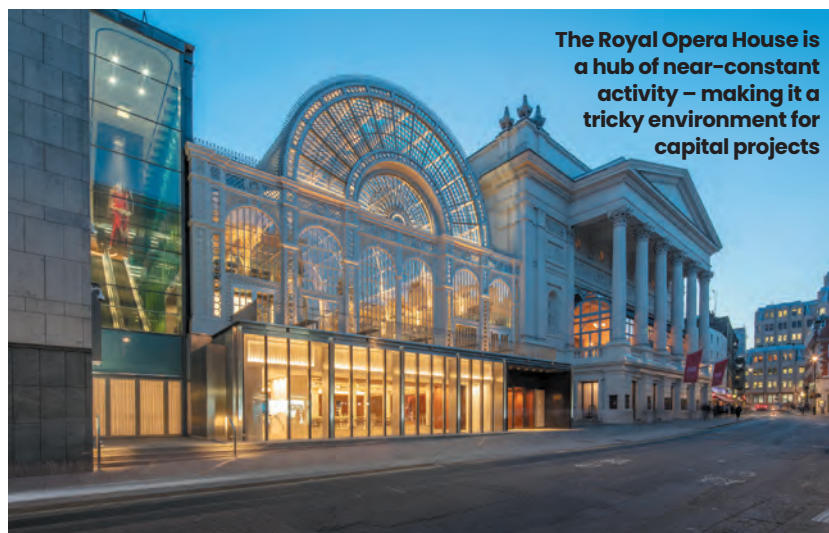
The Royal Opera House is a hub of near-constant activity – making it a tricky environment for capital projects

Sian Williams

often than I realised. I thought I'd persuaded them but it was probably the fact that I was in charge of the money," she says, laughing.

Williams believes that projects in the cultural sector centre on sensitive stakeholder management – from curators whose primary concern is the safety of precious objects to donors and funders ("who can be very different to a bank", she explains). Another common challenge is the complication of working within the confines of buildings that need to remain open to visitors. Yet it's these kinds of problems she enjoys solving, as well as "delivering something that matters for the public… something people enjoy".

She also loves being around the collection itself, which spans everything from First World War medicine chests to Polaris missiles. "I'm someone who worked at the Tate and the V&A – I love decorative arts. I didn't think I would find the Science Museum Group collection as interesting, but there are beauties. Things with fantastic stories, but also beautiful things to look at."

"You need to create an atmosphere where people come and tell you stuff, because otherwise it really will go wrong"

The unexpected female

On being a woman leading a capital works project, Williams points out that the world of museums is skewed towards women, though not always at senior levels. "From the other side, they don't expect to see a woman as the client project director." What she finds depressing is how few women are put forward for interviews for engineers, project managers and quantity surveyors. "It's still male heavy. You do think: 'Could someone bring a woman into the room?'"

The new collection management facility was finished in 2021, and since then work has been about moving in the objects. Williams says the construction part of the project was "relatively straightforward, though we did have COVID-19 in the middle of the construction, so that was an interesting few months". The move of objects, meanwhile, has been "quite complex" on the people management side of things, she explains.

She had originally intended to quit the project once it was set up, but is a self-confessed "horrible completer-finisher", so has stayed on, getting involved in clever wayfinding around the vast space, which centres on a colourful freestanding grid, developed with architect Sam Jacob. "We built something fit for purpose, but that didn't mean we couldn't make it fun and inspiring. We've been able to innovate because it's such a big project," Williams explains.

The new facility is based at the Science Museum Group's Science and Innovation Park near Swindon and will soon be open to public tours and school groups – with researchers already given access. The project is an evident success, coming in on time and on budget, but Williams is most delighted by "everyone talking about it as a sort of blueprint. We've had lots of interest from other people in the sector about how we've done it… Every time you take someone in, they love it. That's a pretty good mark of success. We now have 90% of our collection at the site, and it's in better condition than it ever has been, and that obviously is a success for the future of those objects." The energy efficiency of the building is another big success. "It's a sustainable building both from a green point of view and financially."

I ask Williams what makes a good programme director in her world? "I think it's the ability to understand that it is just going to be a series of problems that you have to solve… It does go right but it also goes wrong, and you need to be able to roll with that, and to support people to sort those things out while keeping your eye on the prize and the deadlines.

"You need to create an atmosphere where people come and tell you stuff, because otherwise it really will go wrong. It's quite important to set that culture of no surprises, and that extends to contractors… I also think that, in this post-COVID-19 world, physical presence is quite important." You can have all the reporting and Zoom calls in the world, but you can't really get the measure of what's happening on the ground unless you're on site and with the team, she believes.

Dealing with opera divas

The career of Tony Wilson MBE, Director at Equals Consulting, has spanned projects at BT, the BBC (where he was responsible for its £350m White City development) and the British Museum's World

The National Collections Centre now houses 90% of the Science Museum's collection

The British Museum's World Conservation and Exhibition Centre

Conservation and Exhibition Centre in 2007, where, as a consultant, he quickly filled the shoes of the client-side project director role.

It's a role he has assumed for every project there since then, including work on its new archive storage building, the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection in Shinfield, near Reading.

His current project is the British Museum's Energy Centre Programme at its main site in Bloomsbury, where all its gas-fired boilers will be replaced in a move that will eventually decarbonise the estate. His primary concern is the protection of the collection, including reducing fire risk, which is a "massive consideration", and avoiding any possible damage caused by vibration.

Wilson worked on the Royal Opera House's Open Up project, where the team lived by the mantra of "the show must go on". The obvious focus was on noise

Tony Wilson MBE

"When you talk about construction time periods and particularly construction overruns, they look at you as if you're from another planet"

management. "You have permissible noise levels, but of course the difficulty with somewhere like the Opera House is the rehearsing during the day, and then in the evening there are performances. Then at night they're often rigging or derigging for the next day, so there's virtually no time at the Opera House when something's not happening," he says. "It takes an immense amount of careful planning and the occasional annoyed opera singer."

There can be a clash of cultures. "The Royal Opera House may have three different productions each week, so the turnaround is incredible – really fast. They're very used to working to very tight time scales, so when you talk about construction time periods and particularly construction overruns, they look at you as if you're from another planet. They can't work in that way – a deadline is a deadline that has to be met," says Wilson.

The joys of the job

One of the joys of project directing within cultural institutions for Wilson is getting to see how each organisation functions at very senior levels, especially the relationship between senior management and the board of trustees. "If I've achieved

anything in my career, I guess it's communicating sometimes quite complex – maybe technical or contractual – issues to the board of trustees, who will often have only one or two people with property or construction expertise. Being a good communicator is an essential part of the role.

"Different organisations and institutions tend to approach stakeholder management differently. Some are not that keen to engage with internal stakeholders... whereas others are much more democratic. They want to involve representatives from internal departments in the decision-making where it's appropriate, and that requires quite a lot of skill in terms of communication, and it's quite time consuming, but it's an essential part of taking people with you. The work you're doing is going to impact on their day-to-day activity, because you're making noise or creating dust or vibration, or whatever it may be." They are also going to be a user of the space when it's finished.

There's lots that Wilson enjoys about the job: "Going into the British Museum at eight o'clock in the morning before the galleries have opened – it's a very special and inspiring space... also being able to see back of house, particularly at the Royal Opera House." But the thing that has really kept him in the industry is "watching someone sketch something and then some years later – if you've been patient enough – seeing that become a physical building.

"It's very special. What's lovely about the arts and culture sector is you can care. You can be passionate about the benefit museums and performing arts venues give to us culturally. There is something very rewarding about projects like these."

Adrian Baguley

Andrew Saunders meets the Ministry of Defence's new Chief Project Delivery Officer, who is also Defence Equipment & Support's Deputy CEO

From tanks, submarines and aircraft carriers to drones, missiles and helicopters, the defence sector has always been at the sharp end – quite literally – of project management, home as it is to some of the most technologically complex and costly projects around. And the nerve centre of the UK's national defences in project terms is Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S), an arm's-length body of the Ministry of Defence headquartered at Abbey Wood near Bristol. It spends some £13bn a year procuring, developing, managing and supporting all the equipment required by the Army, Navy, RAF and Strategic Command, both at home and around the world.

As well as being responsible for around 550 projects (including 20% of the UK government's 235-strong Major Projects Portfolio), many with timescales measured in years and subject to huge amounts of public scrutiny, DE&S also has to manage the less glamorous requirements of forces life, too. Things like uniforms, protective equipment and food deliveries also come under the purview of its 12,500-strong worldwide team of civil servants and military personnel.

It's a challenging environment, but also a hugely rewarding one, says Adrian Baguley, Deputy CEO of DE&S. With 40 years at the Ministry of Defence (MOD) under his belt, Baguley has also recently been appointed as the MOD's Chief Project Delivery Officer (CPDO).

"I've never had a problem getting out of bed in the morning. Delivering projects has always inspired me and it still does," he says. "Anyone involved in defence soon develops a strong affinity for the mission, because the people we support are literally putting their lives on the line to protect our freedoms."

As well as the 'day job' of keeping on top of planned work, there is also the ever-present risk that the turbulent

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geopolitics of the 2020s will produce a surprise crisis that requires an immediate response – such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In that case, the first rapid procurement contracts were placed by DE&S within days, and subsequently the UK has supplied the defending Ukrainian forces with a huge range of materiel, from Challenger tanks and self-propelled guns to missiles and millions of rounds of ammunition, and procured thousands of uncrewed systems (drones) reflecting the rapidly changing nature of the modern warfare.

It's not just about 'lethal aid', however.
"We [the MOD] have committed over £7.5bn of equipment to Ukraine, including medical supplies and body armour, some of which we have gifted from our own stocks and some of which we at DE&S have been procuring from sources all over the world," he says.

DE&S is no stranger to emergency missions; it also supports the logistics of the UK's wider humanitarian aid and disaster relief programmes. However, the experience of managing the huge acceleration of the Ukraine response while also keeping control of its existing long-term commitments (responsibility for the UK Military Flying Training System and the Army's latest Ajax armoured vehicle, for example) has been salutary, Baguley adds.

"We've learned a lot from it. It's a bit like having each foot in a different canoe, one canoe going at Mach five and the other going through treacle. In a crisis situation [like the Ukraine invasion] many of the things that frustrate project delivery in peacetime get stripped away – the bureaucracy, the layers of checking – and you become a lot more agile."

Having managed to do all that without increasing the size of the organisation or denting its core operations, DE&S is now feeding the experience gained into a programme of strategic reforms aimed at speeding up delivery and reducing the time taken to approve and place contracts by 50%, in line with the new Integrated Procurement Model for the MOD announced by the Minister for Defence Procurement, James Cartlidge, in February.

Structurally, big changes are afoot in DE&S, says Baguley. The established

organogram based around four domains (Land, Ships, Air and Strategic Enablers) and functional capabilities such as engineering and finance, will morph into one based on putting all projects through essentially the same pipeline processes to reduce duplication and improve consistency. So, instead of each domain developing its own different version of the same technology, a single technology will service all congruent requirements.

"There are 19 electronic warfare programmes in this organisation and five counter-UAS [anti-drone] systems, for example. We want to pull those things together and do them once, whether for the Army, Air Force or Navy. We will get greater excellence in delivery and it will be less confusing for our suppliers," he says.

It's due for completion in spring 2025, but the first stage – the so called Gateway – went live in April. "The Gateway is our front-door process; it's where we will triage projects and set them up for success by working with our industry suppliers and international allies."

Baguley himself has no shortage of international experience, having worked on several major multinational projects over the course of his career, including the Typhoon fighter jet, developed in the 1990s and still in service today. A collaboration between the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, the project taught him about the importance of speedy delivery when dealing with multinational politics. "There were four partner nations and at any given point one of them was in an election year. If you can deliver decisions at pace you can remove at least some of the uncertainties that emerge when projects take a long time."

In the age of digital warfare, speed is also an increasingly important part of being able to respond effectively to rapidly emerging high-tech threats. "In 2015, we made a big investment in world-class project delivery tools, and that has really paid dividends in the last five years. I can get performance data on all our projects from my tablet, and see immediately where there are any issues in a way that just wouldn't have been possible previously."

Baguley started his career as a student engineer in 1983 at the Royal Aircraft

Establishment in Farnborough, where he learned hands-on skills such as welding and machining – not perhaps the typical formative experiences of many other senior civil servants.

But he soon discovered an aptitude for dealing with people as well as technical problems, which led to three years on the defence staff at the British Embassy in Washington, DC. Being a diplomat is, he says, great practice for managing an organisation like DE&S with its portfolio of complex collaborative projects, power politics and multiple stakeholders with varying agendas. "Some of the projects we deliver are huge endeavours across multiple nations. That adds a level of complexity and means that you can find yourself using more diplomatic skills than project management ones."

On his return from Washington he turned to a more delivery focused role, heading up the procurement and support of the UK's military helicopters. After a succession of increasingly senior roles,

"The other is people leadership. People are at the heart of projects and my ideal project manager also needs to be able to lead, inspire and align people."

He is also a cheerleader for diversity in what has traditionally been a very male industry. "If you are going to deliver projects well, having a diverse team is absolutely critical. We have some extraordinary female project managers among our senior leadership team. In my experience, they often have a different way of looking at things and are the best project managers we have got."

Baguley is just starting his term as the MOD's CPDO. Each major department has a CPDO, he explains, and their collective role is to level up project skills and capabilities across government as well as doing a bit of crystal-ball gazing about the direction of future improvements.

"We've got big projects in transport, prisons, schools... As CPDOs we get together with the IPA [Infrastructure and Projects Authority] to try and lift the profession and share best practice across the whole of government. Because the fundamentals of good project delivery are the same whether you are building an aircraft carrier or a school."

Despite the technological revolution that has taken place over the course of his career, the greatest challenges that DE&S currently faces in delivery terms are not primarily tech issues, he says. "I'm seeing massive challenges in the global supply chain – we've had lead times on some critical components go from a few days to a year. And then there is skills. We are in quite unprecedented times and the availability of qualified and experienced skills is the pacing factor in most projects. Those are the things that keep me awake at night."

His enthusiasm for the future remains palpably undimmed, however, as he puts a shout out to young graduates to join the industry he has made his life's work. "If I have one regret it's that I am not 40 years younger, because some of the things we are going to be delivering over the next couple of decades are just so extraordinary. It's exciting and fulfilling. There aren't many careers that are as rewarding or that give you the same level of satisfaction of having really done something."

Baguley became Deputy CEO of DE&S in June 2020.

As one of the first graduates of the government's Major Projects Leadership Academy (set up in 2012) at Oxford University's Saïd Business School, Baguley is also a firm believer in the value of professionalising project management, not only at DE&S but also across the wider industry. "We are lucky to have some very strong professional bodies, like APM, and strong professional standards that we can train our project managers to.

"Qualifications are important, partly because that independent validation is useful for people to have, but also because they instil an understanding of the fundamentals of project management. I was fortunate enough to go on a number of courses early in my career that taught me fundamentals like critical path analysis and risk management, and I've been using them ever since."

But if the basics haven't changed all that much, the successful project professional of tomorrow will require a couple of additional items in their professional toolboxes, he reckons. "One is data literacy and deep technical expertise," he says, because the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools will increasingly require project professionals who can read data and understand what it is telling them. DE&S, he adds, has already automated the equivalent of 500 people's worth of effort (freeing up people to perform higher-value work) and is employing AI to help analyse complex project schedules and data.

