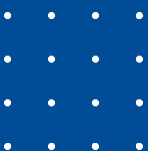INSTITUTE
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Monthly Insights from PM Leaders

Future–Proofing Project Management: Leadership, Innovation, and Adaptability in a Changing World

Table of Contents

Introduction

Project management is evolving at an unprecedented pace. As industries embrace digital transformation, sustainability, and innovative leadership strategies, project managers must adapt to new challenges and opportunities. From emerging methodologies like Project Management 5.0 and Agile Transformation to the critical role of emotional intelligence and purpose–driven leadership, and strategic thinking, the ability to navigate complexity is more crucial than ever.

This eBook brings together key insights into modern project management, exploring the challenges of organisational change, strategies for sustainable growth, and the impact of leadership in driving success. Whether tackling project failures, resistance to change, or integrating innovative and green business models, today's project managers must cultivate resilience, adaptability, and forward–thinking strategies.

By delving into the latest trends and best practices, this collection will help you future–proof your project management approach, ensuring you stay ahead in an ever–changing landscape.
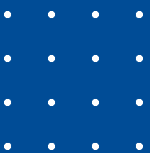
Embracing the Future: Project Management 5.0

By Ibrahim Dani · 15 Jan 2025

Introduction

As technology transforms industries worldwide, project management has evolved to keep pace, leading us to Project Management 5.0—an approach that merges advanced technologies with a human-centric focus. In a world driven by AI, digital twins, blockchain, and IoT, Project Management 5.0 positions people, empathy, and collaboration at the heart of project success. This transformative model is reshaping how project teams operate, balancing high-tech capabilities with the essential human elements needed for sustainable outcomes.

The Journey to Project Management 5.0

Project Management 5.0 is the latest evolution, emerging as organisations saw traditional approaches struggle to meet modern complexities and speed. The journey to this stage began with Project Management 1.0 in the 1950s, which focused on foundational scheduling tools like Gantt charts. Over the decades, new tools and practices appeared: Project Management 2.0 brought software-driven planning, 3.0 incorporated stakeholder management, and 4.0 introduced agile methodologies for adaptability.

The Journey to Project Management 5.0

Project Management 1.0	Project Management 2.0	Project Management 3.0	Project Management 4.0	Project Management 5.0
Foundational scheduling tools like Gantt charts	Software-driven planning	Stakeholder management	Agile methodologies for adaptability	Digital transformation, data-driven decisions, and flexibility

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Project Management 5.0 builds on this foundation, addressing digital transformation, data–driven decisions, and the need for greater flexibility. While technology is central, this phase emphasises people's roles, merging AI and data with empathy, leadership, and teamwork.

The Cutting–Edge Tools of Project Management 5.0

The technology behind Project Management 5.0 supports not just efficiency but collaboration, resilience, and responsiveness. Key innovations include:

- ↗ **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI tools are game–changers for data analysis, prediction, and resource management. Project managers can make faster, more accurate decisions, identifying risks and optimising resources in real–time.
- ↗ **Digital Twins:** These virtual representations enable real–time monitoring of project progress. By simulating different scenarios, teams can anticipate issues and improve performance before problems arise.
- ↗ **Blockchain:** Ensuring security and transparency, blockchain provides a reliable framework for project documentation, safeguarding against data tampering and establishing trust.
- ↗ **Internet of Things (IoT):** IoT devices supply live data on equipment and environmental conditions, providing critical information for project tracking and resource allocation.
- ↗ **Agile and Hybrid Approaches:** Flexibility is essential, and Project Management 5.0 supports a blend of agile and hybrid methodologies to quickly adjust to change and keep projects on track.

Putting People First: The Human–Centric Shift

Project Management 5.0 is distinctive in its people–focused approach, seeing technology as a tool to enhance rather than replace human insight, creativity, and empathy. Key principles include:

- ↗ **Empathy–Driven Planning:** Understanding the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders is central to Project Management 5.0. This approach ensures projects align with the human side of work, considering both employees' and clients' experiences and needs.

- ↗ **Leadership and Change Management:** Effective leadership is crucial, and Project Management 5.0 emphasises developing leaders who can navigate complex, tech–driven projects while maintaining a clear, inclusive vision.
- ↗ **Enhanced Collaboration:** Advanced digital tools streamline communication and help project teams work seamlessly across locations, fostering an inclusive, supportive environment where everyone is engaged.
- ↗ **Well–Being and Work–Life Balance:** Recognising the link between well–being and productivity, Project Management 5.0 promotes a culture of work–life balance, mental health support, and job satisfaction to keep teams motivated and reduce burnout.
- ↗ **Stakeholder Engagement:** From initial planning through execution, ongoing stakeholder involvement ensures that projects meet client expectations, build trust, and foster stronger relationships.

Why Project Management 5.0 Matters

The impact of Project Management 5.0 is transformative, enabling teams to work smarter, adapt quickly, and achieve better results. Some key benefits include:

- ↗ **Data–Driven Decisions:** AI and predictive analytics allow for precise decision–making, reducing guesswork and improving project outcomes.
- ↗ **Global Collaboration:** Digital tools bridge gaps, allowing remote teams to collaborate as effectively as if they were in the same room.
- ↗ **Efficiency Gains:** By automating repetitive tasks, teams can focus on creative problem–solving and strategic planning, maximising both productivity and resource use.
- ↗ **Increased Adaptability:** Agile methodologies allow teams to pivot swiftly, meeting new challenges head–on without compromising progress.
- ↗ **Proactive Risk Management:** With real–time data and predictive insights, potential risks can be addressed before they disrupt progress, leading to smoother project execution.

Conclusion: A Balanced Future

Project Management 5.0 is more than a toolkit; it's a vision of balanced growth where technology supports, rather than replaces, human potential. As organisations adopt this approach, they can expect projects that are not only efficient but also empathetic, inclusive, and aligned with human needs. In a world where change is the only constant, Project Management 5.0 offers the adaptability, innovation, and humanity required to lead projects into the future with purpose and vision.

About the Author
Ibrahim Dani
Sessional Lecturer

Ibrahim Dani is a seasoned business leader with vast project management and leadership experience. Based in Sydney, Australia, Ibrahim has had a diverse career across various industries and countries. His passion for project management has led him to speak at PMI Congresses and train aspiring Project Managers.

Project Management Challenges and Failures

By Mounir Ajam · 27 Jan 2025

Introduction

Despite the growing professionalism in project management, the numbers tell a concerning story. Projects continue to face delays, cost overruns, and outright failures, leading to significant losses for organisations worldwide. With countless certifications, tools, and methodologies available, why do these challenges persist? In this article, we explore the root causes of project failure and examine whether modern project management practices are equipped to handle the complexities of today's projects.

Project and Project Management

Numerous surveys, studies, and books have documented project management failures, represented by project delays, budget overruns, and even project failures (see textbox).

Project vs Project Management

Please note that we differentiate between project management success–failure and project success–failure. The distinction is necessary since a project could face cost and schedule problems but still meet its primary goals.

For example, a café project might still deliver value (revenue and profit, even if it costs more or is delayed). The opposite could also be true; a project could have great cost and schedule performance but not deliver its expected benefits.

This could happen if the business case or feasibility studies were faulty or for other unforeseen reasons. Therefore, when we say, "yet projects continue to fail," it could be project or management failure.

Mounir Ajam

Depending on the reference, we have seen reports claiming that only 0.5% of projects achieved their cost, time, and business goals (Flyvbjerg & Gardner, 2023). A 2014 PwC report claims that only *"2.5% of companies successfully completed*

100% of their projects" (PwC, 2014). Other reports claim that 70% of projects fail, while in capital projects, we have seen studies that show that 60% are successful (Barshop, 2016). Even the success rate of megaprojects (those costing more than one billion dollars) is 35% or lower (Merrow, 2011).

Consequently, the reality, backed up by studies and surveys from various organisations, shows that we have more failures than successes. Why do projects fail despite years of professionalism in project management, millions of certificate holders, hundreds or thousands of books and software tools, and numerous certifications from many associations?

In other words, the consequences of projects and project management failures for organisations are billions of dollars (if not trillions) in actual losses or lost opportunities. Failure of critical projects can even threaten the entire business.

Why Do Projects Fail?

Today, many believe that project management is widely spread and accepted, *yet projects continue to fail.*

Numerous software tools are branded as "project management software." However, most of them are about task management, and some might include timesheet management, collaborations, and other functionalities. Other tools might be sophisticated but limited to certain functions like scheduling, cost control, or risk management. However, *projects continue to fail.*

On the other hand, we have guides from project management associations, *yet projects continue to fail.*

We have hundreds of certifications and millions of certification holders, *yet projects continue to fail.*

Why do projects fail despite years of professionalism in project management?

