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Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
2026 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

Expediting Strategy Realization with AI-Enhanced Project Management

Joe D'Mello

Ph.D., MBA, PMP, CSM, PMI-ACP

PMSYMPOSIUM.UMD.EDU

Focus of this presentation



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1. Quick recap of 2025 Symposium presentation
2. AI in project management: risks and opportunities
3. How can we seize the opportunities?
4. A model for gauging opportunity realization
5. Opportunity realization: factors and challenges

How crane operators changed construction (Video)



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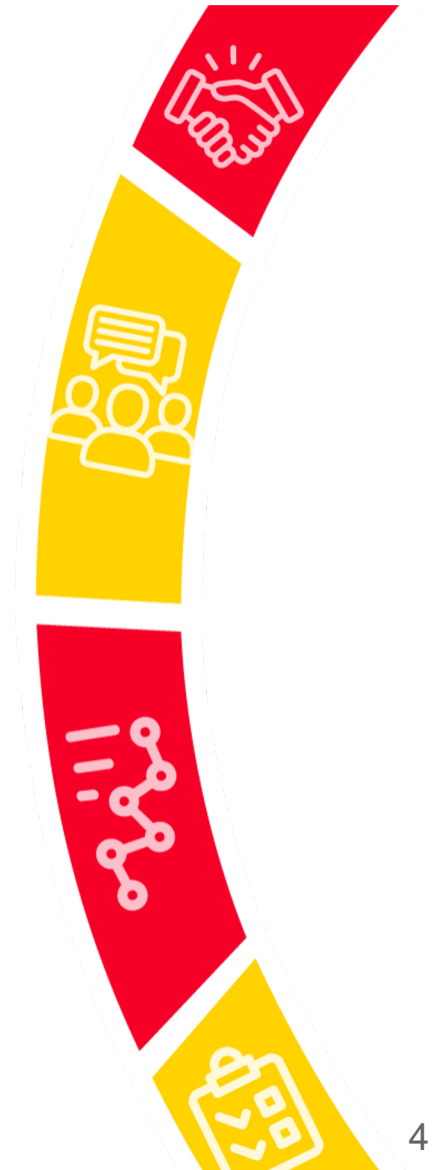
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SECTION 1: Quick Recap of 2025 Symposium Presentation



Key points (2025)



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- Framed around three quotes
- The case for reimagining project management
- RESULT Model
 - Strong history but tough scorecard
 - Knowledge reassembly, 'craft' discipline
 - Artificial separation from organizational work
 - Does not factor in all work-affecting variables
- AI enables feedback loops that improve outcomes
- Potential future PM evolution scenarios
- PMs as work "solutionists"

Reimagining Project Management:

<https://pm.umd.edu/2026/03/10/reimagining-project-management/>

"If you ignore history, you're doomed to repeat it" (George Santayana)

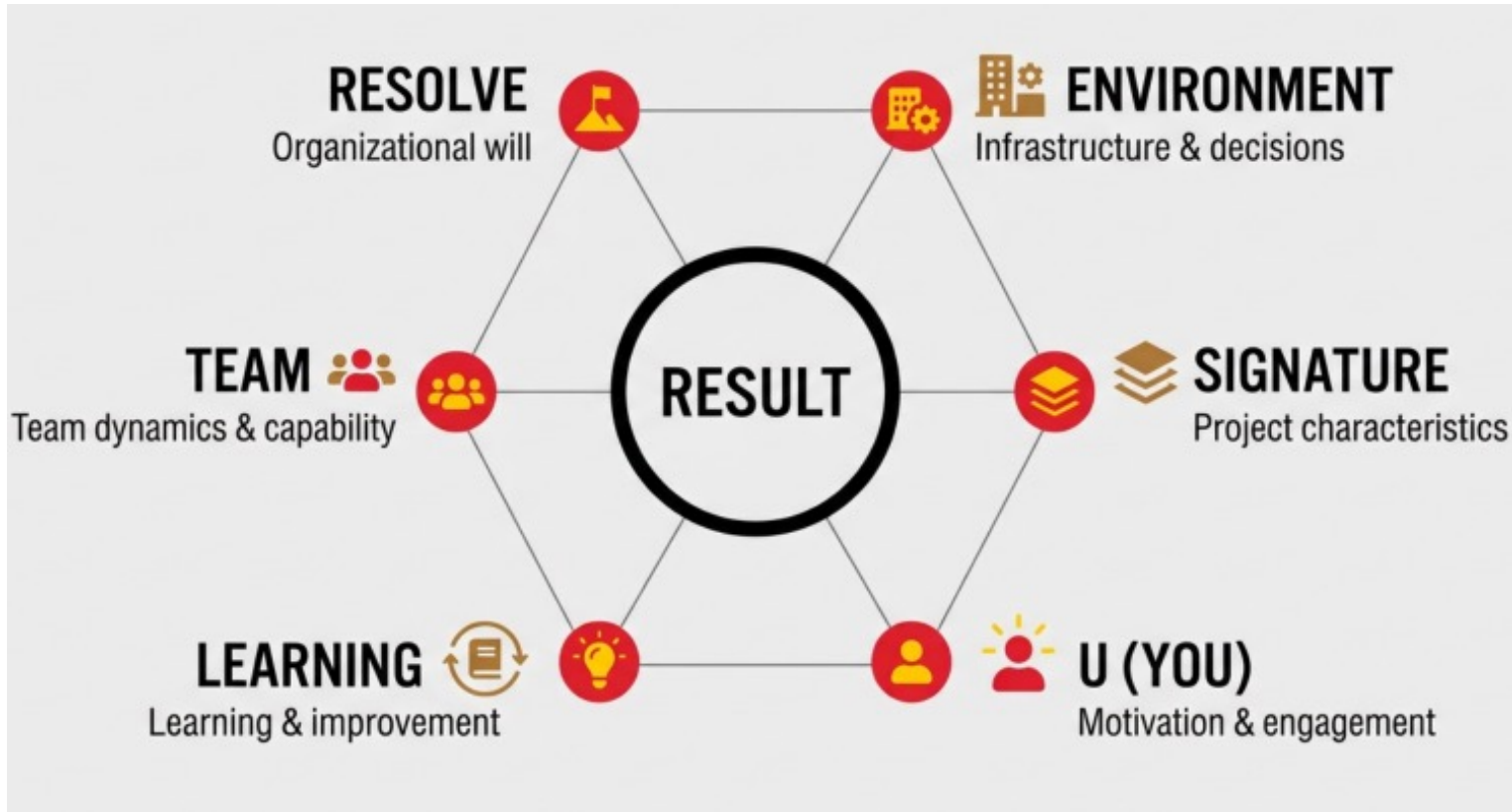
"Don't let your history interfere with your destiny" (Steve Maraboli)

"If you don't control your destiny, someone else will" (Jack Welch)

Multi-factor model



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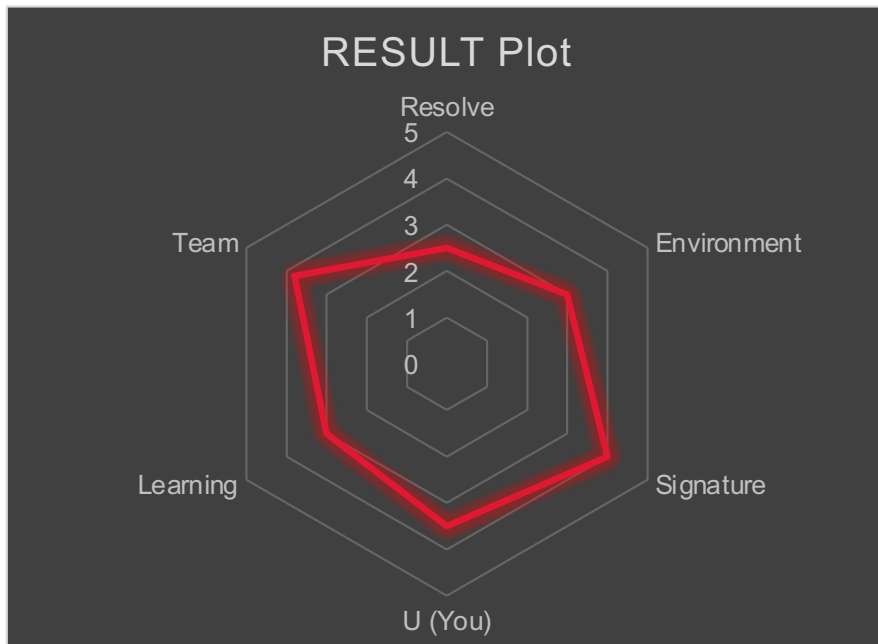


