

# How to unlock your PMO's strategic value

Middle East Transformation and  
Project Management Report 2022



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# How to unlock your PMO's strategic value

Key lessons from the world's leading project managers on maximizing the opportunities generated by the Middle East's transformation



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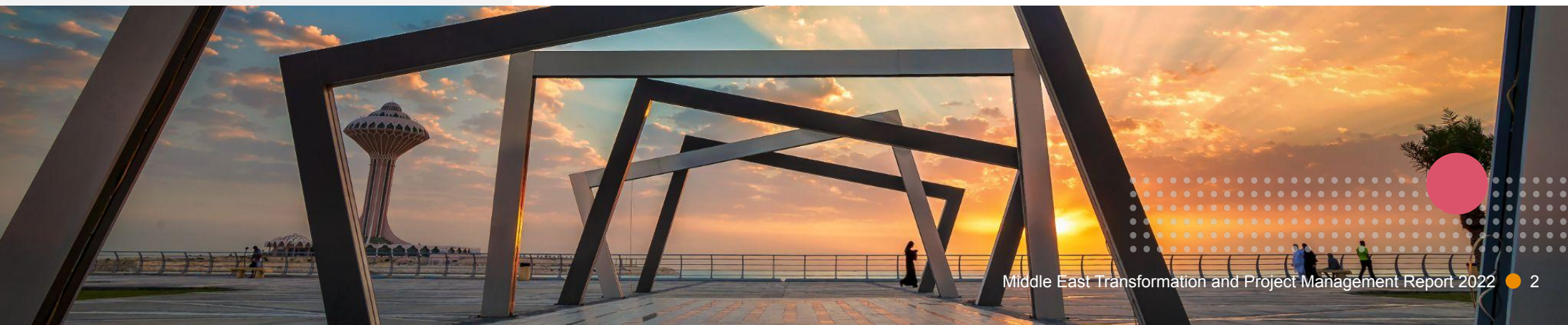
## Foreword

Across the Middle East, the breathtaking scale and ambition of ventures such as the Qatar 2022 World Cup and Saudi Arabia's NEOM smart city are driving the region's transformation. These so-called mega and giga projects, along with countless other developments, require a totally new conception of the project manager's role.

To achieve such ambitious outcomes, project management offices (PMOs) will need to harness the latest technologies and recruit smart, digitally-skilled people who work directly with the C-Suite. In turn, senior management teams will need to prize this new breed of "**Project Influencers**" as strategic partners and value creators. Externally, companies will have to break down the traditional "hard hat and clipboard" image of the project manager's role to attract the best talent.

How can PMOs in the Middle East meet this challenge? Our global survey with the Project Management Institute (PMI) includes more than 500 Middle East respondents, from PMO leaders and C-Suite level executives, to workstream managers. Their answers, along with examples of best practice from a global cohort of high-performing PMOs, provide a roadmap for Middle East organisations embarking on this daunting but exciting and necessary journey.

At PwC Middle East, we believe there has never been a better time and place to be a project manager, at the heart of our region's accelerating transformation. We look forward to hearing your own thoughts about our survey results and to helping you unlock your PMO's strategic value in the coming years.



# How to unlock your PMO's strategic value

Key lessons from the world's leading project managers on maximizing the opportunities generated by the Middle East's transformation

## Executive Summary

Large-scale projects are a key driver of economic growth in the Middle East. In recent years, some of the world's most ambitious projects have been commissioned across the region, including the Riyadh Metro and Dubai 2020 Expo. As the Middle East's transformation accelerates, organisations need to maximise efficiency in delivery, avoid project failure and prioritise projects that support their corporate strategy to gain a competitive advantage.

This report draws on the latest PwC and Project Management Institute's (PMI) Global survey on Transformation and Project Management, conducted in July and August 2021, to identify the actions that will help Middle East project managers and leaders drive their organisation's success. A total of 534 Middle East respondents with project management responsibilities took part in the survey, including 209 C-Suite level executives. Their answers provided an invaluable regional perspective on how project managers can navigate the Middle East's unprecedented opportunities, as well as its challenges to ultimately drive the success of projects and transformations across the region.