"People are at the heart of projects and my ideal project manager also needs to be able to lead, inspire and align people"

The headlines around big infrastructure projects tell a gloomy story. HS2 is the most obvious victim. As Tunde Ajia, veteran megaprojects manager and currently a doctoral researcher at Cranfield University focusing on project complexity, summarises: "A glorious project finally humbled by the UK's long history of political football, delays, disappointments and spiralling costs." But it's not alone. Crossrail arrived two years late. Hinkley Point C is facing cost and schedule overruns. The Scottish Parliament building was 10 times over budget. Add your own example to the list.

But as a recent Boston Consulting Group (BCG) report, *Reshaping British Infrastructure: Global lessons to improve project delivery*, points out, the UK's challenges are not unique: most developed democracies "must grapple with similar challenges around high labour costs, expensive real estate, dense urban populations and complex public approvals". Even Germany isn't faultless,

it adds, with the Berlin Brandenburg Airport project three times over budget and nine years late.

While BCG's analysis shows the UK doing comparatively well on social infrastructure (e.g., schools and hospitals), on road and rail the UK is a particularly poor performer. On roads, for example, Germany comes top. It completed all its significant road projects on time, while the UK delivered 64% of them late.

"It's definitely a global issue," says Andy Murray, Executive Director at the Major Projects Association. "We're in good company on this one – and on the really big projects, we're probably better than many." True, on the most-costly rail projects (over £1bn), the UK's unit costs are in the same ballpark as Germany, Spain and France – but only if you exclude Crossrail and the Northern Line extension, says BCG. Those are pretty big exceptions.

As Sam Dumitriu, Head of Policy at campaign group Britain Remade, told *The Telegraph*: "When Britain builds infrastructure... we tend to pay more – a lot more in some cases – than other countries in Europe." He contrasts the £68m per mile paid for Madrid's new metro with the £1.4bn per mile for the Elizabeth Line. Yes, it's apples and pears – but the difference is huge. Diagnosing what plagues UK infrastructure could be the key to helping project managers cure the problem – and avoid the blame if things do go wrong.

WHY CAN'T THE UK DO INFRASTR

SPOILER: IT'S NOT THE FAULT OF PROJECT MANAGERS. COMPLEX INVESTMENT PROFILES, STICKY PLANNING REGIMES AND FRAGMENTED VALUE CHAINS ALL CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROBLEM. BUT IS THIS DISEASE UNIQUELY BRITISH? RICHARD YOUNG DOES HIS RESEARCH

UCTURE?

Costly complexity

Ajia reckons the UK's problem is partly a question of governance, "with project sponsors often finding themselves navigating a labyrinth of 'good' and 'bad' complexity," he says. Good – 'intrinsic'– complexity is all about technical challenges, scale, the need for innovative solutions and environmental considerations. Project managers are good at handling these – and they're often the fun challenges of the job.

"The 'bad' side refers to complexity not directly related to the engineering or construction tasks but arising from external factors such as political fluctuations, regulatory hurdles, outsourcing challenges, financial ambiguities and shareholder conflicts," Ajia explains. "These add little value." And the UK suffers them in spades.

For instance, eight new reservoirs were built in the UK in the 1980s, two in the 1990s – and just one since then. The industry fragmented on privatisation; scoping requirements for new builds

> **"When Britain builds infrastructure... we tend to pay more – a lot more in some cases – than other countries in Europe"**

have needed to address more factors around issues such as sustainability and social impact; and land values have soared. On major projects generally, longer gestations push them into new spending review periods, for example, and the project scope gets re-evaluated. BCG also singles out "gold-plating" – over-rigorous application of regulations, and up-speccing, for example – of project scope as a peculiarly British fault.

Scoping sclerosis

A well-crafted mission with clear goals cascades through project planning and decision-making. A common UK problem is disjointed sponsors and stakeholders, leaving projects in a stop-start loop as decisions are recalibrated, scopes amended and budgets shuffled. The emergence of different levels of devolved government – including "levelling up" committees, metro mayors and regional planning bodies – has worsened the problem.

"We do need to ask whether we're being realistic at the outset on costs and time," says Garry Murphy, Director for Infrastructure UK and Head of Project Management at consultancy Turner & Townsend. "Politicians will say a project is going to cost 'x' billions and be finished by this date – and [project managers] get measured against that. Perhaps we should be more realistic about the range, which can narrow as we evolve to maturity."

The façade of the new Metro de Madrid headquarters, Spain. Main: Escalators up to the ground-level entrance hall at Farringdon Station, Elizabeth Line

On high-profile project 'failures' it's often shifting scope that makes the outcome feel suboptimal. A great example is the Transpennine rail project, green-lit in 2011 with a £290m budget, but which has seen several changes to spec, pushing estimated costs up to £10bn. "Without a single UK delivery agency," adds Murray, "you do have these pop-up clients that end up doing a lot of the project work from scratch, and

IT WASN'T ALWAYS THIS WAY…

When William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066 he took personal ownership of the entire country. His loyal lords would get rights to vast estates and tax peasants or raise militia for his armies. But the land was his. Want to build a castle? A bridge? A road? Knock yourself out.

That's how you solve planning congestion. As the Major Projects Association's Andy Murray points out: "The government took a decision in the 18th century to re-plant the New Forest as a source of timber for the Royal Navy – even though it encroached on the statutory rights of the Commoners."

The Crown still owns lots of land, but private ownership of the patchwork of real estate across the UK severely complicates matters when you want to build something really big. (The government

doesn't even know who owns around 17% of UK land.) And devolved government has meant project managers are often facing national, regional and local government structures that are deeply at odds with each other.

Today's politics is a universe away from feudal overlordship. But the UK's complex planning and political timetables really do hurt infrastructure, even when projects do get off the ground. "As entities adjust to their socio-political and economic surroundings, they acquire a dynamic quality that defies the structured, control-oriented approach commonly associated with conventional project management," says Tunde Ajia.

"It's true that the construction sector is more fragmented here than elsewhere"

don't have that institutional memory to draw on."

Planning problems

One problem that's acutely felt in the UK is population density. At 272 persons per square kilometre, it's higher than Germany (232), more than twice that of France (118) and three times that of Spain (92). That means projects are more likely to affect more people. Add in a patchwork of land ownership, and the planning problems are obvious.

Are we a NIMBY nation? In a recent Ipsos poll, 63% of Britons said local community views should be a priority for infrastructure projects even if that causes delays – although 67% also said we are not building critical infrastructure quick enough.

Regulations aren't helping. In 2023, the *National Infrastructure Assessment* declared: "While the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

planning regime [established in 2008] initially worked well, it has deteriorated in recent years – consenting times have slowed by 65%... to 4.2 years on average, and the rate of judicial review has spiked in recent years to nearly 60% from a long term average of 10%."

No wonder Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves declared in the 2024 Mais Lecture: "Planning dysfunction means that land is costly and inefficiently utilised, making the cost of building infrastructure in the UK significantly higher than in most developed economies." The government's 2023 announcement of reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects framework might help – especially around planning – and Reeves intimated Labour would inject further reforms.

But in Germany, which already has simpler planning rules for projects that comply with established parameters, bolder steps have already been taken. After demonstrating rapid infrastructure implementation was possible with new liquefied natural gas terminals to cope with Russian gas sanctions, it now plans to automatically approve applications for infrastructure projects if the relevant authority does not respond in time.

Funding failures

UK overall investment averaged 19% of GDP in the 40 years to 2019 – the lowest in the G7. The Resolution Foundation think-tank estimates that if the UK had met the average investment levels of other advanced economies since 2000, an extra £500bn would have gone into public infrastructure.

The National Infrastructure Commission adds a major issue: funding volatility: "Too often funding decisions are short term, leading to stop-start and underinvestment in maintenance and renewal... One in every six pounds of planned spending [goes] unspent." Spending reviews are too quick to judge projects; budgets are often allocated to project phases rather than made available for project managers' evolving needs; and decisions are taken for political reasons.

The need to bring in private investment, even for strategic infrastructure, further complicates things in the UK. "For example, our new nuclear now requires funding from different sources – Chinese investors, teaming up with French owners," says Murphy. The challenge of aligning public and private funding – with a government struggling to meet even existing commitments – remains a huge drag on major projects.

Convoluted contractors

When the *Financial Times* did a deep dive on UK infrastructure earlier this year, journalist Gill Plimmer picked on the 14-mile Lower Thames Crossing project to illustrate her point, citing the "Russian dolls" of UK contracting as a key reason the scheme is so problematic. With (at least) nine named project consultancies working under the National Highways umbrella, and then countless sub- and sub-sub-contractors, the whole model is, as one commentator put it, "highly transactional". That's hampering project managers' ability to make progress.

"It's true that the construction sector is more fragmented here than elsewhere," says Murray. "And many firms do operate with less robust balance sheets. You see big firms operating on a cash-flow basis, paying suppliers on longer terms than they're taking income in." That hurts both the contractors' ability to plan ahead – and

has negative knock-ons for the stability of the sub-contracting supply chain.

"The UK's use of complex and often ambiguous contracts can lead to legal disputes and confusion over accountability," adds Ajia. "An example is the NHS's Civilian Computer System, which caved from an inundation of indiscriminate contractual changes, technical issues and prolonged stakeholder disputes. And the UK's outsourcing culture can sometimes result in fragmented responsibility and a diffusion of accountability."

Skills shortages

"Our European neighbours do have cheaper labour markets and more flexible, available supply chains," says Murphy. "Then you have to ask: is the industry attracting in enough young people? They want to go into high-tech industries and the traditional professions. Making project management and construction roles 'sexier' rather than allowing perceptions that its muddy and dirty – that's an important mission."

Interestingly, says Murray, the skills argument might be overplayed. "Tim Stone, Chairman of the Nuclear Industry Association, talked recently about visiting a small modular reactor project in Poland," he says. "The project office was full of British engineers. They exist; they're just not working here." Building a pipeline of predictable, stable, attractive infrastructure projects – and generating what Stone calls "momentum, rather than events" in big project work – would do a huge amount to keep skills here and attract new blood to the profession.

Dealing with the unique barriers to UK infrastructure projects, then, starts to look like a virtuous circle. Solve the scoping and planning issues, and the funding, supply chain and skills might well sort themselves out. The "British disease" need not be terminal.

"The UK's outsourcing culture can sometimes result in fragmented responsibility"

GLOBAL LESSONS: HOW MEXICO AND NEW ZEALAND ARE TAKING ON THEIR OWN 'HS2' MEGAPROJECTS. REPORT BY CONRAD HEINE

TREN MAYA:
A "megaproject of hope" for Mexico's south-east

Like HS2 was meant to do for England's north, Mexico's massive Tren Maya megaproject – a new 1,500km rail line through five states in Mexico's south-east, with a budget of $28bn – is designed to boost a long-neglected region. Unlike HS2, Tren Maya benefits from unambiguous government commitment.

Tren Maya is a flagship pet project of 'AMLO', Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Mexico's president, who is standing down at the coming June elections. Described as the "megaproject of hope", Tren Maya was launched in 2018 as part of Mexico's National Development Plan, and in line with AMLO's motto: "For the benefit of all, the poor come first."

While it is intended to serve tourism, the region's biggest industry (centred around Cancún and the Caribbean coast on the Yucatán Peninsula), the plan is that it be more than just a railway and open up other opportunities for economic, commercial and social development. It will also move freight and give affordable transport to local inhabitants who are currently poorly served.

Unlike HS2, Tren Maya has progressed with impressive speed. Despite predictions of a 15-year building time, it has taken just five years to get to its current stage, with the first section (from Campeche to Cancún) inaugurated in December 2023 and the rest, optimistically announced for February 2024, expected before the end of the year.

Tren Maya is, however, deeply controversial. It has been dubbed the "megaproject of death" by some for the environmental damage construction has caused in rainforests and its potential to damage the region's unique and fragile underground caves, aquifers and archaeological sites. Others say the project has been forced through without proper environmental impact assessments or consultation with local inhabitants.

It is a measure of the Mexican government's commitment to and control of Tren Maya that the overall oversight, as well as part of the construction, rests with SEDENA, Mexico's Ministry of Defence. Consequently, even though numerous private companies are involved in building the seven sections of Tren Maya, *Project*'s many attempts to speak with the project professionals involved were fruitless.

Military involvement

The military's involvement has also provoked controversy, especially considering its historic role in repressing Mexico's population. Étienne von Bertrab, a Mexican-born lecturer in development and planning at University College London, and the coordinator of a book on Tren Maya, points out that it is part of a trend of redirecting the military towards civic purposes, including operation of airports and ports, where corruption has often flourished.

Military involvement, he argues, also boosts security for the project against criminal groups, and keeps the military,

Having opened in December 2023, Cancún Airport station is one of the major termini of Tren Maya

Despite predictions of a 15-year building time, it has taken just five years to get to its current stage

300,000 strong nationally, busy to boot. The military, he points out, has successfully delivered other projects, such as an airport in Mexico City. "They are very efficient and vertical in their approach."

Furthermore, Bertrab argues that giving SEDENA a stake in Tren Maya will act as a bulwark against privatisation of the new railway, which reintroduces passenger services to a country where, in the 1990s, the country's 23,000km-long publicly owned rail network was privatised, seeing passenger trains disappear in favour of freight. Down the line, the hope is that Tren Maya will connect with the existing network, reviving a state-owned passenger network throughout Mexico as contracts expire.

As for the environmental concerns, Bertrab acknowledges

they are genuine. However, he also points out that, during construction, routes have been altered and tracks built on elevated platforms to mitigate damage to environmental and archaeological sites, and the project has also included the creation of ecological reserves and more than 400 passages for wildlife.

Out of poverty

Other benefits have included the creation of jobs and a rail industry building trains in the region. The UN Development Programme has estimated it will help lift many out of poverty in the region. Tren Maya is indeed more than just a train – the project also includes housing, urban renewal and infrastructure provision in many neglected cities and towns along the route, as well as affordable transport provision where there previously was little or none.

Whether Tren Maya will achieve its promised benefits remains to be seen – but as a transformative rail project for a region that has seen the light of day in prompt time, its contrast with HS2 is marked.

AUCKLAND'S CITY RAIL LINK:
A transformative project for New Zealand's largest city

At 3.45km in length, Auckland's City Rail Link (CRL) is nowhere near HS2's scale. Yet New Zealand's first underground metro rail network is the country's largest infrastructure project ever. The two-way twin tunnels up to 42m below the centre of the country's largest city will close a gap in Auckland's network between the current terminus and existing lines, adding two new stations and transforming a third. Funded by Auckland Council and New Zealand's government, completion is projected for late 2025, after which transport agencies will take over and get the trains running (wisely perhaps, that date is not yet specified).

CRL's benefits have been clear from the start: it doubles Auckland's rail capacity, shortens journeys and better connects the city and sprawling suburbs (as well as a host of economic and environmental benefits). Still, in a rapidly growing city (population 1.7 million) that

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is choked with traffic and where non-road transport projects often go nowhere (a long-planned light rail network was cancelled recently), it took "enormous political courage" by Auckland's then mayor to lead on starting things in 2011 before national government support was guaranteed, says Dr Sean Sweeney, CRL's CEO.

CRL has forged ahead since. As a project, it is defined by clear benefits and absence of scope creep. Dr Sweeney points to only one major scope change since digging commenced – a shift from six- to nine-carriage trains, forcing changes to stations, for capacity and future-proofing reasons.

A sense of realism

CRL benefits from relatively simple partnerships – its main part is handled by the 'Link Alliance' of seven partners, including CRL Ltd, established in 2017 to deliver the project. Dr Sweeney, a New Zealander with a background in Australian infrastructure, came on board in 2018 and immediately set about a "major refit" of the project management. A review was commissioned to "prove that the numbers were wrong", team members were changed and the "basics" were put in place – "management of time, costs, risks and scope".

