

AI in Project Management Beyond the Myth - Panel Discussion

greyfly.ai recently facilitated a panel with global Project Management experts on real-world AI in Project Management use cases, adoption levels and common misconceptions. This paper summarises the conversation, and offers an overview on the benefits, challenges, best practices, and future trends of leveraging AI to enhance project management.



Introduction

Projects typically follow a lifecycle that includes approval, delivery, and operation stages. The goal of AI in PM is to unlock and utilize historical project data as early as possible in the lifecycle, by providing insights, driving efficiency and predicting outcomes to enhance project success. Commentators typically focus on how AI will improve project efficiency (doing things right) and effectiveness (doing the right things).



Hussain Bandukwala, CEO of Parwaaz Consulting, empowers project and business leaders through consulting, coaching, and workshops. He

collaborates with executives to overcome challenges, enhance strategic initiatives by 73%, streamline PMO setup by 2x, and elevate PMO recognition among CxOs. Hussain is a published author, LinkedIn Learning instructor, and IDG Influencer.



Jean-Christophe Hamani an international Strategic Execution and Transformation expert, has led major projects in the Telecom industry for

over 30 years. Holding certifications from PMP to ITIL V4, he founded PMI France and the Francophone Community, and now heads Tactics consulting firm.



Ricardo Sastre Martín with 20+ years of global leadership at Microsoft, Ericsson, and Telefonica, he has led projects and PMOs across sectors.

Holding MBA and multiple PM credentials, he excels in strategy, project management, deploying innovations, achieving targets, and mentoring industry development worldwide.

AI tools can generally be classified within a two-by-two grid, dimensioned by technology adaptability and intuitiveness versus the level of human involvement.



As AI advances, human involvement is likely to decrease.



Initially, AI products, like chatbots, in project management focused on enhanced streamlining. Now, with the rise of robotic process automation and Large Language Models like ChatGPT, applications are moving towards Virtual Assistants that integrate multiple applications to drive workflows and rapidly unlock knowledge.

Currently, the c150 Project Portfolio Management (PPM) tools are typically evolving and integrating AI to predict project outcomes and incorporate chatbots. Despite advancements, no projects operate entirely without human intervention, ensuring there will be an ongoing demand for project managers. When choosing PPM tools, consideration should be given to how they will enhance project delivery efficiency and effectiveness. For example, efficiency relates to resource utilization, while effectiveness ensures the appropriateness of projects.

The Landscape of AI in PM

AI is set to revolutionize project management by enhancing how projects are initiated, planned, and executed. JC and Lloyd emphasized AI's role in improving contextual understanding, particularly in early project phases. Tools like ChatGPT offer valuable insights and automate processes, boosting efficiency and effectiveness. Lloyd compares this evolution to advancements in GPS

technology, predicting similar progress for AI in project management. Despite AI's potential, JC stresses his belief that human judgment will remain crucial. He likens AI to a powerful car needing a skilled driver, underscoring the necessity of human expertise in decision-making. This analogy highlights the dynamic, context-specific nature of projects that AI alone cannot fully address.

A poll of the panel attendees revealed that most participants are either observers or amateurs in AI use, reflecting cautious and early adoption potentially reflecting concerns over tool stability, data security, and reliability. It was noted that:

“ **Companies need to prioritize keeping data integrity, security and access to ensure AI outputs are trustworthy** ”

As these issues are resolved and benefits become more apparent, more organizations are expected to actively leverage AI. While AI promises significant improvements in project management, human oversight and careful integration currently remains essential.

Unlocking Industry Transformation

JC provided a compelling case study exemplifying the transformative potential of AI in sea port management, identifying its broader implications for project management and the industry at large. The example software leverages AI to optimize port operations, serving as a catalyst for digital transformation across multiple functions by capitalizing on data. JC positioned AI as an enabler and underscored its capacity to unlock value across different functions, highlighting its role in addressing challenges through integration with other

cutting-edge technologies like IoT and drones. By integrating data streams and deploying AI-powered algorithms, the software not only optimizes port operations but also paves the way for innovative solutions to address sustainability concerns, such as reducing CO2 emissions and enhancing safety protocols. This integration of AI with other technologies signifies a shift in project management. JC emphasized the importance of analytical prowess, proficiency in business analysis, and adept negotiation skills to orchestrate collaborative efforts among stakeholders.



Hussain further expanded on the implications of AI-driven projects, emphasizing their transformative nature and the challenges they entail. He highlighted reinforcing the need for a multifaceted skill set encompassing analytical acumen, stakeholder management, and execution prowess. Moreover, whilst highlighting the resistance to AI adoption, particularly in optimizing operations, he emphasized the project manager's role in mitigating such challenges through effective communication and collaboration. This discussion reinforced the transformative potential of AI in reshaping industry landscapes and driving innovation. Through collaborative efforts and adept project management, organizations can harness the

the power of AI to address contemporary challenges and drive sustainable growth in an increasingly digital world.

Mastering PM in the Era of AI

Hussain provided a glimpse into the evolving role of project managers amidst the increasing integration of AI into project workflows. He addressed the concern among project managers regarding potential job displacement due to automation, highlighting the importance of understanding the evolving role and responsibilities in the context of AI adoption. He confirmed the proactive approach necessary for project managers to navigate the shifting landscape and emphasized the need for

The importance of project managers in spearheading these initiatives

project managers to embrace AI as a resource, leveraging its capabilities for tasks such as auto-rescheduling and forecasting to enhance productivity. Furthermore, Hussain advocated for active engagement with AI-related initiatives and projects to position project managers as leaders in AI adoption within organizations.