PwC's research with PMI has also identified a global cohort of 230 organisations with high performing project management offices (PMOs). C-Suite level executives in this "Top 10 Percent" group are more than twice as likely as their Middle East counterparts to say their organisation performed much better in 2020 compared with 2019 across a range of KPIs. These metrics include revenue growth, customer acquisition, customer satisfaction and ESG targets.

Our report explores what Middle East project managers and leaders can learn from the Top 10 Percent about improving their own performance, and we make the following recommendations:

- Middle East organisations need to strengthen C-Suite support for the PMO to help move it beyond the execution of projects to driving corporate strategy
- PMOs must tailor processes and methodologies to the different needs of the organisation and stakeholders to maximise their value
- The current talent shortage requires organisations to build winning project management capabilities to avoid the risk of project failures, or alternatively to outsource PMOs
- PMOs should use outcome-based measurements, engaging across the organisation to develop KPIs that will enable them to become strategic "**Project influencers**" and changemakers
- PMOs need to implement digital upskilling at pace, supported by a cultural shift towards a digital mindset inside the PMO and the C-Suite
- With hybrid working set to remain, project managers will need more support and training in managing teams remotely



# How to unlock your PMO's strategic value

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# 01

## Introduction to the global survey

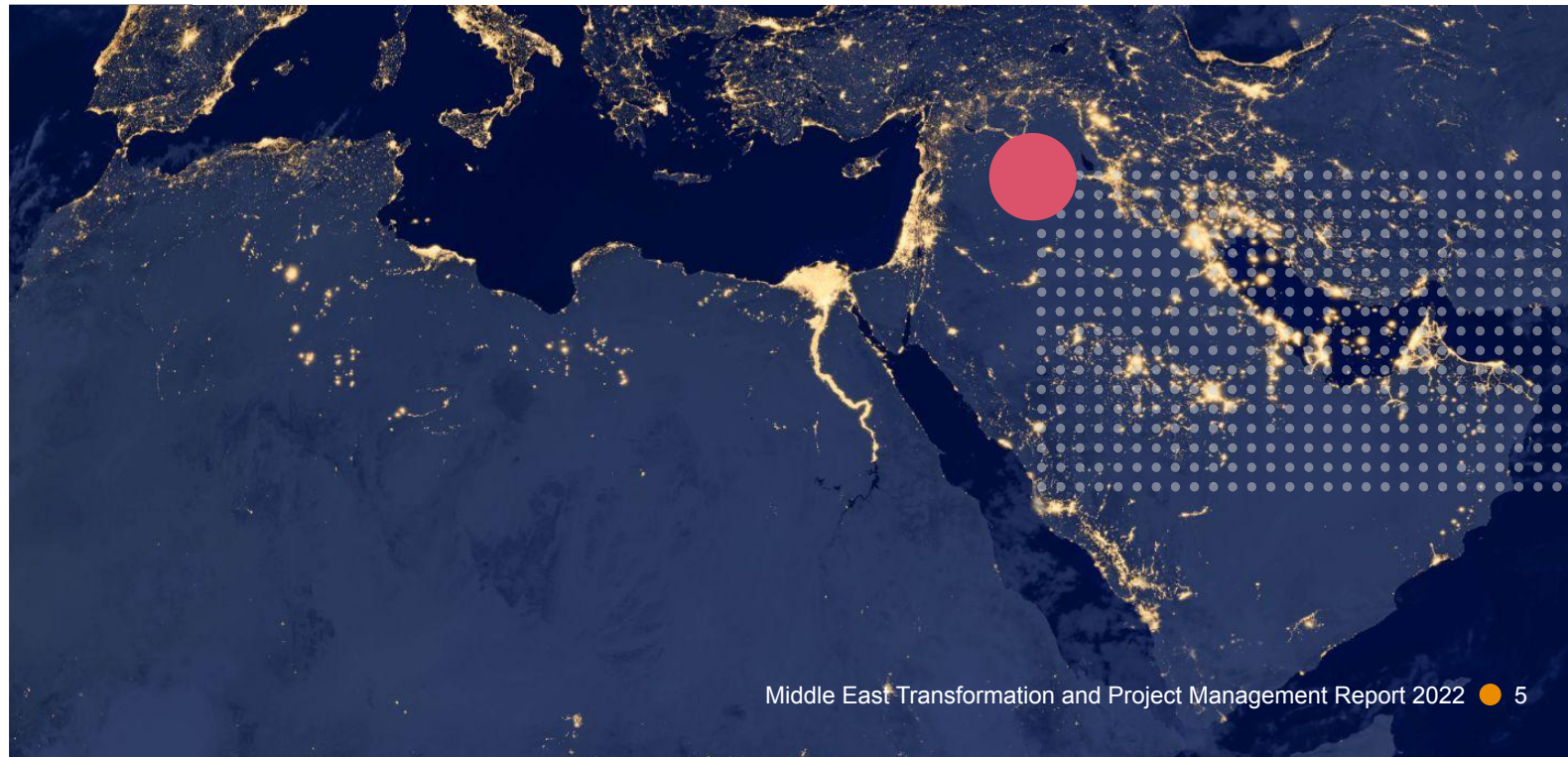
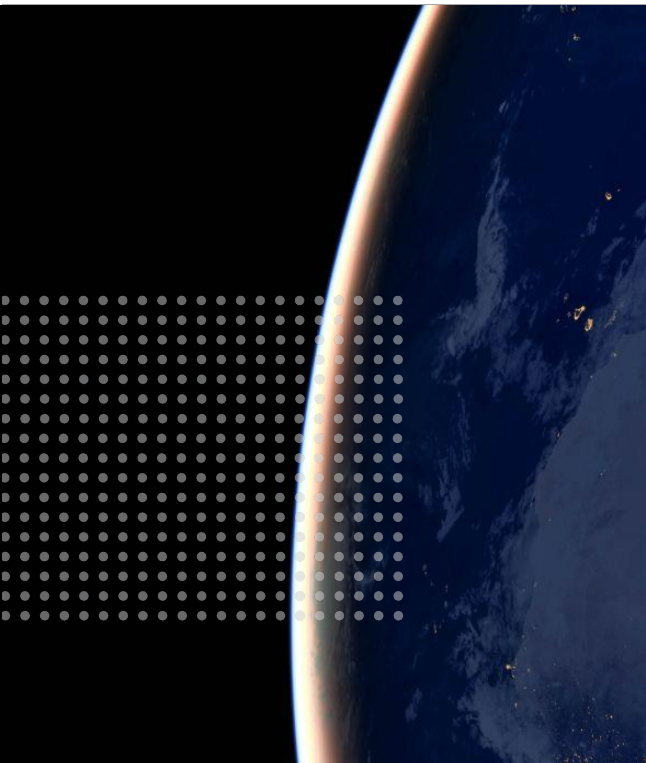


