

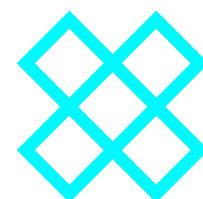
PARADIGM SHIFT

Synergy:
Navigating the
Path to Project
Success



Introducing Boola Katitjin:
WA's largest mass-engineered
timber building

Using systems thinking
to unlock construction
project success



Australian
Institute
of Project
Management

Paradigm Shift

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Interested in contributing to the next edition?

Calls for articles for the next edition will be made approximately 45 days before publication. Please see the back page for more details on how you can feature in our next edition.

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Certify your project management experience

Demonstrate your capabilities with AIPM's RegPM™ certification.

[RegPM™ overview >](#)

[See certifications >](#)

In the news

2023 National Project Management Achievement Awards: AIPM extends a heartfelt congratulations to all the winners

The National PMAA awards have wrapped up for 2023 in the Gold Coast and what a night to remember. AIPM not only congratulates the winners but also the nominees and thanks the judges and all who attended. Special mention to the team at Westpac for taking down National Project of the Year.



National Individual Winners

- Senior Project Professional: *Michael Thompson – RPS*
- Project Professional: *Dane Kosky – RPS AAP Consulting Pty Ltd*
- Future Project Leader (Under 35 years): *Joanne Huynh – Escient*

National Project Winners

- Construction/Engineering Projects: *EastCo Development Project (Department of Transport & Planning Building) – Turner & Townsend*
- Government Projects: *Critical Asset Failure Response Program – Courts Service Victoria, Built Environment Division*
- ICT/Telecommunications projects: *Westpac Core Network Transformation Stream 3a – Westpac*
- Transformation Projects: *Establishment of PMO – Kingston City Council – Kingston City Council*
- Small Projects: *RAAF Townsville Ordnance Loading Apron Roof Refurbishment – Defence, Aurecon*
- Regional Projects: *Heron Island Seawater Intake Project – Turner & Townsend*
- Sustainable Projects: *Metro Tasmania – Zero Emission Bus Trials – Implementation Stage – Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd and Pitt & Sherry Pty Ltd*
- Professional Services Projects: *USFPI Northern Territory Training Areas and Ranges upgrades project – Planning Phase – RPS AAP Consulting*
- Project Management Office (PMO): *Project Management Office – Glen Eira City Council – Glen Eira City Council*



2023 AIPM National Conference wraps up on the Gold Coast

Thank you to all who joined us on the Gold Coast for The Impact and Influence National conference 2023. What a location and unforgettable three days celebrating Australia's project management industry. Recordings of the sessions will be made available on the website and photos of the event can be found on our Facebook page. Watch this space as next year's conference draws closer.

Climate, Australia's next big employer: says entrepreneur Mike Cannon-Brookes

Atlassian Co-Founder and Co-CEO, Mike Cannon-Brookes, emphasizes climate as Australia's next major job market. The recent Careers for Net Zero Fair in Melbourne explores the impact of skills and transitioning to a clean economy. In his keynote address, Cannon-Brookes envisions Australia as a global leader in clean energy and stresses the need for innovation and infrastructure development in solar farms and batteries.

Congratulations to recently appointed AIPM fellows and life fellows

AIPM announces the recent appointment of five distinguished individuals as new AIPM fellows and life fellows. Our sincere congratulations go to Michael King, Colin Knowles, Michael Young, Ian Sharpe and Sherif Shenouda for this exceptional achievement.

Aurecon and Tractebel form strategic teaming agreement for Queensland dam projects

Aurecon and Tractebel, global leaders in engineering and hydropower, unite forces through a strategic Teaming Agreement for Queensland's booming dam market. This collaboration merges Aurecon's regional expertise with Tractebel's global hydro plant design proficiency, offering comprehensive advisory and engineering services for major dam projects. The partnership addresses the escalating demand for dam upgrades in Queensland, driven by climate change, aging assets, and community protection imperatives.





Sustainable construction

Shaping the future: a mass-engineered timber masterpiece



The climate emergency is driving the push for more sustainable building materials to reduce construction industry carbon emissions. Boola Katitjin is a ground-breaking mass-engineered timber (MET) building that showcases exciting future possibilities. Pratik Shrestha MAIPM unveils the phenomenal results when assumptions are tested, boundaries pushed and innovation triumphs over traditional thinking.

By Pratik Shrestha

Introducing Boola Katitjin: WA's largest mass-engineered timber building

A ground-breaking 16,000m², four-storey, contemporary educational facility has been constructed at Murdoch University's Perth campus. Boola Katitjin provides a space where people's well-being is enhanced, and inclusivity and accessibility have been considered.

In the local Noongar language, Boola Katitjin means 'lots of learning.' Noongar Elders, leaders, academics, staff and students were included in the design process, creating a deep sense of ownership and belonging. It proudly continues the site's 65,000 years of learning, teaching and storytelling history.

Why Murdoch University chose timber for Boola Katitjin

There has been an increasing awareness that sustainable building materials are needed to reduce carbon emissions.

“
We need to reimagine how we're going to build buildings and infrastructure going forward. We can't continue to do what we've always been doing. Timber is a renewable material. The amount of timber we needed to build this building has already been regrown. ”

Pratik Shrestha

Decreasing reliance on finite materials to prioritise renewable resources, such as timber, is a key circular economy concept. When MET is harvested from certified sustainably managed forests, it can play an important role in the circular economy and have a lower carbon footprint than traditional building materials.

Murdoch University chose timber to reflect their sustainability values in built form to help them reach their net zero carbon goals. It also reflects the local bush setting while recognising the traditions of using timber for ceremonial and functional activities in First Nations culture.

How the project team challenged traditional mindsets

MET buildings are in relative infancy in Australia, with cost often perceived as a barrier. In engineering Boola Katitjin, the project team of Murdoch University, Aurecon, Multiplex and Lyons, challenged traditional mindsets around financial viability and programming. Let's explore two of their innovations.

Prototyping timber components before production

Boola Katitjin's defining feature is the column-free northern events space. It's big enough to house a 737 Boeing jet, with the main timber portal frame spanning 30 metres. It creates an open environment that fosters social connections between students, staff and the community.

“
We were really at the limits of what we could do from an engineering perspective. We needed to test the assumptions and push the boundaries of engineering. ”

Pratik Shrestha

The project built and tested, to the point of destruction, a full-scale prototype of the portal frame connection for the space, which provided invaluable insights into the design and connection details.

It allowed testing of the engineering assumptions of the timber between the roof rafters (at 1,380 mm deep) and outer columns. Rather than poring over different design scenarios, the prototype allowed designers to efficiently validate their analysis and move forward.

Robotics as a pathway to financially viable sustainable construction

Between 200,000 to 300,000 screws needed to be manually fixed by workers to connect the timber components. Traditionally, installation of the 300 to 400 mm long screws is completed in a crouched position while exerting downwards force, creating potential ergonomic stress for workers and taking time in the project schedule.

“
In collaboration with Murdoch University, the University of Technology in Sydney and Aurecon, we were able to develop a fully-autonomous, world-first robot that would be able to go around the building and install screws on site. It was a fantastic outcome for all of us involved.”

Pratik Shrestha

The project team challenged itself to do better. This constant desire for innovation brought to life a world-first robotics trial.

Automation will increase productivity, reduce cost and improve worker safety

Deployed on the live construction site, the robot successfully installed 100 screws. It was equipped with a LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) navigation system for autonomous travel.

Its workflow came directly from a digital twin created by the project's engineers, so the robot understood exactly where to insert the screws with +/- 5 mm accuracy. Data suggested that if fully deployed, robotics could deliver a timber building construction time saving of up to 20 per cent, pointing to future cost and safety benefits.

A shining example for the future of sustainable construction

Boola Katitjin has already attracted global attention for its contribution to advancing the sustainable, renewable and circular approaches required by the construction industry to assist economies in reaching net-zero carbon emissions.

It was the subject of a BBC Storyworks series on The Spaces that Shape Us





launched as part of World Green Building Week 2023. The building has been showcased at the World Timber Engineering Conference in Oslo and will be featured at COP28 in Dubai in late 2023.