As with HS2, there have been delays, and budget has ballooned – although nowhere near "blowout", Dr Sweeney stresses. The NZ$5.5bn current cost is well above the original estimate of around NZ$3bn, and reflects inflation, pandemic costs, the lack of a project pipeline in NZ that affects labour and the supply chain, and political realism. "Projects need a '3' in front to get started... it was always going to cost more... governments don't cancel projects once they have started." (Observers of HS2 may beg to differ.)

A sense of realism is part of CRL's success, suggests Nicolas Reid, Principal Public Transport Planner at MRCagney, a local transport

Tunnels up to 42m below the centre of the country's largest city will close a gap in Auckland's network

"It bucks the historical trend [of grand, yet cancelled transit projects in Auckland] by delivering a mountain of benefits"

consultancy. CRL lacks the load of scope creep and additional infrastructure to chase marginal benefits: instead, it builds on the simplest route possible, with the minimum necessary infrastructure. "It is the best project for Auckland because it is the one that Auckland is actually building... it bucks the historical trend [of grand, yet cancelled transit projects in Auckland] by delivering a mountain of benefits and improvements, albeit imperfectly, at a perfectly viable scope and price."

A pipeline is needed

Now, Reid hopes for a similar approach from future much-needed transport projects to "deliver the benefits within a decade". Dr Sweeney asserts that a pipeline of

large projects is needed, to fill many gaps, cope with growth, build skills, lower costs, and improve project management in general. Lessons have been learned – for example, from the inevitable retrofitting disruption in the city centre, which crippled many small businesses and caused media outrage, much like HS2 around Euston. This is something that future projects need to plan for better, he suggests.

With CRL on track to becoming a sunset project, Dr Sweeney is confident the benefits will be transformative, not just as the "backbone to a major metro heavy rail system", but also to a part of the central city that includes major universities, venues and businesses but has previously lacked stations and connections. And although the increased capacity will expose issues further along the lines – from the many level crossings that regularly delay road traffic throughout Auckland – Dr Sweeney sees CRL as "a brand-new engine for a wider network". With its focus on benefits, clear scope and realistic ambitions, CRL – albeit at a far smaller scale – offers a lesson to HS2.

Election demands

WHAT DOES APM WANT TO SEE FROM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT? ANDREW BALDWIN, APM'S HEAD OF POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, ELUCIDATES

I am rewriting this first paragraph minutes after watching the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, announce to the nation that he has asked the King to dissolve Parliament. The UK heads towards a general election on 4 July 2024.

Having worked for a political party, I could fill these pages with electioneering anecdotes, but that is not the subject of this article. My expertise on letterbox design, the dog breed most likely to bite you, and who reverses first when you meet your opponent driving the opposite way down a single-track lane will have to wait.

A nation of projects

Instead, I'll be looking at what APM wants to see out of a new government, whatever its composition. A lot has happened since the last general election in December 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit and climate change, for example, have impacted on what the government could achieve and have affected all departments. All three have something in common – projects and project delivery.

The pandemic response delivered some of the most successful projects of our time – the vaccine delivery and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, for example. Brexit's multitude of regulatory reforms and legislative changes set in motion thousands of projects. Climate change has led to many projects around delivering net zero and also projects to mitigate the effects of climate change.

None of those projects was unique to government. Every business up and down the country has dealt with, and is dealing with, the impact of all three.

Five is the magic number

The major parties, those contesting all seats across Great Britain, have made lists key to their approach. The party manifestos are still, at the time of writing, a closely guarded secret (though will no doubt be available at time of publication). But we know that the Conservatives have five "pledges" and Labour have five "missions". Of the smaller nationwide parties, the Liberal Democrats have opted for five "statements", the Greens six "focus areas" and Reform four "areas of reform".

There are also, of course, country-specific parties – those that only contest seats in their geographic regions, such as the SNP in Scotland, Plaid Cymru in Wales and the DUP, Sinn Féin, SDLP, UUP and Alliance in Northern Ireland.

Irrespective of which party or parties might form the next government, it is clear that whatever happens, none of these pledges, missions, statements, focus areas or areas of reform can be delivered without a renewed focus on project management and project professionals.

A bigger role for the profession

The project management profession continues to expand in importance. The recent update to our *Golden Thread* research (see page 18) shows the true value of the project profession to the UK economy, with 2.32 million full-time equivalents currently employed in the sector, generating £186.8bn of gross value add to the UK economy.

> **We need a more consistent approach that allows project professionals to better plan long-term delivery**

It showed that half of businesses surveyed anticipated an increase in the number of projects they would undertake over the next three years and that this growth was mainly attributed to a wider recognition of the value of project management.

It also showed areas where we need to do better. Fifty-six per cent of businesses surveyed predicted that difficulty in attracting new talent would act as a barrier to growth, while another PwC survey revealed that project management's appeal lagged behind other more traditional career paths, primarily due to a general lack of awareness that it is a viable career path.

Respond, reinvent, reform

We must do better here. APM wants any future government to focus on three areas (bucking the five statements trend adopted by most political parties). We need the new government to respond to the situation we find ourselves in, reinvent our attitudes to projects and reform the systems in which they're delivered. It must respond to the current uncertainty plaguing project delivery. Inflation, supply chain issues, material costs and many other (usually) predictable factors have fluctuated wildly in recent years, something our recent road transport infrastructure roundtable in Parliament focused on.

We need a more consistent approach from any future government that allows project professionals to better plan long-term delivery. Part of that is accepting that instability is likely to continue and will become a normal part of project planning, but the level of that instability, the fluctuations, can be controlled better. Minimising the damage instability can do will, in turn, lead to improved confidence, which is vital for attracting investment in projects, and also for building the skills base needed to deliver major projects. As one project professional told me: "We can't afford another HS2-style cancellation."

Once the government has responded to the current challenges, it will need to reinvent attitudes to project management. The reader likely shares my own frustrations that good project delivery rarely makes the headlines. To paraphrase the football commentator Roy Keane, though, that might be because that's your job – doing something you said you'd do isn't newsworthy. But delivering early or below cost? That's newsworthy.

Personally, I think the definitions of benefit and value I mention there do us harm. Value is about more than delivery time and financial cost and increasingly we're seeing a greater focus on social and environmental benefits, alongside the more traditional economic ones. More projects are beginning to measure unexpected benefits as well, and on timings, we need to encourage government to consider projects on a longer time scale – benefit and value accrue over time.

Civil service governance

Alongside attitudes to success and failure, APM wants to see acceleration of the investment in the civil service project delivery function started by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA). We need to support it to improve project management leadership, workplace culture and increase the number of Chartered Project Professionals within the civil service.

We were concerned to see the Cabinet Office resource departmental expenditure limit reduced from £0.9bn to £0.2bn in the Spring Budget, and APM wrote to MPs stressing that this cut must not fall wholly on the IPA and potentially jeopardise one of the government's major success stories.

Reform was the final focus area I mentioned above. Lord Maude of Horsham wrote a review of civil service governance that raised concerns about a lack of transparency in government departments. He urged reform, saying it was damaging "effectiveness in decision-making" when "ensuring value for money of government spending". This is particularly concerning, as this lack of transparency "damages confidence and trust."

Joined-up thinking

But that's not the only area we think future governments can focus attention on to improve project delivery. There has to be better joined-up thinking with government departments working together, something the IPA is working on improving. We'd also like to see project delivery considered at policy development stage, not just at the policy delivery stage. More guidance in the early stages of project development will ensure they are delivered well at later stages.

Whichever party is asked to form the next government, implementing its manifesto and dealing with the issues facing the country will have to be delivered through projects. Our members will be front and centre in delivering the UK's future, whatever that might be.

If you'd like to get involved with APM's public affairs work, please contact Andrew and his team at external.affairs@apm.org.uk

GOTCHA!
PROJECT MANAGEMENT HITS THE NEWSROOMS

EMMA DE VITA UNCOVERS HOW AN APPETITE FOR PROJECTS IS CHANGING HOW *THE WASHINGTON POST, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL* AND ONLINE NEWS START-UP THE 19TH ARE WORKING

A buzzy newsroom may not be a place you'd think of as a natural fit for the discipline and rigour of project management. Yet you'd be wrong. In the fast world of news journalism, with its story chasing, excitement and egos, the slow thinking of proper project planning and delivery is taking root.

In the past couple of decades, the business models of newspapers and the expectations of readers have shifted radically. Journalistic content now comes in the form of videos, podcasts and data visualisations as much as words – and advertising is being replaced with subscriptions. This means journalists view their collaborative and experimental work as projects that cross many teams, and that requires a new mindset. "It's a brave new world," writes former *Financial Times* reporter and Special Projects Editor (and APM Honorary Fellow) Robin Kwong in his APM guide *Project Management in Newsrooms*. The old factory model is out; projects are in.

Winging it

Unfortunately, he adds, "newsrooms are not hotbeds of project management expertise. News organisations don't have a tradition of hiring professional project managers. Journalists have an ingrained faith in their ability to 'wing it', which makes them inclined to see project planning as a burden and a waste of time." But things are changing.

Kwong now works at *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) in New York as Director of Audience and sits in its newsroom as part of the editorial staff. "It's hard to introduce somebody to project management, because part of what gets people excited about the profession is the freedom and the sense of doing something heroically," he explains. "The thrill of the business is part of the attraction, so there are people

Robin Kwong

that would see the level of planning that I advocate to be excessive or take all the fun out of it," he says.

While the WSJ has project managers in IT, services and advertising, there is no one with that formal job title in editorial. "It is a function of a role that is taken up by lots of different editors and reporters when projects come up, like a particularly ambitious piece of reporting," he says. Take the US elections this November, for which the newspaper is trying to approach coverage in special ways, such as an Election Challenge guessing game and a series of multimedia storytelling projects. "We want to do something that we haven't really done before and that really serves our readers. So with those, we come up with a project plan," he says.

Creating a project ethos

Kwong oversees social media, search engine optimisation and newsletter teams and the WSJ's news partnership teams (who work with Apple News,

One Franklin Square in Washington, DC, is home to *The Washington Post*. Inset: *Wall Street Journal* offices at 1155 Avenue of the Americas, New York

"Project management is the muscle for having adaptability and growth as an organisation"

among others). This means ensuring reporters collaborate with a broader cast of characters outside the newsroom. Kwong's mission is to establish and cultivate a "project management ethos" among the editorial staff, instilling a more disciplined approach and process to their projects. "These are skills that a lot of editors have acquired over the years but they don't think of themselves as project managers. They could actually be quite good at it," he says. And that's critical because the direction of travel will only be towards greater experimentation and collaboration. "These conditions call for more project management," he says.

For individuals, the project management approach Kwong favours brings clarity to expectations and communication through documentation and proper planning. It means everyone knows what the bigger picture is, and a confidence about next steps in the project is achieved. Organisationally, project management brings control over spiralling project scope that can suck up more resources than initially intended. "But the biggest benefit is the ability to grow and adapt to figure out new ways of working and new products to give to our readers. Project management is the muscle for having adaptability and growth as an organisation," Kwong reflects.

Finding the right moment

That's all well and good, but only if the editorial staff can be persuaded to see the light when it comes to project management. Kwong has learnt that it's about finding the right level of process to introduce when reporters need to be reactive to fast-moving news that might

demand a constant rethink of a story approach. "Maybe one of the biggest differences between project management in journalism versus project management in other fields is the need for people to be flexible to real things that you need to be responsive to, especially when their work isn't necessarily project focused most of the time. It's about figuring out the right moment of intervention," says Kwong.

That's important for any creative environment where project management is being introduced. He recommends starting small in the way you introduce it to people and encouraging them to adopt it. "You don't have to get everybody to do all of the [project management] steps in order for this to be beneficial," he advises. "Realise that other people might not immediately be as enthusiastic and automatically see the value of it. You really have to think hard about how to articulate it and how it helps them in very concrete ways for the things that matter to them. Cast your mind back

to when you first encountered project management, what benefits you saw, and try to communicate it," he says.

Better journalism at *The Washington Post*

Like Kwong, Rachel Sadon – *The Washington Post*'s Director of Newsroom Planning and Project Development – is a convert to the importance of project planning for ambitious and innovative storytelling projects. These can be complex in scope and scale, involving large teams from around the newsroom. Some examples of award-winning projects her team have produced include a series exploring the falling life expectancy rate in the US and a series on the roots of the Fentanyl crisis. "It takes many teams to bring these projects to life," she says, and it's her job to orchestrate this collaboration.

Sedon manages a team of project editors who oversee large projects, guiding the storytelling and production process for initiatives such as major investigations from launch strategy to post-publication. Everything must be infused with audience-centric thinking, she explains, describing her role as "part project management, part audience strategy, part journalistic strategy".

Complicated multimedia treatments require bespoke design, more material for additional platforms and more strategic thinking about roll-out strategy, cadence and promotion. Project management, Sedon has discovered, strengthens workflows and communication and resolves cultural issues. "I believe deeply that these efforts result in less chaos, more clarity and ultimately better journalism," she says.

Clarity and communication

One of the biggest benefits project management has brought, Sedon explains, is help in delineating roles and responsibilities on a journalistic project. It minimises confusion about who is doing what and sets clear expectations for those involved. Other benefits have included the better and earlier integration of visual journalists to reporting and writing, leading to more creative, ambitious ideas and streamlined execution. Communication and

The 19th was founded in 2020 by long-time journalists who believed the news was not representative enough

collaboration with non-newsroom teams, including marketing, PR and advertising, have also improved, explains Sedon.

What does she think the future holds for project management in the media sector? "There's a very clear need for project management in large media organisations, especially as ambitious journalism requires increasingly complex teams to fully execute it. We're now a foundational part of ensuring our most important work is intentionally directed from pitch to publication," she says.

Not the sexiest of jobs?

If that's the state of play of project management in the US's most established newsrooms, what's it like at a start-up? Alexandra Smith is Audience Director at The 19th, a four-year-old, non-profit, independent US news site that reports on gender, politics and policy. She covers the same ground as Kwong and Sedon, working at "the intersection of the editorial, product, technology and revenue teams".

She was invited by Kwong through the community of practice News Product Alliance to test his APM guide. She says she'd been thinking a lot about project management, as strategic work within The 19th's newsroom was becoming more organised around projects across many different organisational teams.

Smith explains that there were often no formal project manager roles at any of the small newsrooms she's worked in. "Journalism is in a bit of a crisis in our country in terms of funding. [Project manager] is usually not a role that gets prioritised. Newsrooms, small and

Rachel Sadon   Alexandra Smith

> **"I say a lot of time, 'Let's just try it this way and see if it makes things less painful, and if it doesn't, we don't have to do it this way again'"**

mid-sized, prioritise hiring reporters, editors and photographers over a project manager. It doesn't always sound like the sexiest job until you go to do a project and you run into some pain points – like how you are making decisions or who's accountable for what – and then you need some systems or processes," she says.

An experimental and humble mindset

Instead of hiring project managers, The 19th has invested in training managers on project management skills and trying out APM project management frameworks, as laid out in Kwong's guide.

"There are some evangelists for the process, and I've been one of them," says Smith, who uses and teaches the frameworks on the projects she leads (such as managing the strategic planning process), knowing the tools will be so useful that others will be inspired to use them on future projects, and encouraging those with the proclivity for it to lead their own projects.

Creating a shared language around projects is an important part of collectively building a culture, rather than imposing processes on people, Smith explains. "In every newsroom there are folks who just want to run after the story, who don't see immediately the benefits of making a solid plan – [who ask]: why do we want to approach it this way? Why are we slowing down? What's worked for me is approaching it with an experimental and humble mindset.