So, why do projects fail?

A quick answer, which might be controversial, is that we (as a community) have not identified and addressed the root causes. We are often distracted or get lost in the symptoms. For example, we do not have a standard definition of success and how to assess it, leading to endless debates due to the lack of common ground. In other words, we do not have a baseline, a reference that we can agree on, and in the absence of a reference, how can we measure progress or growth?

If we shift the discussion outside the direct influence of project management, we realise that organisations do not typically face problems in formulating strategy and the organisation's strategic direction. However, they often face strategy implementation failures. Consequently, they fail to bridge the gap between the formulated strategy and achieving the desired outcomes. Therefore, we must start with an organisational strategic plan and the executives behind it to transform project management and achieve impactful results.

What Is The Root Cause?

> The root cause is the lack of recognition of project management as a core organisational function.
>
> ___
>
> Mounir Ajam

If we ask five people why projects fail, we will likely get tens of causes. We will hear about change, scope creep, lack of clarity on requirements, market conditions, teams or contractors' performance, and more. Also, the symptoms might vary depending on a project's industry, type, size, or complexity. However, we believe most of those reasons are system failure symptoms. If we drill down, one "root cause" might seem to be the lack of focus on the entire project value stream. Another apparent root cause might be the absence of organisational project management systems and methods. A common cause is a lack of proper planning or framing. These ideas are close to the root cause, but not yet.

We hypothesise that the root cause starts with the lack of recognition of project management as a core organisational function; everything else is a symptom or a side effect.

We hear a lot about the "Project Economy" and the importance of project management. We might hear other ideas about project management value contradicting our statement on the lack of recognition. We think we have fallen into the knowing–doing gap (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999). We might talk big, but our actions do not align or rise to the needed responsibility and accountability level. Hence, the need for this book.

Conclusion: Are We Not Improving?

For decades, despite the growth in members of professional associations, certifications, certification holders, and many software, books, etc., we have not seen any meaningful change in projects' performance. At best, we have seen fluctuations in the rate of success. However, project management failures are still too common, if not dominant. Our collective work has not compensated for the confusion and fragmentation of project management. We are not learning from our history; it is like treating a significant injury with a band-aid.

It is time to break away from our past and seek what might appear to be radical change.

This book is our attempt to break the cycle of doom. We will present the current reality and the case for change, offer our solution, and then offer the mechanism to build the future before closing with practical tips.

About the Author

Mounir Ajam
Founder and CEO of Uruk Project Management

Mounir Ajam is a highly respected project management expert with over thirty years of global experience. His expertise includes leading major initiatives valued at billions of US dollars. His experience covers industrial, technology, and capital projects in the United States, the United Kingdom, Southeast Asia, West Asia, and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council).

Emotional Intelligence for Effective Project Leadership

By Billy Schofield · 24 Jan 2025

Effective project leadership requires more than technical knowledge and strategic skills in today's dynamic and interconnected world. Emotional Intelligence (EI), a concept popularised by psychologist Daniel Goleman, has become crucial in building productive relationships, improving team performance, and achieving organisational success. EI embroils the capability to recognise, control, and manage one's own emotions as well as being aware of the feelings of others. Project leaders who shine in EI can navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, inspire their teams, and drive meaningful change.

The foundation for comprehending emotions in intelligence started in the 1920s. Psychologist Edward Thorndike introduced the idea of "social intelligence," which refers to the capacity to understand and manage interpersonal relationships[1].

In the 1980s, Howard Gardner expanded this idea with his theory of Multiple Intelligences, identifying interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence as critical forms of human capability[2].

The Core Components of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Self-Awareness · Self-Regulation · Social Skills · Motivation · Empathy

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The Core Components of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman's model highlights five essential elements of [emotional intelligence](#): self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Each contributes uniquely to effective project leadership.

1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the essential basis for emotional intelligence (EI). It involves recognising and understanding one's emotions, strengths, and limitations. Self-aware leaders can objectively assess their emotional triggers and behaviours, allowing them to respond thoughtfully instead of impulsively. For example, a leader dealing with high-pressure deadlines might acknowledge their stress and implement strategies to stay composed, ensuring clarity and focus in their decision-making.

2. Self-Regulation

Self-regulation, which relies on self-awareness, is managing emotional impulses and sustaining emotional stability. [Project leaders](#) with effective self-regulation abilities exhibit flexibility, perseverance, and honesty. They can remain calm in crises, manage conflict constructively, and create a stable and trustworthy environment for their teams. Self-regulation fosters an atmosphere of fairness and consistency, which is essential for team cohesion.

3. Motivation

In the context of EI, motivation is characterised by an internal drive to achieve goals for personal fulfilment rather than external rewards. Emotionally intelligent project leaders are passionate about their work and committed to excellence. Their intrinsic motivation inspires others and sets a high standard for performance. For instance, a motivated leader might spearhead innovative initiatives and persist through challenges, demonstrating dedication to organisational goals.

4. Empathy

Empathy involves recognising and connecting with the emotions of others. Project leaders who express empathy understand the emotional needs of their team members. They actively listen, acknowledge diverse perspectives, and provide support during challenging times. Practising empathy not only strengthens interpersonal relationships but also improves decision-making by considering the

human impact of leadership choices. For instance, empathetic leaders may offer flexible work arrangements to help employees manage personal challenges, enhancing morale and productivity.

5. Social Skills

Social skills refer to establishing and maintaining effective relationships, communicating effectively, and resolving conflicts. Project leaders with solid social skills excel in collaboration, negotiation, and team building. They inspire trust and create a culture of open communication where everyone feels valued and heard. By utilising their social skills, leaders can unite diverse teams around a shared vision and navigate organisational challenges smoothly. Social skills are developing and sustaining effective relationships, communicating successfully, and resolving conflicts effectively. Leaders with strong social skills thrive in collaboration, negotiation, and team–building. They cultivate trust and foster open communication, ensuring individuals feel valued and acknowledged. By harnessing their social skills, leaders can unify diverse teams around a shared vision and adeptly navigate the complexities of organisational dynamics.

The Importance of EI in Leadership

Research highlights the pivotal role of EI in successful leadership. According to Goleman's studies, particularly in his 1998 Harvard Business Review article "What Makes a Leader?" EI accounts for significant differences between top performers and average leaders in senior roles. This is because, while necessary, technical expertise and cognitive abilities are insufficient for managing the human dimensions of leadership[3].

Enhancing Team Performance

Emotionally intelligent project leaders create an environment where individuals feel motivated, supported, and empowered. They foster psychological safety, encouraging open dialogue, innovation, and collaboration. Studies, such as those by Edmondson (1999) on psychological safety in teams, illustrate how emotionally intelligent leadership can establish trust and openness, which are crucial for team success. Teams led by high–EI leaders are more cohesive, resilient, and adaptive to change[4].

Navigating Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in any project. Project leaders with high EI can manage disagreements constructively, transforming potential disruptions into opportunities

for growth. By recognising the underlying emotions driving conflicts, they can address concerns effectively and facilitate resolution.

Driving Change

Change initiatives often encounter resistance due to fear, uncertainty, or scepticism. Emotionally intelligent leaders can navigate these challenges by addressing stakeholders' concerns empathetically, building trust, and communicating a compelling vision. Their ability to inspire confidence and commitment ensures smoother transitions and sustainable outcomes.

Cultivating Emotional Intelligence

While some individuals may have a natural aptitude for EI, it is a skill that can be developed through deliberate practice. Studies, such as Goleman's research on emotional intelligence and Bradberry and Greaves's work in "Emotional Intelligence 2.0," provide evidence that targeted exercises and consistent self-reflection can significantly enhance EI over time[5].

Below are strategies for cultivating EI:

- ↗ **Self-Reflection:** Regularly evaluate your emotional responses and behaviours. Journaling or seeking feedback from trusted colleagues can provide valuable insights.
- ↗ **Mindfulness Practices:** Daily meditation exercises enhance emotional awareness and regulation.
- ↗ **Active Listening:** Focus on understanding others' perspectives without judgment or interruption. Paraphrase their points to ensure clarity and demonstrate empathy.
- ↗ **Building Relationships:** Invest time in personally understanding and connecting with your team members.
- ↗ **Continuous Learning:** Participate in EI training programs or workshops to enhance your skills.
- ↗ **Ask for feedback from others:** Seek honest feedback from trusted friends, family, or colleagues. Listen to their perspectives on your emotional responses and interpersonal skills and use this information to identify areas for improvement and growth.