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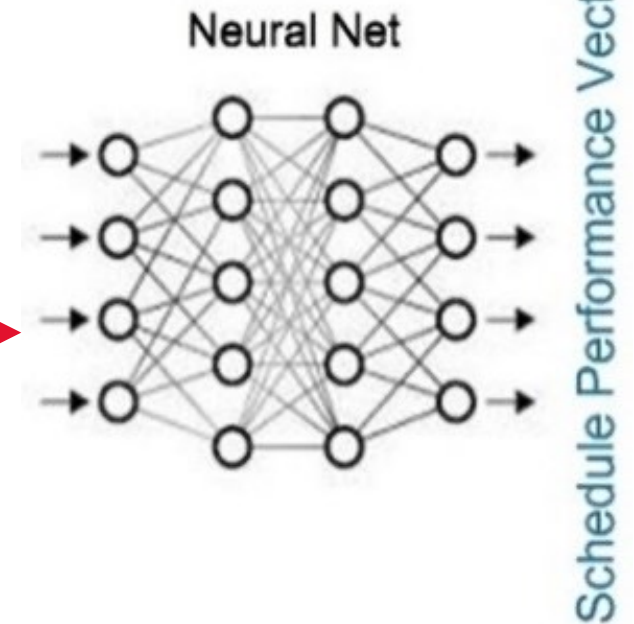
AI-enabled insights



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RESULT VECTOR



Conclusion and imperative



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We can't continue to do the same things and expect different results! We must reimagine project management to:

- Improve project outcomes
- Portray PM as mature and high-ROI (so it ranks in the echelons of well-established business disciplines)
- Enhance PM careers and career progression
- Maintain PM relevance amid the onslaught of AI

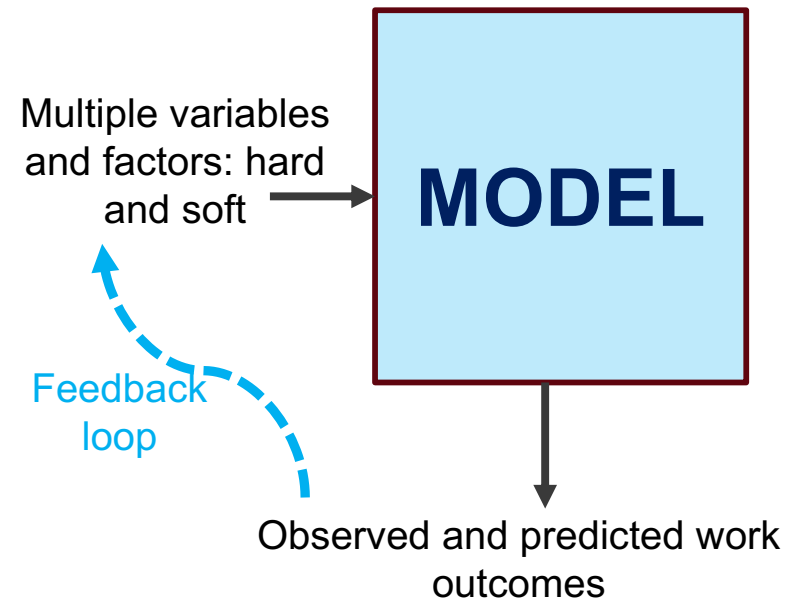
Potential evolution trajectories



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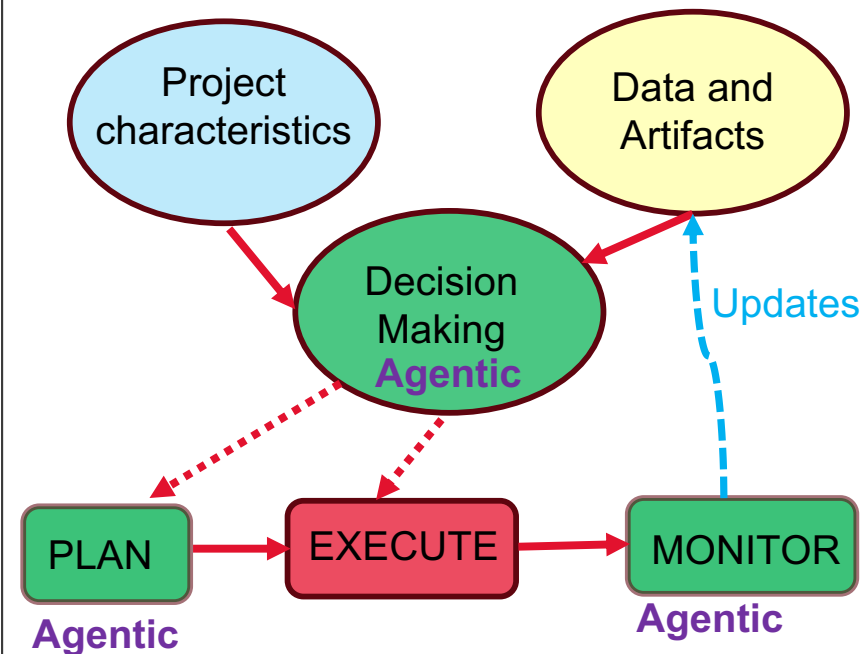
Trajectory 1: PM transformed: Human at the helm; technology assistive

- Model with predictive capability
- Soft and hard factor inputs
- Observed and predicted outcomes
- Feedback loop (for corrective action)
- PM and Data Science distinction is blurred
- PM role expanded and elevated



Trajectory 2: PM transformed: Technology at the helm; human assistive

- AI-driven automation
- AI makes (or recommends) decisions
- Decisions are based on project characteristics and past/evolving data and artifacts
- Decisions drive planning and execution
- Monitoring updates data



***“If you don’t control your destiny, someone else will”
(Jack Welch)***



Potential evolution trajectory - 3

PM not transformed: technology assists humans

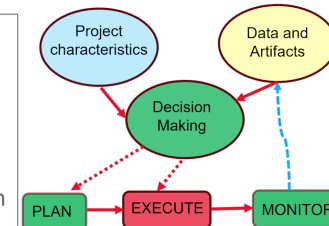
- PM discipline does not change significantly
- Human PMs merely leverage technology more but do the same things they do today
- Greater PM efficiency
- PM remains a highly human-intensive endeavor
- Not clear if/how project success rates would improve

Next one to three years (greater adoption)?

Potential evolution trajectory - 2

PM transformed: Technology at the helm; human assistive

- AI-driven automation
- AI makes (or recommends) decisions
- Decisions are based on project characteristics and past/evolving data and artifacts
- Decisions drive planning and execution
- Monitoring updates data

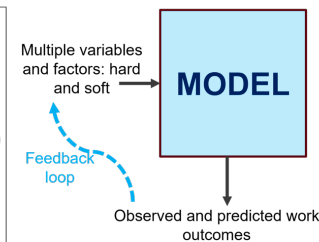


Next two to five years (slower adoption)?

Potential evolution trajectory – 1

PM transformed: Human at the helm; technology assistive

- Model with predictive capability
- Soft and hard factor inputs
- Observed and predicted outcomes
- Feedback loop (for corrective action)
- PM and Data Science distinction is blurred
- PM role expanded and elevated



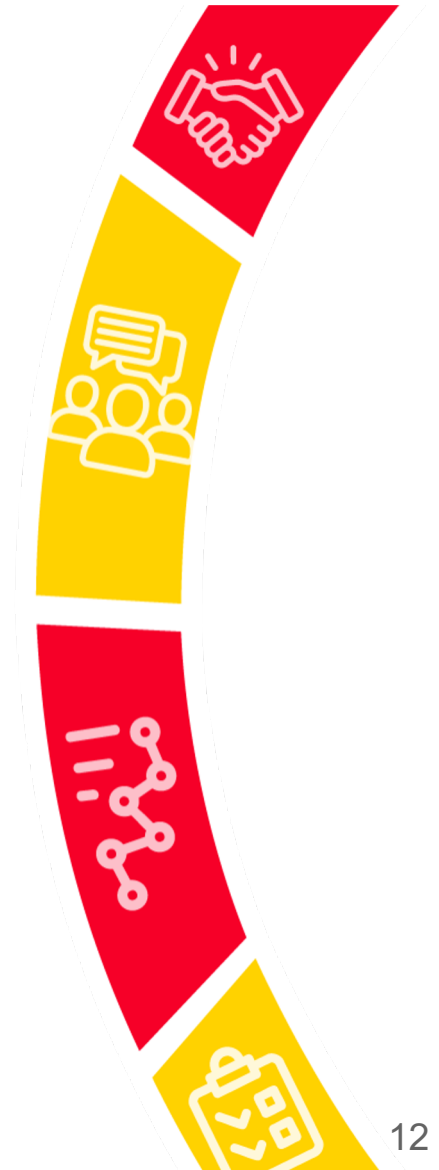
Next three to seven years (slower adoption)?