"I say a lot of time, 'Let's just try it this way and see if it makes things less painful, and if it doesn't, we don't have to do it this way again.'" No one has ever made that request. "Project management tools exist because they ease the burden," she says.

Kicking off in the right way

A big project management challenge is convincing colleagues in a fully distributed and remote working environment to sign up to additional project management meeting time.

"Once someone has experienced a good, helpful, meaningful project kick-off, they're more likely to be open to it again, but that initial meeting is a real thing to contend with," explains Smith.

Using a project kick-off to create a space for the team to build shared agreements works well, she has found. "I really like asking people what their goals are or what success would feel like for them by participating in the project, because it's not always the goal of the project. In fact, it's almost never the goal of the project. It's often things like 'I really want to learn more about how other departments work' or 'I want to see what I can work on outside of my day-to-day'.

"People have different motivations for why they're showing up. Learning about those, creating a shared space together and building those connections to help foster relationships in that first meeting feels like a slow first step that brings dividends down the road for when things get harder or you have to trust someone to make a decision."

It's great advice for any project professional, surely? If you can win over the minds of fast-thinking, story-chasing reporters to slow-thinking project management, you can win over anyone.

Project Management in Newsrooms **can be downloaded at apm.org.uk/ resources/find-a-resource/project- management-in-newsrooms**

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HOW TO
TRANSITION FROM PROJECTS TO PROGRAMMES

MOVING FROM MANAGING PROJECTS TO PROGRAMMES REQUIRES A SHIFT IN THINKING. SUZANNE MORELAND, A VICE PRESIDENT AT AECOM, GIVES HER ADVICE ON GETTING IT RIGHT

Transitioning from project to programme management is like stepping from a photograph into a kaleidoscope. Your focus shifts from a clear, static image to an ever-changing landscape that you need to make sense of for yourself and others every day. You'll go from managing discrete tasks to orchestrating a symphony of interconnected initiatives. You'll be moving from being a lead performer to being the conductor of a complex ensemble.

The following insights are drawn from my three decades of experience and conversations with colleagues about delivering major infrastructure programmes worldwide. I hope they help you in your journey.

1 Understand the difference between a project and a programme

The first and probably hardest step is to grasp the difference between a project and a programme. It's not merely that you'll be delivering multiple projects in a way that derives benefits not otherwise achievable. The difference is that

you'll be leaving a legacy, whether you intend to or not. And your constituents or clients will expect you to deliver the benefits that the programme promises.

Project management is all about delivering results and focusing on the nitty-gritty details, deadlines and deliverables of specific, defined scopes to time and cost constraints. Programme management is a whole new arena.

Programmes are vast, encompassing multiple projects that interlink and impact one another. They're not just bigger projects; they're organisations in and of themselves.

In project management, we obsess over Gantt charts and critical paths. But in the programme world, leaders are focused on the delivery of benefits. This is crucial. Shift gears mentally. Embrace the shift from project delivery (cost, scope, schedule) to strategic delivery of benefits and the assets that support them. Imagine you're not just building a building; you're creating a whole community.
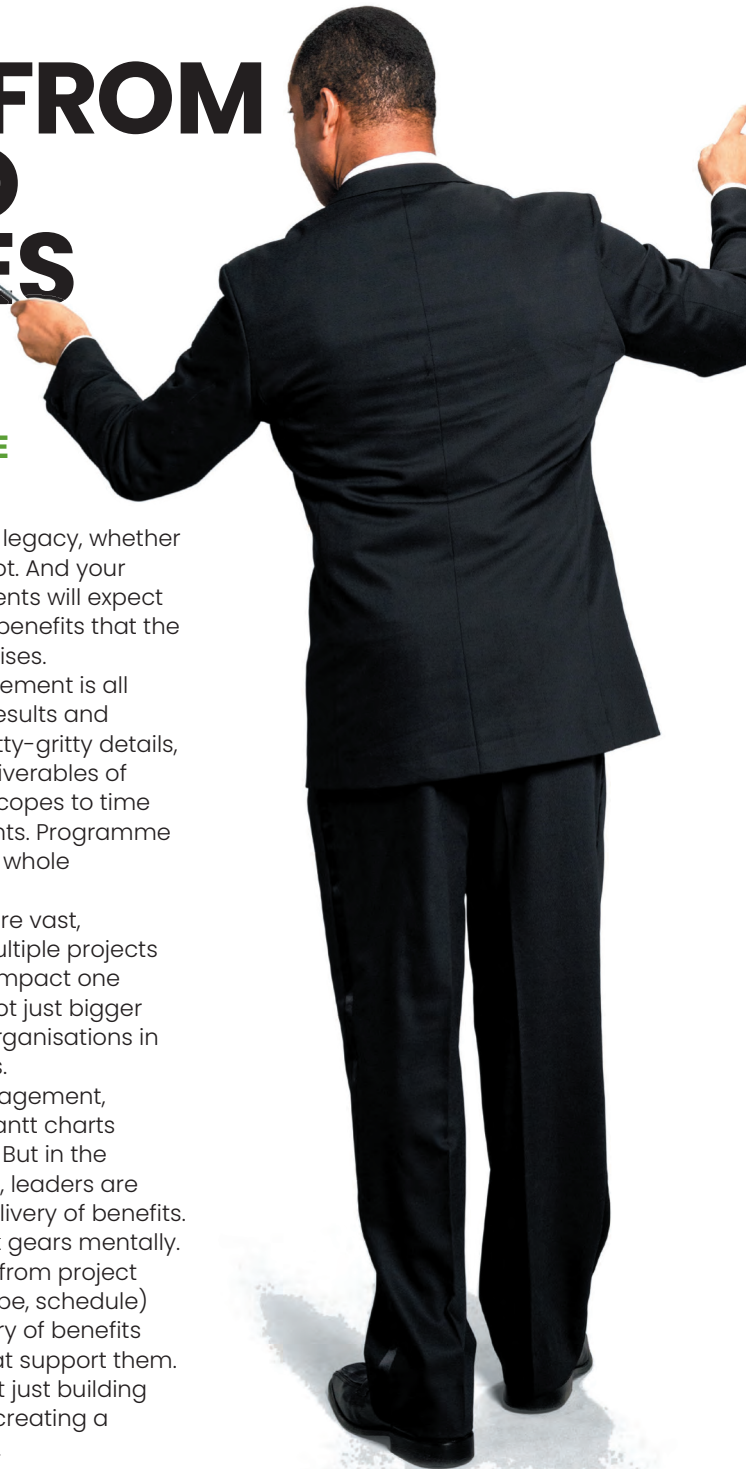
2 Understand the depth and breadth of impact that programmes have

Programmes change organisations and the communities in which they occur. They can even change whole supply chains. Programmes are one of the most (if not the most) complex undertakings for an organisation.

Programme management is as much about strategy as about execution. Ultimately, the success of a programme is measured by the benefits it delivers to the stakeholders. Keep a keen eye on the intended benefits from the outset, and ensure that all projects within the programme are aligned to these goals.

Start practising strategic thinking by asking how each project and initiative under a programme will add to the benefits and outcomes, and how it relates to the delivery of the overall programme. This shift from a purely tactical focus to a strategic one will be pivotal. Don't just think about the immediate outcomes but consider the long-term impact and alignment with the organisation's objectives.

3 Transformational (not transactional) leadership

Your leadership role becomes more strategic. It's not just about the what and the how, but the why. My colleagues and I call it "managing the white space between projects". Our focus is on the benefits the programme will deliver and for whom. We are very aware of the strategic objectives the programme is serving. You will be leading a transformation and so your leadership approach needs be transformational rather than transactional.

One of the first tasks a programme manager needs to tackle is defining how the programme will be governed and the strategy that will be employed to achieve its outcomes and benefits. A programme manager needs to:

- establish governance in consultation with the programme's leaders and key stakeholders to gain buy-in and accountability
- hold themselves and others to a common set of standards and shared goals
- create a culture of mutual respect, collaboration and support
- be mindful of their impact on people, systems and culture
- build trust by walking the walk about ways of working
- collaboratively define mutually beneficial delivery strategies

4 Develop robust risk systems to adapt to uncertainty

Programmes are more complex and longer in duration than individual projects. You'll be assessing strategic risks that could affect the entire programme or organisation, not just individual projects. You'll need to embrace risk and change; encourage a risk-aware culture across the programme; develop contingency plans; and implement processes and systems that take in a wide range of relevant data.

Being able to navigate through ambiguity and make informed decisions with incomplete information is a skill that will serve you well in programme management. This requires a proactive approach, constantly scanning the horizon for potential threats and opportunities, and adjusting your strategy accordingly.

5 Invest in trusted leaders and build capable teams

A strong team is your best asset in programme management. Your main role will be externally focused and will need to rely on a strong deputy and trusted leaders. Invest in building a team with diverse skills and strengths. More importantly, focus on nurturing relationships, fostering open communication and promoting a culture of collaboration. Remember, your role is also to mentor and develop future leaders.

As a project manager, you might have been used to keeping a close eye on all the details. Unlike project management, where teams might be temporary, your programme team will often work with you for years or even decades.

6 Embrace stakeholder engagement and public speaking

You will become the face of the programme. You're not just dealing with project teams and contractors but a broader network, including suppliers, community groups, regulatory bodies and often the

Your journey to becoming an effective programme manager is a marathon, not a sprint

You'll be moving from being a lead performer to being the conductor of a complex ensemble

FERENC SZELEPCSENYI/SHUTTERSTOCK

public. Building and maintaining relationships will be one of your main jobs. You will need to influence sponsors and team members, so spend time polishing your public speaking and presentation skills.

Clear and effective communication is the cornerstone of successful programme management. You'll be dealing with a broader range of stakeholders, each with their own interests and levels of understanding. You will need the ability to confidently:

- connect with stakeholders
- speak to any audience
- understand a wide range of diverse perspectives
- build strong relationships
- align diverse stakeholder interests

Programmes can be massive undertakings that affect communities and attract a lot of money. They bring out the best and worst in people. You will need to tailor your communication style to suit different audiences, whether it's executives, politicians,

the programme team, professional protesters, the supply chain or affected community members.

I have found that having a communications professional on my leadership team saves me from inadvertently stumbling or creating confusion. Regardless, I've 'stepped in it' and I learned early on to develop a thick skin. Programmes will test your resilience. They're more visible, politically charged and fraught with uncertainties. You'll need to adapt to shifting priorities and unexpected challenges.

7 Practise resilience and patience

The transition from project to programme management can be challenging. There will be setbacks and learning curves. Practise resilience and patience with yourself and others. Celebrate the small wins along the way, and don't lose sight of the larger vision. Your journey to becoming an effective programme manager is a marathon, not a sprint.

You're not just levelling up your title; you're levelling up your impact

8 Keep learning and evolving

The world of programme management is dynamic. Best practices are continually evolving. Stay curious and open to learning. Remember that every mistake is a lesson, and every success is a step toward becoming a seasoned programme manager. Find mentors, read books, attend workshops and join communities of practice to learn from other programme managers.

We're a talkative bunch who love to share our stories. The transition to programme management is a journey, not a destination. Remember, you're not just levelling up your title; you're levelling up your impact.

ARE YOU MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR PROJECT DATA?

THE KEY PRINCIPLES REQUIRED TO LEVERAGE YOUR DATA FOR EFFECTIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT. BY SAM EVANS (PROGRAMME MANAGER), GEORGE STEFANOPOULOS (PROJECT CONTROLS MANAGER) AND HABIB KANANI (PROJECT CONTROLS DIRECTOR) OF SYSTRA

The world is awash with data. Every day the tide seems to rise higher in both our personal and professional lives. But how good are we at turning all that data into information we can actually use? Are we looking at the forest or just getting lost in the trees?

Without applying the right analytical skills, data can be worse than useless; it can become noise that at best obscures the truth and at worst leads us astray. But with the right approach, project data can tell us where we are performing well, where we are not, and why. It can help us understand what has already happened, predict what is likely to happen and understand how to take corrective action in a timely manner when things go awry.

So, here's how to maximise the utility of your data as a project professional.

1 Strategically define data needs

What do you need to know? The more distinct your project aims, milestones and performance criteria, the simpler it becomes to pinpoint the data you need. It is essential to recognise the pivotal decisions that will influence the project's outcome, the operational processes that they affect and the key performance indicators (KPIs) they are tied to.
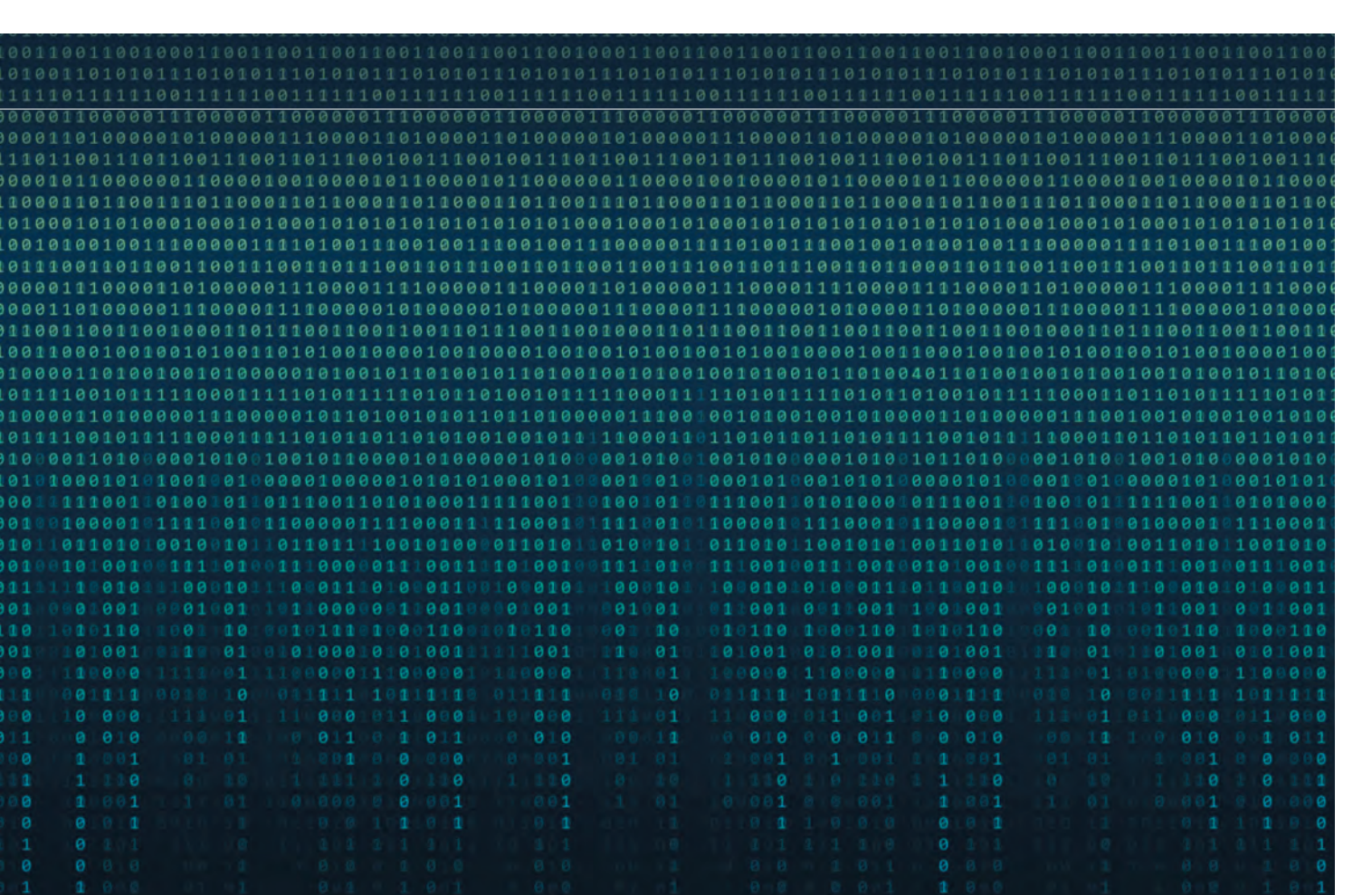
For projects undertaken on behalf of a client, scrutinising and interpreting the contractual requirements is critical. You don't need to tie yourself up in endless, exhaustive discussions with the entire project team, but clarifying the specific data needs of key stakeholders and fully understanding their expectations and intended use of data will take you a long way towards identifying the necessary information for success.