Emotional intelligence is a "soft skill" critical competency for effective project leadership. By enhancing self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and interpersonal skills, leaders can foster trust, motivate their teams, and achieve success within the organisation. As the workplace evolves, EI will remain an

indispensable asset, enabling leaders to navigate the complexities of human dynamics with poise and effectiveness.

As the distinguished Irish psychologist Maureen Gaffney[6] expresses,

"The overwhelming evidence from hundreds of studies by Daniel Goleman, the best-known expert on emotional intelligence, and his colleagues is that self-awareness – the ability to understand and manage your own feelings and to motivate yourself, and the ability to understand and motivate others and to build good relationships – is a key component of success at work."

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About the Author

Billy Schofield

PM Lecturer at Dublin Business School (DBS)

Billy Schofield is a Project Management Lecturer at Dublin Business School with over 30 years of experience in the semiconductor industry, specializing in Six Sigma, Lean, and engineering initiatives.

As an Industry 4.0 trainer, he has worked with clients such as Engineers Ireland, Skillnet Industry 4.0, and Adaptive HVM to enhance their productivity and innovation with emerging technologies and methodologies. His research interests include the readiness of Irish manufacturing companies for Industry 4.0, which was the topic of his M.Sc. thesis.

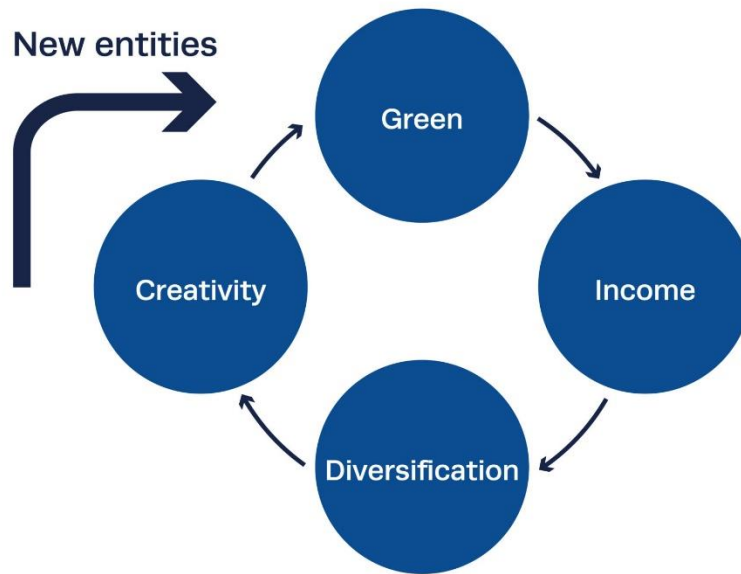# The Green Income Diversification Creativity Model (GIDC)

By Dr. Mohamed Tawfik · 20 Jan 2025

This ebook explores the critical role of the GIDC model in facilitating a successful green transition. The GIDC model, a comprehensive framework, emphasises the importance of green initiatives, income diversification, creativity, and the integration of sustainable AI.

The transition to a green future necessitates creative approaches for both countries and individual investors. This ebook delves into the critical role of sustainable AI and Green AI in optimising renewable energy projects and achieving cost–effective sustainable solutions.

New entities

Green
Income
Diversification
Creativity

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Drawing parallels between the oil and gas industry's historical diversification strategies and the current challenges fossil fuel companies face, the book advocates adopting the Green Income Diversification Creativity (GIDC) model to ensure long–term economic viability during the green transition.

Learn how the GIDC model can drive successful green transitions by integrating sustainable AI, income diversification, and renewable energy strategies. Explore how this comprehensive framework can help ensure long–term economic viability in the shift towards a greener future by downloading this ebook now.

Download Now

> **"**
>
> Striking the right balance between authentic sustainable marketing and avoiding the pitfalls of green hushing is a delicate dance that many organizations are still grappling with
>
> **"**
>
> Dr. Mohamed Tawfik

About the Author

Dr. Mohamed Tawfik
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Dr. Mohamed Tawfik, the inventor of the GIDC model (a framework for green work transformation), holds an MBA from the University of Liverpool, England and a Bachelor of Pharmacy from Assiut University, Egypt. He is currently a Doctoral candidate in management at UCAM University, Spain. Tawfik has over fifteen years of experience in the healthcare and green marketing sectors, and has held leadership roles at various healthcare companies in Saudi Arabia. He is the current Marketing and Sales Director at DAWA NAJD Commercial Organization in KSA, and serves as an advisory member of IASTEM Academy. Dr. Tawfik is also a certified online educator and public speaker.

The Power of Purpose in Project Leadership

By Cherie Mylordis · 22 Jan 2025

Introduction

Project management often feels like a race to meet deadlines, deliverables, and KPIs. And while it's true that project management needs structure in order for projects to succeed, tools and dashboards brimming with actions and deadlines don't tell the whole story of what it takes to deliver impactful, transformative results.

Purpose–driven project management offers a powerful shift so that the focus of each project goes from getting things done to making a difference.

Connecting every project to a clear purpose and ensuring alignment with organisational goals is critical for project leaders looking to inspire teams, boost outcomes and build long–term success.

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Powerful Purpose

The purpose is the glue that holds effective [project management](#) together, when teams understand not just *what* they're doing but *why* it matters, their motivation and engagement skyrocket.

A clear and compelling purpose serves as a golden thread, linking individual tasks and milestones to the broader strategic objectives of the organisation.

I got to see this golden thread at play when I was part of the team delivering the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games – a project of staggering scale and complexity. With a $2.2 billion budget, we orchestrated 40 distinct functions across 128 venues. The shared purpose of creating an inclusive, world–class event inspired innovative thinking and brought together volunteers, contractors, and staff toward a common goal.

The result? We not only achieved success but set a new standard for future Olympic Games.

Working in 3D on Projects

Purpose–driven project management isn't about abandoning deadlines; it's about embedding them in a more meaningful framework.

[Project managers](#) and leaders can adopt the 3D approach to the way they manage projects: Dare, Ditch, and Dial.

1. Dare to Have a Bold Purpose

Defining a bold purpose helps teams see the bigger picture. By daring to make work matter, leaders empower teams to connect their daily efforts to meaningful outcomes.

Use big–room planning sessions to align cross–functional teams on shared goals. In one infrastructure project I was part of, big–room planning clarified how each department's work supported the strategic vision, fostering collaboration and ownership.

When people feel their work has a purpose, deadlines become stepping stones to achieving a shared vision rather than pressure points.

2. Ditch What No Longer Servers

Applying the 3D model of work is also about ditching any outdated processes or systems that are no longer working. By eliminating these roadblocks, you can create space for creativity, innovation, and focus.

Try introducing a 'pitch what to ditch' meeting where team members can suggest improvements.

One leader I worked with streamlined workflows by ditching redundant reporting and replacing it with concise dashboards aligned with key objectives, saving the team hours each week.

3. Dial–up What's Working

Purposeful project management also means amplifying what works. Are there key aspects of the project that are working really well, or perhaps teams that are excelling in achieving their goals? What could the broader team learn from those?

One effective way to amplify these successes is to implement whole team showcases for key stakeholders. These showcases provide a platform for teams to present their achievements, challenges and insights collectively. They not only highlight what's working but also foster transparency and collaboration across the organisation. Stakeholders gain a holistic view of progress, and teams benefit from feedback and recognition, creating a shared sense of purpose

Purpose–driven project management redefines success by measuring outcomes beyond timelines and budgets. It's about delivering projects that leave a lasting legacy and inspire pride among team members.

When purpose guides projects, the impact resonates far beyond their completion.

A Sense of Ownership

Ownership is a critical driver of project success.

Purpose–driven leadership means creating environments where team members feel a personal connection to their work. Techniques like big–room planning showcase and align individual roles with organisational goals and encourage people to take the initiative and go above and beyond.

In the world of project management, where timing and delivery are critical, engaging your people in a shared vision and increasing their visibility is a way to boost productivity and innovation. When people recognise that the successful delivery of the project is part of an important shared focus, they're much more motivated to keep the project on track.

By daring to lead with purpose, ditching what holds us back, and dialling up what drives success, project managers and leaders can deliver projects that leave a lasting impact.

The question isn't whether you can meet your deadlines; it's whether your projects will make a difference. How will you rise to the challenge?

About the Author

Cherie Mylordis
Founder of Nextgenify Academy

Cherie Mylordis is a leadership, transformation and innovation expert with decades of experience leading complex change initiatives. As the founder of Nextgenify, Cherie equips leaders and teams with future-fit strategies, enabling them to thrive in today's evolving world of work.