In July and August 2021, PwC and PMI undertook a global survey of 4,069 people involved in leading or facilitating the delivery of projects, programs, and portfolios. The survey explored how projects, programs and portfolios are working for project managers and their organisations.

In the Middle East region, 534 respondents took part, including individuals with formal project management qualifications and those with job titles such as project/program/portfolio manager, as well as initiative/workstream leaders and those in less formal project management roles. The executive viewpoint was also well represented, with the survey capturing 209 C-Suite responses in the Middle East.

**4,069** global respondents

**534** Middle East respondents, of which **40%** were C-Suite



# The global **Top 10** percent

## Who are The Top 10 Percent?

These organisations are found in all regions of the world, including the Middle East, with a higher than average concentration based in the technology hubs of South Asia. A third of our global Top 10 Percent are technology companies, which is no surprise given the sector is ahead of the game when it comes to business change and transformation, as highlighted in [PMI's Pulse of the Profession 2021](#). A quarter are industrial and manufacturing organisations and the remainder are spread across a range of industries, with slightly greater prevalence in the financial services, construction, and telecommunications sectors. The majority of the Top 10 Percent are corporate-level governance offices, such as an enterprise PMO (ePMO). A centralised, organisation-wide approach gives these PMOs the opportunity to support governance, best practice, and project/program alignment across departments and functions, ensuring projects are carried out for the overall benefit of the organisation.

Importantly, the PMOs in this 'top tier' of our global sample demonstrate a close alignment with organisational strategy and strong linkages with the C-Suite. Three quarters have C-Suite representation, and 94% are considered by their executive leaders to be a strategic partner. Organisations in this group have been more agile in their response to the pandemic, they face fewer challenges when it comes to attracting, retaining and upskilling talent, and are more advanced in terms of implementing technological solutions.