“If you don’t provide the solution, someone else will”

(Joe D’Mello) 😊



SECTION 2: AI in Project Management: Risks and Opportunities



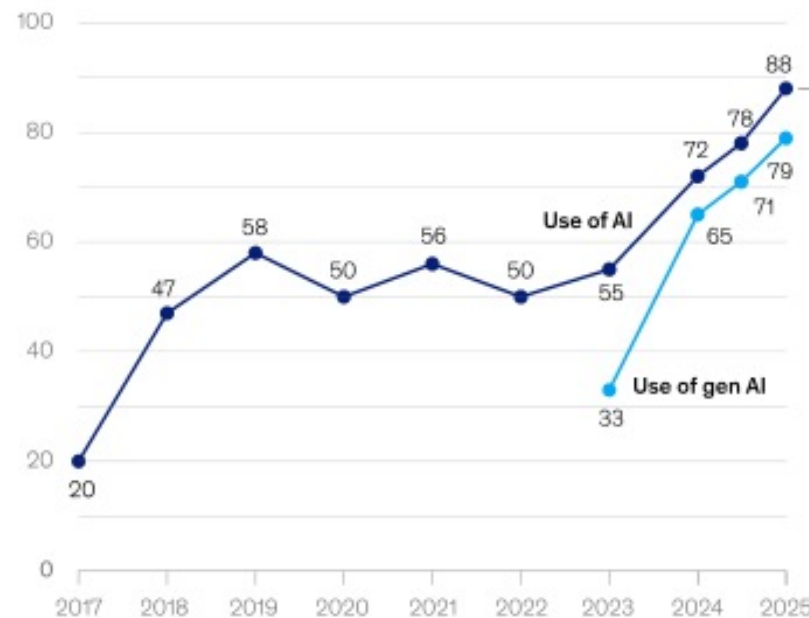
Use of AI



Reported use of AI in at least one business function continues to increase.

Use of AI by respondents' organizations, % of respondents

Organizations that use AI in at least 1 business function¹



Phase of AI use among organizations using AI in 2025



The state of AI in 2025:
Agents, innovation, and
transformation,

McKinsey Consulting,
November 2025

¹In 2017, the definition for AI use was using AI in a core part of the organization's business or at scale. In 2018–19, the definition was embedding at least 1 AI capability in business processes or products. From 2020, the definition was that the organization has adopted AI in at least 1 function, and in 2025, the definition was regular use of AI in at least 1 function.

Source: McKinsey Global Surveys on the state of AI, 2017–25

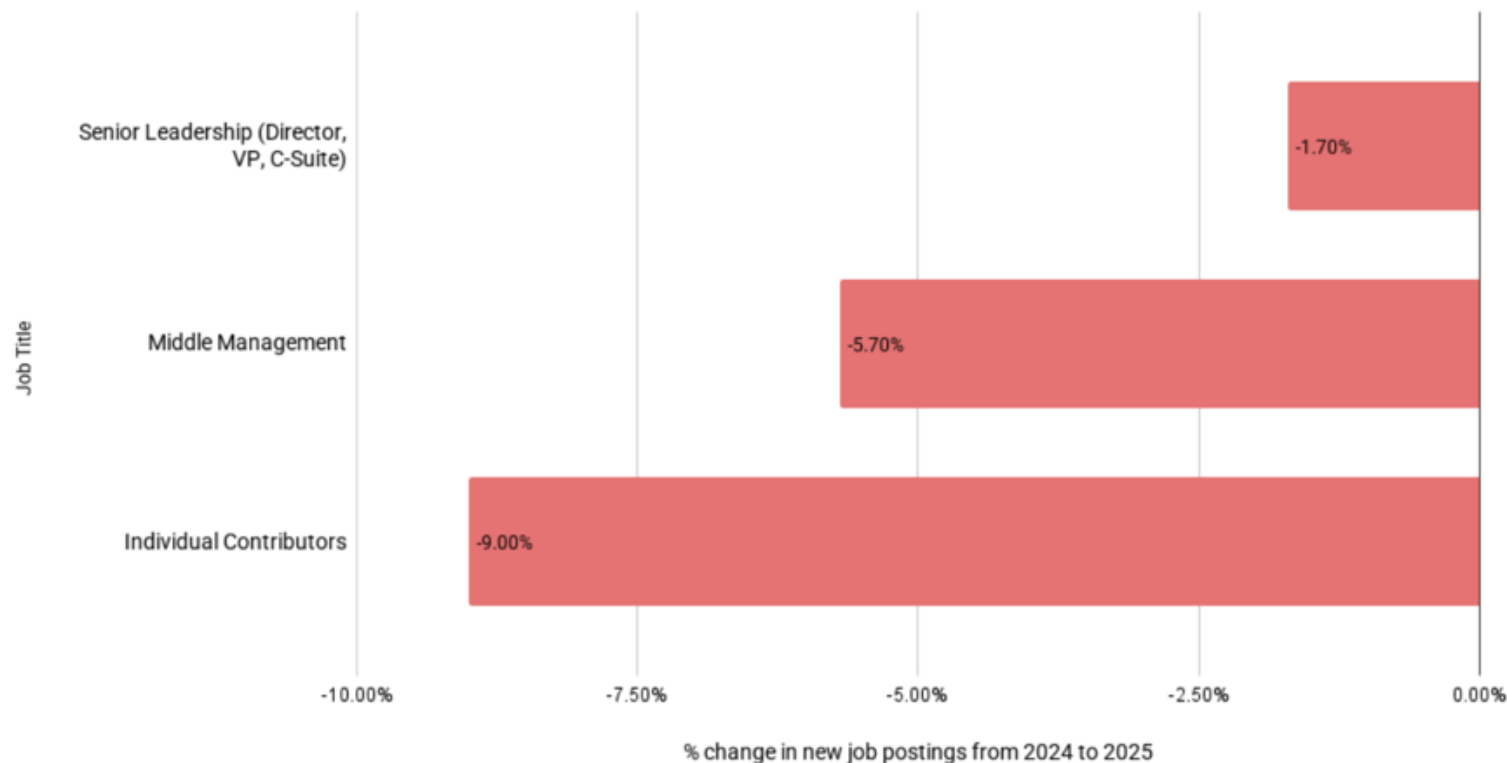
AI job displacement



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Senior Leadership vs Managers vs Individual Contributors: % change in new job postings

Source: Bloomberg.com



<https://bloomberg.com/blog/i-analyzed-180m-jobs-to-see-what-jobs-ai-is-actually-replacing-today/>

Middle management jobs shrinking



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The ranks of middle managers, the professionals that bridge senior leaders with frontline employees, have been thinning in recent years. Middle managers made up one-third of all layoffs in 2023, a Bloomberg and Live Data Technologies analysis found. This year, 41% of employees say their companies trimmed down their management layers, according to organizational consulting firm Korn Ferry's Workforce 2025: Power Shifts report, which surveyed 15,000 professionals worldwide.

The trend is expected to continue into 2026: One in five (20%) businesses are expected to use AI to flatten their organizational structure, slashing over half of current middle management positions, an October 2024 report from research and advisory firm Gartner found.