It has forever shifted the paradigm of what can be achieved with timber in the built environment and the value delivered to the end user. As we track towards a net zero future, more exciting timber construction projects await, building on the indisputable success of Boola Katitjin.

Boola Katitjin: A leader in sustainability

Low carbon: The timber structure contributed to radically reducing the project's overall embodied carbon by approximately 55 per cent.

Less concrete: Almost 9,000 tonnes of concrete was avoided, compared with traditional construction methods.

Proudly certified: It was designed to achieve a 6-star Green Star Design and As-built v1.3 certification with the Green Building Council of Australia, representing world leadership in sustainable design. It will also be the first 6-star certified education building in Western Australia.

Awards to date

- Engineers Australia Project of the Year (WA)
- International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC) Project Awards 2023 – Outstanding Project of the Year – Small to Medium

Pratik Shrestha MAIPM is a Principal at Aurecon and the structural engineer who led the Boola Katitjin project. He specialises in designing mass-engineered timber buildings. Over the past decade, he has partnered with clients to bring major iconic building projects to life.



Professional development

Best practice project and programme management: stepping stones to RegPM™ status

Ian McDermott MAIPM and Lawrie Kirk MAIPM share their thoughts on Australia's project landscape, pointing to the AIPM's RegPM™ certification as a pivotal tool for shaping the next generation of project leaders. Read on to discover their roadmap to certification that will equip you with the skills to lead Australia's upcoming transformation initiatives.

By Ian McDermott MAIPM and Lawrie Kirk MAIPM

Change management amidst uncertainty

Economic uncertainty and volatility across both private and public sectors in Australia challenges both government and companies to find new ways of managing change and meeting the needs of citizens and customers.

The ongoing impacts arising from the COVID-19 pandemic have had a profound influence on ways of working and has driven change in demand for public services: as the 2025 Australian Public Service (APS) Workforce Strategy points out:

6 **Most workforces are seeing the need for a renewed focus on citizen-centric services, rapid delivery with rising expectations and the value of ongoing evaluation and evolution.** 9

With more people wanting to access online services, government is under pressure to deliver. And increasing online activity has heightened cyber risk and the need to secure against data breaches.

Meanwhile, increasing geo-strategic threats are affecting the way government is thinking about long-term investment in defence.

In this context of change, Australia's Labor government has shown a strong commitment to re-energising skills and capability in the public sector – and this bodes well for training and developing the next generation of professionals.

The importance of organisational transformation

If an organisation doesn't transform, it's unlikely to satisfy its customers' or users' evolving needs.

This has put additional pressure on organisations' digital self-service capabilities: without the right digital services the non-digital provision is less able to cope, leading to increased waiting times for helplines and below par service levels.

Many Australian government systems are now feeling their age and it's become necessary to replace them or include a digital interface to facilitate services.

Consequently, the workforce needs greater investment – including the Australian Public Service and beyond – to develop the right skills and retain talent.

The current state of project and programme management skills in Australia – and how to improve them



Managing transformation in government and private businesses is a professional capability in itself, requiring knowledge, experience and recognised best practice qualifications.

This is acknowledged increasingly in Australia and reflected by a big uptake in globally-recognised certifications including PRINCE2® for project management and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP®) for programme management. In addition, this has highlighted the need for project and programme management offices (PMOs) to oversee all the work feeding into transformation.

Meanwhile, in certain change initiatives, the advent of Agile methods and techniques has led to a reduction in sound monitoring, control disciplines and more traditional project management techniques, which poses a risk to successful transformation.

Equally, the investment in maturity assessment – understanding and improving the level of change capability in an organisation – has dropped off in recent years but needs a timely renewal to ensure people have the right skills to handle today's demands for change.

This is why it's important that the Australian Institute of Project Management's Registered Project Manager (RegPM™) certification program – covering six levels of capability and experience – emphasises the need to create knowledgeable and competent project managers.

“
The advent of Agile methods and techniques has led to a reduction in sound monitoring, control disciplines and more traditional project management techniques, which poses a risk to successful transformation.”

This objective and structured approach provides a strong pathway to mentor people in their professional project and programme management development. It highlights the need for foundational knowledge which is generic enough to view through various lenses and be applied to a multitude of project and programme environments.

PRINCE2® and MSP® – stepping stones to AIPM accreditation

As an AIPM member set on achieving the RegPM™ status, you need to collect and present evidence for your chosen level of competency.

Along with real-life experience of managing projects and programmes, having comprehensive understanding of professional practices and knowledge is essential – and this is obtainable through certifications such as PRINCE2 and MSP.

Indeed, the AIPM automatically grants AIPM members the Certified Practising Project Practitioner (CPPP) and Certified Practising Project Manager (CPPM) levels of RegPM™ certification to individuals with a PRINCE2®, PRINCE2 Agile®, MSP, Management of Portfolios (MoP®) or Management of Risk Practitioner (MoR®) certification.

The Certified Practising Project Director (CPPD) level requires demonstrable programme and project management expertise. MSP best practice underpins the way large programmes are set up and run in Australian government.

The principles enshrined in MSP – including the ability to deal with ambiguity and bringing pace and value – also reflect the relevance of this best practice approach to today's transformation challenges.

And the evolution of language used in this best practice – such as changing the description of an organisation's “future state” from blueprint to target operating

model – is aligned with current standards and reflects the way people are using these frameworks in practice.

Equally, if you're involved in projects that are using Agile delivery methods, there's a place for PRINCE2 Agile knowledge and certification to add the necessary control and governance, while adding to your RegPM™ eligibility.

Next steps for AIPM members wanting to further their knowledge, expertise and careers

- 1. Review and validate your current skills and competence:** This allows for honest and structured discussions about areas for improvement.,

- 2. Identify and gather the evidence you need for RegPM™:** If you already have a Practitioner certification, contact the AIPM for automatic recognition for the CPPP level.
- 3. Explore the foundational knowledge available in PRINCE2 and MSP:** Apply the methods as part of the evidence you need to not only achieve eligibility for all levels of the RegPM™, but also to improve your practice.

As Australia is on the cusp of a period of growth, now is the time to develop valuable skills that mean AIPM members are well-placed to manage the transformation and improvement initiatives the country needs.



Ian McDermott MAIPM is a Partner at Synergy Group, leading the Strategic Transformation practice. He has over thirty years of portfolio, program and project management experience, including establishing and running large-scale transformations and change initiatives. Ian is one of Australia's most knowledgeable authorities on the MSP® Program Management and PRINCE2® Project Management methods, having been responsible for introducing them into the Australian marketplace.

Lawrie Kirk MAIPM is an Executive Director at Synergy Group in the Program Design and Delivery Practice, where he consults with many clients to improve their project and programme management. He has a wealth of experience and knowledge in consulting, training and IT best practices, having worked as a National Practice Lead, Principal Consultant, Lead Trainer and Sessional Academic at the Australian National University.

Lifelong learning: reflections and lessons from a project leader

Senior Project Management Lecturer Dr Ali Al-Ashwal reflects on his recent professional growth. After gaining insights into his leadership profile during a Leadership Development program, he implemented his learnings in a real-life project. Explore the lessons from his transformative experience to uncover ideas and inspiration for your own project leadership journey.

By Dr Ali Al-Ashwal



360° feedback uncovers surprising growth opportunities

Last year, I participated in 'Inspire Leadership,' a leadership development program at Western Sydney University. The program aimed to enhance leadership skills and self-awareness for academic and professional managers.

The 360-degree process was a fantastic framework for introspection, allowing me to better understand my leadership approach. I was surprised at the huge difference between my self-assessment of my leadership skills and the feedback from my employees, peers and manager.

I highlighted my growth areas as Task Management and Task Leadership. However, the other respondents supported my current task approach. They suggested investing more time in developing emotional intelligence (EI) behaviours to extend my People Leadership and Management skills (see Figure 1).

“
We alleviated the pressure with meticulous planning, quality control and proactive problem-solving.”

