PROJECT MANAGEMENT CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM MAY 1-2, 2025

2025 Project Management Symposium Papers

ISSN: 2378-9377

Papers are arranged alphabetically by title

AI-POWERED ARCHITECTURE
DESIGN AND PROJECT AGILITY

Abstract

Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and techniques in Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) project management has transformed traditional design and construction workflows. This paper examines how AI technologies can optimize project management processes across different phases of architectural projects, emphasizing their role in enhancing design efficiency and construction agility. Through case studies and comparative analyses, the paper demonstrates how AI tools address project uniqueness while maintaining standardized management protocols. The discussion encompasses various applications, from generative design platforms to construction monitoring systems, highlighting their impact on decision-making, resource allocation, and stakeholder communication. While acknowledging implementation challenges, including initial costs, and learning curves, the paper provides some implementation challenges, limitations, and strategic recommendations for successful AI integration in AEC project management.

Keywords

Design efficiency – Construction monitoring – Project agility – Artificial intelligence

INTRODUCTION

The architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry is one of the largest industries in human activities. There are many factors shaping the significance of this article. Among these factors is that construction management plays a large sector in the economy worldwide. According to the McKinsey Global Institute (2017), construction represents 13% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), they expected to rise to 15% in 2020. Meanwhile, 7% of the working population worldwide has access to a wide variety of career opportunities due to construction projects. Despite its economic importance, it presents a great shortage in productivity and technology use in comparison to other products and services in the realm of Industry 4.0 concept, which is the fourth industrial revolution where automation and data interchange is the tendency (Fonseca et al., 2024). The other obvious factor is that workers in this field are always exposed to threats related to health, mechanical injuries, chemical hazards, and others (Kulkarni, 2007). Therefore, researchers have emphasized the necessity of construction management for safety control and accident prevention (L. Zhang et al., 2021).

Construction has historically been characterized by its reliance on traditional methodologies and practices. However, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has initiated a paradigm shift in how projects are managed, designed, and constructed. This article discusses the integration of AI tools in AEC project management, focusing on their impact on enhancing design efficiency and construction agility, while addressing the implementation challenges and strategic recommendations.

The AEC sector is known for its complexity and the uniqueness of its projects. Each project often presents a different set of challenges, requiring tailored management approaches amplified by AI-driven agility to navigate their independent inherited complexities. This complex nature is shaped by different variables like schedules and timeline, climate considerations, local building codes, resources availability and allocation, and budget fluctuations (Amaro & Domingues, 2023). Moreover, the cultural requirements which necessitate iterative stakeholder engagement to align design iterations with community values or functional needs, adding layers of communication complexity (Baudoux & Safin, 2024). Also, local building codes introduce compliance checkpoints and permitting

workflows that vary by region, affecting stakeholder coordination and approval timelines (Cengizoglu, 2024; Ching & Winkel, 2021; J. Zhang et al., 2025). Traditional project management methods often struggle to keep pace with these unique demands. These factors collectively ensure each project operates within a unique ecosystem of constraints, necessitating adaptive workflows facilitated by the introduction of artificial intelligence systems (Senjak Pejić et al., 2023).

AI technologies, with their ability to learn from data and assist in decision-making, offer promising solutions to these challenges. The deployment of generative design algorithms enables rapid iteration of building prototypes optimized for climate-specific parameters, such as solar exposure and thermal performance, by processing thousands of design variants in minutes—a task requiring months of manual analysis (Rane, 2023). Local building code compliance benefits from AI-powered regulatory scanning platforms that reduce permitting delays through real-time code analysis and automated documentation workflows (Ching & Winkel, 2021). Also, cultural requirements are addressed via AI-enhanced stakeholder engagement tools, which analyze community feedback patterns to streamline design iterations while preserving cultural integrity. Budget fluctuations are managed through machine learning algorithms that perform real-time cost-benefit analyses, enabling rapid value engineering without compromising design intent. These AI applications create adaptive project ecosystems, where predictive analytics and automated workflows compress decision-making cycles while maintaining compliance and stakeholder alignment—critical for delivering architecturally distinct projects within volatile constraints (Adeloye et al., 2023).

The current state of the art technologies linked to Industry 4.0, such Building Information Modeling (BIM), virtual and augmented reality, drone technology, and machine learning, are beginning to be used in construction projects all over the world. In line to this developmental path, Artificial intelligence is expected to serve as the central component that unifies all these technologies (Fonseca et al., 2024).

AI IN AEC PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing Construction Engineering and Management (CEM) by addressing the industry's growing complexity and demand for efficiency. AI enhances decision-making, resource allocation, and operational workflows through advanced data analysis, automation, and predictive modeling. In project planning, AI-powered tools can improve scheduling accuracy and cost estimation, reducing delays and budget overruns by up to 40% through proactive risk management and optimized resource utilization (Gudibandi, 2025). During execution, AI integrates with Building Information Modeling (BIM) to streamline workflows, detect potential conflicts, and ensure real-time monitoring of progress and safety compliance (Azanaw, 2024). Additionally, AI's ability to analyze vast datasets enables predictive maintenance, sustainability optimization, and stakeholder satisfaction improvements (Aladag et al., 2024). These innovations not only reduce project durations but also enhance quality and safety standards, marking a transformative shift in how construction projects are managed.

In the context of project management, Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the use of algorithms and machine learning models to analyze data, automate tasks, and optimize decision-making processes. AI excels in tasks such as predictive analytics, scheduling, cost estimation, and risk assessment by identifying patterns in historical and real-time data. Generative AI (GenAI), on the other hand, is a subset of AI that focuses on creating new content or solutions based on input parameters. In project management, GenAI can generate multiple design options, simulate “what-if” scenarios, or propose innovative workflows tailored to specific constraints like budget or timeline. While AI enhances efficiency by improving existing processes, GenAI drives creativity and innovation by developing entirely new possibilities. Therefore, they serve distinct but complementary roles, offering unique capabilities tailored to different aspects of project execution. Traditional AI focuses on analyzing existing data to optimize processes, predict outcomes, and automate routine tasks. For example, AI-powered tools are commonly used for scheduling, risk assessment, cost forecasting, and monitoring construction progress in real-time. These systems rely on historical and real-time data to identify patterns and provide actionable insights. In contrast, Generative AI goes a step further by creating new solutions

or designs based on input parameters. In construction management, GenAI can generate multiple design options optimized for specific constraints like budget, material efficiency, or sustainability goals. It enables project managers to explore innovative solutions quickly and test "what-if" scenarios that would be time-intensive with traditional methods. While AI enhances decision-making by refining existing processes, GenAI fosters creativity and innovation by generating entirely new possibilities, making it particularly valuable in early design stages and resource optimization efforts. Together, these technologies drive efficiency, reduce costs, and improve project outcomes across the construction lifecycle.