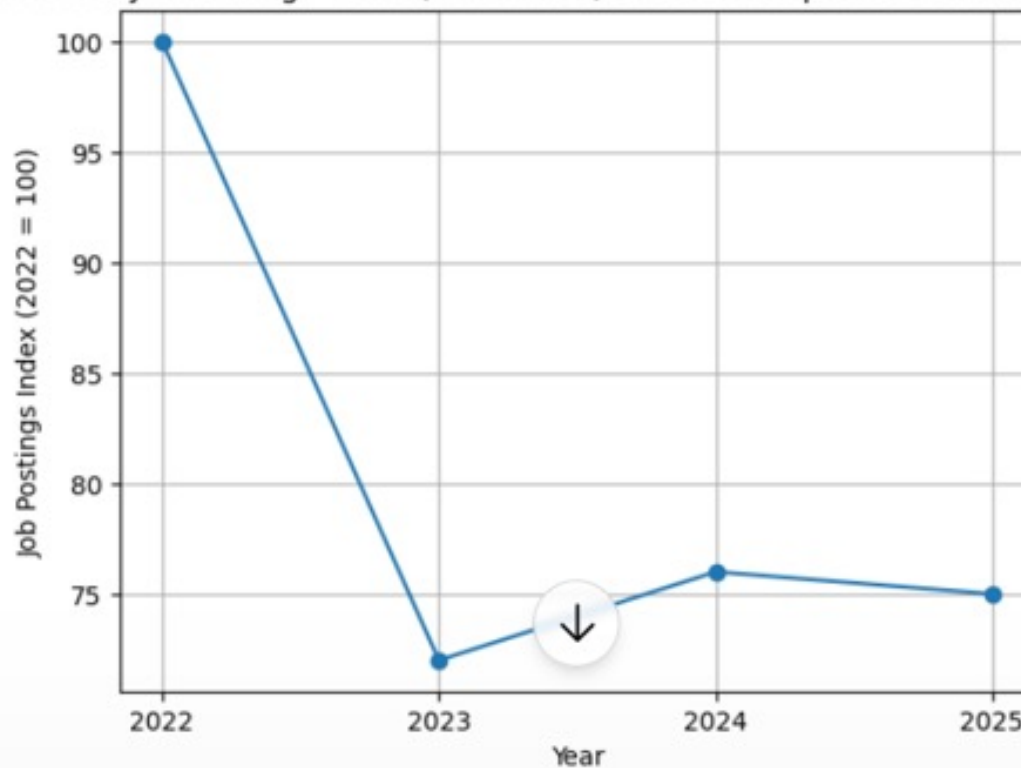
<https://www.cnbc.com/2025/12/29/middle-managers-are-getting-laid-offbut-their-role-is-more-important-than-ever-says-leadership-expert.html>

Overall job postings shrinking



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Indexed Job Postings Trend (Illustrative, Based on Reported Market Decline)



Obtained from a
ChatGPT prompt

What about PM jobs?



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☆ Project Management Job Postings on Indeed in the United States (IHLIDXUSTPPROJMANA)

Observations ▾

2026-04-17: **109.19**

Updated: Apr 24, 2026 9:05 AM CDT

Next Release Date: Not Available

Units:

Index Feb, 1 2020=100,

Seasonally Adjusted

Frequency:

Daily,

7-Day

1Y

5Y

10Y

Max

Edit Graph

Download

2021-04-17

to 2026-04-17

FRED — Project Management Job Postings on Indeed in the United States

FRED (Federal Reserve Economic Data)



Source: Indeed via FRED®

Shaded areas indicate U.S. recessions.

fred.stlouisfed.org

Fullscreen

<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/IHLIDXUSTPPROJMANA>

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Shift in PM skills



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Skill Category	Traditional Focus	What Job Postings Demand Now
Methodologies	Waterfall, strict PMBOK	Agile, hybrid approaches, adaptive planning
Technology	Spreadsheets, MS Project	AI-powered analytics, predictive modeling, digital twins, automated risk forecasting
Leadership	Task assignment, reporting	Strategic thinking, visionary leadership, stakeholder sensemaking
Soft Skills	Basic communication	Emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, empathy, resilience amid uncertainty
Business Acumen	Delivering on time/budget	Value stream awareness, business modeling, strategic analysis, ROI focus
Change Management	Rarely mentioned	Transformation leadership, managing reorganization, change initiatives
Data Skills	Optional	Data analytics & visualization (Power BI, Tableau), interpreting AI insights

Bottom Line

Job postings signal that project management is evolving from tactical execution to strategic change leadership. The most in-demand PMs now blend:

Technical fluency (AI, data, hybrid Agile)

Human leadership (EQ, communication, adaptability)

Business strategy (value delivery, stakeholder influence)

Derived using ChatGPT and based on LinkedIn and PMI data

Progression of AI adoption



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■ Haven't started experimenting ■ Early-stage experimenting ■ Pilot testing in parts of the business
■ Implemented in parts of the business ■ Fully operationalized



Source: Gallagher Attitudes to AI Adoption and Risk Survey

<https://www.ajg.com/news-and-insights/features/ai-adoption-and-risk-benchmarking-2026/>

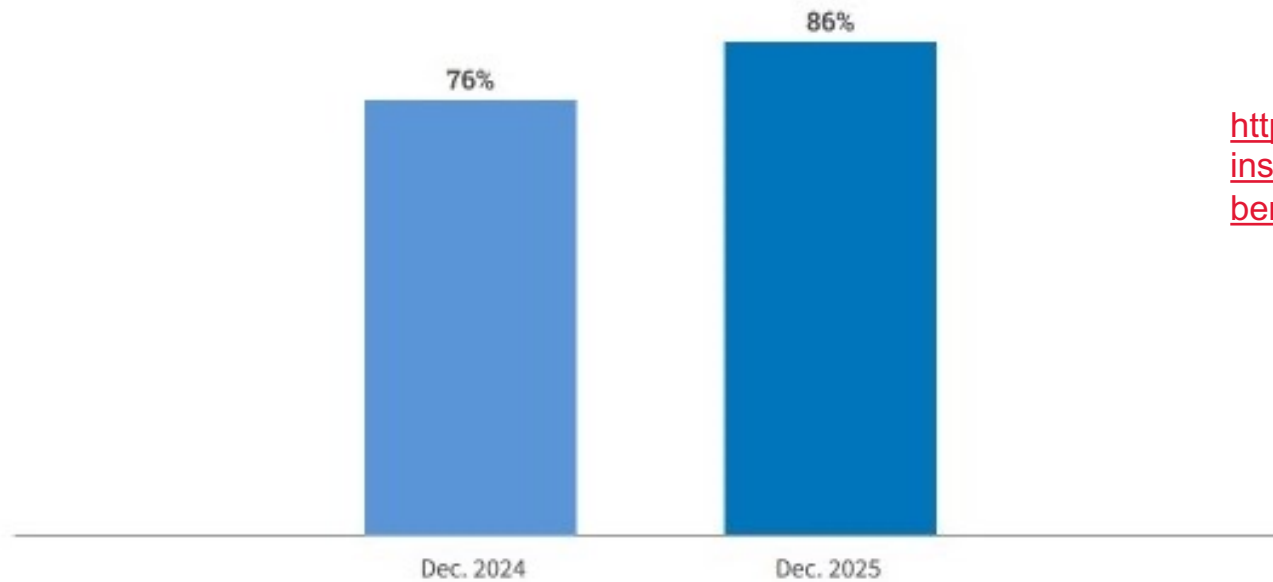
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AI's perceived impact on productivity



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AI's perceived positive impact on workforce productivity



<https://www.ajg.com/news-and-insights/features/ai-adoption-and-risk-benchmarking-2026/>