LEADERSHIP – Drive the Future

TASK Do it better	Visionary Championing innovation, welcoming new ideas, creating a vision, focusing on customers, challenging the status quo, socially sustainable thinking (SM, SA, SoA, ReM).	Motivator Building purpose and direction, role modelling open communication, showing trust, making use of people strengths (SoA, ReM).	PEOPLE Engage your people
	Planner Making decisions, taking a stand, being assertive, tackling long-standing issues, getting 'uncomfortable', agreeing priorities, facilitating change (SA, SM with SoA, ReM)	Facilitator Collaborating across boundaries, listening to other's needs, encouraging contributions, involving people in decisions, valuing diversity (SoA, ReM).	
	Implementer Managing uncertainty and complexity, demonstrating logical thinking, ensuring information is accessible, finding ways around blockages (SM, SA with SoA, ReM).	Developer Providing and learning opportunities and feedback to others, developing self, delegating, seeking opportunities for teamwork (SoA, ReM with SA, SM).	
	Deliverer Being persistent, results focused, taking responsibility for outcomes, staying calm and managing stress, giving timely help and advice (SA, SM with SoA, ReM)	Supporter Listening, showing respect, building relationships, negotiating and mediating, resolving team issues (SoA, ReM).	

MANAGEMENT – Make it happen

Figure 1: 360° survey results: Domain areas of my leadership style (Source: Leader/Manager Styles™ Personal Insight Tool)

EI behaviours: my strengths

- Involving people in decisions that affect them
- Showing concern for others' needs
- Delegating tasks to aid others' development
- Effectively managing personal stress and emotions

EI behaviours: my opportunities

- Building collaborative relationships across the team/organisation
- Sharing own thoughts, feelings and attitudes

With a better understanding of my leadership approach and direction for enhancing my leadership competencies, it was time to apply the principles to a real-world project.

Turning theory into action

I honed my new skills leading the development of a micro-credential course. The 'Fundamentals of Project Management' course would train future construction workers at the Institute of Applied Technology.

Project deliverables

- Documenting learning outcomes.
- Creating engaging and informative course materials.
- Devising assessments to evaluate learners' understanding and application of project management concepts.

A diverse team of casual lecturers, industry professionals, content developers and subject matter experts contributed to course development.

Project challenges a test of new leadership approach

Throughout the development of this course, the following familiar challenges emerged. I leaned on my recent learnings to navigate them with a renewed focus on emotionally intelligent leadership.

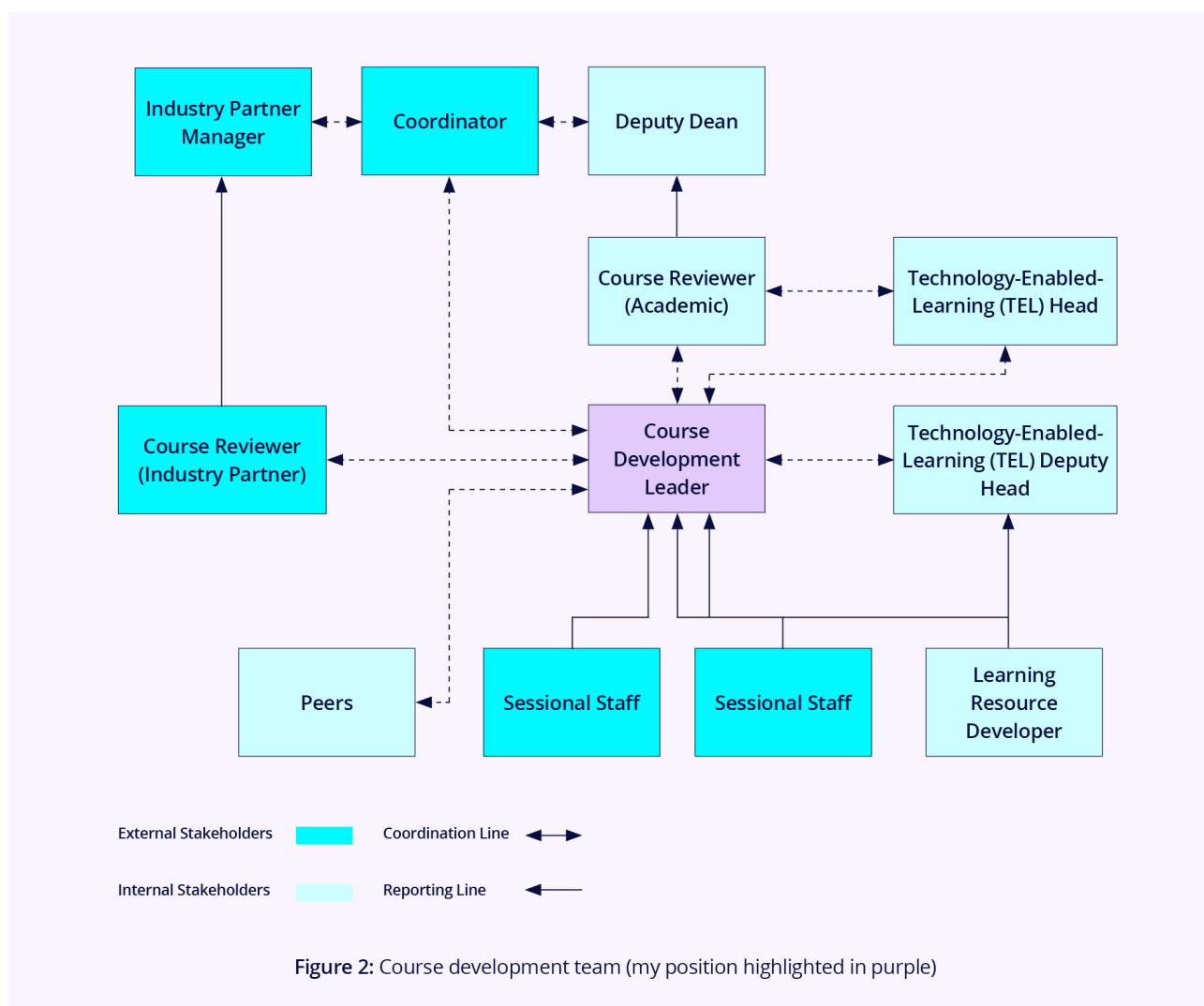
Unclear scope: The project commenced with unclear scope and deliverables, making it difficult to set clear goals. To address this, I engaged extensively with stakeholders, including TAFE and industry experts, to understand their expectations and requirements.

Time limitations: Due to tight time constraints, keeping the team motivated and on schedule was crucial. Clear and

regular communication, task prioritisation, realistic deadlines, progress tracking and effective time management achieved this.

Team dynamics: The team initially lacked a sense of cohesion. To maximise potential, I fostered a positive team culture, encouraged open communication and promoted collaboration with workshops and team-building exercises. This strengthened relationships, enhanced trust and improved overall team performance.

Team member turnover: Frequent team changes posed challenges in maintaining consistency, knowledge transfer and integrating new members. We established regular onboarding sessions, clear documentation and effective communication channels to alleviate the impact.



'Get it Right from the First Time': The project had high stakes, requiring accuracy and quality in course content without room for error. This added pressure to the development process. We alleviated the pressure with meticulous planning, quality control and proactive problem-solving. Frequent collaboration and feedback were crucial.

Leadership insights for project managers

Reflecting on this multifaceted project, several key insights emerged which could be applied to most projects.

1. Embrace Agile methodologies: The project's dynamic nature required an agile approach and Implementer leadership style. By closely driving the course development process, I could navigate complexities, address challenges in real-time and ensure the project stayed on track.
2. Engage stakeholders: Effective stakeholder engagement and coordination were key in establishing a clear course scope and aligning expectations. Regular communication and feedback loops with industry experts, course designers and other developers fostered a collaborative approach. Building strong relationships facilitated smoother decision-making and ensured stakeholder input was incorporated into course development.
3. Foster collaboration: Collaboration was essential in overcoming course development challenges. Open communication, knowledge sharing and a supportive team culture

helped leverage diverse expertise. Brainstorming together led to innovative solutions and informed decisions.

4. Use referent and experience power: Leadership in this challenging project relied heavily on the power of influence, particularly referent power and experience. Building credibility, trust and respect among team members and stakeholders allowed me to effectively guide and motivate the team. Drawing on my project management experience and expertise provided valuable insights and guidance throughout the process.
5. Apply adaptive leadership style: To handle the multifaceted nature of the project, I adapted my leadership style to meet the specific needs of the situation and team. I remained flexible in decision-making, adjusted communication styles and empowered team members to take ownership of their tasks. This allowed me to address challenges, capitalise on opportunities and drive the project forward.