The advent of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has ushered in a transformative era for the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry, significantly enhancing design efficiency and construction agility. Generative AI technologies enable project managers to automate complex design processes, allowing for rapid exploration of multiple design alternatives based on specified parameters and constraints. This capability not only fosters innovation but also optimizes resource utilization and reduces time-to-market for construction projects. Furthermore, generative AI facilitates real-time data analysis and predictive modeling, which enhances decision-making and improves project management workflows. As a result, project managers can respond more effectively to dynamic project requirements and stakeholder needs, ultimately leading to improved project outcomes and increased competitiveness in the market. However, the successful integration of these technologies necessitates a shift in skill sets and a commitment to continuous learning among project managers to fully leverage the potential of generative AI in their workflows. Integrating AI into AEC project management not only streamlines workflows but also enhances overall project outcomes. AI's predictive capabilities enable teams to foresee potential challenges and adjust plans proactively.

From a design standpoint

In recent years, the integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into various sectors has transformed traditional practices, particularly in project management. Generative AI design is an AI-driven process that allows architects and engineers to input design goals and constraints, after which the software generates a variety of design solutions and alternatives. This technology can dictate enhanced decision-making

processes, optimize resource allocation, and improve collaboration among project stakeholders. This capability not only enhances creativity but also optimizes the design based on performance criteria, such as sustainability and cost-efficiency. In the design phase, generative AI can assist in optimizing material selection by evaluating various materials against project requirements such as cost, sustainability, and performance. By generating recommendations for the most suitable materials, AI helps reduce waste and ensures that resources are used efficiently throughout the project.

Generative AI design can enhance decision-making in project management through analyzing vast datasets and identify patterns that humans may overlook then offer data-driven, optimized solutions that improve efficiency, creativity, and risk management, making informed decisions (Bock & Linner, 2015; Yazdi et al., 2024). By leveraging algorithms capable of generating multiple design options based on input parameters like site constraints, material properties, energy efficiency goals, and budget limits, generative AI empowers project managers to make informed decisions early in the project lifecycle. This approach reduces manual iterations and accelerates the design process while ensuring that selected designs meet functional and regulatory requirements. Additionally, generative AI integrates with Building Information Modeling (BIM) to simulate construction workflows and assess constructability, enabling project managers to foresee potential conflicts or inefficiencies. Furthermore, generative AI facilitates stakeholder alignment by visualizing complex scenarios in real-time, enabling faster consensus on design choices and project priorities. For instance, Zhang et al. (2021) highlights how AI can evaluate historical project data to predict potential risks and outcomes (L. Zhang et al., 2021). By simulating various scenarios, project managers can assess the implications of different strategies, leading to more effective planning and execution. Also, Autodesk reported that AI tools helped by 36% in facilitating data-driven decision-making for sustainability initiatives (Autodesk, 2020).

Machine learning systems also automate code compliance checks by cross-referencing 3D BIM models with real-time regulatory databases, reducing permitting delays by up to 40%. For stakeholder alignment, natural language processing tools analyze community feedback to identify cultural priorities, enabling designers to adjust spatial configurations without

compromising project timelines. These technologies collectively shift projects from linear waterfall approaches to iterative, data-driven cycles where design intent and constructability constraints are continuously balanced (Cassens & Kofod-Petersen, 2006; Jia et al., 1999).

Resource Optimization: Effective resource management is a cornerstone of successful project management. Generative AI can assist in optimizing resource allocation by analyzing project requirements and available resources. According to some researchers, AI algorithms can predict the resource needs of various project phases, ensuring that teams are neither overstaffed nor under-resourced (Abioye et al., 2021). This leads to improved efficiency and cost savings. In 2020, Autodesk reported that AI tools help organization in the AEC field by 44% (Figure 1) for optimizing energy consumption and efficiency (Autodesk, 2020). Building Information Modeling (BIM) also supports cost optimization by analyzing material usage and construction methods to minimize waste. The automation of routine tasks is another significant benefit of generative AI in resource optimization. By automating functions such as scheduling, reporting, and documentation, project managers can focus on strategic decision-making rather than administrative duties. This shift not only enhances productivity but also reduces the likelihood of human error, leading to more accurate resource management (Iorio, 2025).

Generative AI employs predictive analytics to forecast resource needs throughout the project lifecycle. By analyzing historical data and real-time metrics, AI can predict the quantity and type of resources required at different project phases. This foresight helps project managers allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that teams are neither overstaffed nor under-resourced, which can lead to cost savings and improved project timelines (Samsami, 2024).

Improved collaboration among team members and stakeholders is also vital for the project's success. Generative AI tools facilitate communication and collaboration by providing real-time data and insights. For example, AI-driven platforms can create shared digital environments where team members can visualize project progress, share documents, and communicate effectively (Pillai et al., 2022). This transparency fosters a collaborative culture, allowing for quicker adjustments to resource allocation as project needs evolve.

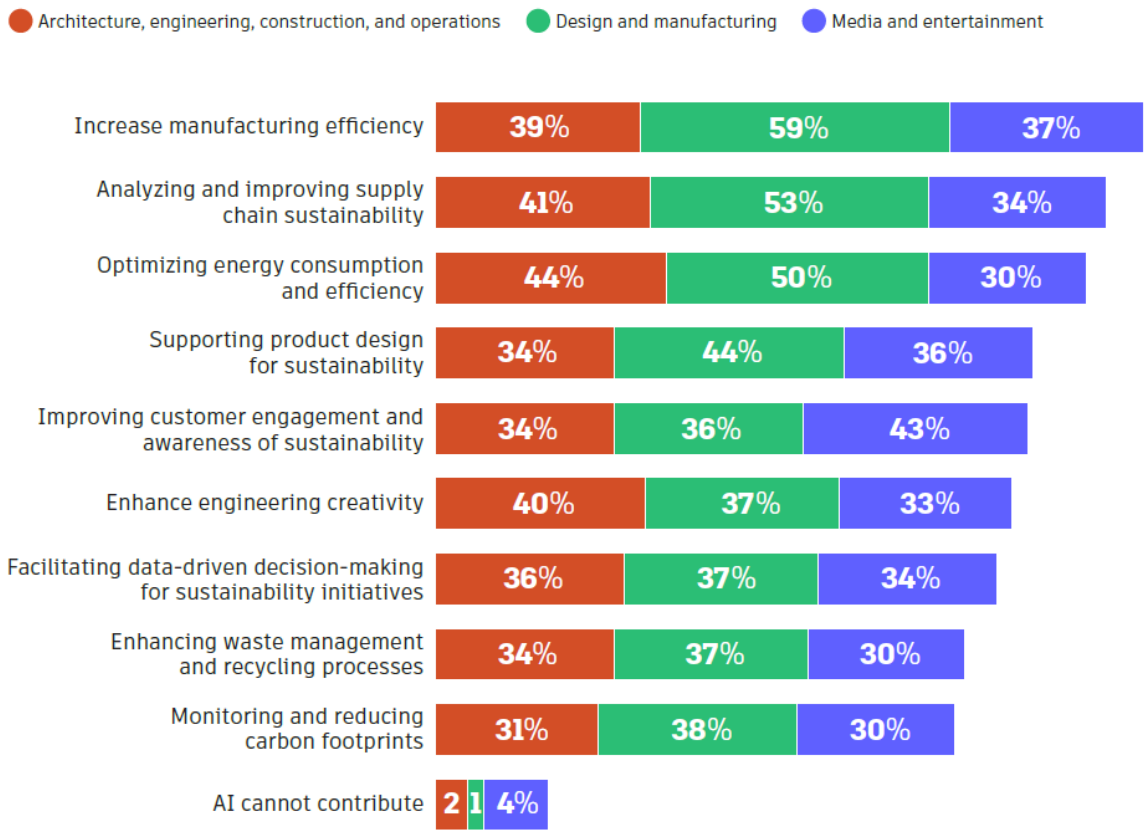

Figure 1: Percentages of how AI tools helped the AEC industry (Autodesk, 2020)

Architectural design is one aspect of the construction sector that has not been covered. There are excellent examples of how AI tools help architecture, despite the fact that this is a very creative and human process. Parametric and generative design are two instances of how AI may support architecture. When using parametric design, the user gives the AI the parameters that need to be resolved. The user can change the parameters, and the system displays the results of each iteration. In generative design, the user suggests problems for the AI to answer, and the system provides the best answers via simulation and iterations (Fonseca et al., 2024).