Source: Gallagher Attitudes to AI Adoption and Risk Survey

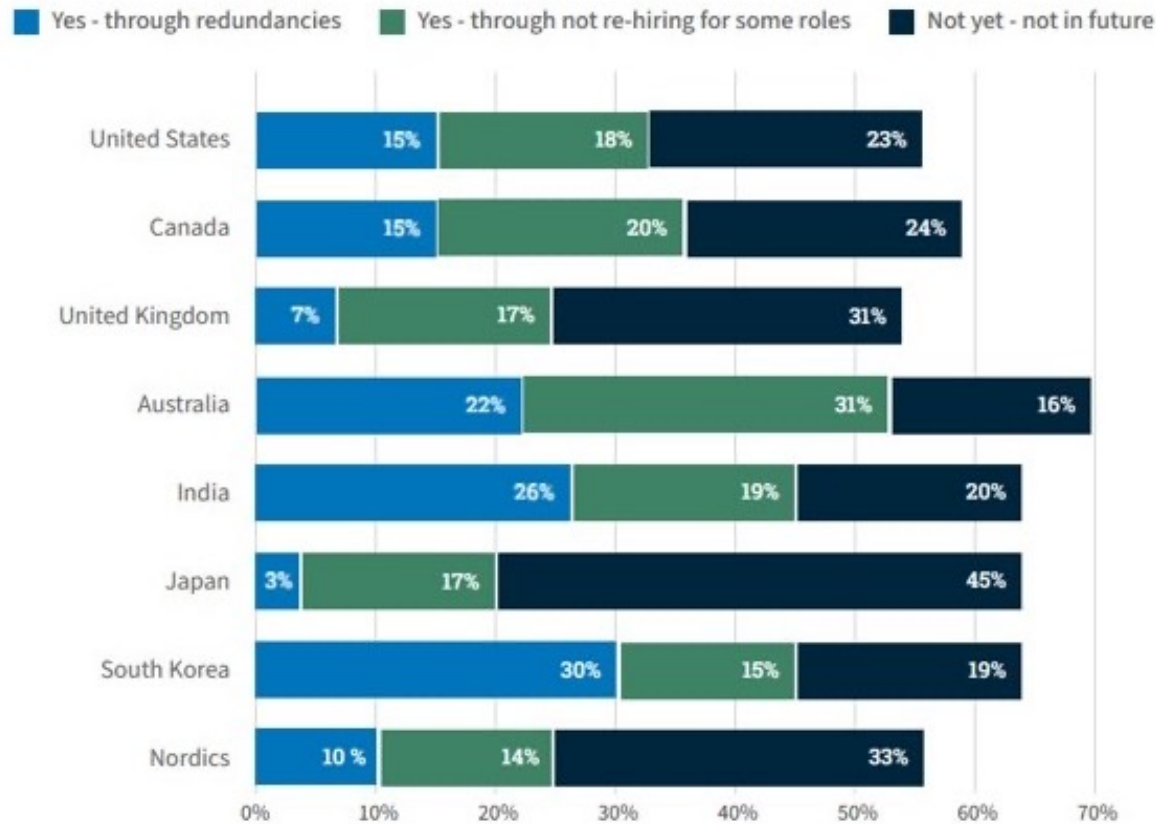
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AI impact on headcount



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Has your company's AI adoption impacted headcount?



Source: Gallagher Attitudes to AI Adoption and Risk Survey

<https://www.ajg.com/news-and-insights/features/ai-adoption-and-risk-benchmarking-2026/>

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AI in Project Management: Market size, share, and trends



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Source: [Artificial Intelligence and Project Management](#), A Global Chapter-led Survey, PMI 2024

Some AI-impacted PM tasks



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Bar is being raised in the direction of strategy, mission, and work solutions

- Status reporting and dashboards
- Progress tracking and reminders
- Routine meeting admin
- Resource allocation and forecasting
- Scheduling, cost, & risk management/analysis

Just as important: AI is likely to fundamentally reshape project management as it is practiced today.
The PM game is changing.

What are the predictions?



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- 80% of current project management tasks will be either eliminated or run by AI by 2030 (Gartner)
- Augmentation may be conflated with replacement
- Hype and vendor incentives
- AI ROI has yet to dazzle* (a J-curve?)

Microsoft New Future
of Work Report 2025

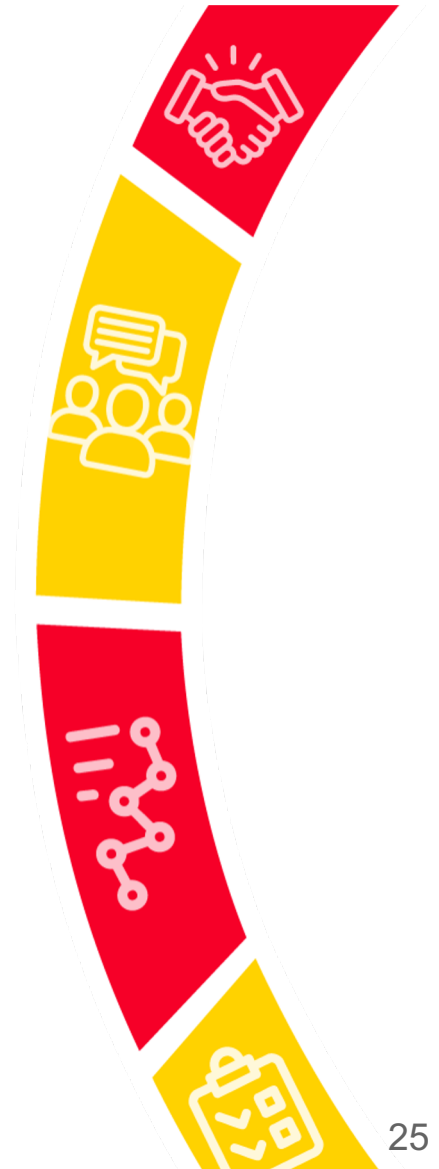
* MIT Study (Feb 2026): 95% of Companies Fail to Get ROI from AI Investments



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SECTION 3: Seizing the Opportunities



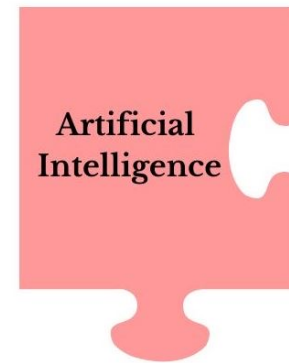
The opportunities



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Let's hitch our PM wagon to the rising star!

- Project management
- Artificial intelligence
- Strategy
- Transformation



Transformation enables strategy realization



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- Strategy realization usually requires transformational change
- 70% of transformational change efforts fail
- Agile strategy and agile transformation

*“When transformation stalls, the instinct is to question commitment. But the deeper issue is often perceptual, resulting from leaders **who genuinely can’t see the disconnect between their intended impact and their actual perceived impact.**”* Harvard Business Review (March 19, 2026)

Why 70% of Transformations Miss the Mark and How to Fix Them, Boston Consulting Group (January 2026)

Good strategy realization is rare!



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*“**Only one in five** companies believe they have high-quality strategy. What do such Strategy Champions have in common? They excel at designing bold strategies—**and are even better at mobilizing their execution.**”*

*“The process of making coherent, hard-to-reverse choices under uncertainty with the aim of building long-term value—has always been demanding. In **2010**, **only 35 percent of more than 2,000 surveyed executives reported that their strategies passed four or more of McKinsey’s Ten Tests of Strategy. In **2025**, the number was **21%!**”***

Source: [How Strategy Champions Win](#) (McKinsey, July 2025)

Ten tests of strategy (McKinsey)



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1. Will your strategy beat the market?
2. Does your strategy tap a true source of advantage?
3. Is your strategy granular about where to compete?
4. Does your strategy put you ahead of trends?
5. Does your strategy rest on privileged insights?
6. Does your strategy embrace uncertainty?
7. Does your strategy balance commitment and flexibility?
8. Is your strategy contaminated by bias?
9. Is there conviction to act on your strategy?
10. Have you translated your strategy into an action plan?

Have You Tested Your
Strategy Lately? (McKinsey)

Effect of complexity and uncertainty

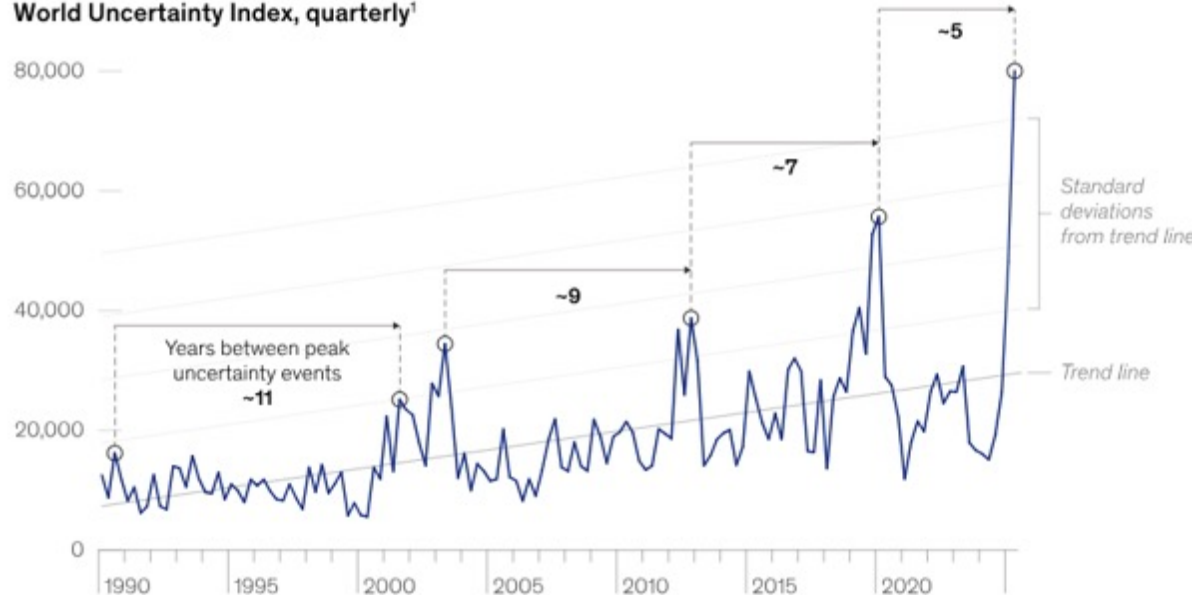


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Exhibit 1

Uncertainty has been rising, and high-uncertainty events have been increasing in frequency and intensity.