Think about what drives performance in the project and what data and information support the effectiveness of those drivers. KPIs are valuable but they tend to be backward-looking and to describe delivery against a baseline rather than illuminating how the current project status has been arrived at and the implications for future project management. If you read the right data from the essential performance drivers you have identified, the possible reasons for the failure to reach

The more distinct your aims, milestones and performance criteria, the simpler it becomes to pinpoint the data you need

a KPI deliverable become more transparent, enabling you to initiate the right conversations at the right level.

The more integrated your data, the deeper the insights it can provide. It is worth establishing links with key frameworks such as the Work Breakdown Structure as early as possible in the project setup to enable the categorisation of your data into appropriate 'buckets', facilitating integrated, clear and focused insights that support performance management at various levels.

After establishing a clear understanding of your information needs and your project's data structures, the next step is to verify

the availability of the required data. Collaborate with the project team and experts to methodically address your information requirements. Assess who will provide what data. You will often find that data availability hinges not just on systems but also on the maturity of processes and the capabilities of your project team.

Begin by aligning your information needs with project processes, the owners of these processes and the corresponding systems or tools. Identify any gaps in these areas and rank your needs based on their importance to the project's success and its timeline. Collaborating with your team to bridge any gaps is vital, ensuring all necessary data is accessible. While setting up operations early in the project is beneficial, adjustments can still be made during the project's lifespan. But bear in mind that later changes may be more challenging due to the team's entrenched habits and the inertia of established processes and systems.

2 Establish data processes and assure data

Capturing data is only half the battle; processes must also ensure that the data is high quality. Processes should prioritise critical data elements, such as project timelines, budgets and KPIs, and implement standardised methods for data collection and entry, utilising systems, templates or forms to ensure uniformity and minimise errors. Establishing regular routines, such as weekly checks to verify data accuracy and completeness, will maintain the integrity of your project's information.

The establishment of a data governance framework tailored to your project is also critical. This involves creating transparent, straightforward rules for privacy and ethical data handling and assigning clear responsibilities for data-related tasks to specific individuals.

It is essential that project-related data of all types is available from a single, accessible and secure location to ensure everyone is consistently working with the most up-to-date information. These data systems

HOW TO APPLY DATA-LED DECISION-MAKING PRINCIPLES

When leading the planning and project controls function for any major infrastructure project, it is important to apply decision-making principles when collecting and verifying data from several subcontractors and project operational functions:

● Establish a reporting regime with key stakeholder reviews that contribute towards the three levels of data assurance: data owner, reviewer and client.
● Structure meetings and set up a reporting drumbeat to establish the routines that will focus the project team on performance dialogue.

● Establish a contractual monthly KPI meeting for performance discussions: these will help incentivise suppliers and align their systems and processes to the project's data needs. The knock-on effect will be accurate reporting and progress updates that are easily understood at every level of the organisation. These will also help to quickly highlight any interventions required and may reduce the need for on-site progress checks by the management team.

It is essential that project-related data of all types is available from a single, accessible and secure location

should be linked to your project data structures by utilising columns or systems fields to tag the information to the right structure. Shared cloud storage solutions, ideally with customised access controls, can accommodate different levels of data sensitivity and ensure that

THE ROUTE TO SUCCESSFUL DATA-LED DECISION-MAKING

Strategically define data needs
• Define project objectives and strategy
• Identify key performance indicators and critical success factors
• Establish data needs through stakeholder engagement
• Verify data availability and address gaps

Establish data processes and assure data
• Develop data processes
• Standardise data collection and entry
• Implement regular data verification routines
• Establish a data governance framework
• Align data with project structures
• Single source of the truth

Roll out data processes
• Brief stakeholders on processes and tools
• Define and agree data roles
• Assign data and structure ownership
• Establish data-quality check processes

Continuously improve
• Be agile
• Regularly review effectiveness
• Adapt to project context and life cycle changes
• Seek feedback

Tailor reporting for effective outcomes
• Set up efficient reporting tools
• Automate data updates and integration
• Simplify data visuals for executive presentation
• Tailor reports to project phases and stakeholder needs

data is available to those who need it while being protected from unauthorised access. More mature projects may opt for online databases that extract and structure information from various platforms.

3 Roll out data processes

Once your processes have been established, they need to be rolled out. Begin with a kick-off meeting to establish key data needs, assign roles, introduce the tools and define ownership of the processes, data and data structures. Clear guidance on the templates and checklists for data collection and quality assurance will deliver better results.

Everyone must understand their responsibilities and the quality checks required within their teams. Establishing an easy mechanism for team members to report issues or suggest improvements is critical, especially since data owners are often subject matter experts whose insights are invaluable.

4 Tailor reporting for effective outcomes

Automating report processes increases efficiency, saves time and maximises data effectiveness. On one of our major civil engineering projects, for example, we have over 60,000 deliverables. To automate the live update of this data we tagged key milestone activities in the programme and aligned each deliverable to the relevant section of the programme and also to the document control team sending out the deliverables to the client.

The result is a dashboard that automatically tells the project

It is key to be agile as the context and critical success factors of the project change

teams exactly where each deliverable is in the review cycle and also when they need to get the next version of the deliverable to the client. This report has greatly reduced the need for trackers at design-team level, and this data can also be rolled up into specific reports that help the project executive understand the status of deliverables and review trends.

Powerful reporting tools like this can be tailored to the needs of teams at different levels to provide decision-makers with what they need to work effectively.

5 Continuously improve

Once the reporting has been set up and the data is being used effectively, it is key to be agile as the context and critical success factors of the project change. It is unlikely that the insights needed at the start of the project will be exactly the same as at the end.

There needs to be regular review of the reports being utilised by the data owners and the relevant representatives from the project organisation to ensure continued relevance. It is also important to establish feedback loops that enable report users to raise questions or comments regarding the content of the reports.

The key to data-led decision-making is ensuring the data is relevant, correct and presented in a digestible format that leads to insights on project performance. Of course, larger projects have more demanding data needs and require more complex tools, but the fundamental principles are the same at all scales. The appetite for this approach to data-led management within an organisation is ultimately key to ensuring that the right level of executive sponsorship and budget are allocated to invest in the right infrastructure.

FACILITATING EFFECTIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

On a major railway station project, we established multiple operational reports, designed to allow managers to drill down to the level of detail needed to address any operational concerns. To highlight the most critical concerns of the leadership team, we designed a dashboard to summarise data for each discipline, enabling issues to be identified and resolved quickly. To ensure regular dialogue, reports and visuals are created weekly. We make sure reports are relevant to the latest project context and continuously refine output to suit needs. As a result, project conversations are meaningful and decision-making simplified.

Reporting can be seen as a burden or a distraction, because it is too arduous or the project team doesn't believe it's helping to drive the project forward. But effective reporting and use of data should lead to decisions and ways forward that help the project team to progress. Insights from well-structured reports help the project executive to decide on corrective actions that will resolve risks and issues. High-quality data and narrative lead to high-quality insights and decisions.

Indeed, effective data control and reporting empower project teams at all levels to understand the issues better and to make good decisions with less reliance on the project executive.

DELIVERING A LONG-TERM VISION: A 25-YEAR PROJECT TO 'UNLOCK' HIGHGATE CEMETERY

WHAT LESSONS DOES THE WORK TO CONSERVE HIGHGATE CEMETERY HAVE FOR THOSE CARRYING OUT SENSITIVE HERITAGE PROJECTS? BILL MARSDEN, A PROJECT MANAGER IN ARTELIA UK'S HERITAGE, ARTS AND CULTURE PROJECTS TEAM, EXPLAINS

Highgate Cemetery in North London was opened in 1839 to an initial design by architect Stephen Geary. It is one of the 'Magnificent Seven' London cemeteries developed during the Victorian age on what were then the outskirts of the capital, as the city's population outgrew existing graveyards. Dramatically located on a steep hillside, the cemetery has an abundance of Gothic tombs and mausolea, and smaller monuments ranging from the Victorian to the modern.

The cemetery is also a haven for life, from trees and plants to a variety of insects, birds and mammals. It is Grade I listed in Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and has over 80 listed structures, including some at Grade I and Grade II*, with many more of local heritage importance.

Making the cemetery a more rewarding place to visit

The Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust charity is the owner of Highgate Cemetery. Led by a Board of Trustees, who are volunteers, the trust has a small operational team managing burials and looking after the grounds, monuments and buildings alongside the extraordinary efforts of a team of volunteers. The Friends have three aims:

- to preserve Highgate Cemetery as a place of historic and other interest and beauty
- to permit the cemetery to be

used as a public burial ground
- to secure the repair, restoration and preservation of the cemetery for the public benefit

The Board of Trustees has a vision that Highgate Cemetery will remain an active burial ground, while carefully planned conservation works take place to the landscape, including its monuments and other structures, together with the creation of new facilities to make the cemetery a better functioning and more

rewarding place to visit, as well as helping ensure its long-term sustainability. To make this vision a reality, the trust has put in train a project with multiple workstreams, but with one overriding set of objectives, aimed at 'unlocking' Highgate Cemetery.

Unique project, big vision

Since the cemetery's opening in 1839, people have enjoyed the dramatic architecture and sinuous paths of the its landscape. Today, time and climate change have
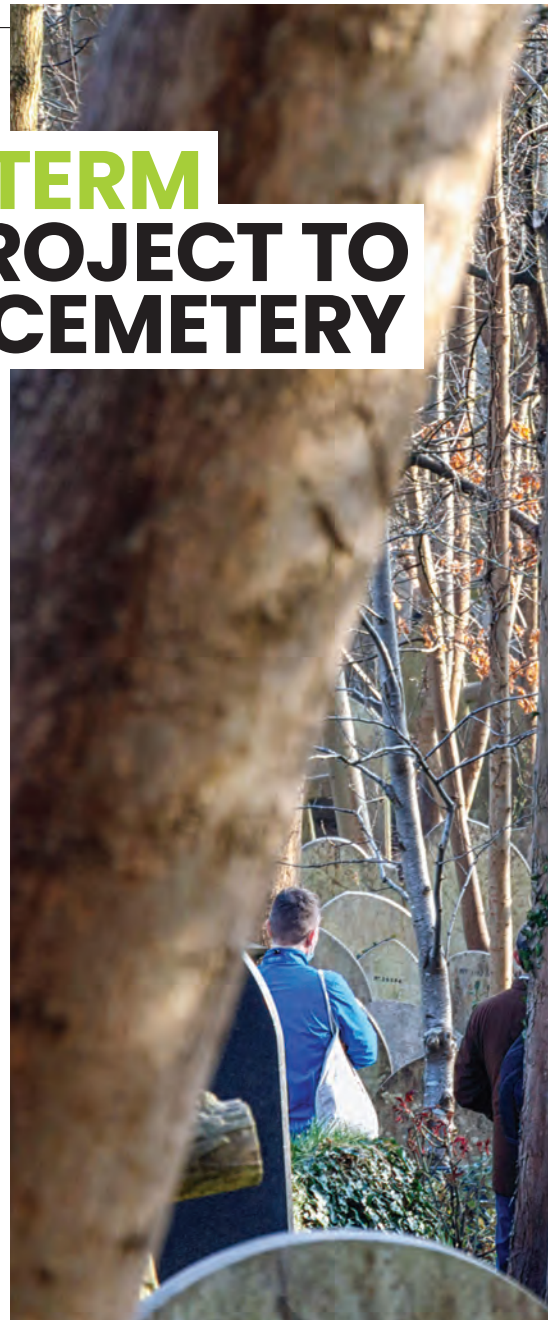
The cemetery has an abundance of Gothic tombs and mausolea, and smaller monuments ranging from the Victorian to the modern

A new heritage interpretation plan will expand the range of stories told, welcoming a greater diversity of people

exposed the fragility of the historic structures, and access to some areas is now difficult or closed. Following the development of a Conservation Plan by Alan Baxter

Ltd, the trust has scoped the project around priorities.

The most urgent needs are the conservation of listed funerary structures, dealing with diseased ash trees, restoring historic views to central London, reopening areas of the cemetery that are currently inaccessible to visitors, and providing an exhibition space for the public to explore nearly 200 years of human stories. This space will be in a part of the Victorian chapel that is currently used as the cemetery's management offices.

All designs are being developed so they help improve accessibility, appeal to a more diverse public and maintain and enhance the cemetery's role as a place of sanctuary. The effects of climate change and ash dieback disease have degraded the richness of the habitat, and the project provides an opportunity to restore biodiversity with climate-resilient planting and improved drainage.

Through the project, the trust will partner with local organisations to develop oracy skills for school

Visiting the cemetery, you feel you are stepping into a different world, an oasis of peace and a sanctuary in a big city

groups, vocational training in landscape management, as well as free online learning resources on universal themes such as grief, memory or celebrity. A new heritage interpretation plan will expand the range of stories told, welcoming a greater diversity of people.

Taking on such a special heritage project

When the trustees embarked on this visionary project, they engaged Artelia UK to help establish processes and the capability to plan and deliver a project that is several orders of magnitude larger and more complicated than any the trust has delivered previously. I am a Project Manager working in Artelia UK's Heritage, Arts and Culture projects team. This team has been successful in restoring or repurposing many historic buildings and delivering exciting and engaging cultural venues. Our experience ranges from medieval castles and 900-year-old cathedrals to creating new buildings and facilities that replicate the quality of the surrounding heritage.

I have been privileged to assist the trust in progressing the special and unique Highgate Cemetery project, which is currently at RIBA Stage 3 (Spatial Coordination). Visiting the cemetery, you feel you are stepping into a different world, an oasis of peace and a sanctuary in a big city. Going there for work, this experience is enhanced, and I see the possibilities for achieving the trustees' vision for the cemetery's future.

The project has four workstreams, as follows.

1 Landscape design. Procured through an international design competition, the landscape design team is led by Gustafson Porter + Bowman, and includes specialists in trees, soil and ecology along with engineers who are designing a new site-wide drainage scheme.

2 Architecture. Also procured via international design competition, this design team is led by Hopkins Architects, with specialists in engineering, acoustics and materials.

3 Conservation architecture. Heritage specialists West Scott Architects lead this design team.

4 Public programming. This work will be led by a new Head of Programmes for the cemetery. Underpinning all four workstreams are stakeholder engagement (led by Steve McAdam), interpretation and the visitor experience (led by Barker Langham) and sustainability (led by Useful Projects). Montagu Evans, experts in town and country planning, are steering the trust through the process of gaining planning and heritage consents, and Huntley Cartwright are the quantity surveyors. The structure of the project team allows experts to focus on their specialist areas and requires particular attention to coordination. The trust has appointed joint project directors to lead this coordination and provide the link between the trustees and the consultant teams, giving strategic direction to the work.