Enhancing Design Efficiency

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and techniques into the Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) industry has significantly transformed design efficiency across both project planning and execution phases. By automating processes, enhancing decision-making, and facilitating real-time data analysis, AI contributes to a more streamlined and adaptive design workflow. Two distinct levels where AI impacts design efficiency include project planning through platforms like PlanGrid and RiskWatch and project execution through tools such as Smartvid.io and Doxel.

At the project planning level, AI enhances design efficiency primarily through improved data management, collaboration, and risk mitigation. PlanGrid, a construction productivity software powered by AI, allows for the seamless sharing and updating of blueprints, documents, and reports. It automates version control and ensures that design teams operate with the most current project information, thereby reducing rework and delays due to miscommunication or outdated documentation. AI-powered features also facilitate automated tagging, issue tracking, and document comparison, improving coordination among stakeholders and accelerating design validation processes. Another tool like RiskWatch contributes by employing AI to assess safety, compliance, and operational risks during the planning phase. It utilizes historical data and predictive analytics to forecast potential risk scenarios associated with design choices, such as material selection, structural configurations, or environmental conditions. This proactive risk identification allows for early-stage design modifications, reducing the likelihood of later-stage disruptions. As a result, design efficiency is improved not only through better-informed decisions but also by reducing the downstream impact of risks, which can often lead to costly redesigns or construction delays.

On the project execution level, AI applications such as Smartvid.io and Doxel further enhance design efficiency by enabling real-time feedback loops between field conditions and the original design. Smartvid.io employs computer vision and machine learning algorithms to analyze site images and videos for safety violations, construction defects, or deviations from the design plan. By identifying these issues early and flagging them for immediate action, Smartvid.io helps to maintain alignment with the intended design while

minimizing the need for rework, which can delay project timelines and strain budgets. Doxel, on the other hand, leverages autonomous robots and AI to monitor project progress through 3D scanning and computer vision. It compares real-world construction progress against digital design models (such as BIM), providing accurate and timely insights into whether projects are being executed as planned. By delivering real-time variance analysis and productivity metrics, Doxel enables teams to make rapid adjustments that preserve the integrity of the original design intent while ensuring schedule adherence. This contributes to an iterative and responsive design process, where field data continuously informs and refines execution strategies.

In summary, AI technologies in the AEC industry fundamentally reshape design efficiency by bridging the gap between planning and execution. In project planning, tools like PlanGrid and RiskWatch enhance coordination and foresight, while in execution, Smartvid.io and Doxel ensure that designs are faithfully implemented and adapted in real time. Collectively, these tools (among many) support a data-driven, adaptive approach to design, reducing waste, improving collaboration, and ultimately leading to higher-quality outcomes in the built environment.

Construction Monitoring Systems

As AI evolves, so do the ways we work. AI technologies also play a crucial role in construction monitoring. Systems equipped with AI can analyze data from construction sites in real-time, helping project managers identify issues before they escalate (Ogunbukola, 2024). These systems utilize computer vision and machine learning to monitor progress, ensuring adherence to schedules and budgets (Rahimian et al., 2019).

A comparative analysis of traditional monitoring methods versus AI-powered systems reveals significant improvements in efficiency and accuracy. Projects utilizing AI monitoring reported a 25% decrease in delays and a 20% reduction in budget overruns, demonstrating the effectiveness of these technologies (Ogunbukola, 2024).

One of the recent technologies (among many) that can enhance the idea of real time monitoring in construction sites is drone technology. One of its applications is LiDAR sensors. LiDAR sensors have revolutionized the way the built environment is scanned and

modeled, enabling precise real-time monitoring that transforms construction workflows. By emitting laser pulses and measuring their return time, LiDAR generates dense point clouds, 3D collections of spatial data points, that capture intricate details of structures, textures, heights, colors, and levels (Figure 2). These raw point clouds are processed into mesh models (interconnected 3D surfaces) using algorithms and software, creating actionable visualizations for construction teams (Mukherjee et al., 2021).

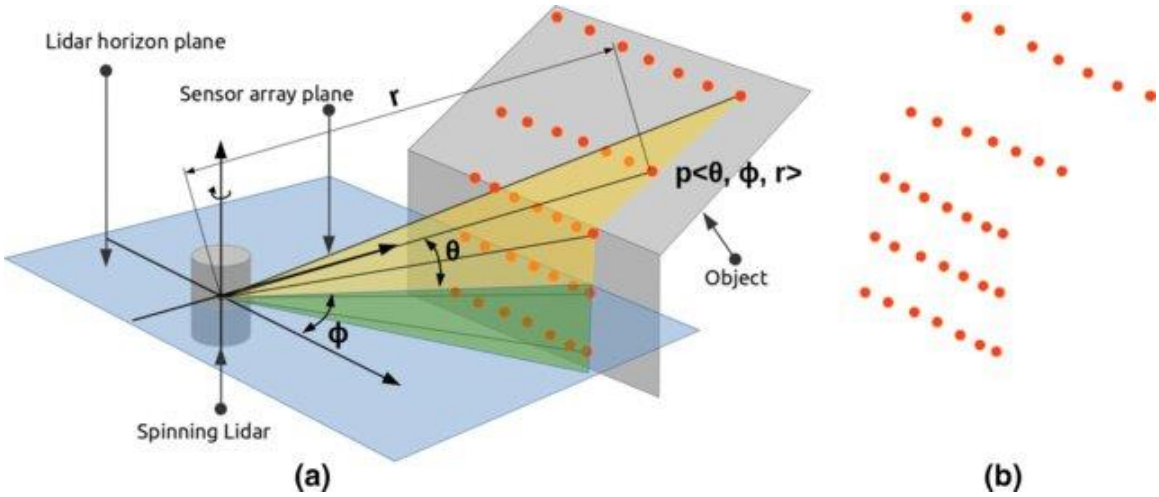

Figure 2: LiDAR Point Cloud Scanner (Mukherjee et al., 2021)

Once captured, point clouds are transformed into textured mesh models through software that interpolates surfaces and fills gaps. These models integrate with Building Information Modeling (BIM) systems, allowing direct comparison of as-built conditions against design plans. For instance, Geospatial Artificial Intelligence's pipeline combines LiDAR with SLAM technology to create real-time digital twins of construction sites, enabling geometric feature extraction and progress tracking (GeoAI, 2023).