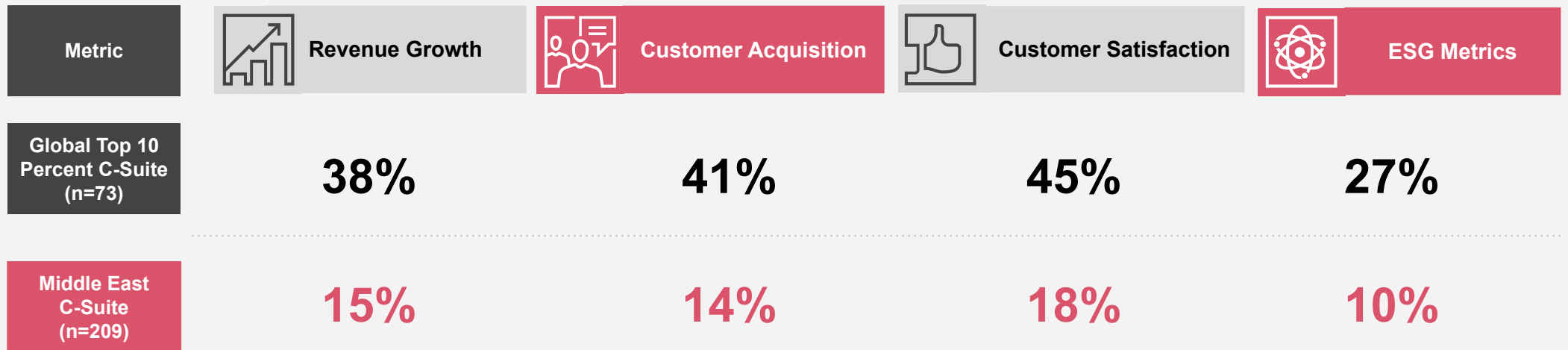
PwC and PMI's research has identified a global cohort of

**230 organisations** with high performing project management offices (PMOs)



# The global **Top 10** percent

**Figure 1:** Proportion of C-Suite saying their organisation performed *much better* in 2020 than in 2019 in key metrics (Global Top 10 Percent C-Suite vs Middle East C-Suite)



Source: PMI and PwC. 2021. PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021

This high performing cohort is pushing the scope of the PMO beyond governance, resulting in key benefits for their organisations. The way they manage talent, embrace technology, adapt processes to changing business needs and align initiatives to the organisation's strategic goals, has seen them achieve greater success across key performance indicators.

**This report will explore how organisations in this group have reached such an advanced level, and highlight the steps your PMO can take to join them, creating long-term benefits for the organisation.**

# 02

## Tapping into the strategic value of the PMO



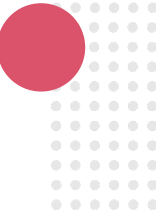
The project management office (PMO) has a vital role to play as the world transitions into a post-pandemic era and our research shows how PMOs can move beyond the tactical execution of projects and perform a wider range of activities that add strategic value. These evolved PMOs embrace new technology, are focused on team culture, and help develop project managers into ambassadors for value creation.

C-Suite support is vital for accelerating the development of a more strategic minded PMO. A key characteristic of the Top 10 Percent is close collaboration with the senior leadership, and this link is vital to help bridge the gap between strategic planning and the execution of projects.





# Tapping into the **strategic value** of the PMO



The vast majority of the Top 10 Percent tell us that the C-Suite supports and values the PMO and considers it to be a strategic partner (Figure 2). Often this is through direct representation — 73% of the Top 10 Percent PMOs have a C-Suite-level role that represents the PMO, compared to 50% of organisations in the Middle East. Senior leadership need real time information to support their decision making, and those that use the PMO's vital insight have a greater understanding of emerging issues, the wider impact of projects on the organisation, and how the effective distribution of resources can drive more positive outcomes.

The pandemic won't be the end of disruption in the Middle East, but organisations that have well developed, strategic PMOs will face fewer obstacles when responding and adapting to change. For example, by ensuring key performance indicators and initiatives are fully aligned with the organisation's key strategic goals, something that 94% of the Top 10 Percent are doing all of the time, compared to only 39% of PMOs in the Middle East.