How to Manage Resistance to Change in the Workplace

By By Paul Taylor · 06 Jan 2025

Resistance is widespread in all projects (regardless of size, scope, geographic spread, etc.), and it is often tiring and challenging to manage. There is a tendency to either ignore or try to crush resistance, but if it is managed proactively, carefully, and tactfully, it can provide a useful source of feedback that can be used to improve the likelihood of change success.

What is Resistance?

In very simple terms, resistance refers to the pushback or reluctance that individual(s) or group(s) within an organisation might exhibit when faced with a new initiative, process, or transformation.

What are the Causes of Resistance?

Several factors cause resistance and are often unique to the change itself and the individual(s) and organisation(s) involved, but a list of the common themes is below:

↗ **Fear of the Unknown:** When people are not fully aware of what the change will entail, they may feel anxious or uncertain. Remember, in the vacuum of news, people will often fill the gaps themselves with bad thoughts.

↗ **Impacts on Individuals:** People often resist changes they believe will disadvantage themselves individually, such as losing their jobs, making their skills outdated, reducing perceived promotion/development activities, and so on.

↗ **Impacts on Work Colleagues:** Similar to personal impacts (see above), people may be worried about the impact on work colleagues, such as losing their jobs or having their job roles changed materially.

↗ **Lack of Perceived Benefits:** When employees do not see or fully understand how the change will benefit them or the organisation, they may resist it.

↗ **Lack of Trust in Management and Leadership:** If employees have little trust in the leadership, then they are more likely to resist it (often regardless of how beneficial the change is).

↗ **Poor Communication:** When the purpose, benefits, scope, and timeline of the change are not communicated effectively, then this could create a 'vacuum' of understanding that is filled by rumours and misunderstandings, which then leads to resistance.

↗ **Previous Negative Experiences:** Past unsuccessful changes can lead to scepticism, which means employees are wary of new initiatives. For example, if a firm is starting its third business transformation project in the last five years, then this will generate scepticism and resistance.

The Differences Between Passive and Active Resistance

While the above has noted the main types of resistance, it is important to understand that resistance can manifest itself in two main ways:

↗ **Active Resistance:** This involves overt and often very public actions, such as vocal opposition, constantly questioning the change, declining to participate, or, in some extreme cases, disrupting change efforts.

↗ **Passive Resistance:** This resistance is much more slight and much harder to spot. It includes disengagement, reduced productivity, and minimal participation.

Active Resistance	Passive Resistance
Overt and noticeable actions	Subtle and harder to detect
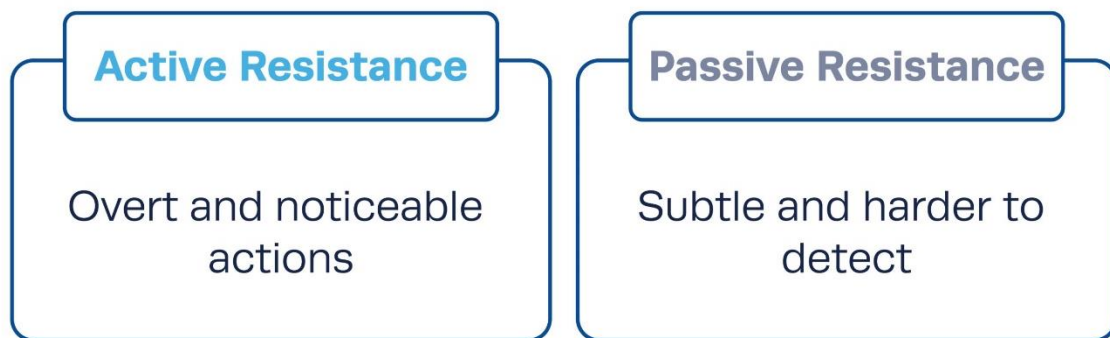
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Identifying Resistance Within a Change Project

The key point to remember is that resistance is not necessarily bad, although it may feel like that when trying to manage it. The people raising resistance often work at the front end of the business and will have a much better understanding of the impact of the change than the people implementing the change or even senior management. Therefore, it is important that any resistance is identified, understood, and managed accordingly because it could help improve the likelihood of chain success.

Initially, it is important to identify the causes of the resistance.

↗ **Active Resistance:** This is easier to identify because of its more open nature. Typically, I would arrange for a series of group meetings to discuss people's worries. However, it is important to ensure that these meetings are managed carefully. Otherwise, it could degenerate into a shouting match. It may also be necessary to hold some smaller, focused follow–up meetings to discuss any specific points. While this overall process can be unpleasant, it should give you an idea of the reasons for any resistance.

↗ **Passive Resistance:** As noted above, this resistance is harder to identify. This means it will require tactful management to tease out what

resistance exists and what is causing it. Typically, I would run a series of 1–2–1 meetings with anybody I feel is resisting passively. On a 1–2–1 basis, people are more comfortable and willing to open up than if they were in front of a larger group. Unfortunately, a large number of 121 meetings can take a lot of time to organise, but this must be done.

There was one other point to note.

When people give reasons for something they do not like, they often give two reasons, and to quote JP Morgan (the man who set up the bank in his name), "*A man [person] always has two reasons for doing anything. A good reason and a real reason".* This means when speaking to people about resistance, it is important to question tactfully and dig into the real reasons.

For example, asking tactfully questions like "Why?" or "Do you have any further reasons?". Again, this is done better on a 1–2–1 basis but with the previously noted overheads regarding the time and effort required. A good example of this is that many years ago, I used to do a lot of offshoring project work, and a large number of people often resisted saying the offshore model would not work and would cost more than hoped, but the real reason was that they were (understandability) very worried about their own and their colleagues' jobs. Once this was understood, we could manage it.

Managing Resistance

Once resistance has been identified, this feedback can be used to improve the likelihood of change success. While each change is unique, some of the more common mitigation strategies are listed below.

Leadership

This plays a critical role in overcoming resistance to change. Leaders who demonstrate credible commitment, empathy, and openness can reduce resistance by setting an example and showing a real concern for employee well–being during transitions.

Awareness of the Change Being Made and Its Benefits

It is important to ensure that the reasons, benefits and scope of the change are clearly and constantly communicated to all staff. This could be uncomfortable for some people (especially those adversely impacted by their change), but all people must know the facts behind the change and dispel rumours and mistruths. This communication needs to be at several levels. At the senior level, organisational–wide emails are good, but it's important to have much lower–level

communications (such as 1–2–1s) to ensure individuals fully understand the change and its impact on them.

Support Staff During the Change Implementation

All staff are impacted by a change more adversely than others (such as those losing or changing jobs). Therefore, all staff will need to be supported during the implementation of the change. This may involve employing specialists (such as external counsellors or lawyers) to help with this.

Keep All People Up to Date on Progress

To avoid rumours and mistruths, then it is important that all staff members are kept up to date on progress regularly. Again, these communications need to be on several levels. At the top level, organisational–wide emails should be fine, but it will be necessary to have 121 sessions with certain staff members to ensure they individually understand the impact on them.

Keep the Communication Channels Open

It is important that people feel that they are being listened to. While the above assessment appears as a one–off, it is important to ensure that people are constantly engaged to understand their views. Otherwise, resistance will continue to fester. Therefore, it is important to have a set of processes around regular meetings, an email mailbox, a list of frequently asked questions, etc, to keep the communication channels open.

Be Honest with Staff Regarding Their Ideas

Some ideas around resistance can be incorporated into the change relatively easily (such as a technology subject expert providing ideas regarding development, testing and roll–out plans. However, certain other ideas, such as stopping and outsourcing projects, cannot be incorporated into the plans without materially impacting the change. Therefore, it's important to be open and honest with staff regarding how their ideas can be progressed or not. They may not like it, but they should know where they stand.

Involve Stakeholders in the Change

If people have good ideas (that have come from 'uncovering resistance)' then it may be a good idea to include them in the change (such as adding them to a project or review team). This will both (a) improve then change and (b) improve staff engagement, which can only improve the likelihood of success.

Conclusion

Managing resistance can be challenging, but when handled effectively, it fosters valuable feedback, innovative ideas, and higher engagement. These outcomes significantly increase the likelihood of successful change implementation.

Ignore or suppress resistance at your peril.

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Business Innovation: Strategies for Sustainable Growth

By Victor Reyna–Vargas · 13 Jan 2025

Every entrepreneur wants to be Steve Jobs. But the Steve Jobs they want to be is the Steve Jobs on stage introducing the new iPhone at an Apple event. Few entrepreneurs want to learn how to be Steve Jobs in everyday innovation. It is no different for innovators in large companies. Many of them value ideas and creativity more than systematic management processes.