LiDAR's ability to frequently update site models—even daily—supports proactive decision-making:

- Progress Tracking: By comparing as-built point clouds with BIM designs, deviations (e.g., misplaced structural elements) are flagged instantly. Case studies show this reduces manual inspections by 30–50% and minimizes rework costs.
- Defect Detection: Sub-centimeter accuracy identifies issues like flatness variances or rebar misalignments early. Automated systems, such as those tested by Laing O'Rourke, detect 1-mm defects from 20 meters away, preventing costly delays.
- Resource Optimization: Real-time data on earthwork volumes or material stockpiles enables precise budget allocation. For example, LiDAR-derived topography maps help planners avoid unexpected soil-leveling expenses.
- Safety and Collaboration: Daily scans provide stakeholders with unified visual updates, reducing miscommunication. The RESEPI drone-mounted LiDAR system, for instance, streamlines reporting for architects, contractors, and clients.

In summary, LiDAR bridges the gap between physical and digital worlds, offering construction teams unprecedented clarity and control. By enabling real-time insights into site conditions, it reduces risks, enhances efficiency, and ensures projects stay on schedule and within budget (Wang et al., 2015; Westling et al., 2020).

Enhancing Construction Agility

The agility of construction processes is enhanced through real-time data analysis and adaptive planning facilitated by AI. For instance, AI can analyze weather patterns to optimize construction schedules, reducing downtime due to adverse conditions (Zhou, 2022).

During construction, AI-powered predictive analytics forecast supply chain disruptions and labor shortages, allowing dynamic rescheduling through digital twin simulations that model alternative workflows. AI-powered predictive analytics can significantly enhance construction agility by enabling data-driven decision-making throughout the project lifecycle. In the complex and dynamic environment of construction, unpredictability is a common challenge. AI techniques, especially machine learning and probabilistic models, can analyze large volumes of data from past and current projects to forecast potential delays, cost overruns, equipment failures, and safety hazards. By identifying these risks early, project managers can proactively adjust, minimizing disruptions and improving

schedule adherence. Predictive analytics also support real-time monitoring of construction activities. Using data from drones, sensors, and building information modeling (BIM), AI systems can continuously assess progress and predict future outcomes based on current trends. This capability allows for timely interventions, improving the overall responsiveness and flexibility of the construction process. Moreover, by leveraging historical data, AI can optimize resource allocation, reducing inefficiencies and enhancing productivity. For instance, intelligent scheduling models can adapt to changes in real-time, ensuring that labor, materials, and equipment are deployed effectively. In this way, AI-powered predictive analytics not only helps mitigate uncertainty but also drives agility by enabling construction teams to respond swiftly and accurately to evolving project conditions (Pan & Zhang, 2021).

Based on the case study of the "Annual Airline Gala" in the paper Navigating the Power of Artificial Intelligence in Risk Management, AI demonstrates a clear advantage over human experts in managing complex risk scenarios (Figure 3). The case study highlights how AI, specifically the GPT-4-based system referred to as AICE, not only matched but in some respects surpassed the performance of seasoned human experts in workplace health and safety (WHS) assessments. First, the AICE system was able to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment in under a minute. It processed detailed image data and textual inputs to identify a broad range of hazards, from physical and environmental to health and security risks. Its recommendations were not only swift but also highly specific, tailored to the event's unique spatial layout, the phases of event execution (setup, live, and teardown), and jurisdictional safety standards in New South Wales, Australia. In comparison, human experts took considerably longer to complete a similar evaluation, involving multiple specialists and a more resource-intensive process.

One significant strength of the AI system was its consistency and comprehensiveness. It provided control measures that covered all aspects of risk, including fire safety, crowd control, food handling, emergency response, and equipment setup. The AI also ensured regulatory compliance, citing appropriate standards and assigning clear responsibilities to specific roles—facilitating smoother implementation. Moreover, the AI system offered practical innovations like preemptive hazard identification through image analysis (e.g.,

trip hazards from cords or crowding risks based on floorplans), which traditional human assessments may overlook due to limited time or visibility. AI's ability to merge visual data with contextual information, such as social media trends or historical safety incidents, further enriched its risk insights, making its assessment not just reactive but truly predictive.

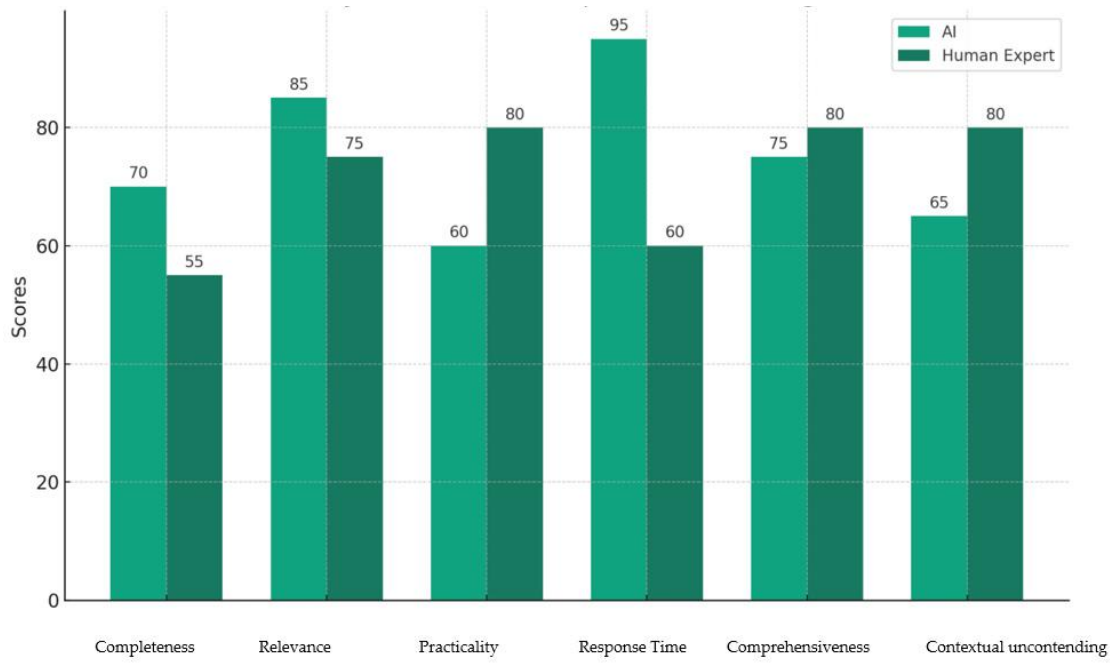

Figure 3: Comparative Scores between AI and Human Expert in Risk Management (Yazdi et al., 2024)

Despite its superiority in speed, scope, and systematic coverage, the study did recognize AI's limitations, especially in areas requiring deep contextual interpretation or ethical judgment. Human experts, with domain-specific experience, were better suited for nuanced decisions involving stakeholder communication, ethical dilemmas, or improvisation under uncertainty. However, the AI's ability to support these experts with fast, reliable, and regulatory-aligned assessments marked it as a transformative tool.

In conclusion, the case study provides compelling evidence that AI can enhance—if not outperform—human experts in specific domains of risk management. The AI system's strengths in speed, accuracy, and integration of visual and regulatory data make it an

indispensable tool for complex, dynamic environments like construction, events, and industrial operations. While not a replacement for human judgment, AI acts as a powerful augmentation to traditional expertise, creating a synergistic model of future risk management (Yazdi et al., 2024).