Hussain's insights provided a picture of the evolving role of project managers in the age of AI. He underscored the need for project managers to proactively embrace AI as a transformative force, leveraging its capabilities to enhance productivity, efficiency, and strategic decision-making. Moreover, he highlighted the imperative for project managers to develop a versatile skill set encompassing both technical proficiency in AI tools and the soft skills necessary for effective collaboration and leadership. Ultimately, he underscored the pivotal role of project managers in driving organizational success through adept navigation of the AI landscape.



AI Paradigm Shift

Ricardo, in his dual role at Microsoft leading AI projects and leveraging AI in project management, offered a unique perspective. He emphasized the democratization of AI, highlighting how Microsoft Copilot seamlessly integrates into daily tasks across other Microsoft applications. Using Natural Language Processing (NLP), Copilot enhances productivity by automating tasks like agenda preparation, email management, and meeting summaries.

He supported this with practical applications of Copilot in project management, showcasing its ability to simplify complex tasks like data analysis and presentation preparation. For instance, Copilot eliminates the need for manual tasks like building pivot tables, allowing project managers to focus on higher-value activities. He also showcased Copilot's versatility, from aiding in meeting attendance to summarizing lengthy reports, emphasizing its user-friendliness and minimal configuration requirements. Furthermore, he highlighted Microsoft's commitment to data privacy, assuring users their data remains confidential. Despite initial challenges, Copilot's potential is evident, with continuous improvements expected to enhance its impact on productivity.

Intelligent Project Prediction

Developed over five years, IPP leverages AI for executive insights to increase project success. It utilizes historical data and applies machine learning to predict project outcomes. Designed for use at portfolio level, IPP analyzes past project patterns to predict key metrics like budget adherence and go-live dates. For example, if historical data shows consistent overruns with a specific supplier, IPP alerts stakeholders to similar risks.

IPP predicts project outcomes with 96% accuracy

Beyond predictions, IPP is integrated into workflows to enable informed decision-making. For example it can be used within project or assurance reviews and gateways to ensure alignment with forecast. Alternatively for proposed projects, IPP provides predictions and risk mitigation strategies, enhancing planning and efficiency. Lloyd highlighted that implementing IPP requires robust change management and that organizations must invest in initiatives to foster user adoption, streamline processes, to maximize AI-driven insights.

Challenges and Future Prospects

Lloyd highlighted data maturity as the primary barrier to adopting machine learning-based prediction models. He emphasized:

There is a direct relationship between data maturity, project management maturity and project

This underscores the critical need for robust data health checks and ongoing transformation

to ensure the availability of quality data necessary for accurate predictions. Ricardo further acknowledged the current limitations of AI in project management due to data scarcity. While optimistic about the future potential for autonomous projects, he stresses the importance of realistic expectations.



JC stated the importance of knowledge management, particularly in capturing lessons learned from past projects. He acknowledges AI's potential to facilitate continuous learning within organizations, highlighting the transformative impact on project management practices. Furthermore, JC addressed the shifting dynamics between executives and project managers, anticipating increased scrutiny on project planning and execution with the advent of AI-driven tools. The discussion culminated in a reflection on the cultural and organizational changes required to harness the full potential of AI in project management. Panel members converged on the importance of change management and continuous adaptation to leverage AI effectively. Ultimately, the panel discussion served to highlight the complexities of integrating AI into project management practices, offering valuable insights for industry professionals seeking to embrace AI-driven innovation.

Conclusion

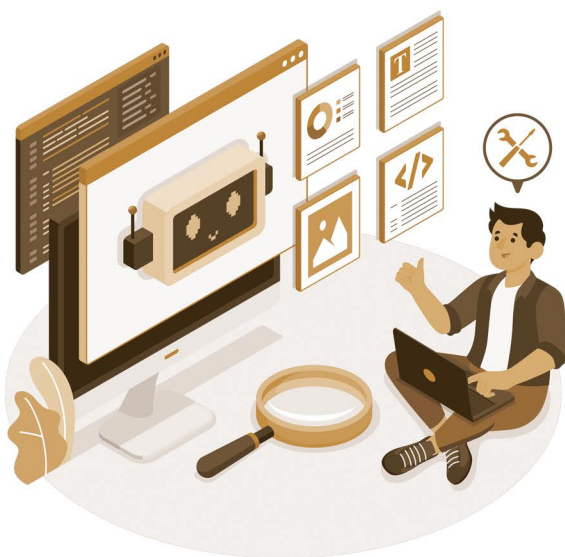
The panel discussion concluded with a consensus on the transformative potential of AI in PM. Embracing AI emerges as a key takeaway, with a focus on mindset adoption to stay ahead in the evolving landscape. While acknowledging the early stage of AI implementation, the panel emphasizes the pivotal role of project management professionals in driving adoption and managing change effectively. Despite existing technical and organizational challenges, AI-powered tools showcased in the discussion demonstrated promise of efficiency and effectiveness in project management. Hussain emphasized:



Embracing AI is crucial for staying competitive



urging proactive steps towards integration. JC reinforced the complementary role of human intelligence in problem-solving alongside AI advancements. Whilst Ricardo highlighted the need for adoption and change management, positioning project managers as pivotal change agents.



Author



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Lloyd has 25+ years programme management experience and leads greyfly.ai's board and all major strategic initiatives. His working career started as a planner ahead of leading PMOs and latterly as a Programme Manager for full life-cycle, multi-year, award winning major transformation projects.

greyfly.ai was founded when two LSE alumni reunited after 25 years. Historically greyfly.ai has delivered multi-million pound transformation projects and are approved government and BBC suppliers. Our mission is to apply AI in Project Management to reduce costs and improve project success. Our flagship product is the Intelligent Project Prediction (IPP) platform that uses AI to provide executive insights to increase project success. We offer a suite of complimentary tools to unlock knowledge within project data, provide 3 predictions and Insights to enable guided interventions.



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