But, as Eric Ries ("The Lean Startup") rightly emphasises, entrepreneurship is management. The same applies to innovation. It is not just about fun and games.

In fact, transformational innovation can quickly become a brutal "two steps forward, three steps back" process. Constant monitoring is, therefore, necessary.

1. Definition of Business Innovation

The book "The Corporate Startup" (Tendayi Viki, Dan Toma, Esther Gons; Verlag Vahlen) defines innovation as the creation of new products and services that offer added value to the customer in a way that is supported by a sustainable and profitable business model.

What comes to mind when you think of innovation? Maybe it is a flashy new gadget but make no mistake. The world of innovation encompasses much more than just new products and things on the shelves. If products and services alone are not the whole story, then what is innovation?

> **In a business context, innovation is the ability to design, develop, deliver, and expand new products, services, processes, and business models for customers.**
>
> **Successful innovation creates significant growth.**

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McKinsey emphasises: "However you measure it, innovation must increase the value of a company and promote its growth." In addition, more than 80% of executives said that innovation was one of their top three priorities, but less than 10% were satisfied with their company's innovation performance. Many established companies are better at operating than innovating and produce little creative change. Most are successful by optimising their own activities. In other words, they improve what already exists but not innovating.

We need to start distinguishing between genuine innovation and "innovation theatre." The crucial question for any innovation programme is whether it creates added value for the company. Just because a company has an innovation lab with drip coffee bags, post-it notes, smoothie machines, and Sherpas organising hackathons does not mean it is an innovation. This is known as "innovation theatre": they perform and look innovative, but there is no tangible, demonstrable value for the company and customer behind it.

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2. Battle with Innovation

There is a perception in the business world that large companies can be disrupted by start-ups in ways they did not expect. Disruption can come from unexpected quarters. An example of this is the upheaval in the hotel industry caused by Airbnb.

On the other hand, Xerox invented most of the technologies we use today in personal computing. Xerox is no longer one of the largest computer companies in the world.

Kodak invented the digital camera and filed for bankruptcy in 2012.

Nokia was one of the pioneers in the field of smartphones, yet it has lost considerable market share to the iPhone.

These companies not only saw the future coming but, in some cases, even invented it. Why haven't they managed to harness the imagination of their customers?

When a company has found a successful business model, the management sets itself the goal of exploiting this advantage. This means that most companies are structurally organised to manage their current successful business model. All corporate structures, procedures, processes, tools, and culture are geared towards doing what they have always done.

This is not necessarily a bad decision. Companies need to capitalise on their current advantages. After all, this is how they generate their sales and profits.

The mistake these companies make is that they focus exclusively on exploitation. But every business model has a life cycle. The demise of every business model is inevitable. In fact, the life cycles of business models are getting shorter and shorter.

So, if a company is structurally aligned with its current business model, this means that the life cycle of the company is linked to the life cycle of its business model. If the business model eventually goes under, the company will also go under. The task of today's managers is to decouple the life cycle of their company from the life cycle of their business model.

3. Innovative Leadership

Without management support, most innovation programmes die as soon as they are introduced. Changes at the operation level may have some initial success. However, if they remain at this level, their long–term prospects are slim, if not nil. The antibodies of companies attacking innovation programmes are too strong.

In established companies, the long–term success of innovation is highly dependent on the level of support innovation teams receive from top leaders.

The role of the CEO is particularly important in this context. CEOs have the power to influence organisational changes necessary to successfully drive innovation programmes forward.

Today's leaders see innovation as one of the key drivers of growth. Many CEOs are actively engaged in innovation and are willing to drive it within their organisations. This is a unique opportunity for innovators to leverage leadership support and build long–term innovation capabilities within their organisations. However, not all leadership support for innovation is good.

Sometimes, CEOs unintentionally get in their own way. This happens when they create myths about innovation. One example of such a myth is the belief that innovation can be managed with the same tools and processes that are used for the core business. This belief can make it difficult for innovators to be honest about the uncertainty that underlies their ideas. With the focus on execution, there is a risk that CEOs will invest resources in launching and scaling up untested ideas.

Companies need world–class, innovative leadership. And they need CEOs who understand this. Companies with world–class innovation leaders will have a competitive advantage in the future. It is no longer enough to be a leader in managing an existing business. CEOs and their leadership teams must also prepare their organisations for the – possibly uncertain – future and manage innovation appropriately.

What exactly are the characteristics of world–class innovative leadership? What does a CEO who understands this look like? Three main categories that can make up world–class innovative leadership can be identified:

3.1. Strategic Orientation

A CEO who understands what is at stake here knows that he has two equally important tasks: moving into the future and capitalising on current success. She/He also knows that she/he cannot use the same strategy and processes for exploring the future that she/he uses for his core business. In addition to defining a clear strategy for the core business, she/he also develops her/his own innovation strategy that is aligned with the company's goals.

3.2. Resouce Allocation

A CEO who understands this devotes her/his time personally to innovation. Time is the first and most important resource dedicated to innovation. When a CEO dedicates at least 30% of her/his time to innovation, she/he sends a clear message to the company that innovation is an important part of the business. Other leaders in the company are then likely to follow suit.

3.3. Portfolio Management

A top innovation leader knows that she/he cannot choose the best idea for innovation initiatives on the first day. The CEO cannot put her/his own favourite innovation initiatives first, which could lead to problems for the teams involved. They are doomed to succeed. Failure is not an option because nobody wants to tell the CEO that her/his baby is ugly.

4. Innovation is Management

I have often encountered entrepreneurs in established companies who reject the innovation process because they prefer to move forward in peace. If they

participate in an innovation process, it is only when light, easy–to–use tools are used.

They see innovation as a process designed for creative visionaries, with no room for managers. They are interested in the fun moments of innovation, which usually involve ideation, brainstorming, and canvases with post–it notes and markers… Innovation Theatre.

This view is not correct. Innovation has never been limited to the creation of ideas. There are many ideas. This is not to deny the value of visions and ideas. Ideas are still at the heart of innovation. Without ideas and visions, there would be no new products or services to manage.

> " Successful innovation is the combination of creative ideas and profitable and sustainable business models. The choice if not between vision or management. Innovation is both inspiration and a systematic process. "

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In addition to brainstorming, there is a systematic process of searching for the right business model to support the new product or service. This systematic search includes the following:

- ↗ Understanding customer needs.
- ↗ Finding the right solution, channels, and relationships for customers.
- ↗ Determining the right pricing and cost structures for profitability.

The initial process of brainstorming and designing the business model is one way to capture our hypotheses. These hypotheses should be prioritised and tested with customers in the real world. The insights gained should be captured and used as the basis for iterations and pivots. An innovation team must think and act cross–functionally.

The entire process must be systematically managed so that the innovation teams can track progress. In other words, innovation has something to do with accounting with innovation accounting. I have always found it unreasonable that some entrepreneurs expect their progress not to be monitored and managed. Investments in innovation must pay off. You can't expect managers to keep investing money in initiatives that might fail.

5. Continuous Explore–Exploit

Managers typically want to know how to create an environment in which innovation can flourish. First, they need to recognise that business operates on a continuum of uncertainty, the so–called "explore–exploit continuum," and that creating a new engine of growth and managing existing business lie at opposite ends of that continuum.

A good understanding of this continuum helps leaders and innovation teams to create the right investment and management processes, skills, and culture required to develop new business ideas as successfully as they leverage the existing business.

To build a company that can successfully deal with digital disruption, you need to be able to operate in two very different modes with different levels of uncertainty.

Existing business models – Exploitation – operate with a relatively high degree of certainty, and it is possible to make accurate sales and growth forecasts. These business models can be managed and improved through detailed planning and proper execution.

In contrast to Exploitation, Exploration consists of the search for new value propositions and business models in an environment characterised by great uncertainty. Forecasts and plans make little sense in this uncertain environment and require a different financial approach, different skills, and a different culture.

Exploration culture cultivates the creation, discovery, validation, and acceleration of entirely new ideas that are still foreign to an organisation.

Exploitation culture emphasises the management, systematic improvement, and growth of existing businesses.

This means that companies must create, manage, and harmonise two antagonistic cultures under one roof, a strong exploration culture and a strong exploitation culture at the same time.

These companies value operation excellence, planning, and continuous improvement when it comes to managing the present. At the same time, they embrace a culture of rapid experimentation, success, and failure, learning and adapting to develop ideas for the years and decades to come, and they know they

won't be saving any money here. However successful they may be today, they are not resting on their laurels but are already working on the future.