This is a long-term project – the master plan for the cemetery will be implemented over 25 years

With my Artelia colleague Luciele Mendes, I support the project directors in this work.

The trust has been successful with a development phase application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for 'Unlocking Highgate Cemetery', and the project team is making good progress towards a planned delivery phase next year, with work due to start on-site in 2027.

Aside from the heritage listings described above, the cemetery is in a Conservation Area, is designated Metropolitan Open Land (with its openness and character given the same status and level of protection as Green Belt) and is also a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation for London. With

work needing to be planned with great care and precision around the approximately 50,000 graves, it is a sensitive site in which to plan a project.

Durable and sustainable

This is a long-term project – the master plan for the cemetery will be implemented over 25 years. This might be compared with Crossrail (the Elizabeth Line), which emerged from the Central London Rail Study in the late 1980s (there was an earlier east-west tunnel proposal in 1974), with the first trains running through the central London tunnels in 2022. (I did a little work on that scheme myself, in 1989, as a graduate trainee project manager on the land referencing

team). However, if the leaders of that project will forgive me, the Highgate Cemetery project is different in that it is planned to unfold over a long term.

The approaches, methods and techniques being applied to the Highgate Cemetery project will be familiar to any project professional: deep engagement with stakeholders; working with an operational team to ensure their views and expertise contribute to the design and to achieve a 'smooth landing'; coordination of design development and planning advice; procuring a range of specialist consultants; programme scheduling; risk management; reporting and communications.

So what makes this project special? In my view, there are three things: the clarity of the trustees' vision for a long-term sustainable plan based on engagement with the widest possible public; the outstanding project and operations teams the trustees have assembled; and perhaps most of all, the unique landscape of Highgate Cemetery. If you are in or coming to the area, why not book a guided tour and experience it for yourself?

HOW TO TEACH YOUR (ROBOTIC) DOG NEW TRICKS

RISING STAR

CHARLES ORTON-JONES MEETS CHARLOTTE BREW MAPM, A YOUNG PROJECT MANAGER AT SELLAFIELD WHO LED THE ADOPTION OF ADVANCED CANINE ROBOTICS IN RADIOACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, AND WHO WAS RECOGNISED AS A FINALIST FOR APM'S YOUNG PROJECT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Boston Dynamics robot
Atlas is terrifyingly athletic. This metal biped can jog, leap and, in one demonstration, back-flip off a podium to land on its feet like a gymnast. It can drive, climb a ladder and throw objects with precision. Elon Musk saw a video clip of Atlas somersaulting through the air with the grace of an Olympian and commented: "This is nothing. In a few years, that bot will move so fast you'll need a strobe light to see it. Sweet dreams."

Boston Dynamics robots are hailed as the future of warfare. Why endanger humans when a robot can do the same work, faster? DARPA, the US defence research arm, works in partnership with the company. And Atlas (recently reborn as an all-electric model) has siblings. There's Cheetah, a four-footed robot that runs at 28 miles an hour. LS3, tested by the US Marine Corps, which looks like a trotting pony. And the smallest in the range is Spot the dog, which is the size of a Labrador and weighs 32kg.

Spot the dog goes nuclear
Boston Dynamics robots are viewed as projects for the future – concepts under development. Yet at Sellafield, Spot the dog is now a valued member of the team. "We can send Spot into hazardous environments to do work which would endanger a human," reveals Charlotte Brew MAPM, a project

"Spot is not there to replace operators, but rather to keep them out of danger"

manager at Sellafield. "We have a building which hasn't been easily accessible since the early 2000s. A human would need a specialist air-fed suit, and only has limited exposure. We can send in Spot and it can do all sorts of tasks."

Brew is the right person to talk about Spot. She's the reason it's at Sellafield. In 2022, Brew went to a demonstration of industry innovations and noticed the robot canine. She immediately saw its potential. She discussed her ideas with her line manager, presented to

Sellafield's Strategy and Technical Board, won approval and led the adoption of the concept. She worked with the in-house robotics team to understand the nuances of robots in the workplace. She engaged with nuclear regulators and Boston Dynamics, and produced a Primavera P6 schedule on the activities Spot would attempt and those involved in deploying the robot successfully.

In December 2022, Spot entered service. It was the first-ever deployment of a quadruped robot in a radiological area – an impressive feat for any project manager, let alone a 24-year-old. Brew's energy took the project from inception to launch in seven months – and led to her being a finalist for APM's 2023 Young Project Professional of the Year award.

A dog like no other
"It can be programmed to follow routes and go up and down stairs. It can undertake clean-up work. It has an arm attachment for that. The robot can also carry out survey work. We can fit a LiDAR, which is a laser scanner, to make 3D models of the inside of buildings," says Brew. A radiation sensor on Spot adds detail to the image, so engineers can produce a digital model of a site to map key characteristics such as radiation intensity.

Brew's enthusiasm for robot tech is infectious. She even engaged local

CV: Charlotte Brew MAPM

Job title: Project Manager
Education: Technical Degree Apprentice at Sellafield – obtained first-class BEng (Hons) in Plant Engineering with Nuclear Technology at University of Cumbria (graduated in 2022)
Employment: Sellafield, 2017–
Qualifications: APM Project Management Qualification; PRINCE2 Foundation; APM Risk Management (Level 1); University Certificate in Project Scope Baseline Management
Volunteering: Newly appointed APM Deputy Lead for North West Region; mentors project management apprentices, graduates, etc., within Sellafield and works with local schools to promote project management/ STEM subjects

primary schools to evangelise about engineering and nuclear power. "We did a competition to name Spot. The winner was NERD – Nuclear Engineering Robotic Dog!" Footage of NERD/Spot at work is spooky. Brew admits there was a degree of nervousness around the launch. "We emphasised Spot is not there to replace operators, but rather to keep them out of danger. Involving the operators throughout was key and their insight and suggestions were vital to making this such a success. It was also the perfect opportunity for them to learn new skills and be part of this exciting journey."

The ability of Spot to wander into radioactive zones is a huge advantage. A human can tolerate no more than 100 rem, or Roentgen equivalent man, a metric used to estimate the health impact of radiation. A spokesman for Boston Dynamics said: "Ionising radiation has a negative effect on electronics. So with the robot we exposed it to fields that were extremely strong, up to 500 rem per hour, and the robot absorbed the whole dose. We were attempting to cause the robot to fail but the reality is the robot remained

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functional throughout. At this point in time, we don't know what the upper ceiling is."

Brew admits Spot is being pushed to the limit: "Because of the condition of the building there isn't any chance of it coming out again. It's sacrificial!"

Spot is easy to manage. "We can see on the tablet when Spot is running low on charge," says Brew. "When it reaches 10% battery it returns to its charging point and docks simultaneously." With Spot now a feature of life at Sellafield, Brew has moved onwards and upwards. She is now working on a £30m project to renovate the largest roof at the site. "I've worked on a lot of projects," she says. "I've done decommissioning and demolition. Now I'm building things."

Moving on from Spot

Sellafield is a wonderful place to grow as a project professional. The work of nuclear reprocessing is long-term – there are milestones stretching into the next century and beyond. There will be both the opportunity and budget to launch innovations to tackle the vital task of reprocessing the world's nuclear waste.

"I like to see things differently," says Brew. "The potential for robots is endless. We could look at robots taking over the handling of radioactive materials in the near future. Operators could control robots remotely, which would be convenient as Cumbria is quite remote. There are so many opportunities. In 10 years' time, who knows what robots will be able to do?"

CHARLOTTE'S TOP TIPS

1 Seek out opportunities
You can't wait for good things to happen. You need to be proactive. I went to an APM event last year – the Women in Project Management Conference. It helped my career development and progression. I've been selected as Deputy Lead for the North West by APM. My advice is to not be scared of moving around and taking on different projects. I've worked on six projects in the last seven years. As you take on new challenges you'll meet different people, overcome new obstacles and keep growing.

2 Go into the office
Working from home is a big debate right now. There are those who believe they can do their jobs just fine from home. Personally, I go into the office at least three days a week. It is so much harder to have important conversations if

you aren't present. It keeps you connected. I've noticed since COVID-19, a lot of people have lost their confidence. They are not as comfortable talking to colleagues in person. If you go into the office you are building relationships and developing your network while removing the feeling of working in isolation.

3 Work-life balance
It is important to draw boundaries around your professional and personal lives. I know people who have burned out because they couldn't switch off. I think the pandemic made the problem worse. We got used to being accessible at all hours. I have set my own expectations and boundaries. If you don't get the balance right, you are risking your mental health.

4 Mentor and be mentored
Mentoring is important and

beneficial for everyone. One person I mentor just came off the project management scheme and I see so much of myself in her. It gives me great pride to see how well she's doing. We both benefit from the mentoring relationship. I also want to mention how much I loved working with kids on the project to name the robot.

5 Celebrate achievements
Entering the APM Project Management Awards was a great way for me to show what I've accomplished – something that many people perhaps shy away from. It was also great to see what others have been working on and the diversity of projects. Celebrating achievements is important. I was the first person from Sellafield to be shortlisted for the category of Young Project Professional of the Year, and it helped boost my self-belief. Too often, people are shy and hold back. If you've done something worthwhile, it's okay to talk about it and it should be recognised.

CLAIRE WOOD

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 Canada to Nigeria and Kazakhstan! 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.

APM
Chartered Project Professional

Name	Country
Ahmed Abdelaal	EGY
James Aigboduwa	**NGA**
Tom Aldus	UK
Nick Aldworth	**UK**
Munaf Ally	UK
Richard Andrew	**UK**
David Arnold	UK
Katie Bainbridge	**UK**
Anna Baird	UK
David Barnetson	**UK**
Victoria Baxter	UK
Sayara Beg	**UK**
Anne Beven	UK
Elliott Biglin	**UK**
Richard Bishop	UK
Benjamin Bissett	**UK**
Graham Black	UK
Charlotte Blewitt	**UK**
David Brown	UK
Richard Burgham Pearson	**UK**
Oliver Butler	UK
Michael Callaghan	**UK**
Cigdem Candan Emektar	UK
Christopher Cantwell	**UK**
Joanne Chaplain	UK
Wai Shan (Karen) Chiu	**UK**
Ethan Clarke	UK
Tom Commins	**UK**
Vanessa Conway	UK
Monica Corso Griffiths	**UK**
Joanne Costin	UK
Barry Couper	**UK**
Ali Cox	UK
Tamsin Dangerfield	**UK**
Estelle Detrembleur	UK
Brian Dunseath	**UK**
Ines Eiro	UK
Marc Fallows	**UK**
Ade Niyi Famuboni	UK
Mikhail Faskheev	**UK**
Nicholas Field	UK
Alister Gordon	**UK**
Patrick Gorrill	UK
Kerry Grant	**UK**
John Green	UK
Irene Greenwood	**UK**
Joanna Grew	UK

Name	Country
Rebecca Groves	**UK**
Andrew Grunstein	UK
Julio Guedes	**UK**
Anthea Hague	UK
Kristine Harris	**UK**
Nikki Hart	UK
Christopher Harvey-Davis	**UK**
Raja Ahmed Hassan	UK
Christina Haughton	**UK**
Alaleh Rose Haziraei-Yazdi	UK
Patrick Heisel	**UK**
Stuart Hemming-Mitchell	UK
Florence Hickling	**UK**
Andrew Higson	UK
Thomas Holden	**UK**
Dominic Holloran	UK
Mark Hugo	**UK**
Chinthaka Induruwana	UK
Katherine Ingham	**UK**
Supot J	THA
Ian Jackson	**UK**
Mustafa Jaddou	UK
Thomas Jeffery	**UK**
Chloe Johns	UK
Dave Jones	**UK**
Laura Jones	UK
Rajesh Kalra	**UK**
Marcin Kaminski	UK
Symau Kenmegne Tamwo	**UK**
John Kennedy	UK
Rebecca Kerr	**UK**
Hasib Khan	UK
Suresh Kodakkal	**IND**
Luke Krumins	UK
Declan Langan	**UK**
Christine Lazarus	UK
Philippa Lea	**UK**
Caroline Leedham	UK
Vickie Lennon	**UK**
Lokanantham Logitharan	AUS
David Lomax	**UK**
Matthew Longmuir-Smith	UK
Colin Mackenzie	**UK**
Andy Maclachlan	UK
Okechukwu Madu	**NGA**
Djamel Maibeche	CAN
Andrew Makinson	**UK**

Name	Country
Heidi Marinelli	UK
Marta Marjan	**UK**
Paula Marshall	UK
David Marty	**US**
Kevin Mayes	UK
Ciaran McArdle	**IRL**
Tom McDonald	UK
Rory McFadden	**UK**
Joe McGowan	UK
Chris McMahon	**UK**
Neil Meade	AUS
Nathan Melrose	**UK**
Natalie Mendez	ESP
Alex Merryman	**UK**
Sara Midgley	UK
Naomi Mills	**UK**
Paul Monis	UK
James Moore	**UK**
Jason Mullaney	UK
Richard Murray	**UK**
Mike Neary	UK
Kate Neill-Sneller	**UK**
Simon O'Hara	UK
Jamie O'Reilly	**UK**
David Paget	UK
Adam Palmer	**UK**
Matthew Parkinson	UK
Mark Patch	**AUS**
Jaymin Patel	UK
Elizabeth Pattison	**UK**
Shelley Persad	UK
Catherine Porter	**UK**
Matthew Preston	UK
Joe Quinn	**UK**
George Rampersad	US
Alexander Rees	**UK**
Chris Reeves	UK
Aaron Renker	**UK**
Rohit Rewagad	NLD
Ross Rickatson	**UK**
Simon Antony Rippon	UK
Andrew Robinson	**UK**
Paul Robinson	UK
Melisha Rodrigues	**UK**
Andrew Rogalski	UK
Neil Rothwell	**UK**
Josh Roy	UK

Name	Country
Jack Ryder	**UK**
Aaron Sanders	AUS
Sako Sani	**UK**
Michael Scholfield	UK
Fraser Scott	**UK**
Emily Scrivener	UK
Muhammad Faysal Shafiq	**UK**
Dipti Shah	UK
Elizabeth Shepherd	**UK**
David Shillitto	UK
Paul Siemianowicz	**UK**
Craig Silver	UK
Michael Smith	**UK**
Dan Soutar	UK
Rory Southward	**UK**
James Stanford	UK
Robert Stein	**UK**
Neil Stevenson	UK
Ganesh Subramanian	**BRN**
Alexander Tait	UK
Christopher Toft	**UK**
Sacha Tomes	UK
Andy Tyrrell	**UK**
James Vaughan	UK
E Jonathan Waite	**UK**
Georgina Walker	UK
Martin Wallbank	**UK**
Christopher Waller	UK
Alison Walsh	**UK**
Robert Walter	UK
Owen Walters	**UK**
Layla Wanderkoke	UK
Stephen Ware	**UK**
David Wassell	UK
Carrie Anne Waters	**UK**
Alice Willcox	UK
Matthew Willetts	**UK**
Mark Wilson	UK
Samuel Winter	**UK**
Neil Wolstenholme	UK
Matthew Woof	**UK**
Craig Woolley	UK
Peter Wright	**UK**
Elena Yagmurova	KAZ

DEAR SUSANNE

What, in your view, are the differences between leadership more generally and project-specific leadership?

Although there are major differences in the scope of the roles, the elements that make up good leadership and how we interact with our teams are similar irrespective of whether we're responsible for leading a department or a project.

No direct reports

The main difference is that in project leadership, team members don't report directly to you. You are not their line manager and you don't have direct authority over them. This has a number of implications.