World Uncertainty Index, quarterly¹



¹Index measures global uncertainty by analyzing country reports from the Economist Intelligence Unit. The chart shows the unbalanced GDP weighted average for 142 countries, as of Q2 2025.
Source: Economist Intelligence Unit World Uncertainty Index; McKinsey analysis

McKinsey & Company

“These two challenges have taken a toll on the quality of corporate strategies. In a 2024–2025 survey, only **21 percent** of executives reported that their strategies passed four or more of the Ten Tests of Strategy—a **40 percent drop from a decade and a half earlier**. Not surprisingly, strategists are feeling the pressure. In 2022, 42 percent of survey respondents said they were **struggling to achieve the level of impact they desired**”, McKinsey Quarterly (July 14, 2025)

Growing gap between top and bottom performers

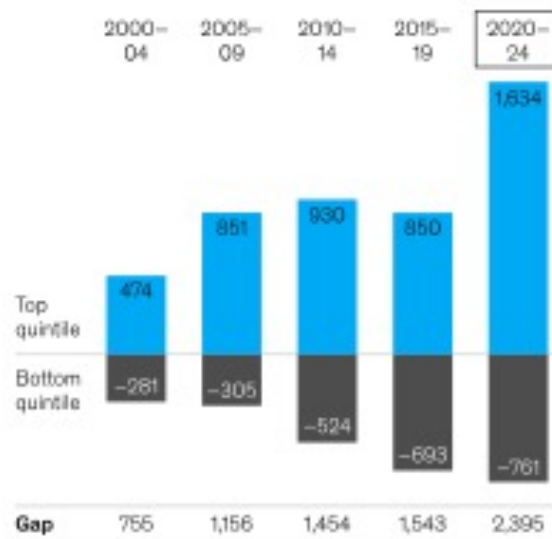


Exhibit 2

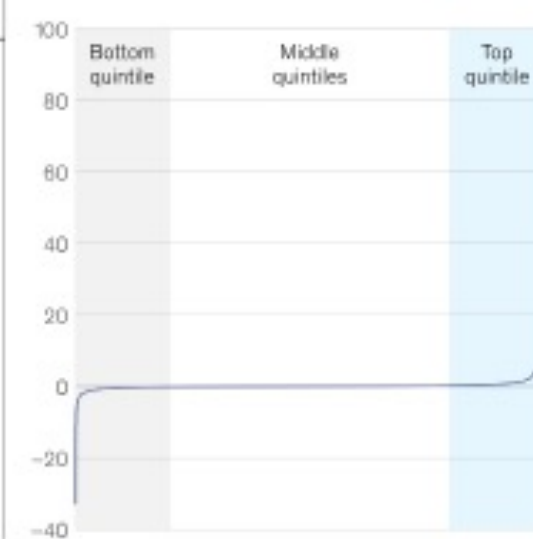
The gap between top and bottom performers has been growing.

Average annual economic profit earned by companies with >\$1 billion in revenue in any year

By time period and quintile, \$ million



Economic Profit Power Curve, 2020–24, \$ billion



How Strategy Champions Win
(McKinsey)

Source: McKinsey Value Intelligence; McKinsey analysis

McKinsey & Company

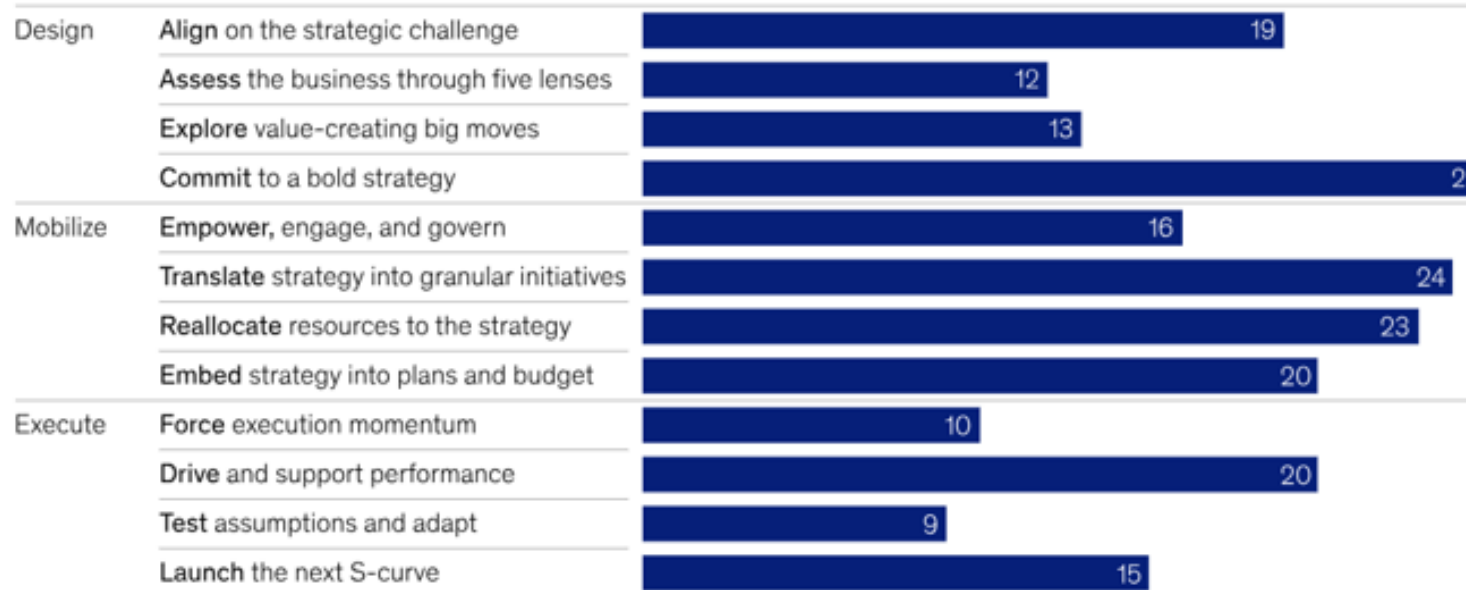
Strategy champions vs. stragglers



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Strategy Champions have stronger capabilities than stragglers at each of the 12 fundamental building blocks of strategy.

Net difference in strengths between Strategy Champions and stragglers, percentage points



How Strategy
Champions Win
(McKinsey)

AI and project management as instruments for strategy realization



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AI-enhanced PM will

- Enable “intelligent” strategy mobilization
- Help steer clear of potential pitfalls
- Facilitate timely corrections in strategy mobilization and execution
- Anticipate execution challenges and suggest alternatives
- Detect performance trends and recommend solutions for concerning trends

Most importantly, AI-enhanced PM could neutralize the existential threat facing PM **AS IT IS PRACTISED TODAY**

Who will PM emulate?



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LET's BECOME "SOLUTIONISTS"!