6. Innovation Ecosystem

Developing innovation capability within a large organisation can be a daunting process. In the past, many have tried, but few have succeeded. With our clients, we use the term Innovation Ecosystem, coined by Strategyser. This is designed to help leaders take a broader, systemic approach to building an innovation capability.

An innovation ecosystem is the framework that companies should use to develop their innovation capabilities. Three elements are required to build this in your organisation:

Exploration Portfolio

This is the portfolio of innovation initiatives, new business models, new value propositions, and new products and services, all of which are mapped in terms of expected return and innovation risk.

For a better understanding of an organisation's exploration portfolio, the initiatives in the portfolio are also classified according to three types of innovation: Efficiency, Sustainability, and Transformative innovation.

In this way, it is possible to assess whether the portfolio is in line with the organisation's strategic goals or whether adjustments to the innovation ecosystem are required.

Innovation Programmes

These are all innovation-related programmes that take place within the company and are aimed at creating value (i.e., sales/profit) and/or changing the culture (i.e., structures/processes).

Exploration Culture

Exploration culture prepares the ground for the development, discovery, validation, and acceleration of entirely new ideas that are foreign to an organisation. In this way, we can quickly identify the obstacles that could derail innovation efforts, develop cultural interventions to overcome them and create the conditions for a sustainable and thriving innovation ecosystem.

In our work with clients, we use Strategyser's Innovation Ecosystem Map to assess the performance of innovation programmes. We plot a company's existing innovation programmes on this map to determine if the programmes and the resources allocated to them are aligned with the company's strategic goals or if adjustments are needed to improve the overall innovation ecosystem. We use Strategyser's Culture Map to visualise exploration culture and assess

advancements and disruption in key categories of leadership support, organisational design, and innovation practice.

When creating an ecosystem for corporate innovation, we recommend applying the five principles from the book "The Corporate Startup":

- ↗ **Innovation Thesis:** Innovation should be part of the company's strategic goals and should be aligned with them. An innovation thesis clearly sets out a company's vision for the future and the strategic goals of innovation.
- ↗ **Innovation Portfolio:** To achieve its innovation thesis, an organisation must establish a portfolio of products and services. This portfolio should contain offerings that cover the entire innovation spectrum.
- ↗ **Innovation Framework:** To execute its thesis and manage its portfolio, the organisation needs a framework to manage the journey from search to execution. There are many frameworks that can be summarised as create ideas, test ideas, and scale ideas.
- ↗ **Innovation Accounting:** With an innovation framework, the organisation must use sound investment practices and metrics to measure success. There are three sets of innovation KPIs: reporting, governance, and global.
- ↗ **Innovation Practice:** The way teams develop their products and services must be aligned with the innovation framework. The innovation practice ensures that no product or service scales until it has a validated business model.

Together, these five principles contribute to the creation of an innovation ecosystem. The first two principles (thesis and portfolio) focus on innovation strategy. The next two (framework and accounting) focus on innovation management. The last one is the principle where the company starts to interact with customers and validate business models. Ultimately, it is up to each organisation to adapt the principles and apply them to their business, strategic goals, and context.

7. Importance of Innovation Ecosystem

It is the unique combination of a properly managed exploration portfolio and your company's innovation programmes and culture. Like any complex living system, it does not mature overnight. It will constantly change, adapting to changes in your business environment and evolving in line with your business strategy to respond to new threats and opportunities.

Conclusion

It could be so simple...

The reason why companies end up in innovation theatre, despite their best intentions, is that the process of turning ideas into profitable business models requires a level of executive commitment that is often difficult to achieve.

When managers focus on driving the success of their current business, innovation can be pushed to the margins of the company. These fringe areas may have fancy names like "lab", "accelerator" or "incubator". But if nothing of value is ever created in these places, they might as well not exist. This is an innovation theatre that should be avoided at all costs

> **"**
> Successful innovation requires interaction between numerous stakeholders from different areas of an organisation.
> **"**

Aligning the organisation with innovation is critical, as is establishing principles that guide how the organisation deals with the complexity of innovation. We believe that principles will trump tactics and that innovation will be brought to life and not just a temporary task.

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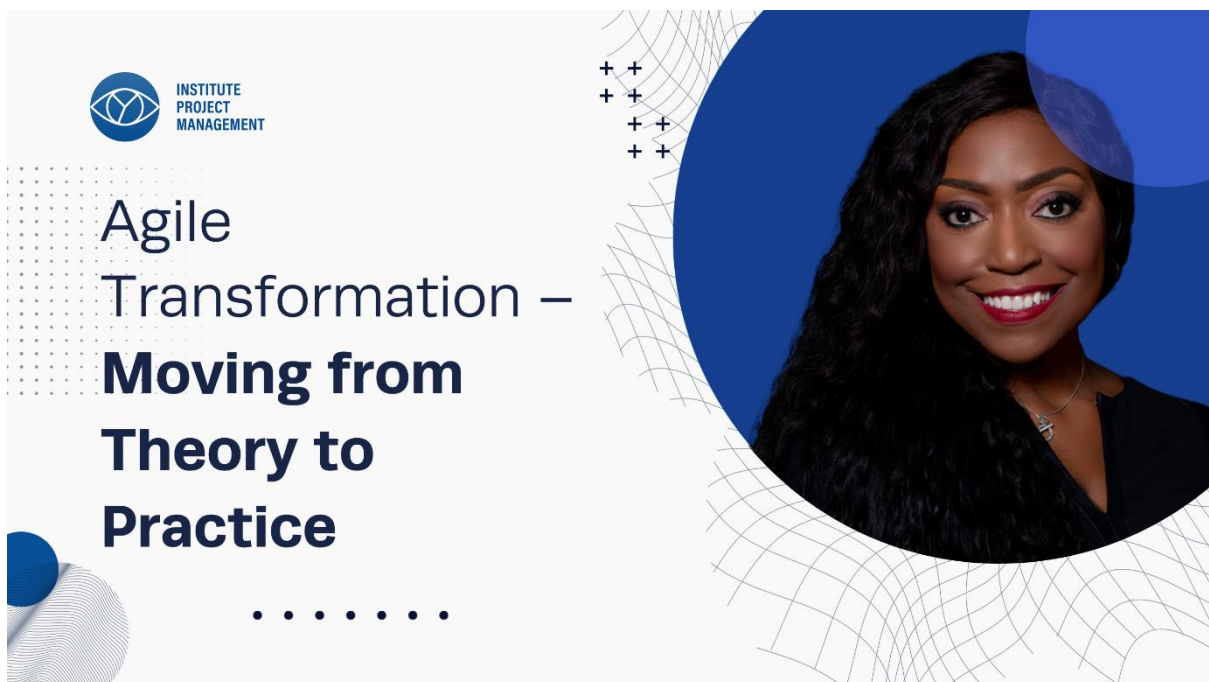
Agile Transformation – Moving from Theory to Practice

By Olivia Mitchell Russell · 29 Jan 2025

Agile methodologies have fundamentally changed the way teams manage projects, introducing a flexible, iterative approach that prioritises adaptability and collaboration. However, transitioning from traditional project management methods to Agile is not just about adopting a new set of tools and processes. It requires a complete cultural and mindset shift, especially for organisations that have long relied on structured, linear methodologies like Waterfall.

The journey from theory to practice in Agile transformation is full of opportunities but also challenges. When done correctly, it can lead to profound benefits—accelerated time–to–market, higher customer satisfaction, improved innovation, and empowered teams. But how does one successfully navigate this transformation, and what key steps are essential to ensuring a smooth transition?
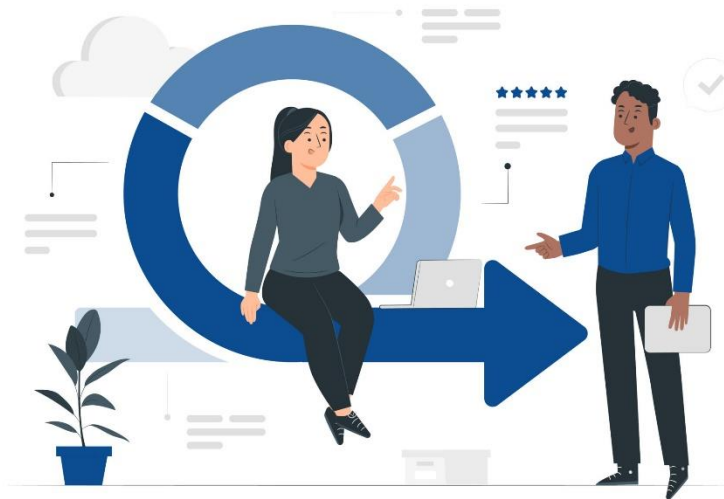
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At its core, Agile is a mindset focused on continuous improvement, delivering value quickly, and being responsive to change. It's not just a framework or a process; it's a philosophy that values individuals and interactions over rigid processes and tools. Agile encourages teams to collaborate, communicate openly, and remain flexible in the face of changing requirements. This approach is particularly powerful in today's fast-paced, uncertain environments where traditional linear planning can fall short.