Leadership learning never ends

Undertaking the professional development course was transformative, reminding me that leadership development is a lifelong journey. I hope my story inspires other project managers to pursue professional development courses to build confidence and their ability to better navigate complex projects.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr Matt Stevens for his insightful review and comment on this article.

Dr Ali Al-Ashwal MAIPM CPPP is a highly experienced professional in academia and practice, specialising in project and construction management. He has a strong educational foundation with a PhD in construction building economics, an MSc in construction management and a BSc in architecture. He's a Senior Lecturer and Academic Course Advisor in Project Management at Western Sydney University.



Education innovation

Opening the doors to project management entrepreneurship

Amir Ghapanchi shares how he filled a gap in project management education by incorporating entrepreneurship into the Master of Project Management at Victoria University and how it opened students' minds to new career opportunities and possibilities.

By Dr Amir Ghapanchi MAIPM

Interest in entrepreneurship is growing.

The share of students who intend to be entrepreneurs right after their studies in Australia has increased from 9.1% in 2018 to 16.1% in 2021.

2021 GUESSS Global Report

This significant jump indicates a student appetite shift from 'being an employee' to 'becoming an entrepreneur.'

Australian higher education institutions,

including in the field of project management, must cater to this increasing student demand. We must evolve our curriculum to help students open the door to project management entrepreneurship.

What is project management entrepreneurship?

Project management entrepreneurship is the process of applying project management principles and skills to start and run a project management business.

It involves creating a project management product or service and launching it to customers. Project management entrepreneurship requires both project management and entrepreneurial competencies. It's a rewarding and challenging career option for project managers who want to create their own project management business and make an impact in the industry.

The link between project management and entrepreneurship

Project management and entrepreneurship may seem like two different worlds, but they have much in common. Both involve creating something new, managing resources, solving problems and delivering value. They complement each other in many ways. Project management gives entrepreneurs the structure, discipline and rigour to turn ideas into reality. Entrepreneurship provides the creativity, innovation and vision project management needs to deliver value and impact.

A limited number of researchers have studied the broad topic of entrepreneurship and project management. They have uncovered some interesting findings that support the need to expose project management students to entrepreneurship in their studies:

- ✓ Entrepreneurial orientation is positively correlated with project success.
- ✓ Entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the success of any project.

Embedding entrepreneurship in project management studies

In response to the increasing orientation towards entrepreneurship in university students and the strong link with project management, Victoria University (VU) ran an entrepreneurial initiative for our final year Master of Project Management.

We collaborated with Michael Jackson, a

VU graduate who became an entrepreneur and established two project management firms. Together, we created a project where students worked in groups to develop a proposal to establish a project management start-up, outlining how they would apply project management principles. Then, the students created a Project Management Plan to establish their start-up.

Student feedback on the entrepreneurship project.

'It opened my mind that you can start your own venture as a project management consultant and not just rely on someone else to provide you with employment.'

“**Project management and entrepreneurship may seem like two different worlds, but they have much in common. Both involve creating something new, managing resources, solving problems and delivering value.**”

'We all ought to create a practice of our own one day, and I think this unit created a good foundation for it.'

'I found it exceedingly realistic with a practical approach to starting a new business. The professors provided an eye-opening glimpse into the realities of the work life and the opportunities that it offers.'

Entrepreneurship can enhance project management careers.

Project management and entrepreneurship are a winning combination that can lead to successful and rewarding careers. That's why we need to embed exposure to entrepreneurship into project management higher education.



Project manager students learn many skills that can help them execute successful business strategies. Evolving project management qualifications to include entrepreneurial skills enlightens students to pursue many other career pathways and opportunities.

Tips for project management entrepreneurship success.

VU's project management entrepreneurship initiative uncovered a range of characteristics that contribute to success.

Forming a coherent team: A successful project management start-up requires a team rather than just one person. The ability to form a team of motivated individuals who can work together is very important. The team leader needs to be supportive and charismatic enough to be able to build and lead the team. The team leader should freely delegate authority to team members as needed.

Promoting a positive team culture: Fostering a non-judgemental environment

where all team members can freely express their opinions and thoughts is key. Establishing a start-up is a challenging task and involves dealing with many issues. A positive team culture provides a strong foundation for this to happen.

Having members from diverse expertise areas: Establishing a project management start-up requires not only project management expertise but also the inclusion of team members from other expertise areas such as finance, marketing, sales, human resources and so on.

Being patient: Most start-ups fail, and those that don't fail will take time to succeed. Project management entrepreneurs need to be patient and determined. They need to have an open mind and not get upset with the losses made before the firm reaches the break-even point.

Being innovative: In today's environment, every industry has intense competition. The team must be innovative and creative to survive in such a volatile market. This also helps with the process of problem solving and dealing with business challenges.

Dr Amir Ghapanchi MAIPM is a certified project manager, a senior lecturer and course chair for Master of Project Management at Victoria University. Amir has published more than 100 refereed publications, including more than 55 articles in prestigious journals on project management, organisation management, systems and technology.



Project leadership

Project sponsorship: the good, the bad and the ugly

Over her 20-year project management career, Tamara Mirkovic CPPD has determined that project success often lies in the hands of the project sponsor. Join us as Tamara shares her valuable insights, offering guidance on recognising great sponsors and avoiding or gracefully supporting the challenging ones.



By Tamara Mirkovic

Show me your sponsor, and I'll predict your success.

It's a bold statement, but it's grounded both in my experience and research. I've seen it play out countless times, and a 2020 study by KPMG and the AIPM highlighted the important role of the project sponsor.

Characteristics of a good project sponsor

With Project Sponsors being so critical to project success, your achievements and career progression can hinge on their abilities in the role. Here are some characteristics of sponsors you'll want to work with.

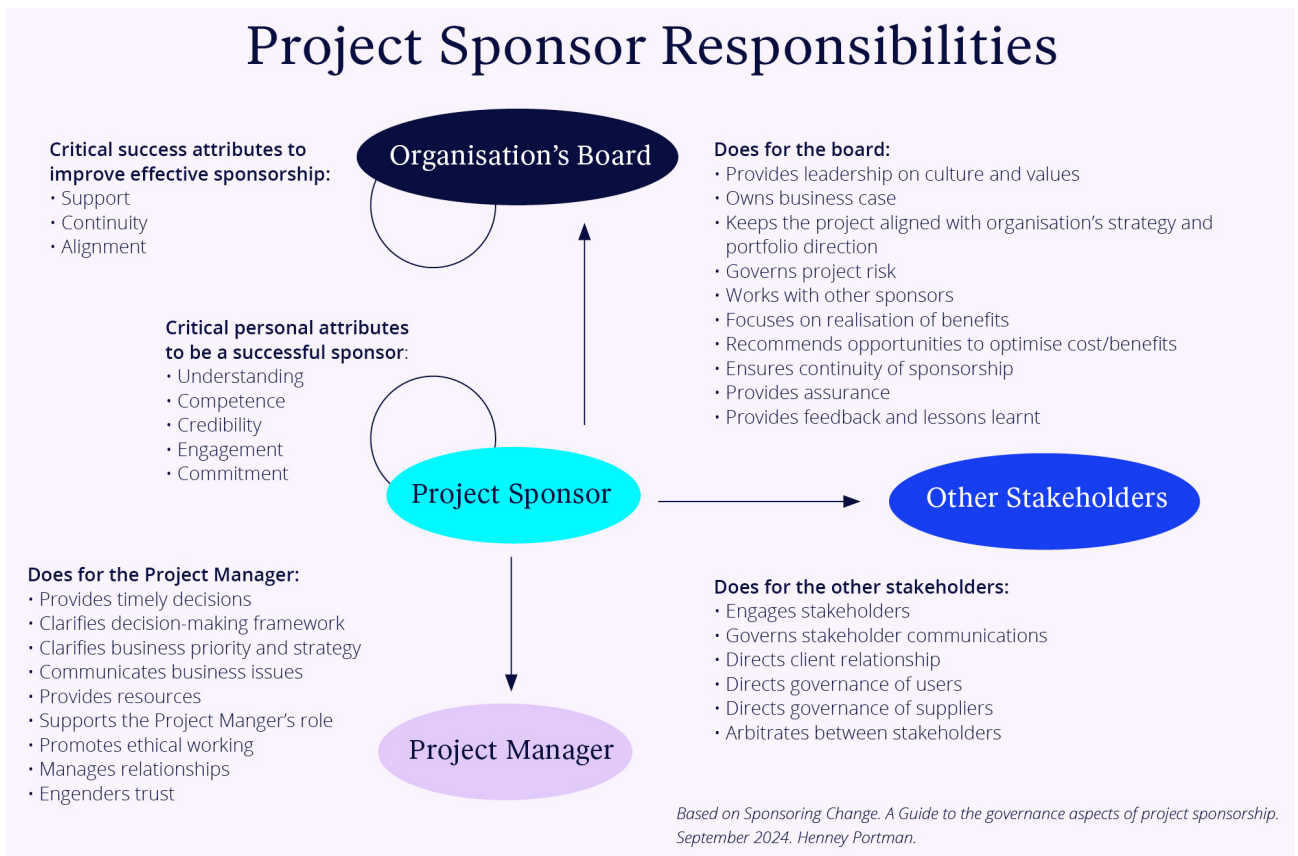
Passionate: They are deeply invested in the project's purpose. Whether it's implementing AI or advancing cancer treatment, their care and commitment can propel projects towards success.