1. Kodak — missed digital photography

2. Blockbuster — ignored streaming

3. Nokia — missed the smartphone shift

4. BlackBerry — underestimated consumer smartphones

OR

1. Netflix — jumped on internet streaming

2. Apple — tech ecosystem dominance

3. IBM — enterprise IT solutions

4. Adobe — cloud-based subscriptions

How PMs can get AI-ready



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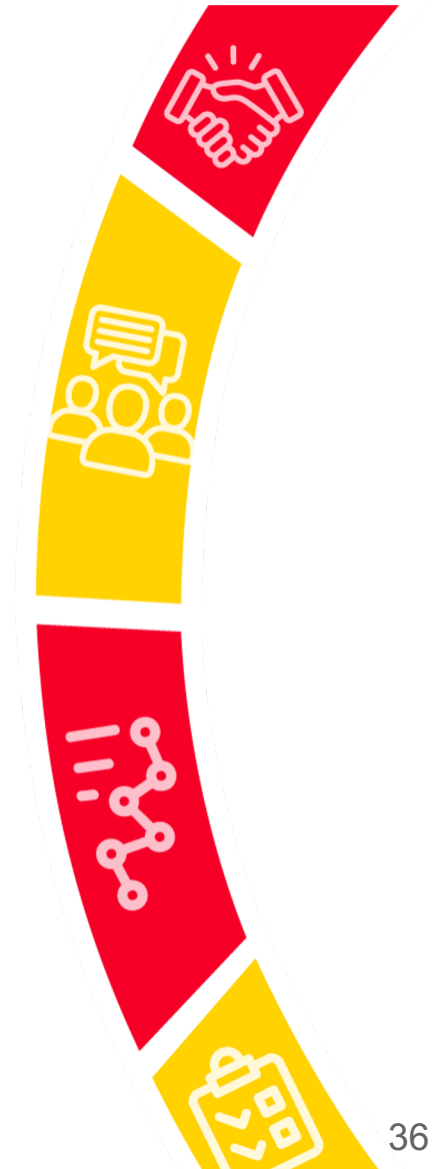
- Think big picture (strategy, mission, goals, etc.)
- Bridge big picture and details
- Orient towards work solutions (become “solutionists”!)
- Leverage data science and AI
- Understand AI language, taxonomy, and tools (see <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IG10077>)
- Skill up on AI agents/Agentic AI
- Spot work challenges and step up to tackle them!



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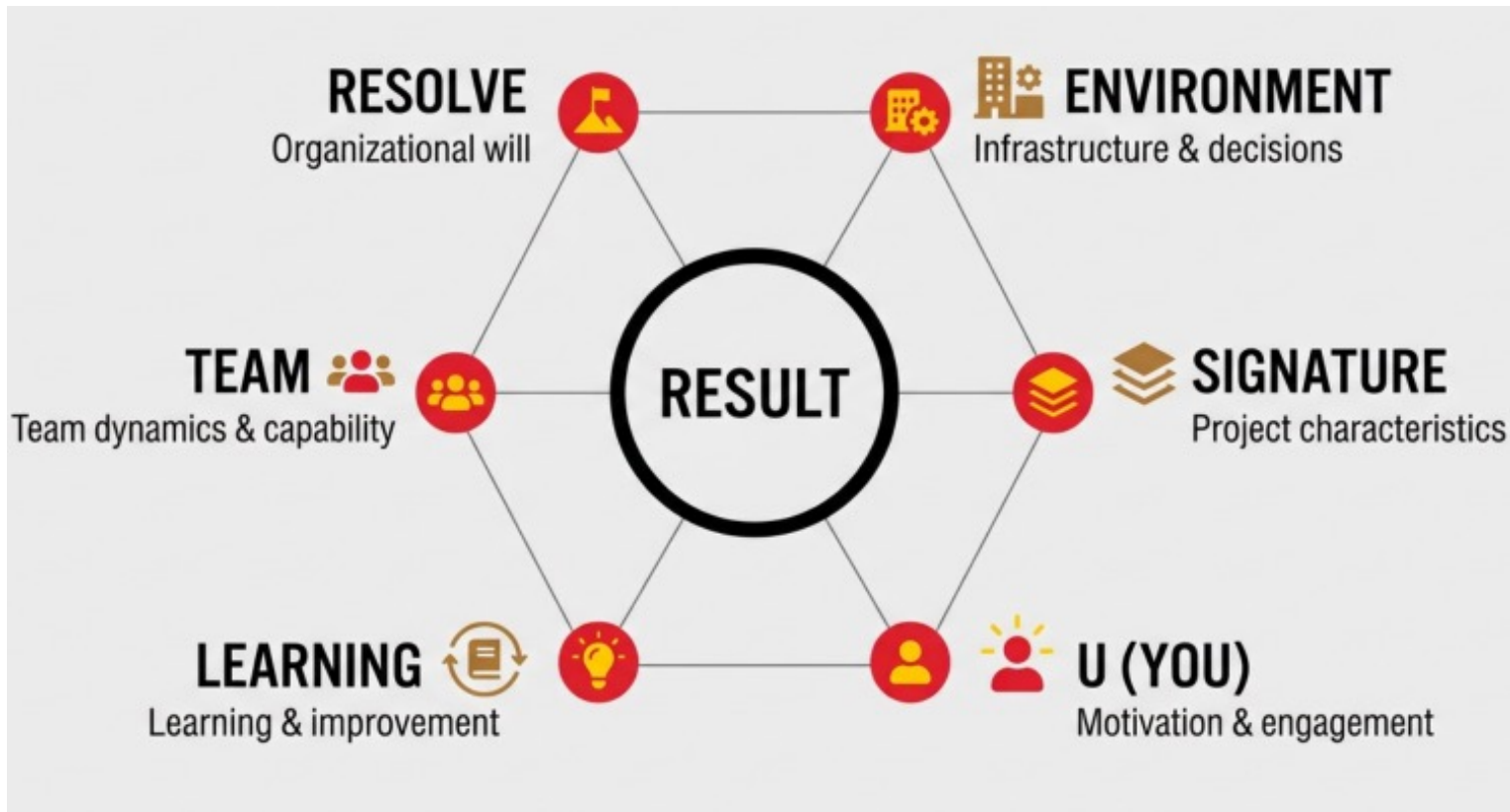
SECTION 4: A Model for Gauging Opportunity Realization



Multi-factor model



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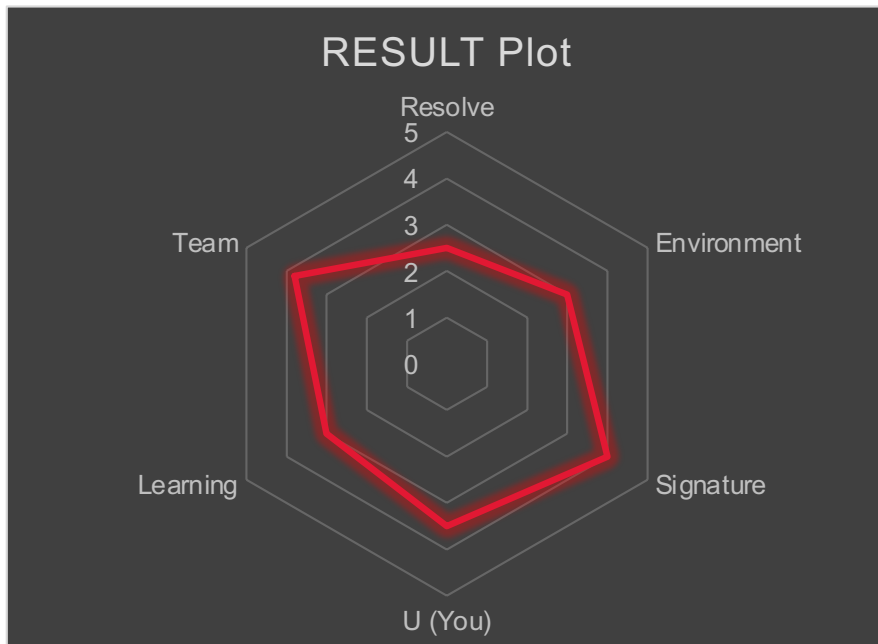
<https://pm.umd.edu/2026/03/10/reimaging-project-management/>

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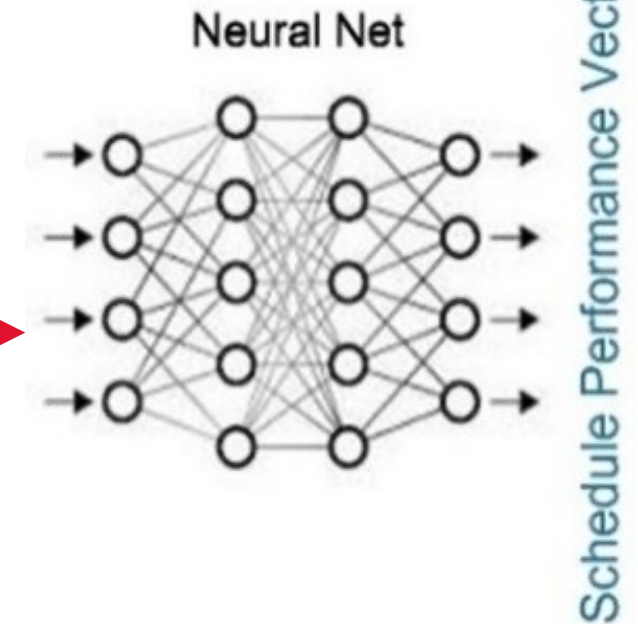
AI-enabled insights