But here's the key: for Agile to truly work, organisations must embrace it at a deeper level. It's not enough to simply label a team or project as Agile. Real transformation comes when Agile principles permeate the organisation, reshaping leadership practices, team dynamics, and the overall company culture.

In many cases, organisations that claim to have adopted Agile are still following traditional structures, simply dressed up in Agile terminology. This pseudo-Agile approach—where Waterfall methods are hidden behind Agile labels—can be more damaging than helpful. Agile transformation must be genuine and thorough, involving a significant rethinking of how projects are managed, how teams work together, and how leadership functions.

The Importance of Leadership in Agile Transformation

Leadership plays a critical role in any Agile transformation. Leaders must not only support the adoption of Agile frameworks like Scrum or Kanban, but they must also embody Agile thinking. This means letting go of a command-and-control style of management in favour of a more facilitative, empowering approach.

Agile leadership focuses on creating an environment where teams can thrive. Leaders need to trust their teams to make decisions, remove roadblocks, and foster a culture of experimentation and learning. Agile thrives in environments

where failure is seen as an opportunity to learn and where teams are encouraged to take ownership of their work.

However, many leaders find it difficult to embrace this shift. Traditional management styles rely on predictability, control, and long–term planning. In contrast, Agile is about embracing uncertainty, responding to feedback, and being flexible in the face of change. For leaders, this requires a significant shift in mindset.

Key Steps in Agile Transformation

For organisations to successfully implement Agile, several key steps must be followed:

1. Assess Organisational Readiness

Begin by assessing the organisation's culture, structure, and current processes. Are teams ready to embrace Agile principles such as collaboration, transparency, and adaptability? Is leadership willing to change how decisions are made and how teams are managed?

2. Choose the Right Framework

While Agile is a mindset, it also offers various frameworks—Scrum, Kanban, and others—that help guide the process. Choose a framework that aligns with your team's specific needs and goals. For instance, Scrum might work well for development teams that need structured sprints, while Kanban is effective for managing workflows in more continuous delivery environments.

3. Train and Develop Teams

Agile is as much about skills as it is about mindset. Teams need to be trained in Agile practices, and they should be given the tools and support necessary to succeed. This involves not only formal training sessions but also ongoing mentorship and coaching to guide the transition.

4. Pilot Agile Projects

Start small with a pilot project. This allows your organisation to experiment with Agile practices on a manageable scale, learn from mistakes, and adjust as necessary before scaling to larger teams or departments.

5. Scale Agile Gradually

Once the pilot project has been completed, Agile will begin to scale across the organisation. This should be done iteratively, with a focus on continuous

improvement. Each iteration provides valuable insights that can be used to refine the process as Agile practices are rolled out across other teams and departments.

6. Measure Success

The success of an Agile transformation should be measured not only by traditional project metrics but also by indicators of team morale, customer satisfaction, and the ability to adapt to change. Agile is about delivering value quickly, so ensure you are tracking time–to–market, feedback loops, and customer outcomes as key success metrics.

Common Challenges in Agile Transformation

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While Agile offers numerous benefits, organisations often encounter challenges during the transition. One common pitfall is resistance to change, especially among leadership or middle management. Leaders accustomed to traditional management methods may struggle with letting go of control in the "traditional" sense and adopting Agile's more iterative, flexible approach.

Another challenge is the tendency to cling to old processes. Many organisations try to fit Agile into their existing workflows rather than making the changes that are truly necessary for Agile principles. This often results in hybrid models that offer neither the speed of Agile nor the predictability of traditional methods, leaving teams frustrated and outcomes suboptimal

Why Agile Transformation Matters

To stay competitive, organisations understand the need to embrace Agile principles. As markets evolve and customer expectations change, the ability to adapt quickly and efficiently becomes a critical competitive advantage. Organisations that successfully embrace Agile can expect:

- ↗ **Faster Time-to-Market:** Agile's iterative approach allows teams to deliver products and features more quickly, often outpacing competitors.
- ↗ **Increased Customer Satisfaction:** Organisations can ensure their offerings remain relevant by continuously delivering value and adapting to changing customer needs.
- ↗ **Enhanced Innovation:** Agile encourages teams to experiment, take risks, and learn from failures, which fosters a culture of innovation.
- ↗ **Improved Team Morale:** Empowering teams to take ownership of their work leads to higher job satisfaction and better collaboration.

The Path Forward

Agile transformation is not a one-size-fits-all journey. Each organisation must tailor its approach to fit its unique culture, goals, and challenges. However, by adopting an Agile mindset, empowering teams, and committing to continuous improvement, organisations can successfully transition from theory to practice. This shift enables them to not only respond to change but to thrive in it.

As you consider your Agile journey, ask yourself: Is your organisation ready to embrace this change? Have you laid the groundwork for a true transformation, or are you still holding onto traditional methods?

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Olivia Russell, founder and CEO of Exquis Executive Management Solutions, is a strategic project leader specialising in Agile transformations. She has guided diverse industries through successful transitions, blending Agile practices with leadership development to drive excellence, innovation, and lasting success.
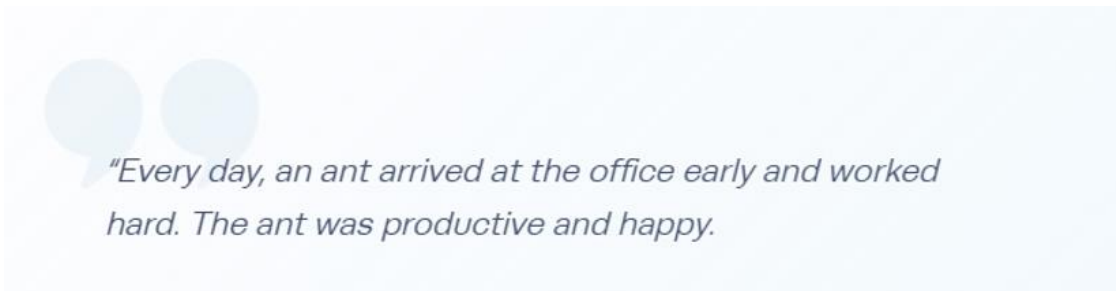
Using the Ludic to Define a Strategic Plan

By Jose Roberto · 08 Jan 2025

The Parable of the Unmotivated Ant, A Project Manager

"Every day, an ant arrived at the office early and worked hard. The ant was productive and happy.

The wasp manager found it strange that the ant worked without supervision. If it was productive without supervision, it would be even more so if it were supervised. And he appointed a cockroach, who prepared beautiful reports and had a lot of experience, as its supervisor.

———

The cockroach's first concern was to standardise the ant's arrival and departure times. Soon, the cockroach needed a secretary to help prepare the reports, and a spider was hired to organise the files and control the phone calls.

———

The wasp was delighted with the cockroach's reports and asked for graphs with indicators and an analysis of the trends that were shown in meetings. The cockroach then hired a fly and bought a computer with a colour printer. Soon, the productive and happy ant began to complain about all that paperwork and meetings!

———

The wasp concluded that it was time to create the position of manager for the area where the productive and happy ant worked. The position was given to a grasshopper, who ordered carpeting in her office and a special chair to be purchased. The new grasshopper manager soon needed a computer and an assistant, the flea (her assistant at the previous company) to help her prepare a strategic plan for improvements and budget control for the area where the ant worked, who was no longer humming and was becoming more and more upset every day.

The grasshopper then convinced the wasp manager that a climate survey was needed. However, upon reviewing the finances, the wasp realised that the unit where the ant worked was no longer performing as well as before and hired the owl, a prestigious and famous consultant, to diagnose the situation. The owl stayed in the offices for three months and issued a voluminous report, with several volumes, which concluded: There are too many people in this company!

———————

And guess who the wasp fired?

———————

The ant, of course, because she was very unmotivated and upset."

The Parable of the Unmotivated Ant: A Project Manager's Journey Towards New Direction

Several people must have already read this parable, which I read and decided to take a new direction, still without an ending.

After being fired, the ant, who was also a project management specialist, lamented for a while about the injustice suffered, at least in her eyes. She spent months introspecting and searching for explanations for the perhaps inexplicable.

After the phase of revolts and questions, she realised that she could do some things that she didn't have time to do before, because she was involved in her daily routine.