Powerful: They are senior enough in the organisational hierarchy to have decision-making authority and influence. They must be willing to use their power to resolve business process delays and other internal roadblocks.

Communicative: They prioritise regular catchups with their project manager. They welcome honesty and transparency, they listen, and they are invested in helping you fix problems.

Supportive: They have your back in the tough times and will fight for your project's survival, protect it from budget cuts and personally vouch for its ROI.

Advocacy: They actively promote what your project is doing for the organisation at every opportunity. They share their passion with their peers, so senior executives understand the value of your project.



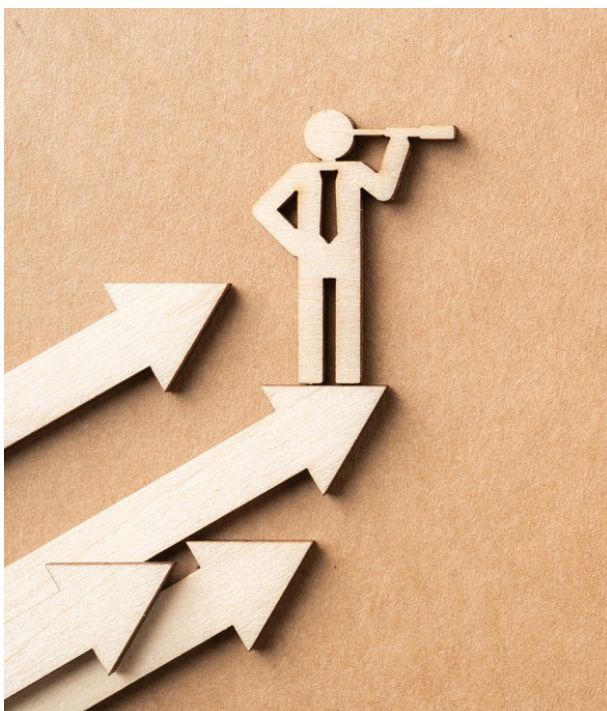
Involved: They celebrate your wins, show appreciation for your efforts and drop in to chat with the team. Their door is open to discuss setbacks. They give their time and advice freely and want to know how they can help your project succeed.

Project Sponsors who display these characteristics show they care about the project vision and value your team's efforts. They demonstrate the shared commitment to pursue ongoing benefits realisation well beyond project closure, which is the true measure of success.

Characteristics shared by challenging project sponsors

Having the wrong Project Sponsor can be detrimental to project success. Here are some red flags to look out for.

Disengaged: Sponsors that delegate communication via a third party, constantly cancel meetings, don't show up or don't bother to engage consistently are demonstrating a lack of engagement with the project. This will inevitably impact project success.



Lacks knowledge: If a sponsor can't easily explain your project's purpose, benefits and value to key stakeholders without prior preparation, they may not be the right sponsor.

Not collaborative: If they arbitrarily make decisions about the project without consultation or taking advice on the risks, benefits or options first, it signals an indifference to outcomes and a disregard for the team's expertise.

Lacks accountability: If you can't apply basic project controls because the sponsor won't follow the basic governance protocols, your project will be in chaos.

Avoids responsibility: If a sponsor tends to claim the victories while avoiding responsibility when things go wrong, they're more inclined to resort to scapegoating and anger, which undermines project success.

Unappreciative: If they don't regularly check in on the team's wellbeing or say thanks for the hard work, they probably see the project team as 'expensive temporary staff' rather than the drivers of innovation and change.

Self-serving: If individuals prioritise their personal agenda over the good of the organisation or alignment with the stated strategy, project success will suffer.

Working with Project Sponsors who display these characteristics is highly challenging, so I've created some tips for improving the situation.

Taking action with a challenging project sponsor

When faced with a difficult sponsor, there are actions you can take to improve the situation, despite the power imbalances.

Relationship building: Start by trying to build a trusted relationship. Some sponsors are simply new to the role or unaware of

what's expected of them. Investing in the relationship can yield big rewards. You could also suggest Project Sponsor training.

Peer support: If that doesn't work, you could seek support from one of their peers, who might have more influence than you.

Sponsor change: If you're still unsuccessful, petition someone who is more senior to appoint a new sponsor. Explain what type of sponsor you need and see if they can find someone more suitable.

External support: You could try appointing an external Project Assurance provider, Auditor or Management Consultancy to review your project. Someone well-regarded in the industry can point out this sponsorship issue in an impartial way and can make clear recommendations to the board in a sensitive and effective manner.

Move on: Although it's a last resort, if you've tried everything with no success, consider looking for another project. Some things are outside of your control, and there is only so much you can do to influence the hierarchy above you. Without a great sponsor, your project has a high failure risk, and this can impact your work satisfaction and future prospects. You may as well face this difficult truth early on. You could still deliver a successful project, but without an effective leader in the long term, it is unlikely to be allocated the required resources to be maintained after the project and it typically gets shelved. Their money and your efforts will be wasted, so it's best to move on to something better.


How to avoid challenging project sponsors

To avert the unpleasant situation of working with a difficult project sponsor, try to assess their effectiveness before you agree to take on a project role. Meeting your sponsor at the interview stage is vital. Ask many questions to uncover their leadership characteristics before agreeing to deliver their project. Whenever I've failed to listen to my intuition in this regard, I've come to regret it.


Acknowledging visionary project sponsors

Although I've focused on challenging sponsors, I've been fortunate to work with mostly amazing ones. Thank you to the inspiring organisational sponsors that I've had the pleasure of working with throughout my career. Your contributions are a major factor in our collective success. I'm grateful for your vision, your passion and your unwavering dedication in guiding and supporting what we all work so hard for in project delivery.

Without you, our projects would not be winning awards, and we'd struggle to navigate and make gains in challenging business landscapes with the usual levels of change aversion. The project manager and project team often get all the credit, yet I believe the sponsor has an under-appreciated and pivotal role in project management. Thanks for helping us make the world a better place.



Tamara Mirkovic CPPD is an award-winning leader in Program and Project Management, specialising in digital innovation and large-scale ICT transformations. With over 20 years of experience, she has led projects involving advanced data science, geospatial machine learning, cloud platform data transformations, enterprise system upgrades, digitisation, mobile apps and high-performance computing.



Using systems thinking to unlock construction project success



In the fast-paced realm of construction projects, success comes from deftly managing many complex and interconnected elements. Sebastian Immaraj MAIPM explores how systems thinking can help project managers understand the interplay between project elements, manage risks and reduce uncertainty. Read on to learn more about the transformative potential of systems thinking and practical examples of how you can apply it in construction projects.

By Sebastian Immaraj

Understanding systems thinking

As Russell Ackoff eloquently said, 'A system is not the sum of its parts – it's the product of their interactions.' Systems thinking has enormous potential to influence project outcomes. While project managers often use it intuitively, the concept needs formalisation and reinforcement to achieve its full potential. Let's start by exploring systems thinking basics.