First, you're not in a position to give direct orders and tell someone what to do. Whereas that may seem like a disadvantage, it is really an opportunity to practise real leadership, or leading by influencing. Good leadership isn't about giving orders unless you're faced with an emergency

Your primary responsibility is to lead people... Don't let a lack of authority hold you back

or a high-stakes decision. Good leadership is about influencing others to do a good piece of work and helping them feel intrinsically motivated to do so.

At times you may lead from the front by showing the way and setting the example. At others you may lead from behind by coaching someone and helping them find their own answers. These leadership styles are available to both project leaders and general managers.

No appraisals needed

Second, a project leader isn't directly responsible for appraising team members, conducting yearly reviews or helping them progress their careers. These responsibilities sit firmly with the line manager. However, there's nothing stopping you from discussing your team members' aspirations, and I'd strongly encourage you to do so.

Team members aren't just resources; they are human beings whose level of motivation and satisfaction you have a direct influence over. Building a high-performing team requires you to have rapport with your team and to build trust based on the ability to be vulnerable and open with each other.

Project managers who are very task-oriented often don't take the time to get to know their team members. That's a missed opportunity. Good leaders care about the wellbeing of their team and what makes each person tick, irrespective of whether they have direct line management responsibility.

The same applies to feedback. Don't hold back, thinking it's the job of the line manager. In reality, giving feedback is a shared responsibility. As a project leader you have first-hand knowledge about your team members' day-to-day performance, and it's only natural for you to share that feedback. The line manager will then pick up where you leave off, conducting the yearly reviews and discussing aspirations beyond the project.

Susanne Madsen is an internationally recognised project leadership coach, trainer, consultant and author. Her latest book, *How to do the Inner Work* (TCK Publishing), is out now. Read our review on page 72. For more information, visit www.susannemadsen.com

Explain the why *and* the how

When you're a general manager, a big part of the role is to set the vision and the overarching strategy. When you lead a project, the vision and the strategy have already been set. Your job is to make it happen. But even if you're not the one setting the vision, it's essential that you fully understand it and that you impart it to the team.

Team members need to know why they are doing what they are doing. If you're overly focused on what, when and who, you may forget the why. Whether you're a leader of an organisation or a project, your primary responsibility is to lead people. That means relating, empathising, challenging, motivating and inspiring. Don't let a lack of authority hold you back.

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

PROJECT ME

WE ASK PROJECT PROFESSIONALS FOR THEIR TOP TIPS ON STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT. WHAT HARD-WON LESSONS CAN THEY SHARE?

Recognise the evolution of stakeholders
Hayley Butland, Planner & Scheduler, Cooper Moss Rutland
Managing stakeholders effectively requires continuous engagement and understanding of who the key stakeholders are. It is not a one-time effort. Stakeholders change over time and it's important to recognise this evolution and drive it throughout the project life cycle. Utilising familiar stakeholder mapping tools is essential for identifying who is deeply invested in a project and who holds decision-making authority, including notification of any changes to this. Another key lesson is the importance of implementing a clear and consistent communication strategy. Keeping the right people informed at the right time, in the right way, is crucial. Lastly, I remind myself that, while dealing with demanding stakeholders can be daunting, it presents invaluable opportunities for personal and professional development.

Integrate their needs
Joaquin Flores, Regional Client Director, AtkinsRéalis
A robust strategy is pivotal for navigating the demands of clients and stakeholders. It entails a continuous and proactive approach to engage stakeholders positively throughout the life cycle. This involves identifying their requirements and strategically addressing them to align with overarching project objectives. By integrating stakeholder needs into project goals, a sense of shared purpose is cultivated, fostering collaboration and buy-in. Through monitoring and validation of initial intents, trust and respect are nurtured, laying the foundation for enduring partnerships. This approach both ensures project success and strengthens relationships for future endeavours.

Politics with a small 'p'
Dr Alexander Budzier, CEO, Oxford Global Projects and Fellow, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford
Projects rarely fail because of purely technical reasons: it is politics with a small 'p'. And the solution to that is stakeholder engagement. Conventionally, when planning projects, we would ask questions like: 'Does it make economic sense as an investment?' 'Can we deliver it safely?' Now we ask all sorts of great questions like: 'Is it carbon-neutral? What is the human and social value we'll deliver?' All of this shows the increasing socio-political complexity of delivering projects in today's context, and the demand to engage stakeholders in meaningful ways is ever greater. I find that the tricky bit about stakeholder engagement is how genuine it is. If you're coming with solutions and just wanting people to agree with you, they see right through it. You need to approach them with a question for which you don't know the answer and that is mobilising for this particular group. People don't need to agree on the answers, but they need to be moved by the question. And that often means moving away from your preferred answer and engaging together with the problem.

Bespoke communication
Kevin Morgan, Principal Planning Engineer, Carey Group
The key when working with stakeholders is to ensure all parties have a common understanding of each others' needs, perspectives and expectations. This should include the best forms of communication, such as the frequency, whether that's once a day or once a year. The format of communication should also be tailored, understanding what they expect and need. For example, giving someone an essay when they only need high-level bullet points will not help collaboration. Spending time up front to gain this understanding can greatly improve the chances of a healthy working relationship. This requires project professionals to proactively engage with stakeholders, spending time communicating and, more importantly, listening to them to gain an understanding of their views and concerns. By doing so empathetically, respect can be built mutually, improving the chances of collaboration.
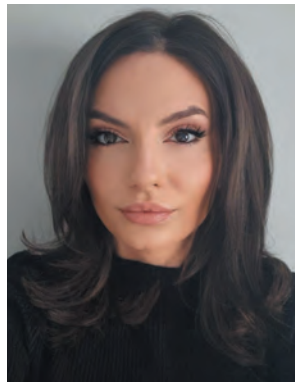
It's all about the soft skills

Flavia Saviatu, Lead Senior Project Professional, Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land

Stakeholder management is a critical component in the successful delivery of any project, programme or activity. It hinges on a set of soft skills such as communication, empathy, negotiation and conflict management. My top tips are:

1 Identify and invest time in analysing and understanding your stakeholders.
2 Understand your project scope, requirements and your stakeholders' interests and priorities.
3 Be ethical, build trust and credibility, and gain respect.
4 Be flexible with your communication style, approach and method.
5 Involve, engage, inform, consult and collaborate.
6 Be proactive, clear and manage expectations.
7 Be patient – building a healthy working relationship takes time.
8 Embrace challenges and adapt.
9 Be realistic.
10 Always invest in expanding your knowledge and experience.

Understand the 'why' first

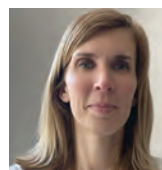**Emeka Okorocha, Founding Partner, iStrat Consulting**

Stakeholder engagement can be like the line of scrimmage in an American football game – the project team with the ball facing off against the defensive stakeholders. On the whistle, we wait for the crunch and the fight for possession of the deliverables, either to drive them home or to take them in the opposite direction! Managing stakeholders begins long before the appointed stakeholder engagement period. You need to understand the project from the stakeholders' perspective and the benefits it brings to them. To quote the Simon Sinek model, you need to sell the 'why' before the 'how' and the 'what'.

Become a detective

Kate Davis, Senior Lecturer, Cranfield University

"If you don't laugh, you cry." Effective stakeholder management involves detective work to identify everyone involved, like remembering the guy from accounting who loves Comic Sans. Understanding stakeholders' needs is crucial, akin to realising your partner prefers burgers over Italian food. Prioritise stakeholders like VIPs, ensuring CEOs are invited but skipping unnecessary guests. Tailor communication to avoid email mishaps, and manage expectations realistically. Trust-building is delicate like a soufflé, requiring reliability to avoid a collapse. Involve stakeholders in decisions, akin to a reality show vote. Handling conflict is like defusing a bomb; staying calm is vital. Continuously monitor and adjust your approach, injecting humour to ease the process for all involved.

Get to know them

Donna Unitt, Head of Delivery, Rocket Consulting

In my experience it's important that you make sure you have identified all of your stakeholders. This is not a one-off exercise. Spend time getting to know your stakeholders and understanding their needs and whether they support your project or not. You need to know who to focus your efforts on. Who are your key stakeholders? What do they need? What are their expectations? What are their current pain points? Is there anything within the project you are delivering that can help them? Not all stakeholders will need the same level of engagement – you want to get the key ones and a critical mass on your side. You need to empathise with them about how their world will change due to your project. It's really useful if you can anchor on things that they will continue to do in the new world; this will make it easier for them to frame what they will stop doing and then what they will start doing when the change comes in.

PROJECT: TO REGENERATE A TOWN CENTRE

ISAAC BAMFIELD VOLUNTEERS AS A COUNCILLOR FOR THE TOWN OF BERKELEY AND HAS TAKEN ON A PROJECT TO REVITALISE THE TOWN'S HEART AND SOUL

Berkeley, Gloucestershire, is a rural town with around 5,000 residents. It boasts the historic Berkeley Castle, which is the site of the gruesome murder of King Edward II in 1327, and less famously where some of the *Johnny English* movies were filmed. Berkeley has also been slowly coming back into the news: it has been announced that it will be the site of a new 'small modular reactor' nuclear cluster.

Setting up for success

I have been volunteering as a councillor for the town since 2021. After settling into the political joys of monthly council meetings, I set about looking for a project where I could utilise my skills in project management, but also give something back to the community.

For over 10 years, the council had been looking to regenerate the town centre but had failed, mainly because it had been trying to do this on a major scale. I set about defining a revitalised plan with strategic intent and splitting the scope into deliverable stages. This allowed me to communicate a clearer vision of the project in terms of its delivery.

Establishing governance and endorsement

I set up a committee to act as a steering board, which I chaired. This committee would then report and have all key decisions sanctioned by the main council (acting as sponsor) – to follow the local government legislation. I outlined and agreed terms of reference with the committee, ensuring it provided clear accountability for decision-making.

First, the committee updated existing plans focusing on a smaller, more manageable area. We did this by using consultants who had previously been involved. Once a clearer vision had been established, the newly formed Town Regeneration Committee needed to engage with its main stakeholders: residents and businesses. To that end, we took the revitalised plan through a public consultation in June 2022. I found this process helped me learn about public consultation engagement and the requirements for client delivery in the public sector, and get to know my community better.

I set about defining a revitalised plan with strategic intent and splitting the scope into deliverable stages

Making Berkeley better

The plan focuses on key benefits to Berkeley, such as making it safer, greener, more accessible and more enjoyable to spend time in. It includes: a new market area, with new access to cross the road and speed-reduction techniques to benefit pedestrians; bike facilities and resting places; and planting and green areas.

The public consultation was positive and received plenty of feedback. I used my project experience to categorise the feedback so it could be summarised and reported back to the council coherently. The committee agreed that further community engagement opportunities should be set up.

Integrated planning and people

With the committee in full flow, groups broke off to focus on considering risks and opportunities, capturing these in spreadsheets later reviewed by the committee. I helped the team focus on a phased risk approach to ensure a short- and long-term perspective could be considered. This also allowed suitable focus on appropriate mitigation at the right time.

Another group started considering funding applications and researching key features of the project to make it attractive to investment and its wider setting and benefits for the community. I used my project negotiation

experience to mediate regular differences of opinions and focus on the project goals. Because everyone apart from the Town Clerk was a volunteer, it was important individuals were involved and felt part of the team and wider picture to deliver the vision.

Working out the finances

With estimates for the work at around £2m, obtaining this would be difficult in a struggling economy. I explained to the committee members how the project itself should be set up with distinctive phases, using the APM structure of Concept, Definition, Deployment and Transition. Key milestones were aligned to these phases and all key decisions were sanctioned through the main council.

The first phase has now been completed, which created a full Concept with the highways team (around £55,000). The second Definition phase is the detailed design and procurement also using the highways design framework (around £250,000). The Deployment phase would then cost over £1.7m, but with all the plans and a clear fixed price in place, the funding would be easier to apply for. Reviewing funding routes, one of the main contributors was a Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy held by the district council. The

> **I explained that the project should be set up using the APM structure of Concept, Definition, Deployment and Transition**

committee carried out an extensive application and then canvassed with the local MP and applied for various funding, ultimately receiving over £300,000 to complete the first two phases.

Defining a procurement strategy was key. The design and construction would require major work by the local highways authority. The committee had several engagements with this major stakeholder and learnt how it would need to approve and own the highways modifications. Understanding this set-up, it was decided to harness the existing local highways design framework to develop the design for tender and support the contractor procurement.

Controlling deployment

The project is entering the now fully funded Definition phase and is also planning for a second public consultation before procurement begins for a contractor. Change has been constant, and I have been

advising the committee to keep a clear record of decision-making.

The developed plans outline the rearrangement of the highways, crossing and traffic-calming locations, as well as the new recreational community area. Many of the changes have been safety requirements (e.g. bus turning circles). The community will have a further opportunity to provide feedback on this design before its final development for the Deployment (construction) phase.

Forward focusing

In March 2024, I went to Parliament to lobby and discuss the final stage of funding with the local MP Siobhan Baillie and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Government Simon Hoare MP. This was a fantastic opportunity to meet some of the key people in the government and understand the importance of the different areas to get community funding for key projects like the Berkeley regeneration.

Volunteering has given me valuable insights for my career, as well as benefiting my local community. I would recommend anyone to volunteer for their local town or parish council.

Isaac Bamfield is a Senior Project Manager at AtkinsRéalis

IN THE LOOP

MOVIES OFTEN TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT GETTING PROJECTS DONE. THIS FILM ABOUT WESTMINSTER AND WHITE HOUSE POLITICS TACKLES THE QUESTION: HOW DO YOU STOP A PROJECT YOU HATE? BY RICHARD YOUNG

Most modern historians dispute A J P Taylor's argument that the principal cause of the First World War was railway timetables. His rationale? The massive mobilisations required for all-out war in 1914 demanded such complex and interconnected logistics that it was impossible not to proceed once there was a tiny chance of conflict breaking out. Any delay, and the timetables wouldn't work, leaving the generals to re-plan everything.

We've all worked on projects like that. The rationale is shaky; the goal perhaps unclear; the resources uncertain. But key pieces are in place and might not be again for the foreseeable future, so we go! Armando Iannucci's 2009 film *In the Loop* is a cinematic variation on his Westminster satire *The Thick of It* (see *Project*, spring 2024, issue for an article on how to manage project politics). The film adds political expediency to the above mix – again, something most project professionals know only too well – and the result is a tragicomedy with lots of lessons for us.

The set up: Simon Foster, the UK Minister for International Development (played by Tom Hollander), makes the mistake of saying something interesting in a radio interview – calling imminent conflict in the Middle East "unforeseeable". Naturally, the Prime Minister's Director of Communications, Malcolm Tucker (Peter Capaldi), is horrified at this unsanctioned statement.

What Malcolm knows (but Simon doesn't) is that there's a decent chance that hawkish forces in the US government will push for an invasion (the country is unspecified). The spin doctor exists to control the narrative, even when the narrative is "anything and nothing is possible". But the project we're looking at here is securing a declaration of war. The project manager is US State Department official Linton Barwick (David Rasche). And the focus of our attention is project management politics – specifically, whether and how you can derail a project you think is bad.

The anti-iron triangle

Sabotaging a project requires discipline and cunning. When the railway timetables (time), massed armies (quality) and huge cost of mobilisation (money) align, shifting the balance – even when you know the project is doomed – can be a mountain to climb. The anti-project manager in *In the Loop* attempting to do that is Karen Clark (Mimi Kennedy), a rival of Linton's in the State Department. She knows how terrible a war is going to be because her aide Liza Weld (Anna Chlumsky) has produced a well-researched report – *Post-War Planning: Parameters, Implications, and Possibilities* (PWPPIP) – explaining why.