CHALLENGES, LIMITAIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in project management within the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry presents both significant opportunities and formidable challenges. While generative AI has the potential to enhance design processes and improve construction agility, its implementation is often hindered by various obstacles. These include high initial costs, the complexity of AI tools, limited domain-specific knowledge, and concerns regarding data privacy and intellectual property rights. Additionally, the traditional mindset prevalent in the AEC industry may lead to resistance against adopting new technologies, further complicating the integration process (Samsami, 2024). To navigate these challenges effectively, project managers must adopt strategic recommendations that include investing in training and reskilling programs, fostering a culture of innovation, and implementing pilot projects to test AI applications on a smaller scale before full deployment. By addressing these challenges proactively and embracing a strategic approach to AI integration, project managers can unlock the transformative potential of generative AI, ultimately leading to improved project outcomes and enhanced competitiveness in the industry (Ghimire et al., 2024; Samsami, 2024).

Implementation challenges

While the benefits of AI integration are substantial, several challenges must be addressed to ensure successful implementation in the AEC sector (Mohamad Sopi & Hanizun Hanafi, 2024). The initial cost is one of the biggest challenges faced in this field. The initial investment required for AI technologies can be a significant barrier for many firms. Costs associated with software acquisition, training, and infrastructure must be considered. The initial cost is one of the most significant challenges faced in the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry when implementing generative AI technologies. Many firms, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, view the substantial upfront

investment required for AI as a formidable barrier to entry. This initial expenditure encompasses various components, including software acquisition, which often entails licensing fees for advanced AI tools tailored to project needs. Additionally, organizations must allocate funds for comprehensive training programs to ensure that staff are adequately equipped to utilize these new technologies effectively. Infrastructure investments, such as upgrading hardware and ensuring robust data management systems, further contribute to the overall financial burden. This multifaceted cost structure can deter firms from adopting AI solutions, despite the long-term benefits they may offer. As such, project managers must carefully evaluate the return on investment and explore potential funding options or partnerships to mitigate these financial challenges and facilitate the integration of generative AI into their workflows (Balasubramanian et al., 2021; Ghimire et al., 2024).

Moreover, the complexity of AI tools often necessitates extensive training for staff, which can lead to significant resistance to change within organizations (Bock & Linner, 2015). Employees may feel overwhelmed by the prospect of adopting new technologies, particularly if they lack familiarity with AI concepts and applications. This apprehension can result in a reluctance to engage with generative AI systems, ultimately hindering their effective implementation. To mitigate this issue, organizations must invest in comprehensive training programs that not only familiarize staff with the technical aspects of AI tools but also emphasize the strategic advantages these technologies offer. Such programs should include hands-on workshops, online resources, and continuous support to foster a culture of innovation and adaptability. By equipping employees with the necessary skills and knowledge, organizations can alleviate fears associated with change, enhance employee confidence, and promote a more collaborative environment where AI tools can be effectively utilized to improve project outcomes and operational efficiency (Adepoju et al., 2022).

Deploying AI Limitations

AI is widely used in the construction industry and almost all phases of the construction project; it is necessary to investigate the level of resistance and the benefits of its application. It is very important to explore further strategies to overcome the barriers and justify the investment of monetary resources and efforts to apply AI in AEC. Table 1 shows

the advantages and obstacles when implementing the subfield of artificial intelligence in different construction project phases (Senjak Pejić et al., 2023).

Table 1: AI advantages & limitations categorized by field (Senjak Pejić et al., 2023)

AI field	Application advantages	Limitation
Machine learning	Relevant predictive and prescriptive insights	Incomplete data
	Increasing efficiency	Learning from streaming data
	Reduction of costs	Working with high-dimensional data
	Improving security	Model adaptability
Computer vision	Faster checks and monitoring	A complete understanding of the entire scene
	Higher precision, reliability, and transparency	Recognition of equipment or work activity
	Higher cost efficiency	Improvement of tracking accuracy and effective visualization of tracking results
Automated planning and scheduling	Cost reduction through process improvement, better logistics	High cost of implementation
	Increasing productivity	It can be complex
	Reduction of planning effort	Representing knowledge necessary for models, monitoring issues, integration, etc.
Robotics	Increased security	High initial investment
	Increased productivity	Potential job loss during automation
	Increased quality	Unstructured work environment
Optimization	Increased productivity through process optimization	Requires significant computer powers
	Increased efficiency	A question of scalability

Strategic Recommendations

To ensure the successful integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in project management within the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry, a series of strategic recommendations can be implemented. First, organizations should prioritize comprehensive training, reskilling and upskilling programs for their staff to increase their competitive advantage (Adepoju et al., 2022). This will not only enhance employees' technical proficiency but also foster a culture of innovation and adaptability, ensuring that

team members are comfortable and confident in using AI tools effectively (Adepoju et al., 2022; Otani, 2024; Regona et al., 2022). Investing in training and ongoing support is crucial for overcoming learning curves. Providing staff with resources and access to experts can foster a culture of innovation and adaptability. Establishing partnerships with technology providers and research institutions can enhance access to innovative AI tools and expertise, facilitating smoother integrations (Bock & Linner, 2015).

Additionally, firms should consider establishing pilot projects that allow for testing AI applications on a smaller scale before full deployment. Such initiatives can help identify potential challenges and areas for improvement, enabling project teams to refine their approach based on real-world feedback. Collaboration with technology providers can also facilitate smoother integration, as these partnerships can offer insights and support tailored to specific organizational needs (Abioye et al., 2021). Implementing pilot programs allows organizations to test AI tools on a smaller scale before full deployment. This approach helps identify potential issues and refine processes.

Moreover, organizations should remain vigilant about evolving industry standards and regulations surrounding AI technologies. This proactive approach will help ensure compliance and build trust among stakeholders. By adopting these strategic measures, AEC firms can not only overcome the barriers to AI implementation but also unlock its transformative potential, ultimately leading to improved project outcomes and enhanced competitiveness in the industry.

CONCLUSION

The integration of AI tools in AEC project management marks a significant advancement in the industry, fundamentally altering how projects are conceived, designed, and executed, especially in what we call now Construction 4.0; the fourth industrial revolution (Adepoju et al., 2022). By optimizing design processes and enhancing construction agility, AI technologies offer substantial benefits that can transform traditional practices. These innovations streamline workflows, improve decision-making, and enable real-time monitoring, ultimately leading to better resource allocation and reduced costs. This transformation is redefining job requirements in terms of skilling and adaptability of the

human capital. According to the World Economic Forum in 2018, there will be 133 million new roles introduced in the construction industry that will be distributed between human, machines and algorithms (WEF, 2018). However, addressing the challenges of implementation is critical to realizing these advantages. Project managers must navigate initial costs, learning curves, and resistance to change to successfully adopt AI solutions. In this evolving landscape, it is imperative for project managers to reskill themselves, adapting to the technological transformation within the industry. This includes developing competencies in data analysis, understanding AI applications, and learning to leverage new tools effectively. By investing in their professional development, project managers can enhance their strategic decision-making abilities and drive their teams toward successful project outcomes. Through strategic recommendations and a commitment to continuous learning, AEC firms can position themselves for success in an increasingly competitive market, ensuring they remain at the forefront of innovation while meeting the unique challenges posed by each new project.