This constant alignment, supported by the integration of PMO processes across the organisation, allows organisations to be more agile. Strategy can be quickly and effectively applied across the organisation, and resources can be reprioritized at speed. As a result, the Top 10 Percent had a bigger impact on organisational change when the COVID-19 pandemic hit: 75% helped to accelerate new ways of working (54% in the Middle East) and 70% expanded risk management practices (54% in the Middle East)

While it is important that the PMO standardises processes to achieve clarity across the organisation, the Top 10 Percent demonstrate that the PMO needs to understand the different needs of projects and teams and tailor standardisation accordingly. 92% of this group are continuously adapting tools, methodologies, and practices for different projects and teams, compared to 39% of PMOs in the Middle East. Change is frequently met with resistance, so the willingness to be flexible depending on the different goals and priorities of different departments is critical to influence the naysayers and achieve strategic alignment.

**Figure 2: C-Suite support is a key feature of the most mature PMOs**

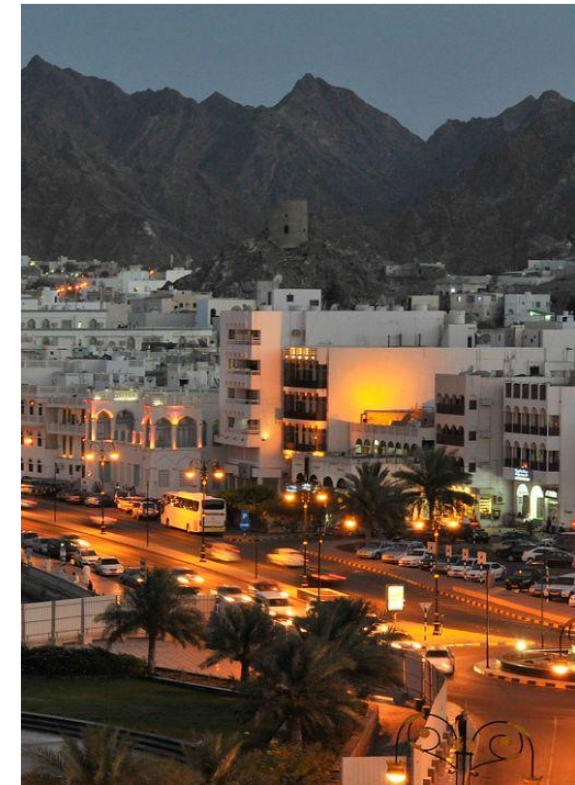
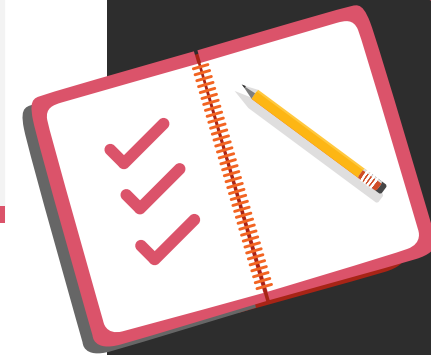
	Global Top 10 Percent (n=230)	Middle East organisations (those working within PMO) n=370
Agree that the C-Suite understands and appreciates the value of the PMO	94%	74%
Agree that the C-Suite in their organisation considers the PMO to be a strategic partner	94%	70%
Agree that the C-Suite supports the PMO and demonstrates commitment to its success	94%	75%

**Source:** PMI and PwC. 2021. PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021

# Call to action

C-Suite support and flexibility are important factors

- ✓ Organisations in the Middle East need to establish and strengthen C-Suite support for the PMO to help move it beyond the execution of projects to a place where it can help inform and drive the organisation's strategy
- ✓ PMOs must tailor processes and methodologies to the different needs of the organisation and stakeholders to maximise their value



# 03

## Turning the tide on the talent crisis



Currently, one of the greatest threats facing PMOs and the successful delivery of projects in the Middle East, is the shortage of talent and lack of investment in developing key project management skills, resulting in significant recruitment challenges. Compounding this, the profession appears to have something of an image problem, and although the perception is slightly better in the Middle East than elsewhere in the world, more needs to be done to help attract talent and reduce the skill gap.