So how might we describe the 'anti-iron triangle'? How do you set up roadblocks to a project? One interpretation might be to reverse the traditional measures. You simply say the project will cost too much, fail to deliver and take too long. But that just results in an argument about forecasting. Still, Karen does enlist the help of dove-ish General George Miller (James Gandolfini), when he explains that the US army simply couldn't field enough troops to make an invasion practical (failing 'quality'). But they never even use that fact in their joint attempts to stop the war project. It's merely a rationale for their efforts.

Another way to look at Karen and General Miller is as a project governance team. That does tick some boxes: they're inside the organisation and knowledgeable about its operations, but not on the project. They (theoretically) have some powers of oversight. And they report up to the board (the senior politicians). But the lack of valid governance structures, or a clear mandate, make it impossible for them

> ## The UK Minister for International Development makes the mistake of saying something interesting in a radio interview

to operate that way. They're up against political operators who can ensure it won't work.

Instead we see them try three different anti-project measures: uncertainty, complexity and transparency.

Tactic 1: Uncertainty

One big problem for the project is that the US – and by extension the desperate-to-please UK Prime Minister – needs evidence to justify an invasion, otherwise the UN won't mandate it. Malcolm is asked by his boss (a key project sponsor, but who never appears in the story... sound familiar?) to conjure up some intelligence for that purpose. This is critical: when project sponsors themselves are playing fast-and-loose with project governance, the chances of getting the project stopped fall dramatically.

But that uncertainty about the intel is gold for the anti-project team. The more so, since General Miller's attempts to convince Linton that the project is fatally flawed are neutralised when the State Department hawk

simply avoids coming into contact with him. He knows the uncertainties will be a problem, so finds ways never to confront them. That's why the PWPPIP report is so crucial – because it introduces questions about the rationale with well-evidenced findings.

Tactic 2: Complexity

Miller rejects the idea of leaking PWPPIP; but Simon's feckless special adviser Toby Wright (Chris Addison) is the unwitting agent of chaos here – which is their second tactic. The more complex a project gets, and the more stakeholders are invited in, the less chance it has to succeed. For example, Toby accidentally reveals to CNN the existence of the war committee – resulting in dozens of people showing up to its meeting and forcing the hand of the Linton project team. (*In the Loop* coined the term 'room meat' to describe people invited to a meeting simply to make it look more important; the more room meat, the higher the prestige of the meeting, but the lower its chances of achieving anything.)

Karen also uses this tactic. As soon as Simon makes his "conflict is unforeseeable" gaffe, she sees the UK MP as a useful pawn in gumming up the project – calling it "internationalising the dissent" to the war. What she means is, introducing more moving parts to the project to hurt its chance of success. Sadly for her, Simon is so feckless and changeable that far from confusing matters, he becomes a whipping boy for all the factions.

Tactic 3: Transparency

Sunlight is the best disinfectant, the saying goes. Perhaps – but is it also the best way to kneecap a project you don't like? Leaking plays a crucial role in the movie, and although General Miller baulks at giving the PWPPIP report to the press, Toby decides to do it. True, his motive is an attempt to assuage his guilt over being unfaithful (with the author of the report) to his peace-party girlfriend by giving it to her and encouraging her to pass it on to the BBC.

News of the leak – and imminent publicity for the dodgy basis of the

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decision to invade – does indeed panic the project team. Malcolm strong-arms the UK ambassador to the UN to accelerate the vote on the war to get it done before the report is broadcast, then hastily reverses the decision to give himself enough time to fabricate intelligence that might justify the invasion.

The irony is that the dodgy dossier is compiled using the PWPPIP by removing all the caveats – like taking garden shears to a project risk register. So, ultimately, the attempt to show the project's faulty foundations to the world and put a stop to it ends up being the tool that allows it to proceed.

Politics is everything

The film's message for project managers is clear: forget iron triangles; don't worry about the details. In most situations, a project is defined by politics. Project managers who can manipulate, scheme, obfuscate and cajole are much more likely to get their work through the organisation's various checkpoints than those who can't. And don't assume that the light of truth, rationality and (dare we say it) ethical conduct will either sustain or derail a project in the face of a smart political operator.

Professionalism in project management is critical to contradicting

the film's message. Discipline and clarity of purpose – whether it's clear project scoping, solid user buy-in, strong governance structures, sponsor engagement or efficient operations – with a strong code of ethics, are the best bulwarks against politicking.

That doesn't mean politics isn't important. At the very least, understanding it is a valuable skill for the project manager. But there are those in every organisation for whom the politics (and their personal aggrandisement) is everything. *In the Loop* is full of them – and as the film makes abundantly clear when Malcolm's dodgy dossier convinces the UN to sanction a war, they don't care what the implications of their successful project are.

The anti-project fails. The war will proceed. Karen is the only one to resign in protest. Her ally, General Miller, declares he won't. Now they're at war, his "boys" in the army need him. Simon tries to resign after finding his conscience far too late – but is fired for a minor scandal by a jubilant, vengeful Malcolm before he can. And Simon's fate is the biggest warning of all: if you back a project hoping for personal advancement, commit. If you don't take control of the situation, the situation takes control of you. And then? Well, you're just room meat.

MAXIMUM FILM/ALAMY; PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY

NEW BOOKS, RECOMMENDED FAVOURITES AND PODCASTS TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED

HOW TO NAVIGATE AI AS A HUMAN LEADER; LEARN WHY ANSWERS TO OUR PROBLEMS LIE WITHIN US; AND WRAP YOUR EARS AROUND OUR NEW PODCAST SERIES ON THE NATIONAL TRUST
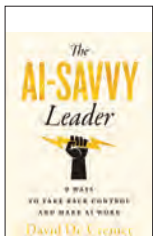
The AI-Savvy Leader
David De Cremer (HBR Press)
This is an essential roadmap for leaders in the era of artificial intelligence (AI), advocating for a leadership style that harmonises human empathy with technological efficiency. David De Cremer confronts the challenge of integrating AI into businesses not as a technical hurdle, but as a leadership and cultural one, emphasising the need for leaders to adapt and oversee AI strategies that align with organisational goals and ethical considerations. This book is not about the intricacies of AI technologies, but rather about applying fundamental leadership skills in an AI-driven context.

The author highlights the crucial role of empathy, illustrating how AI, despite its efficiency, currently lacks the ability to comprehend and respond to human emotions and moral dilemmas. He gives an example of an instance where a leader's understanding of an employee's late arrival due to a human tragedy starkly contrasts with AI's emotionless adherence to rules. This contrast underpins the argument that, while AI can augment efficiency and decision-making, the nuances of human empathy and ethical judgment are irreplaceable.

De Cremer also argues that leaders must possess a foundational understanding of AI and data analytics to effectively communicate with technical teams and ensure that AI applications are aligned with the company's strategic objectives and ethical standards, without needing to be data experts themselves. This knowledge enables leaders to ask the right questions and guide their teams in implementing AI solutions that enhance rather than undermine the organisation's core values and missions.

Inclusion and trust are pivotal themes in the discussions on AI adoption. De Cremer stresses the importance of involving employees in the AI transformation journey, advocating for transparency and education to demystify AI and highlight its strengths and limitations. By fostering an inclusive environment, leaders can mitigate resistance and build a culture of trust towards AI, encouraging a symbiotic relationship between human employees and AI systems. His insights on inclusion aim not only to enhance operational efficiency but also to uphold ethical standards and ensure that AI serves as a tool for empowerment, rather than exclusion.

This book is an easy-to-implement clarion call for leaders to step up and navigate the AI revolution with a balanced approach. It values human intuition and empathy alongside technological advancement. De Cremer's work is a testament to the belief that successful and ethical AI implementation relies on the wisdom and moral compass of human leaders, not machines. An indispensable guide for leading organisations into the AI-driven future with confidence and integrity.

Review by James Garner, Global Head of Data, Insights and Analytics, Gleeds

★★★★⯪

How to Do the Inner Work
Susanne Madsen (TCK Publishing)
This is a well-written book and a must-have for every executive. It will also be an asset for those currently working their way up to executive level, who can use the tools presented in this book to better prepare them for what life challenges lies ahead.

This book is of particular interest for addressing problems. It was interesting to read that we are likely to attempt addressing problems from the outside, when we should be addressing them from the inside, as addressing from the outside cannot provide us with

the desired solution. Author Susanne Madsen highlights that the answers to our problems lie within us. There were several moments when I had to pause while reading this book, just to reflect on what is being communicated, so that I can bring some of the concepts into my consciousness.

It was interesting to read that she had experienced challenges and burnout just like most executives. She uses her experience to share tools (inner toolbox), knowledge and solutions that can take us out of low self-esteem/unhappiness. Madsen writes that we often get ourselves caught up in something that is not authentic to us because we are trying to please other people.

I thought I was the only one who gets caught up in this, just like many other behaviours that we feel are unique to us. This book makes me realise that I am not alone in my desire to be an effective executive, which has sometimes left me being overwhelmed and burnt out. I am pleased to have been able to try some of the solutions presented in the book. These have helped me to reassess myself from the inside out and strengthen my inner self.

One thing that comes across strikingly in this book is the need for self-care. Self-care takes time, and no matter how busy life gets, we must find time for it – one thing we executives are not used to. With the level of experience, tools and knowledge shared in this book, I believe Madsen can help us to unlock and untangle those clusters that will prevent us from making the progress that we need to make, so that we can heal from the inside out, rediscover our real selves and be empowered to live life more effectively.

Review by Yetunde Adeshile, Founder/CEO, The Next Chosen Generation, and Director, RJ Emmanuel

★★★★★

My Bedside Books
Yaeger Irwin, Founder, Bloom Project Management

Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway
Susan Jeffers (Vermilion)
Jeffers' writing shines with clarity, offering strategies to re-evaluate risk and navigate the emotional responses to various scenarios. She adeptly encourages readers to draw lessons from their experiences and, importantly, to cherish and express gratitude for the connections and moments we encounter. If you're on the verge of a significant decision, considering a new direction or simply aiming to enrich your daily life, this book is an essential read.

Key Person of Influence
Daniel Preistley (Rethink Press)
In business literature, the power of personal storytelling is a recurring motif. Priestley's book stands out by offering a concise and effective strategy for leveraging one's experiences to add value within their field. It provides a roadmap for defining your professional identity and capitalising on industry trends to enhance your visibility. Packed with innovative ideas and practical tools, this guide is essential for those aiming to amplify their professional presence.

How to Kill Your Family
Bella Mackie (The Borough Press)
This novel is an engaging and entertaining read that adeptly balances dark comedy with a suspenseful narrative. Featuring Grace Bernard, a protagonist whose lack of remorse and clever dedication to vengeance captivates, the book skilfully navigates through chilling twists. You will find yourself, surprisingly, cheering for Grace! The novel offers a much-needed reprieve from the pressures of daily life and professional expectations. Recommended for those seeking an escape and light-hearted relief.

We're all ears – podcasts to listen to

APM Podcast
Our new mini-series on the National Trust takes the APM Podcast into new territory. *Project* Editor Emma De Vita goes on location at Dyrham Park house and gardens near Bath, and to a National Trust community garden in East London, to discover what it's like to work on both heritage and urban projects at the charity. Over three episodes, we cover the project management journey from apprentice up to strategic project management leader at the Trust.

The Urbanist
Monocle editor-in-chief Andrew Tuck hosts this weekly guide to improving our cities, covering mobility, place-making and more. Recent episodes include a discussion on whether sporting developments bring about community change and have a lasting legacy (see our 'Perspectives' piece on the Paris Olympics, page 14) and an episode on two projects redefining urban areas: Canada Water in London and work in suburban Helsinki.

Political Currency
In this general election year, why not listen to a former Chancellor and former Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne and Ed Balls, from opposite sides of the House of Commons discuss the economic ramifications of politics (with a strong injection of insider gossip)? The two former despatch box rivals give a lively unpicking of weekly events.

Solving the project puzzle: find the picture on the box!

EDDIE OBENG ON GINGERLY TRYING TO FIT TOGETHER THE PIECES OF A PROJECT, WORKING THROUGH THE DISMAY AND EXTRA WORK UNTIL HE FINDS THE OVERALL VISION

A friend got me hooked on Jan van Haasteren jigsaws. Drawn by the Dutch comic strip artist, they are close to impossible to complete, with hundreds of characters acting out chaotic scenes. The insane challenge I set myself is never to look at the picture on the box. In that way I transform a painting-by-numbers project into a more 'foggy' one.

Everyone prefers leading a different type of change. When we have to lead a type of change that is not our favourite, we don't do a great job. Are you a Quest-Pioneer, Paint by Numbers-Adapter, Movie-Craftsman or Fog-Innovator?

As an Innovator, I relish the unclear, so all I know when I start is that I have 1,000 or so pieces. How do they fit together? How should I organise them? In a big pile? Which one should I pick up now?

You may face an analogous challenge, but perhaps not by choice. For many of us, over the years or through training, we've acquired hundreds of pieces: critical paths, project planning, programme assessment, stakeholder engagement, transformation embedding, agile retrospectives, the list goes on.

A virtual butler?

Recently, I've been told that we could train an artificial intelligence (AI) as a butler – to bring you the appropriate tool as needed. But if you know anything about AI, you will know that it has no memory, no ethics and routinely makes stuff up. Would you want the success of your project to be dependent on that?

Unless you are amazingly lucky, chances are, your change challenge will involve other people. Other people are notoriously creative in finding ways to disrupt the smooth flow of change and resist it. But I believe human ingenuity in making your life tough still outstrips AI's ability to propose patterns.

But some skills, concepts and frameworks seem to crop up in every project, such as stakeholders, team leadership, coordination, risk removal, etc. Foggy projects focus first on stakeholders; Paint by Numbers projects on planning; Quests on leadership; and Movies on learning, so we all know which pieces to pick first.

But what of the others? Without the picture on the box, do you, like me, have to gingerly try out each piece to see if fits and experience the dismay and extra workload when it doesn't?

All aboard

So, imagine my joy when I found the box picture. The image is a sort of map of an

If you know anything about AI, you will know that it has no memory, no ethics and routinely makes stuff up

underground system. Out in the 'suburbs' is the 'Zone of No Hope', with concentric zones towards the centre each increasing in likelihood of project success up to the 'dead-cert' centre.

There are eight transit lines to choose from, but it's probably worth starting down the blue line: the Purpose and Change Type line. Climb aboard at the Reason for Change Terminus. Travel through the Change Type Identification,

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the Value and Benefits and the Scope Check, where you ensure that the project activity is actually the solution to the identified challenge. Continue through Future Proofing, where the project is shaped so it doesn't create unintended bad consequences, to select the best Approach depending on the Type of Change you're tackling. Then switch to the next line.

The green line (the Stakeholder line) starts at Stakeholder Identification, passing through Stakeholder Engagement, Stakeholder Risk, Hard Success Criteria Setting, Prioritisation and Soft Success Criteria Setting. You can change at Setting and Agreeing Ground Rules for the white line (the Organisation line). If you continue to Securing Budget, Decision and Risk Resolution and past Expectations Management, you reach success!

The other lines are: the brown (the Learning and Review line that takes you from a Just-in-Time Healthcheck of your current professional capability to success); the red (the Planning and Risk line, from Overall Risk via Catching up on Late or Overspent Projects to success); and the yellow (the Circle of Consolidation line). The black (Leadership and Teams line) begins with the Leaders' Preference Audit.

As an Innovator, I'm best suited to Foggy projects.

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