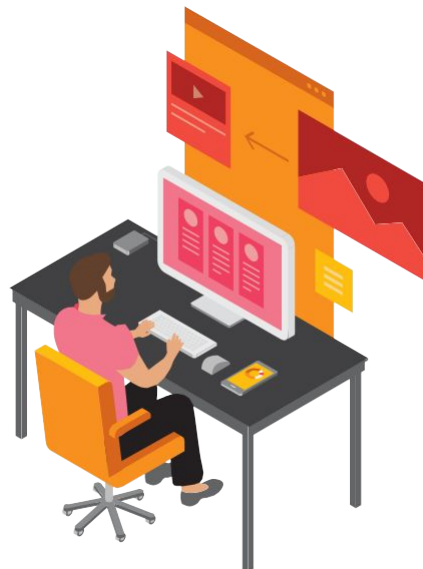




# Who is the Modern Project Manager?

**Fundamentals alone  
don't cut it. Meet the  
Project Influencer.**



Projects are everywhere. The global trend of 'projectification'<sup>1</sup> has meant that more activities are being organised into projects and more people are working as project managers.

Projects are not only more numerous, they are also becoming larger and more complex, with mega projects and organisation-wide transformations becoming the norm. Adding digitisation into the mix has created efficiencies, but the speed at which technology evolves means that we are now in a constant state of rapid evolution. As a result, the demand for people with the proven ability to manage projects has surged.

Yet, rather than celebrating project managers, headlines instead announce that the role will soon go the way of the dinosaurs. Research from Gartner<sup>2</sup> estimates that 80% of all project management tasks will be automated by 2030, with artificial intelligence capable

of analysing and reporting data faster and more accurately than humans. Attempts to reduce human error might lead the humans to be replaced entirely – a quick Google search for 'the death of the project manager' brings up countless articles calling in the Grim Reaper.

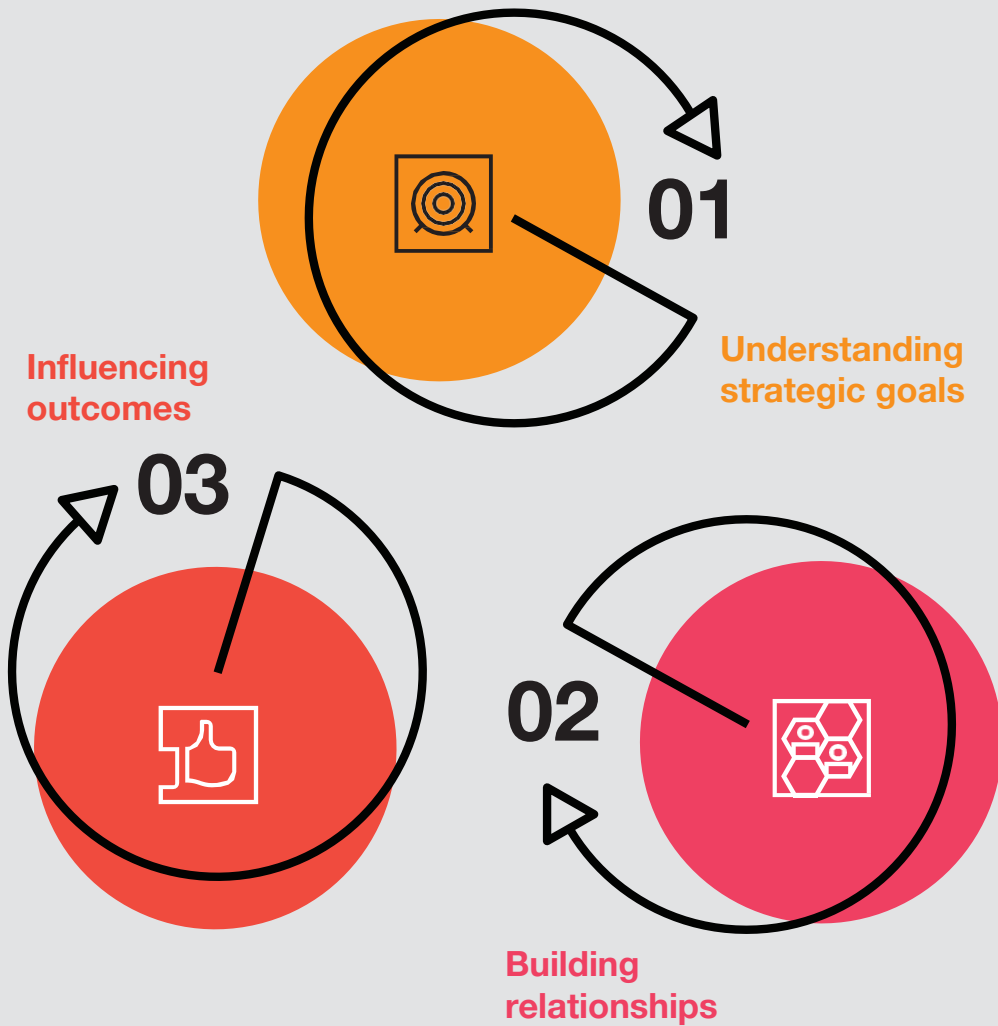
In reality, the Project Manager (PM) role – like the surrounding business environment – is changing and is more important than ever. PwC's latest research shows that project managers are evolving – no longer a group focussed on scope, schedule and budget alone, the best project managers today are leveraging new technology to streamline much of what they and their teams have done in the past, in order to focus on influencing the outcomes, building relationships and achieving the strategic goals of their organisations. They are not just project managers – they are Project Influencers – and will never be replaced by a machine.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'projectification' was first used in the article: Schoper, Y.G., Wald, A., Ingason, H.T. and Fridgeirsson, T.V., 2017. Projectification in Western economies