Across the globe, project managers are viewed more as tactical troubleshooters rather than strategic partners, suggesting a widespread lack of understanding of the value and impact of project management. In the Middle East, 44% describe project managers as 'schedulers' and only a third say they are 'essential'. A key attribute of the **Project Influencer** is being able to adapt and reevaluate in order to do things more efficiently. However, when describing project managers, only a quarter of respondents chose phrases like 'flexible', 'creative' and 'realising visions'.

**Project Influencers** create value through their strategic partnerships with C-Suite.



# Turning the **tide** on the talent crisis



The image of project managers among the Top 10 Percent is more positive: 48% describe them as ‘enablers’ and 47% say they are ‘change makers’ (compared to 39% and 37% in the Middle East) demonstrating that strong strategic alignment between the PMO and the C-Suite helps to reinforce the value of project management capabilities in achieving wider strategic aims. But there’s still room for improvement, even among this high performing group.

In [PwC’s 24th CEO survey](#) 39% of CEOs in the Middle East said that the availability of key skills was a threat to their organisation’s growth prospects. The talent crisis has been building for some time and now demands urgent attention from business leaders in the region. PwC and PMI’s [‘Narrowing the Talent Gap’](#) report, highlights that this is not just an issue in the Middle East; organisations from every corner of the world are struggling to meet the increasing demand for projectisation, while demographic trends and cultural shifts only exacerbate the problem.

## The capabilities gap - the most important project management skills are difficult to find

PwC’s [‘Who is the Modern Project Manager’](#) report, points out that project managers have evolved in response to the ever changing-environment they find themselves in. Their role is no longer focused solely on scope, schedule and budget. Rather, individuals are needed who can successfully influence the outcomes of projects through their strategic awareness and interpersonal skills, firmly focused on influencing outcomes, building relationships and achieving the strategic goals of their organisations. From the survey data (figure 3), we can see that organisations view these **Project Influencer** capabilities as being crucial to the successful delivery of project outcomes.



# Turning the tide on the talent crisis

**Figure 3:** The capabilities gap: the top 5 capabilities of a project manager and the level of difficulty in recruiting

Capability	% say this is a top capability of project managers (Middle East)	% say capability is difficult to find when recruiting (Middle East)
Creative problem solving and innovative thinking	34	40
Knowledge of the business, industry and ecosystem, and their implications for projects	28	27
Understanding of the organisational strategy and its implications for projects	26	35
Ability to build trust and relationships	26	31
Ability to adapt use of tools, processes, methodologies and practices to different projects and teams	24	26

Source: PMI and PwC. 2021. PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021



# Turning the **tide** on the talent crisis

Our research shows that a growing recruitment challenge exists for project based organisations in the Middle East. The skills and capabilities ranked as the most important are those which are proving most difficult to find (figure 4). For example, over a third say that creative problem solving and innovative thinking is a top capability of project managers. But worryingly, 40% say it is difficult to find people with this attribute when recruiting.

To deal with skills and recruitment challenges, PMOs in the region are having to look externally for help, with 37% - the highest of all regions in the study - recruiting project managers from outside of their own country. In addition, organisations in the Middle East are more likely than their peers in other regions to see outsourcing the PMO as a potential solution to the capabilities gap. 55% of Middle East organisations, compared to 40% elsewhere say that a key benefit of outsourcing the PMO is that it leads to improved capabilities through skill transfer.

But outsourcing won't be enough. If organisations are to successfully meet the increasing demands of projects, they first need to understand the driving factors behind the talent crisis, and put initiatives in place to overcome these.

## Lessons from the Top 10 Percent

The scale of the recruitment challenges facing the profession in the Middle East, and globally, cannot be underestimated. Even the Top 10 Percent are having difficulty, with a quarter struggling to find people with creative problem solving and innovative thinking skills. However, while there is still room for them to improve, our research shows that organisations in this top performing cohort are being more creative when it comes to attracting, retaining and developing talent. As a result, they face fewer recruitment challenges when compared to organisations in the Middle East (figure 4).