A system is a set of elements, coherently organised and interconnected to achieve an objective.

Let's consider project management from a system perspective of PMBOK disciplines. The disciplines can make up the system elements. Figure 1 shows how these interrelated elements can be viewed through the lens of systems thinking to ensure they are organised and working towards a common goal. On the right side are human disciplines, which enable

the objective disciplines on the left to be achieved. Integration management is the systems thinking engine room and eye, managing the total system, while risk management is a safety net. The relationships of the elements to each other is complex and change through a project life cycle. Projects typically improve an existing operations environment and therefore the project to operations relationship is also paramount.

Construction project elements must be considered as a system and not in isolated silos, to achieve better outputs and outcomes. Everything we do in a construction project is related to something else within a project and outside of it. Construction is the bringing together of many and complex elements through a project life cycle. Project success can vary dramatically depending on how well the relationships of these elements are managed.

Operations System

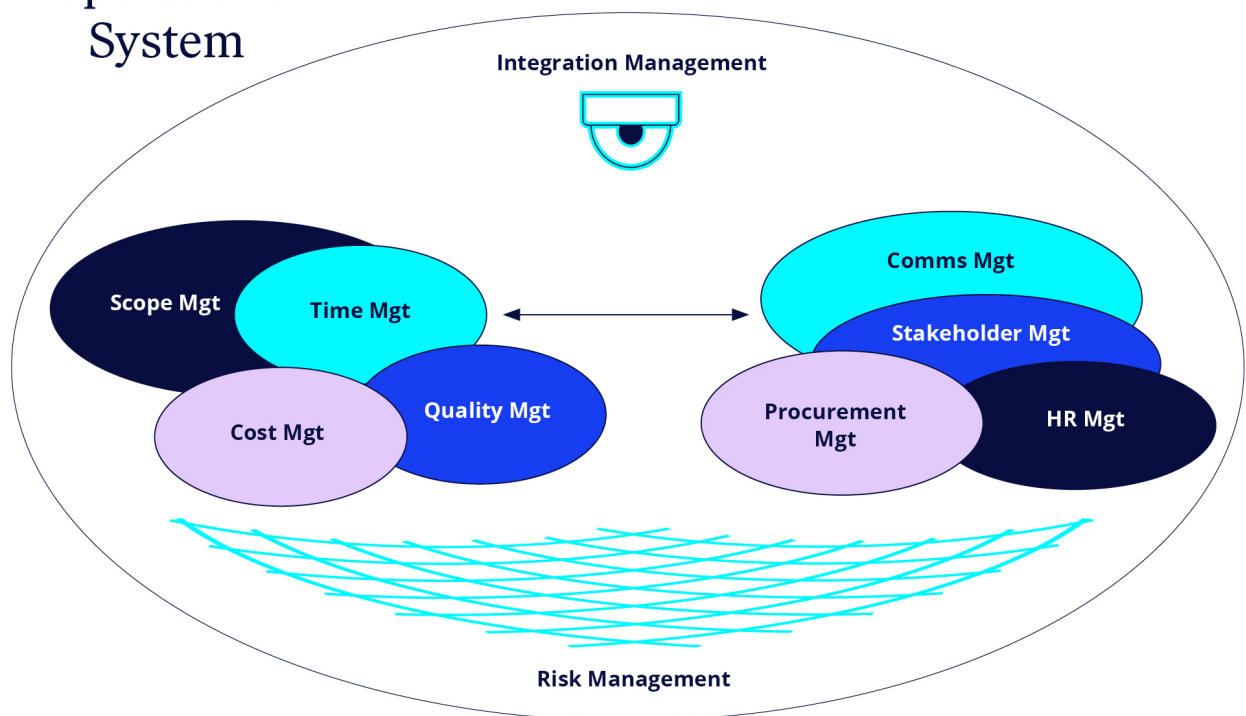


Figure 1 – Project System PMBOK disciplines as System Elements

Navigating complexity in construction projects

Construction projects are dynamic, complex, high-risk systems.

Construction naturally aligns with systems thinking because there are many systems and subsystems embedded in every project. It is a dynamic environment, making cause-and-effect relationships elusive. The paradox of high risk and low profit projects can challenge even seasoned professionals. Even with advanced tools for managing and controlling projects, many construction projects still struggle to meet cost, time and quality objectives.

“

A system is not the sum of its parts; it's the product of their interactions. ”

The need for a holistic approach to project management.

Construction productivity in Australia has been relatively stagnant compared to other industries over the past 30 years. The sector has opportunities for reform in project management, materials, procurement models, sustainability, processes, construction methods, supply chains, and modular and volumetric construction – all of which will need more systems thinking.

A vision for an interconnected future

As industry leaders, we must foster a culture that acknowledges the interconnectedness of things and move away from silo thinking. Success in construction hinges on understanding system elements, relationships, integration and alignment within larger systems and objectives. Systems thinking in technical and human contexts needs to be taught at universities and continued into the workforce, particularly as project complexity increases.

From theory to practice: examples of systems thinking in construction

From integrating organisational strategies to building cohesive teams, these real-world scenarios highlight the interconnectedness of various elements and the transformative potential of systems thinking in construction.

Systems thinking in business strategy.

Projects must align with an organisation's mission, vision, and strategic direction. Project portfolio management is systems thinking to select appropriate projects by assessing risks, opportunities and links to integrate projects with business goals.

Systems thinking within a project technical disciplines.

Bunjil Place in Casey, Melbourne, is a multipurpose facility with a plaza, auditorium, library, civic centre and gallery. Systems thinking is key to integrating these elements and achieving the best outcomes from design, scheduling, contractual and construction methods perspectives.

Systems thinking in planning.

Planning is understanding relationships of elements in systems and subsystems to meet objectives, typically time and cost. In a construction schedule, tasks are elements that make up subsystems. These subsystems are elements of a system. Planning software can manage thousands of system elements. We can analyse and visualise how variables and changes impact project objectives.

Systems thinking in project objectives.

The University of Melbourne's Architecture Building project objectives were to create an iconic and sustainable building that integrated with the environment while optimising education outcomes. If these objectives aren't aligned to the detail level, they will conflict with each other and hinder results. These objectives are system elements integrated for a common outcome.

Systems thinking for teams.

Humans have survived by working in teams. A team is system of human elements. Project teams create outputs greater than the sum of individuals. Projects are temporary teams and organisations. Clear organisational, contractual, communication, process and governance structures improve productivity and outcomes, and minimise project risk.

Systems thinking in project learning.

Past project knowledge is key for future decision-making. For instance, a database of similar-sized hospitals constructed in Australia over the past five years can provide valuable information and wisdom for a proposed hospital construction project.

Sebastian Immaraj MAIPM is an award-winning engineer and project manager with over 20 years of experience managing capital projects in energy, resources, government, infrastructure and water sectors. Currently working as a Senior Project Manager at Melbourne Water, Sebastian also teaches engineering, project and construction management at the University of Melbourne.

Practical PMO tips for successful digital transformation



Public and private sector organisations are embracing digital transformation as a strategy for keeping pace with today's dynamic project environment. In this article, Amireh Amirmazaheri MAIPM explores how Project Management Offices (PMOs) are emerging as an indispensable force in shaping these transformations, outlining key success factors and sharing practical tips for project managers.

By Amireh Amirmazaheri

The importance of PMO services in digital transformation

As project professionals, we're well-placed to assist businesses in their digital transformation journey. We're experts in managing change, optimising operations, enhancing customer experience and establishing pathways for long-term growth and success.

However, the key to success is involving the PMO from the start. Preparing the PMO with the necessary skills and resources and placing them at the centre of the change ensures they are the ones who will successfully drive, report on and benefit

from a digital transformation.