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UMD Project Management Symposium

From Vision to Reality: Building a Project Management Core to Support Scholarly Research

Jamie Wylie[1] and Rebecca Brouwer[2]

[1]Jamie S. Wylie, Director, Duke Office of Research Initiatives, Duke University, Box 102846, 2812 Erwin Rd, Durham, NC, 27705; jamie.wylie@duke.edu

[2]Rebecca J. Namenek Brouwer, Assistant Vice President for Research, Duke Office for Research and Innovation, Duke University, Box 90037, 421 Chapel Dr, Durham, NC, 27708; rebecca.brouwer@duke.edu

ABSTRACT

The growing complexity of scholarly research has increased administrative burdens on faculty, often hindering efficiency and productivity. To address this, Duke University established the Research Project Management Core (RPMC), beginning with a one-year pilot providing project management (PM) support to eight faculty members. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 86% finding the support beneficial.

Building on this success, the RPMC launched a centralized model, growing to six full-time staff in its first year and delivering over 6,000 hours of support to more than 40 faculty members. Operating on an effort recovery financial model, the RPMC offers flexible, cost-effective services that accommodate researchers' limited budgets. The part-time, scalable structure ensures faculty receive high-quality PM support without excessive costs.

The RPMC's success demonstrates the impact of centralized PM in enhancing research efficiency. This model serves as a scalable framework for other institutions seeking to support faculty and navigate increasing research complexity.

INTRODUCTION

Project management (PM) is a well-established practice in clinical research, where it is used to coordinate a wide range of tasks associated with clinical trials or interventions (Clinical Research Project Management Association). However, dedicated PM support is less common in other scholarly research settings, such as the humanities, arts, and social sciences (Siemans; Dowling and Turner). The introduction of PM support in these areas can lead to significant improvements in research outcomes. PM helps academic researchers by providing focus and encouraging detailed planning, which improves the quality and quantity of research output. In addition, it

provides an opportunity to coordinate knowledge building and promote accountability to financial and programmatic requirements (Dowling and Turner).

All areas of research are experiencing increased complexity, which can lead to potential payoffs but also presents challenges and consequences when the burden of managing these projects falls solely on faculty members (Duke University). Limited research funding further complicates the ability to hire dedicated PM support. Having a centralized PM core, such as Duke University's Research Project Management Core (RPMC), provides a part-time, scalable model to address this challenge by providing access to trained project managers in a cost-effective way, ensuring faculty receive essential support without overextending their budgets. Having trained project managers available to support scholarly research projects can alleviate this burden and enhance the overall research process.

METHODS

In 2022, Duke University published a report detailing actionable steps to achieve its strategic goals by 2030. Among the recommendations was the establishment of a centralized PM team dedicated to supporting non-clinical research projects (Duke University). The Duke Office of Research Initiatives (DORI) was tasked with assessing the logistics and resources required to develop this centralized PM core.

In 2023, DORI initiated a one-year pilot program designed to inform the strategic implementation of a PM core. Eight faculty members participated in the pilot, receiving up to five hours per week of PM support from DORI staff with research PM backgrounds.

During the pilot, project managers tracked the types of activities and tasks they conducted, and the amount of time dedicated to each activity (Figure 1). The PMs spent the largest portion of their time coordinating or participating in meetings, assisting with recruitment and retention, developing or reviewing project materials, and assisting with websites and social media.

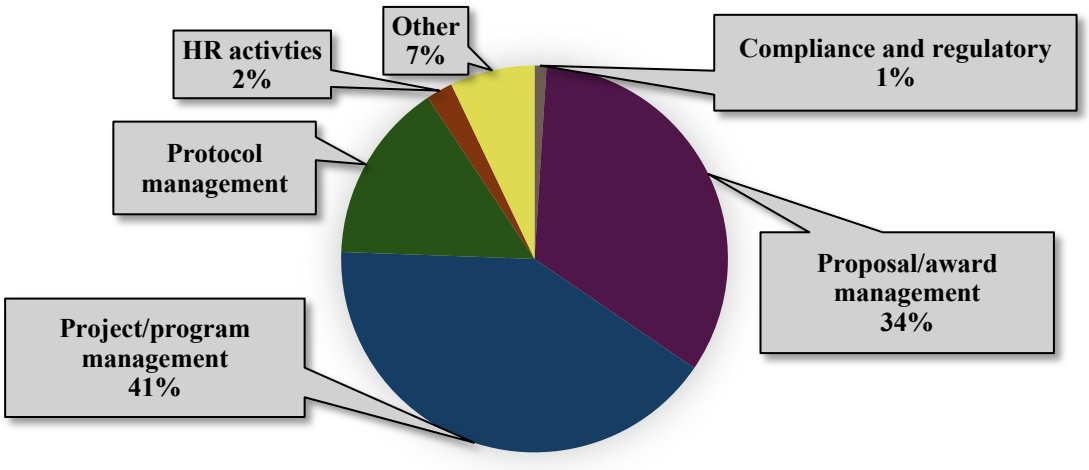

Figure 1: Distribution of project managers' time spent by activity category

At the end of the pilot, participating faculty were asked to complete a feedback survey (N = 7 respondents). The results showed that 86% of the faculty strongly agreed that the tasks they were able to delegate to the project manager were beneficial to their research projects. Additionally, 100% of the faculty strongly agreed that having access to a PM core would be a valuable resource in supporting Duke University researchers. There was also a consensus amongst survey respondents that project managers in this core should be strong communicators, independent workers, and have a robust understanding of the research landscape at Duke University.

Based on the positive feedback from the pilot, DORI received approval to formally launch a centralized PM core, now called the Research Project Management Core (RPMC). Key activities in developing this model included 1) determining the scope of activities the core would provide, 2) establishing a financial model to support faculty with and without adequate funding, and 3) identifying positions for the core to provide both a variety of services to researchers, and a career ladder for the project managers hired into the RPMC.

1) Scope of activities provided by the RPMC

Based on faculty feedback, the following services were deemed within scope for the RPMC for non-clinical research projects:

- General project or program management
    - Coordinate meetings and events
    - Manage communications, websites, and social media
    - Manage reporting, project milestones, and deliverables
- Proposal development support
    - Liaise with research development and administrative staff
    - Develop and drive proposal timelines
    - Organize and coordinate file sharing
- Project initiation and protocol management
    - Advise on resources and best practices for recruitment, data management, etc.
    - Liaise between collaborators and grant management staff for award or project start-up activities
    - Develop and review protocols and study materials
    - Assist with recruitment and retention strategies
- Project team and personnel management
    - Team facilitation and elicitation of shared research goals
    - Develop standard procedures to train project personnel
    - Assist with recruitment and hiring of students or trainees
    - Mentor project personnel to manage the project independently
- Project manager hiring support and training
    - Pair faculty needing partial PM to create full-time positions
    - Assist with writing job descriptions for new PM positions
    - Provide training opportunities for students/research personnel to learn PM skills

2) Establishing a Financial Model

To address the financial needs of the RPMC, the core established an effort recovery model, where 90% of each project manager's time is funded by the projects they support. Project managers typically oversee between two and six projects at a time, with each project contributing a proportional share of the assigned project manager's salary and fringe benefits. For example, a project requiring 25% effort (approximately 10 hours per week) covers 25% of the project manager's salary and benefits, charged to the project's designated fund code(s) for the duration of the engagement.