**37% of Middle East respondents** are recruiting project managers from outside of their own country to deal with skills and recruitment gaps



# Turning the **tide** on the talent crisis

**Figure 4: The top 5 most difficult attributes to find when recruiting project managers in the Middle East vs Top 10 Percent**

Capability	% saying capability is difficult to find when recruiting (Middle East) n=534	% saying capability is difficult to find when recruiting (Global Top 10 Percent) n=230
Creative problem solving and innovative thinking	40	25
Understanding of the organisational strategy and its implications for projects	35	23
Ability to build trust and relationships	31	22
Knowledge of the business, industry and ecosystem, and their implications for projects	27	19
Ability to adapt use of tools, processes, methodologies and practices to different projects and teams	26	16

Source: PMI and PwC. 2021. PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021.

## A creative approach to attracting talent

Organisations in the Top 10 Percent have adopted a more creative and varied approach in how they attract and retain talent. 60% (vs 33% in the Middle East) say they are promoting a positive and cohesive organisational work culture, while more than twice as many (56%) are providing clear and early opportunities for career progression (22% in the Middle East). The Top 10 Percent are also doing more to focus on employee wellbeing: 49% say that mental health and wellbeing is a key focus when trying to attract and retain talent, while organisations in the Middle East are lagging behind (25%). Research by [Gallup](#) suggests that poor wellbeing can cost businesses \$20 million of additional lost opportunity for every 10,000 workers globally, and its research points out that employees in the Middle East and North Africa were particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As recovery from the pandemic gains momentum, organisations in the region need to increase their commitment to health and wellbeing initiatives if they are going to continue to compete for top global talent.

<sup>5</sup>[Wellbeing Declines in the Middle East and North Africa](#). Gallup, 2021



# Turning the **tide** on the talent crisis

## Rethinking learning and development

If capabilities aren't aligned to organisational strategy, capabilities building isn't going to get the attention it deserves. That's why the number one barrier that project managers encounter in the region when developing their capabilities—cited by 37% of respondents—is that learning and development (L&D) isn't enough of a strategic priority. This is the case for 26% of the Top 10 Percent, which shows that even some of the top performing organisations have work to do in this area. Being seen as a strategic partner to the C-Suite is certainly important, but it's no substitute for systematically mapping capabilities to strategic goals and creating a quantifiable business case for investment.

However, our research does show that the Top 10 Percent have a much more consistent approach to upskilling: 69% are promoting a culture of continuous learning (vs 45% in the Middle East), while 50% are regularly reviewing and evolving approaches to training, compared to only 21% of those in the Middle East. Crucially, only 26% of Middle East organisations monitor usage and progress of training (vs 47% of Top 10 Percent). This could indicate that executives in these organisations have no idea what return they're getting on investment in these programs, which in turn feeds the lack of strategic prioritisation.



As recovery from the pandemic gains momentum, organisations in the region need to **increase their commitment to health and wellbeing initiatives** if they are going to continue to compete for top global talent

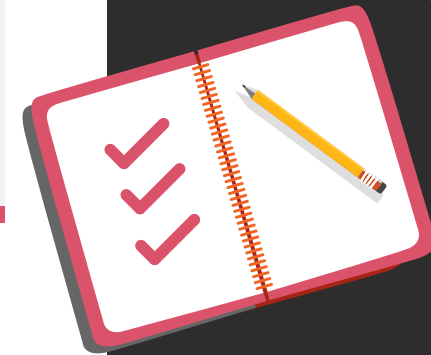




# Call to action

People lie at the heart of success

- ✓ The impending talent shortage will place projects at risk of failure if organisations don't act quickly. Building winning capabilities needs to become a strategic priority, with a greater emphasis placed on more creative and effective hiring, retention and upskilling strategies.