Rediscovering Strength and Purpose

She knew she could lift 100 times her weight, but she needed to think about how to use that to his advantage, being just a little ant, in quantity and way.

Due to circumstances, she returned to studying, reading more, researching and envisioning other horizons in other market segments. Over time, she began to learn the meaning of the word entrepreneur and to have an even more managerial vision.

In one of her moments of reflection, she had the idea of creating her own business. Something that only seemed obvious after years of toil.

Defining the Strategic Plan

It was necessary to define the strategic plan and put it into practice, she looked for some tools and decided to use the Business Model Canvas. But, what would your business be? What would be the scope? So many unanswered questions. For now.

One fine day, talking to another ant, she heard the following sentence:

"My business is not a small thing. Either I want the world, or I want nothing."

A snap or, for those who prefer, an insight. The scope was defined.

She thought of something that didn't exist. But, what?

After reading so much, she also decided to write, following the suggestion of a third ant. In a quick calculation, she realised that the three of them together would be able to support an even greater weight than she could alone. WOW, mathematics, always it.

The size was no longer a barrier.

But, despite the discovery of a new skill, writing, she was not content with doing what so many were already doing in his environment and in the same way. She thought of something serious, but not unsmilling. In the middle of an article, she received a message on WhatsApp, it was another one of her friends who always sent jokes, this time with a drawing.

Defining the Focus: Humor and Playfulness

New snap or insight. Humour and playfulness. The focus and form were defined.

Excited by the avalanche of ideas, she listed partners, defined activities, sought resources, defined how she would add value to what already existed, what the relationship with customers would be like, what channels she would use, which segments she would attack, what the costs involved would be and how she would have any revenue. Phew. Early morning, it was time to sleep.

Reaching the World with Limited Resources

With few financial resources, she thought about how to reach the world without money and read one of these readings. WOW, reading, always it.

"Creativity is more important than knowledge."

Its main partners are spread across the globe. And how to reach them?

The first step would be to know where they are.

There were many, and she would have to do a lot of work like a little ant.

Taking Action: Building Partnerships

New snap or insight, she remembered that she was a little ant, so obvious.

Therefore, the work would be nothing more than what she was used to, but at this time, for her own benefit.

One by one, more than 300 partners were contacted, and 365 days went by. Ants of various nationalities and cultures brought with them a wealth of knowledge, and with each interaction, more was gained. WOW, knowledge, always it. It doesn't take up space and makes a lot of difference.

Innovation and Empathy: The Key to Success

Between questions and quick acceptance, her product appeared in several countries because it was innovative. WOW, innovation, always it. Often confused with novelty, it was accepted almost instantly. But it was empathy and the ability to connect that was what really drew us in. The human factor became a mirror.

With each country reached, the motivation grew alongside the progress. A true citizen of the world.

The Journey Continues

The story does not end here, and the plan is still running its course; there is still a lot to be achieved.

The message of this text is the determination of the ant. Obstinate, she began to see herself as great, to see herself shining, to see herself as a thinking being, to want more, to go after it, to give her opinion, to believe, to insist, to convince and to motivate herself.

The employees of the company where the ant was fired say that she has an ambitious plan to found a company called Anthill and become a market reference in the world.

Conclusion: The Power of Passion

The time will tell.

"When you exude passion for your work, success is just a consequence."

The return to the dream, **WOW the dream**, it always keeping us alive.

GEPLANUS PRANADA: THE PM — by José Roberto and Ricardo Catani

With a determination, **WOW the determination**, it always there, that encourages us to start over as many times as necessary. Such resilience.

With a goal, **WOW the goal**, always it, which once defined encourages us to look forward towards the horizon. Just like GEPLANUS.

The FAITH in VICTORY must be UNSHAKABLE!

About the Author
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José is a bachelor business administration and graduated in MBA in strategic IT management (FGV). He is a Project Management Professional (PMP) since 2005, an Agile expert, and a franchisee entrepreneur at Mr. KIDS. Franchisee entrepreneur at the company Mr. KIDS. A writer, screenwriter, and PMI-Angola member, José is passionate about education and information technology.

Conclusion

As organisations continue to evolve, so too must project management. The traditional, rigid approaches of the past are no longer sufficient to navigate the complexities of modern business. Instead, success requires agile thinking, emotional intelligence, and a strong sense of purpose.

This eBook has explored the key themes that define future-ready project management: embracing new technologies, fostering sustainable innovation, and leading teams with clarity and adaptability. Whether integrating AI-driven solutions, managing change effectively, or building a purpose-driven culture, project managers must continuously refine their skills and strategies.

The future of project management is not just about delivering projects on time and within budget—it's about leading transformation, driving meaningful impact, and ensuring long-term organisational resilience. The tools, insights, and strategies shared in these chapters serve as a guide to help you thrive in this new era of project management. The question remains: Are you ready to embrace the future?
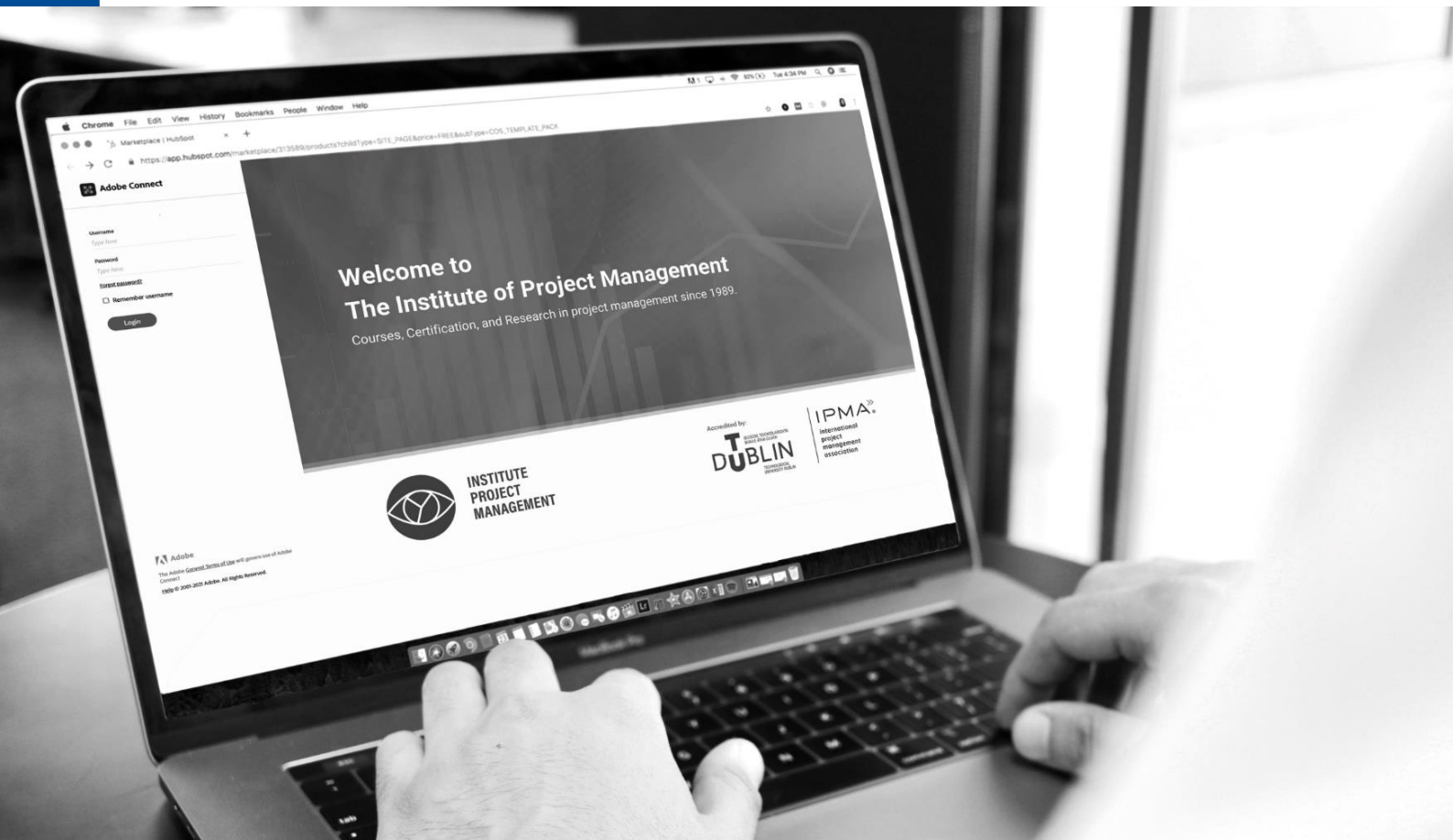
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