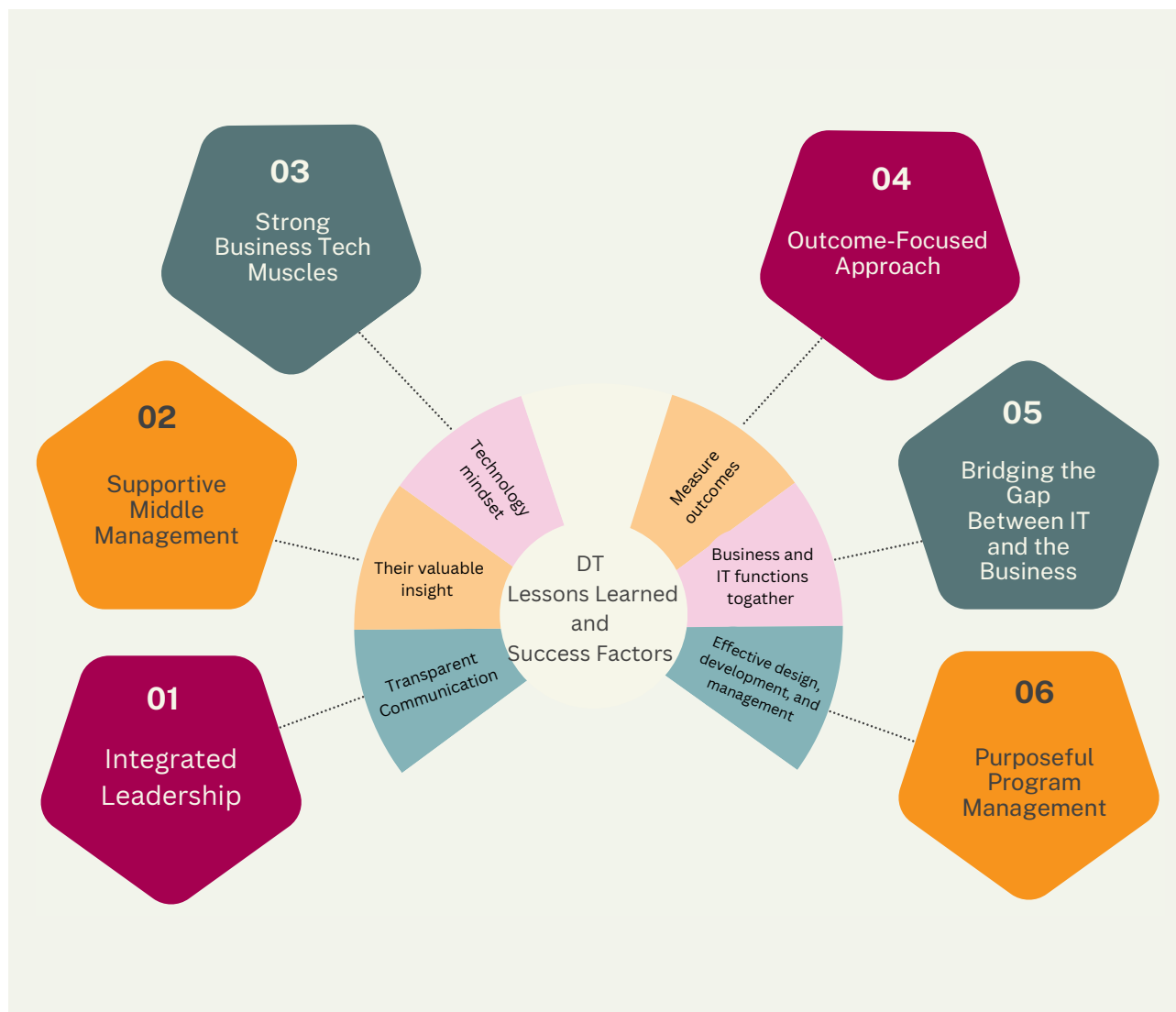
Rather than merely participating in the transformation, with upfront involvement, the PMO will act as an enabler, providing focused and tailored services that contribute to the program's overall success. This mindset shift ensures the business receives the necessary support throughout its transformative journey.

Digital transformation success factors (and practical tips you can start using today)

Digital transformation programs are complex initiatives that require careful

consideration. Based on extensive research and experience, we have identified the following key factors that contribute to a successful digital

transformation program. Competent, experienced leaders and skilled PMOs are pivotal to successfully executing the practical tips we've outlined.



1. Integrated leadership

Unwavering leadership support is crucial for successful digital transformation programs. Leaders must encourage a culture that values failures as learning experiences, and actively participate in the program. Clear and strategic objectives aligned with business goals should be communicated at all levels of the organisation for successful outcomes.

Practical tip: Schedule regular retrospective meetings and establish transparent communication channels.

- Supportive middle management:** It's crucial for any initiative to have engaged middle management. When their key performance indicators (KPIs) are aligned with the business technology objectives, they become influential advocates and capable resources for the transformation, leading to better outcomes.

Practical tip: Collaborating with middle management is critical to establishing a capability framework for the transformation program's success. Use their valuable insights to tailor an approach to measure capability.

- 3. Strong business tech muscles:** Enthusiasm for the effective implementation of technology solutions is essential for both employees and management. Building strong business tech muscles ensures that everyone understands and supports the use of technology to drive innovation and efficiency.

Practical tip: Implement "tips and tricks" sessions to enhance the organisation's technology mindset. Additionally, organising internal mini-hackathons can promote a culture of creative thinking and problem-solving. Leveraging cross-functional teams can help swiftly identify and resolve challenges.

- 4. Outcome-focused approach:** A lean, agile, and effective mindset is essential for achieving successful outcomes. Monitoring progress towards desired outcomes should be ongoing, allowing for adjustments when necessary.

Practical tip: Design the program based on the outcomes and defined benefits. Create simple, measurable, tangible metrics against the outcomes and set regular reviews. Embed the outcome to employee performance reviews and create a sustainable

“
A lean, agile, and effective mindset is essential for achieving successful outcomes.”

flow in monitoring, empowering and engaging team members. Always ask, "How can we improve?"

- 5. Bridging the gap between IT and the business:** Organisations must stay alert for potential disconnects between IT and the rest of the business. Having a strategy in place to avoid ending up with multiple disjointed digital platforms and wasted efforts is critical.

Practical tip: Implement a Program Leadership and Governance Board that includes IT and business functions, and form fusion teams of all functions to solve problems. Define business work packages or sprints led by business Subject Matter Experts.

- 6. Purposeful program management:** Managing a digital transformation program requires a specific, fit-for-purpose approach. Avoiding trial and error methodologies prevents the business from exhausting the transformation journey.

Practical tip: The initial focus should be program design exercises incorporating robust design thinking techniques. This ensures the effective design, development, and management of the program and its services.

Understanding the scope of digital transformation

Contrary to popular belief, digital transformation does not solely involve technology implementation. According to Forrester's report, 'Digital transformation is not just about technology; it is the challenging, but necessary, journey of operating digitally.' Focusing on technology without considering the broader business outcomes can lead to program failures.



Speeding up service delivery and staying future-ready are key components in supporting the overall success of the digital transformation program. ”

Organisations need to use digital transformation initiatives to achieve their desired business outcomes and reshape processes to make them more efficient, effective and intelligent. But there's no value in digitising existing services without a culture that embraces and leverages the power of technology. Implementing a digital transformation program is just the beginning of the journey. By leveraging technology, businesses can achieve better results and enhance their outcomes, but only with an innovative and efficient company culture.

The role of the PMO in digital transformation

To provide effective oversight and visibility, it is essential to establish a dedicated PMO specifically for the program. This PMO should provide VIP service to the business's CIO, ensuring the program stays on track towards its intended outcomes, which are embedded in the business's strategic objectives.



Amireh Amirmazaheri MAIPM is the CEO and Founder of PMO Solutions. With over two decades of experience in diverse roles within Portfolio, Program, and Project Management Offices, she delivers comprehensive PMO services focusing on setting up and implementing PMOs, business process improvement, mentoring, coaching and training.