The RPMC offers two approaches for funding PM support:

1. **Grant or Other Funds**: Faculty can cover PM effort using grant funds (where allowable under sponsor regulations and within the scope of work), discretionary accounts, start-up funds, or other available funding sources.
2. **Voucher Program**: Schools and institutes have the option to participate in a pre-paid voucher program, allowing school leadership to allocate a set amount of PM effort to select faculty. This program enables units to support priority initiatives as they see fit (e.g., assisting faculty preparing grant proposals and providing resources to faculty who lack sufficient funds to access PM services independently).

The remaining 10% of each project manager's time is protected for administrative activities and professional development. These costs, along with any unallocated project time, are supported by institutional funds. Non-personnel expenses, including computers, software, office space, and continuing education, are also funded through dedicated institutional resources.

3) Identifying positions for the RPMC

To align support with faculty needs and foster career growth for PM personnel, three distinct roles were established:

1. **Senior Program Coordinator**: Focused on coordinating symposia, conferences, workshops, and managing low-complexity research projects.
2. **Project Planner I**: Assigned to research projects of medium complexity, determined by the scope, number of collaborators, and the intricacy of required tasks.
3. **Project Planner II**: Dedicated to complex research projects, program and portfolio management, and large-scale initiatives.

Additionally, a Director was appointed to lead the RPMC, overseeing staff, managing fiscal operations, and providing strategic direction. The Director dedicates 50% of their time to the RPMC, with the remainder allocated to other responsibilities outside the core.

RESULTS

In its first year, the RPMC provided over 6,000 hours of PM support to more than 40 faculty members across 13 Schools, Institutes, and other Duke University entities. Six of those Schools and Institutes participated in the voucher program to provide PM services to faculty in their units

conducting high priority projects, or who may not have had adequate or appropriate funding to access the services otherwise.

To meet the demand for services, the RPMC team grew from one full-time project manager to six full-time project managers in its first year. Based on the types of requests received, the following distribution of positions were hired: one Senior Program Coordinator, two Project Planner Is, and three Project Planner IIs.

Participating faculty were sent an optional survey at the conclusion of their engagement with the RPMC to provide input on their satisfaction with the services provided, and to help identify areas for improvement and additional training. Most projects initiated in 2024 are still ongoing, so feedback data are limited (N = 4). However, 100% of survey respondents agreed with the following statements:

1. Engaging with the PM service freed up my or my staff's time to focus on other priorities.
2. Engaging with the PM service allowed me or my team to accomplish tasks we would not have been able to otherwise.
3. I would utilize the PM service for future projects.

DISCUSSION

Duke University's experience demonstrates that a centralized PM model can help to reduce administrative burden, provide project efficiency, and enhance institutional capacity to address the growing complexity of research. Institutions seeking to adopt a model similar to Duke University's RPMC can draw valuable insights from the lessons learned during its development:

1. Begin with a small pilot program in selected departments or labs, allowing for gradual scaling based on capacity and demonstrated need. Gather data and feedback during the pilot phase to assess the value of the services and identify the resources required to expand support effectively. This feedback can also help refine the scope of services and align them with institutional priorities.
2. Engage directly with department chairs and institutional leadership to share the pilot results and resource needs. By working closely with leadership, institutions can align the goals of the PM core with broader strategic objectives, increasing the likelihood of support and success.
3. Establish systems from the outset to track key metrics, such as the hours of support provided, the disciplines served, and faculty feedback. These metrics are valuable for assessing the impact of PM services, refining operational practices, and informing resource allocation. Regular communication with institutional leaders using this data ensures continued alignment of goals, priorities, and resources, creating a strong foundation for the PM core.

CONCLUSION

The creation of Duke University's RPMC highlights the value of PM support for non-clinical research. By addressing the increasing complexity of research projects and reducing the

administrative burden on faculty, the RPMC has improved both the efficiency and effectiveness of research efforts. Insights gained from the pilot program helped shape a scalable, sustainable model aligned with institutional priorities.

Institutions interested in implementing a similar model should begin with a small pilot program, use data to demonstrate the impact, and engage leadership to secure long-term resources and alignment. This approach ensures that PM support addresses key challenges while remaining adaptable to institutional goals.

The RPMC demonstrates how a centralized PM service can streamline research processes, support faculty, and improve outcomes. As research grows more complex, and funds become more limited, having systems and personnel in place to manage these challenges is essential for supporting faculty and advancing institutional priorities.

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MOTIVATING HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS TO ENSURE PROJECT SUCCESS

Dr. Kenneth R. Green, Sr., PMP & Marcia Clark, SPHR

University of Maryland Project Management Center for Excellence

May 1 & 2, 2025

Abstract

Leaders must consider the environment that they create for their team and the culture that exists within their organization and/or department. “It is possible to provide an environment in which almost all of the subjects contribute toward the group interest. Situations exist that can make individuals adopt group goals and choose actions in terms of those goals” (Foss & Lindenberg, 2012, pg. 372). By creating an environment that encourages teamwork and communication, leaders foster a culture that establishes clear goals and through their own actions, set a positive example that focuses on team and organizational goals. “Transformational leadership encourages employees to transcend their self-interests for the good of the team and the organization, pushes them to address higher-order needs, and enables them to achieve performance beyond expectations” (Wang, 2016, pg. 3232). “When leaders encourage employees to focus on the good of the team and organization and stimulate them intellectually, we expect that employees will be more likely to enjoy working with people who have different knowledge and views” (Wang, 2016, pg. 3232).

Keywords: Encourage, Environment, Motivate, Team, Transcend, Transformational

Motivating high-performing teams is essential for achieving project success. Effective leadership fosters engagement, innovation, and efficiency, ensuring that team members are aligned with project goals and committed to excellence. The ability of a leader to inspire and mobilize a project team directly influences performance outcomes, productivity, and overall job satisfaction (Green, 2021). A high-performing team is not merely a collection of individuals, but a cohesive unit driven by shared objectives, values, and a strong culture of accountability and trust. Leaders who cultivate an environment where employees feel valued, challenged, and supported play a critical role in sustaining motivation over time (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2011).

The modern project environment demands leaders who can guide their teams effectively, ensuring that projects meet deadlines, deliver high-quality outcomes, and contribute to broader organizational goals. Ethical leadership, change management strategies, and engagement techniques enhance team performance and ensure sustainable success (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). This paper explores the key drivers of team motivation, the role of leadership in sustaining engagement, strategies for overcoming challenges, and methods for measuring motivation and success.

Key Drivers of Team Motivation

Understanding what drives motivation in project teams is critical to ensuring consistent high performance. Several key factors contribute to a motivated workforce, including clear goals, meaningful work, professional growth opportunities, recognition, and a strong team culture (Green, 2021). Structured goal-setting ensures employees understand how their contributions fit

into larger organizational objectives. Using the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) framework helps define clear expectations and enhances accountability. When employees see the tangible impact of their work, they are more likely to remain engaged and committed to success. Inceoglu, Thomas, and Chu (2018) highlight that "the behavior of a leader impacts the behavior of an employee significantly, which impacts the employee performance, which inevitably will impact the success of the organization" (p. 3).