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RESULT VECTOR



Applying the RESULT model



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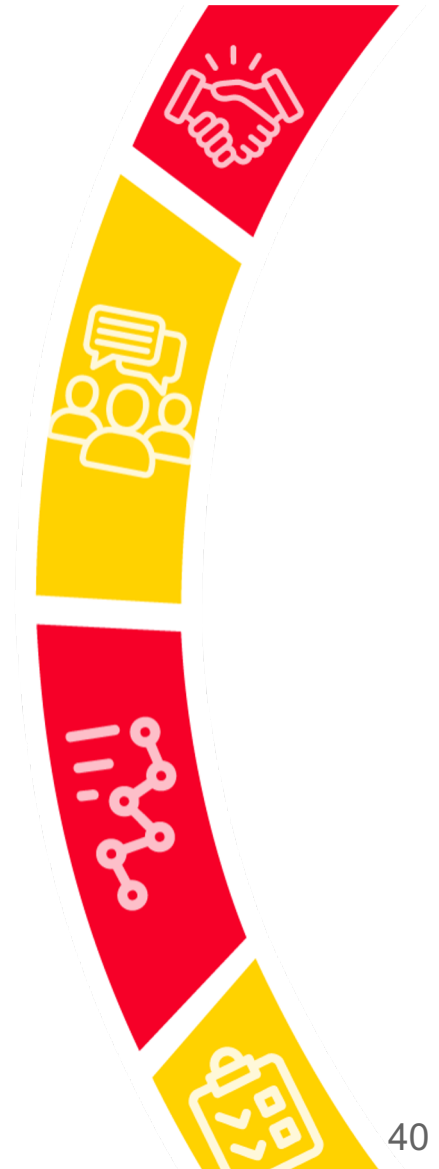
- To gauge organizational readiness for transformations, strategy realization, and projects
- To forecast likely outcomes
- To provide timely corrective feedback loops
- To recommend “soft” and “hard” factor changes over time (culture, leadership, politics, planning, technology, etc.)
- To monitor changes, their implementation, and their effects



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SECTION 5: Opportunity Realization: Factors and Challenges



Opportunity realization factors and challenges



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- Normalcy bias
- Not being aware of trends
- Clinging to the past (and hoping for the best!)
- Inertial thinking and action
- Status quo is comfortable and rewarding
- Conflating standards with trending developments/practices
- Conflating consensus with thought leadership

Standards reflect consensus



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From PMBOK Guide, Eighth Edition (Page V)

“While PMI administers the process and establishes rules to promote fairness in the development of consensus, it does not write the document and it does not independently test, evaluate, or verify the accuracy and completeness of any information or the soundness of any judgments contained in its standards and guideline publications”

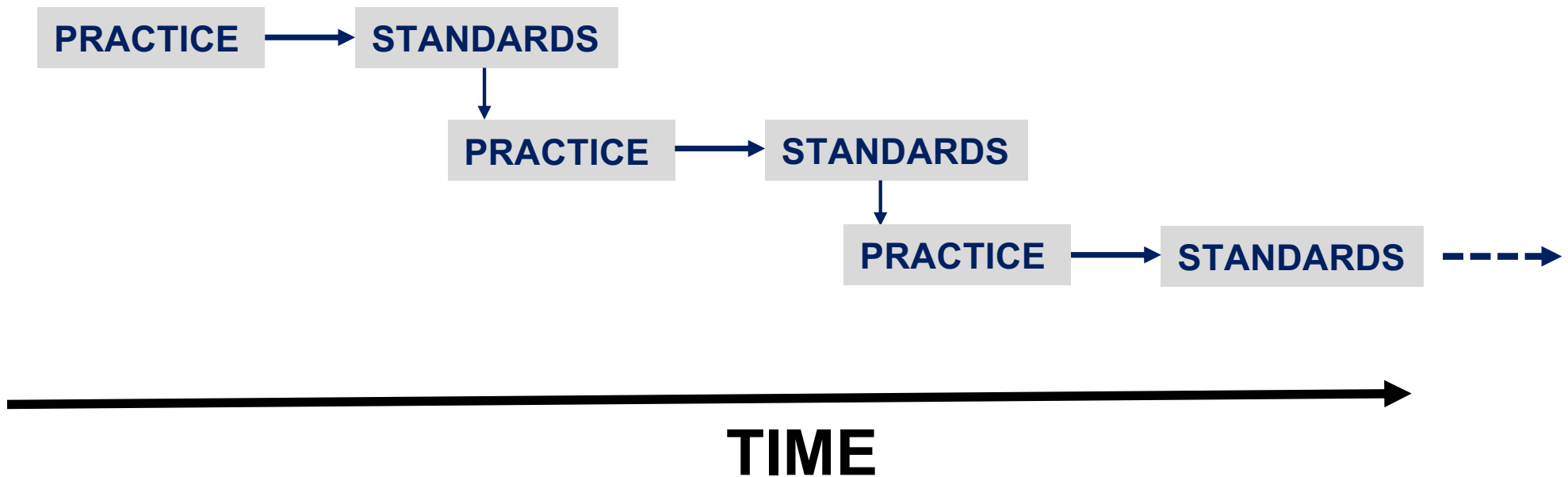
Standards vs. Practice

The Under-acknowledged Reality



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Standards are LAGGING indicators



How about leading indicators, thought leadership, and innovation?



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Why leading indicators, thought leadership, and innovation?



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- Increase industry–academia collaboration and cross pollination
- Improve success rates of projects, strategies, and transformations
- Future proof project management training and education
- Use standards to inform but not dominate training and education
- Elevate project management so it thrives in the AI-era
- Equip project management to derive solutions to work challenges and to successfully realize strategy and transformations
- Grow the influence, impact, and careers of project managers

How can we get started?



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How about right here and now by forming a *Community of Interest* that includes industry, academia, students, consultants, and anyone else who is interested? The *Community of Interest* could initially:

- Meet periodically on Zoom to discuss AI trends, concerns, and ideas
- Share AI tools, experiences, recommendations, etc.
- Explore expanding PM influence, reach, and recognition
- Help to shape or influence AI integration into project management practice and project management training/education



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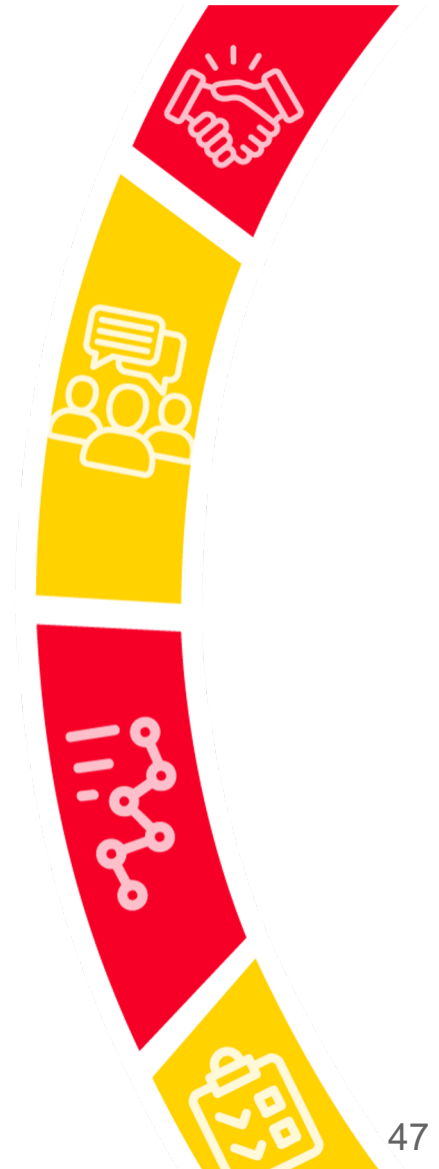
Questions & Evaluation

Evaluate Session:



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