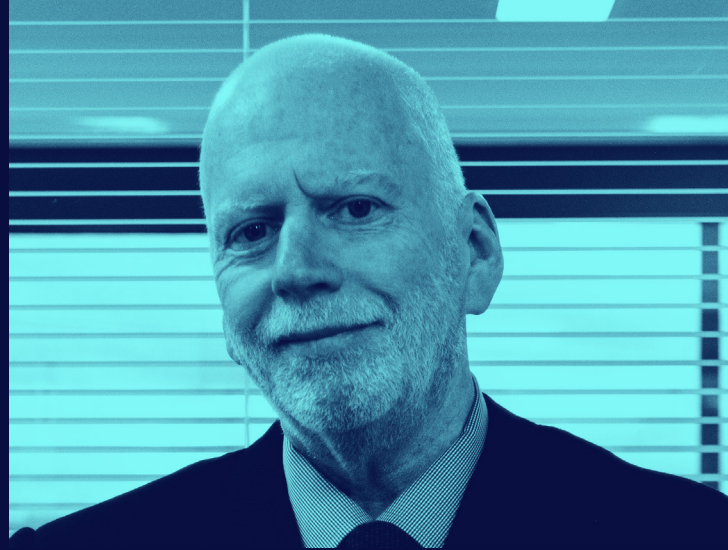
Importantly, the PMO must be adaptable and quick to learn as the business evolves. Speeding up service delivery and staying future-ready are key components in supporting the overall success of the digital transformation program.

The role of the business in digital transformation

To ensure the success of a digital transformation program, the business must involve the Program Management Office (PMO) from the very beginning. The PMO's involvement ensures that the transformation aligns with the overall business strategy and that all stakeholders are on board with the changes. By placing the PMO at the forefront of the program, businesses can ensure that the transformation is carried out efficiently and effectively, resulting in a seamless transition to a digitally transformed organisation.

Paving the path to success

Strategic partnerships between adept PMOs and visionary leaders are key to successful digital transformations. As project professionals, let's continue to drive change, empower teams, and ensure the success of digital transformation programs that define the future of businesses.



Fellows forum

From junior PM to Managing Director: Andrew Fox's career journey

Andrew Fox, FAIPM CPPD is the founder and managing director of The Project Bureau. In this interview, he shares insights and lessons from his diverse and challenging experiences, revealing how achieving synergy has transformed ordinary projects into extraordinary successes. Whether you're an aspiring or experienced project manager, read on to be inspired by Andrew's story and achievements.

Why did you pursue a career in project management, and how did you get started?

My path into project management started with a curiosity about bringing together complex tasks to create something meaningful. It's like solving a puzzle where each piece is a different team or resource, and you're the one making sure they all fit perfectly. Working alongside project managers in IT, I was drawn into their world – the hurdles they navigated, the diverse methods they employed, and the satisfaction of steering a project to completion. Unlike many who stumble into this field, I deliberately chose this path and started as

a junior project manager, handling a few straightforward projects. And from there, it just snowballed into where I am today.

Tell us a little about the experiences and past roles that have led you to where you are today.

It's been quite a journey. I started in the trenches as a junior project manager, getting my hands dirty with the nuts and bolts of project execution. Moving up the ranks, each role from project manager to senior PM to programme manager was a new adventure with its own challenges and victories. These experiences shaped my project leadership approach and have been instrumental in

developing my expertise in governance, strategy and team leadership. Today, I lead The Project Bureau, overseeing innovative offerings like the virtual Project Management Office (vPMO) and cutting-edge simulation tools.

Throughout that journey, what is the biggest career challenge you've overcome?

Project recovery is the most challenging work I do. I've seen tough situations where projects are teetering on the brink due to poor planning or cost-cutting measures in hiring underqualified project managers. It's heart-wrenching to see organisations wasting resources, jeopardising careers and leaving stakeholders in dismay. Stepping into these projects and steering them back on track isn't just a matter of applying the right methodologies. It's about restoring faith, rebuilding confidence, and making tough decisions to, in many ways, save the day.

What is your biggest professional achievement?

Helping a startup deliver its first major project to a government client is one of my most standout achievements. This was a make-or-break moment for a young engineer with a brilliant idea, working out of his garage. I stepped in and helped rework the contract, ensuring it was beneficial and fair. We recalibrated the budget to ensure sustainability throughout the project lifecycle, preventing what could have been a premature cash burnout. But the real game-changer was restructuring the milestone payments. This strategic move ensured the startup had the necessary funds to engage all the resources needed, transforming their delivery capabilities. The result? We turned a garage operation into a thriving business, and the young engineer behind it became a millionaire overnight.

This achievement exemplifies what we do at The Project Bureau. Beyond managing projects, our real value lies in empowering

visions and nurturing potential. That's the kind of impact I find most fulfilling and my true measure of professional success.

Is this what you love most about project management – making an impact?

Yes, definitely. I love its power to transform. Every project is a new story, a new adventure. Whether helping a startup go from a garage to a boardroom or rescuing a project on the brink of collapse, our impact is real. It can uplift communities, influence economies and change lives.

But it's not all roses, right? The field is ever-evolving, and that's what keeps it exciting. There's always a new challenge, lesson or strategy to explore. It's this dynamic nature that makes project management so uniquely rewarding.

What are you working on right now?

I'm wearing a couple of exciting hats at the moment. I'm deeply involved in enhancing our virtual PMO offering at The Project Bureau, which brings cutting-edge efficiency and innovation to project management. We're also pushing the boundaries with our project simulation tool, a game-changer in developing project management competencies that set new standards in the industry.

I'm also spearheading a significant initiative with a critical government department overseeing their ICT project portfolio. It's a massive undertaking, where I ensure that each project within this portfolio runs smoothly and aligns perfectly with the department's strategic objectives.

How do you define project success?

For me, defining project success goes beyond just ticking off deadlines and staying within budget. While these are important, the real magic lies in the long-

term impact and value a project creates. It's about leaving a legacy, not just a completed checklist. I strive for that in every project, and it's what excites me about our work.

Do you think synergy is important to project success?

Project synergy is the secret sauce of successful project management. I see the critical components of achieving synergy as leadership, culture and advanced tools.

Strategic leadership charts the course, inspiring people to reach for the bigger picture. It builds a collaborative team environment with a culture of open communication, mutual respect and shared goals. Advanced, tailored tools like our virtual PMO and simulation technology, Futureview, enhance efficiency, foster better decision-making and provide insights that might otherwise be missed.

When you blend these elements – strategic leadership, a collaborative team, and cutting-edge tools – you get a transformative level of synergy. It turns ordinary projects into extraordinary successes. And that's what I aim for in every project – to meet and exceed expectations and set new benchmarks.

How has your career benefited from being an AIPM member and RegPM certified?

Becoming an AIPM member, earning my RegPM certification and holding the CPPD level certification have been game-changers for my career. The CPPD certification

has been a particularly critical step in my journey to becoming a Chartered Project Professional. It showcases a level of expertise and commitment that's recognised and respected in the industry.

The resources and insights gained through AIPM have enhanced my skills and ensured that The Project Bureau remains at the forefront of industry standards. And the network I've tapped into through AIPM is phenomenal. It's a vibrant community of the best minds in project management. These connections are a source of inspiration, collaboration and mentorship, enriching my career journey in countless ways.

Where to next for Andrew Fox?

My sights are set on amplifying The Project Bureau's influence on project management practices on a global scale while contributing meaningfully to a global improvement in project outcomes. We're in an era where over \$1 trillion is spent annually on projects globally, yet more than 70% of these projects don't deliver as expected. This is a stark reminder of the work ahead for us as a profession.

My goal is to be at the forefront of turning these statistics around. I want to dive into the root causes of why projects fail and address them with innovative solutions and thought leadership. From there, I want to enhance project managers' professionalism and success rates worldwide, elevating the standards of practice to a level where project failures become the exception, not the norm. The road ahead is exciting and daunting, but it's a journey I am committed to. ♦

Andrew Fox FAIPM CPPD is the Founder and Managing Director of The Project Bureau and has delivered major projects and programmes for many organisations. He holds a Masters Degree in Project Management, is a Chartered Project Professional, a Certified Practising Project Director, a Praxis, MSP, Prince2 and PMBoK Certified Practitioner and a registered Project Manager. He is also an AIPM assessor and lectures in project management at the Australian National University on the Masters of Project Management (MPM) degree.

Contribute to the next edition of AIPM magazine

Writing for our magazine provides a unique opportunity to share your valuable insights and experiences with fellow project management professionals, showcasing your expertise in the field. All contributors will be awarded 10 CPD points, even when co-authoring articles with colleagues.

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- How will my peers benefit from the knowledge shared in my article?
- Can I present a comprehensive and well-rounded argument on the chosen topic?
- Do I possess expertise and experience in the area I plan to write about?
- How can I provide high-level insights tailored to my peers in the industry?

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