<sup>2</sup> Gartner Says 80 Percent of Today's Project Management Tasks Will Be Eliminated by 2030 as Artificial Intelligence Takes Over, March 2019.

<https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2019-03-20-gartner-says-80-percent-of-today-s-project-management>

## Project Influencer focus



## Meet the Project Influencer

There is an old misconception that the PM role is mainly focused on running reports and pulling together schedules/tasks that could simply be automated. As our interviews with senior project professionals and transformation leaders across the Middle East and North America highlighted, the Project Influencer is defined by fundamental technical project management skills in addition to core human skills that are leading them through this era of transformative digital change, based in empathy.

Project Influencers are skilled in the fundamentals, such as scheduling, managing scope, controlling budget, and reporting. On top of this, they possess a business acumen and emotional intelligence that allow them to build relationships, and an agile mindset which enable them to seamlessly leverage technology to proactively forecast and manage risk on a global scale.



# The Project Influencer: Key Skills and Attributes

## Business basics



### Project management fundamentals

Highly organised, and professionally certified/credentialed in applying discipline and structure through appropriately controlled scope, schedule, and budget levers

### Business acumen

Strong knowledge of the organisation and industry they are a part of: understands the key dependencies, sees the big picture. Strong understanding of key business problems and how the strategy and execution of the project will solve them

## Ways of working



### Agile mindset

Takes a flexible approach, frequently re-evaluating and adapting along the way to get things done better, faster and often cheaper

### Digitally enabled

Leverages technology to streamline processes and uses automation to enable enhanced, data-driven decision making.

### Problem Solver

Brings creativity to their thinking to drive the project forward

## The human factor



### Amateur psychologist

Possesses emotional intelligence and leads and guides progress by building relationships and trust

### Motivator

Makes people enthused and eager to give their best

### Gravitas

Feels comfortable in a position of authority and able to hold people accountable



The human factor is very key in project management. Technology can't put someone in another person's shoes, so you can understand the other side and then find the right solutions, how to comfort people and make the right decision that will help everyone.

### Strategy and Innovation Leader

Government and Public Sector, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In a world where change is the only constant, the ability to adapt and re-evaluate is irreplaceable. Our conversations indicated that digital savviness isn't a 'hard' skill, but more of an outcome of this 'agile mindset'. **'For me, they are hand in hand'**, noted one of our participants, an Agile delivery lead. 'The project managers that have an agile mindset have evolved and kept up with changing times and new technologies. And what we're seeing now, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, is that these are the project managers who are a little stronger.'

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided further opportunities for attributes of a Project Influencer to come to the fore. **'All of us learned to adapt to a new**

**way of working. It comes with challenges, but it has its benefits as well'** explains a digital delivery lead. 'For example, by communicating and managing external stakeholders online, we were able to execute a large project much more quickly than we could have done offline' Project Influencers have continued to thrive in the remote world, even when working in industries that do not easily lend themselves to remote working, such as infrastructure. Their agility and digital capabilities have enabled them to quickly adapt, and their gravitas and emotional intelligence ensures they still command the presence needed to maintain and leverage relationships to solve complex problems – even when they are just a tile in a virtual meeting.

## Modern technology amplifies the key skills and attributes of the project influencer

In our discussions we found little evidence or belief that any type of technology will, or can, replace the human project manager any time soon. Instead, our research indicates that Project Influencers are leveraging digital tools to alter trajectories, enforce best practices and free up time to focus on the people-centred aspects impacting outcomes.

We cannot underestimate the power of human attributes. If the project manager's work is purely scheduling and reporting, they can be replaced by technology very soon. If they use strategic thinking, human sensitivity, creativity and act as Project Influencers within their organisations, then we will see faster delivery, mitigated risk, and more customer-centred solutions – and the role will survive for a long time yet.

This report is part four of four from PwC's Middle East transformation and project management research series.



Project management is one of the trades which is heavily involved in stakeholder management and problem-solving, and these things require human intelligence. We are all believers in technology, but at the same time, I believe the role of humans is vital to projects.

**Strategy and ePMO Leader**

Tourism and Culture Sector, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



## Does our research resonate?

1

Do you see this evolution in your effective PMs and PMOs?

2

Is your organisation set up to foster this kind of evolution?

3

What are you doing as an organisation to provide your PMs the tools and training to adapt these traits, and realise the benefits?

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