Employees are most motivated when their work aligns with their skills, interests, and aspirations.

Leaders should assign responsibilities that challenge employees while also leveraging their strengths, fostering engagement, personal investment, and job satisfaction (Bavik et al., 2018). Recognition is another key factor in sustaining motivation. Employees who feel appreciated for their contributions tend to be more engaged, and structured recognition programs can significantly boost morale and productivity (Green, 2021). Whether through verbal praise, monetary incentives, or professional development opportunities, recognition reinforces motivation and drives performance. Mayer et al. (2011) assert that "an ethical organizational climate, one in which the individuals view the policies, practices, and procedures to be moral, reduces unethical behavior and designs the manner in which the organization behaves" (p. 5).

A collaborative and inclusive team culture also plays a critical role in maintaining motivation.

Employees who feel a sense of belonging and shared purpose are more likely to remain engaged and invested in the project's success. Open communication, team-building activities, and shared decision-making processes enhance trust and cohesion, leading to improved collaboration and efficiency (Zyglidopoulos, 2020). Leaders who create an environment where

employees feel valued and heard contribute to sustained motivation and long-term project success.

The Role of Leadership in Sustaining Motivation

Leadership is a crucial factor in sustaining motivation within a project team. A leader's ability to set a clear vision, provide support, and foster a culture of trust determines the team's overall engagement and performance. A compelling vision provides teams with a sense of direction and purpose. Leaders should communicate long-term goals clearly and align team members' roles with the broader mission to keep them engaged (Jordan et al., 2013). A visionary leader provides inspiration by outlining a compelling future for the team. In one instance, a leader took over a struggling project team that lacked direction and motivation. By clearly defining the team's long-term mission and setting ambitious but achievable milestones, the leader instilled a renewed sense of purpose. Through frequent communication, encouragement, and alignment of individual strengths with team goals, the leader transformed the team into a high-performing unit that exceeded expectations. This example illustrates how a compelling vision can drive motivation and inspire success.

Emotional intelligence is a critical leadership trait that influences team motivation. Leaders who exhibit self-awareness, empathy, and strong interpersonal skills create environments that encourage open communication and collaboration. Recognizing individual strengths and providing tailored support helps sustain motivation. Ethical leadership is particularly influential in sustaining engagement, as leaders who demonstrate integrity, fairness, and transparency build trust within their teams (Engelbrecht et al., 2010). Leaders should adopt a

coaching mindset, offering mentorship, constructive feedback, and career growth opportunities. Encouraging employees to take on new responsibilities, participate in leadership training, and pursue continuous learning fosters professional growth and long-term engagement.

Continuous learning and professional development reinforce long-term engagement.

Encouraging professional development through workshops, training programs, and certifications demonstrates an organization's commitment to employee growth. Leaders should encourage employees to take on new responsibilities, participate in training programs, and pursue mentorship opportunities to build career growth (Offstein et al., 2020). To maintain motivation, organizations must implement intentional strategies that cater to both individual and team needs. Encouraging continuous learning through professional development opportunities ensures employees feel valued and engaged. Empowering employees with autonomy and decision-making responsibilities increases accountability and job satisfaction. Micromanagement can stifle creativity and motivation, whereas providing employees with the freedom to make decisions increases their confidence and job satisfaction. Offering flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options and flexible hours, contributes to better work-life balance. Employees who feel supported in managing their professional and personal responsibilities are more likely to stay engaged and productive as it fosters trust and enhances motivation.

Overcoming Challenges to Team Motivation

Despite best efforts, motivation can wane due to burnout, disengagement, or resistance to change. Leaders must be proactive in addressing these challenges to maintain a high-performing team (Green, 2021). High workloads and unrealistic deadlines lead to stress and disengagement,

ultimately affecting productivity and project outcomes. Leaders should monitor workload distribution, encourage regular breaks, and provide mental health resources to support employee well-being (Sharma et al., 2019).

Regular check-ins, recognition programs, and career development opportunities help reignite motivation among disengaged team members. Employees who feel disconnected from their work may exhibit decreased productivity and enthusiasm. Implementing structured feedback systems and maintaining open channels of communication help leaders identify early signs of disengagement and take corrective action (Huang & Paterson, 2017).

Organizational changes can cause uncertainty and resistance. Transparent communication, involving employees in decision-making, and offering support through transitions help ease concerns and maintain engagement. Grama and Todericiu (2016) state that "organizational change is a process that happens in time, with periods of instability, in which the lack of safety of a system is the answer to the need of survival in an environment under constant change" (p. 48). Leaders who take an active role in guiding employees through transitions foster adaptability and resilience within their teams.

Measuring Motivation and Success

Assessing motivation levels allows organizations to refine engagement strategies and ensure long-term project success. To achieve this, organizations should implement various assessment methods to measure motivation and identify areas for improvement. Regularly collecting feedback through employee engagement surveys helps pinpoint challenges and ensures that employees' needs are addressed (Green, 2021). In one case, a team experiencing

declining engagement left leadership uncertain about the root cause. By implementing anonymous engagement surveys, employees felt comfortable sharing their concerns, revealing that unclear career growth paths and limited development opportunities were primary issues.

Based on this feedback, leadership introduced mentorship programs and additional training resources, resulting in increased job satisfaction and improved team performance. This example underscores the importance of structured feedback tools in identifying and addressing motivation challenges. Effective survey questions should focus on job satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and workplace culture.

Monitoring project completion rates, work quality, and efficiency provides valuable insights into motivation levels, allowing leaders to address potential challenges before they impact overall performance (Ciesielska, 2019). High employee turnover is often a key indicator of dissatisfaction and low motivation. Analyzing exit interview data and retention trends enables organizations to identify patterns and develop targeted improvements in workplace engagement. Regular conversations between managers and employees foster open communication, helping to resolve concerns before they escalate. Creating opportunities for employees to voice their feedback and suggestions contributes to a culture of continuous improvement.

Utilizing workforce analytics tools and behavioral assessments offers deeper insights into motivational drivers, team dynamics, and engagement levels. Data-driven decision-making empowers leaders to refine strategies and enhance overall team performance. Tracking trends and proactively addressing underlying causes strengthen team stability and foster a culture of retention (Mayer et al., 2011). Open communication not only builds trust but also allows leaders

to respond to concerns in real time. By leveraging data-driven insights, organizations can continuously refine motivation strategies and enhance team dynamics, ensuring sustained success over the long term.

Conclusion

Motivating high-performing teams is a fundamental aspect of project success. Leadership plays a key role in sustaining engagement, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that employees remain motivated to achieve organizational goals. By implementing strategic motivation techniques, fostering a positive work environment, and continuously measuring engagement, organizations can create a high-performance culture that drives long-term success (Green, 2021). Ethical leadership and effective change management further enhance team dynamics, ensuring alignment with organizational priorities. The ability to inspire and mobilize teams is a critical skill for project leaders, reinforcing the need for strong, adaptable leadership in today's evolving work environment.

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