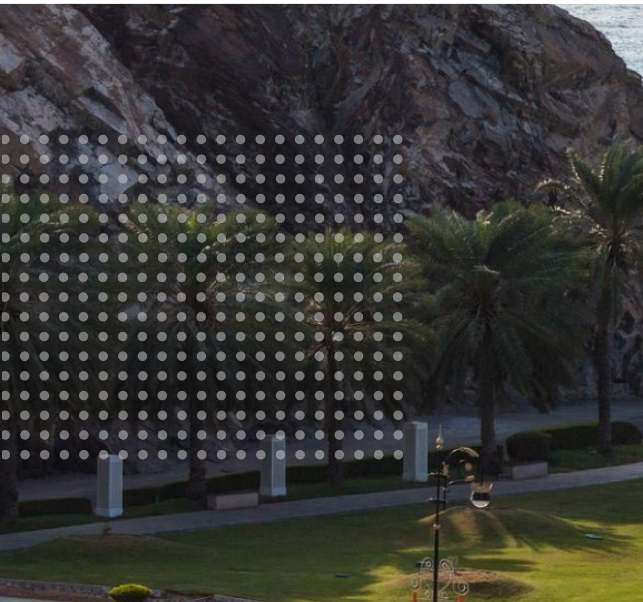


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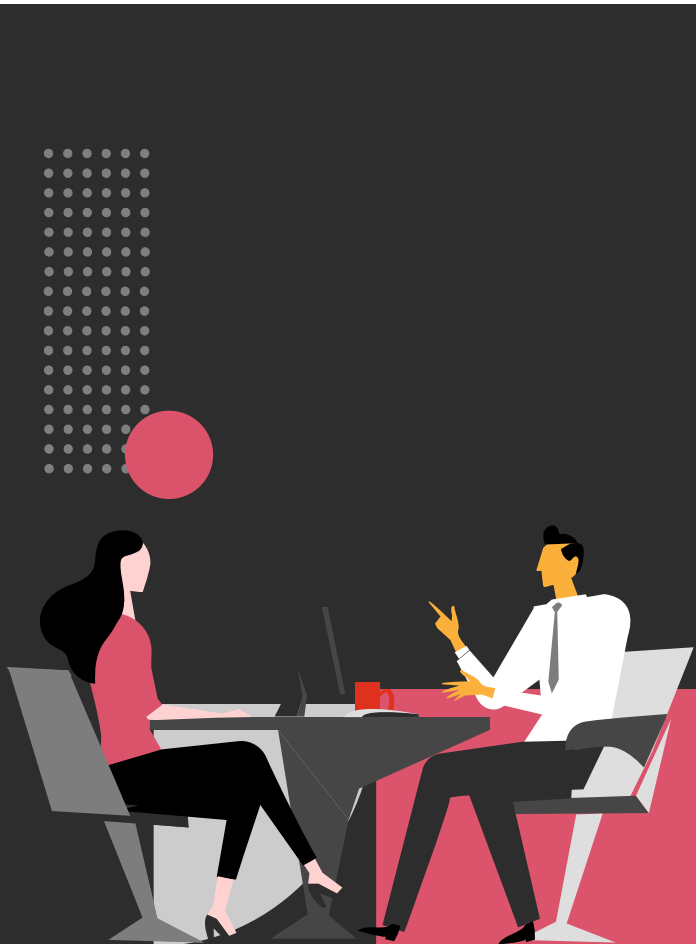
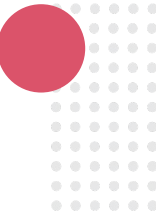
## Rethinking measurement to improve the image of the PMO in the Middle East



The success of projects has traditionally been measured through the lens of the 'Iron Triangle', where cost, schedule, scope and quality are the defining metrics. Our research shows that this is still the case; in the Middle East, these four metrics are especially common. While these are clearly crucial when it comes to tracking project success, focusing on these factors alone is a missed opportunity. PwC and PMI's [Measuring What Matters](#) report highlights that PMOs should not only adopt a greater breadth of measures, but they need to ensure they measure success consistently and regularly communicate key project milestones to the C-Suite. This allows PMOs to evidence the real change and success that their projects are bringing.



# Rethinking measurement to improve the image of the **PMO** in the Middle East



**Figure 5: Beyond the Iron Triangle - Factors used to measure project performance: Middle East vs Global Top 10 Percent**

Project Metric	Middle East Organisations % (n=534)	Global Top 10 Percent % (n=230)
Customer satisfaction	68	78
Risk management indicators	45	67
Operational efficiencies	40	63
Alignment to the wider organisational strategy and KPIs	42	61
Financial measures	42	55
Regulatory compliance indicators	37	62
Adoption of tools, processes, methodologies and approaches	28	56
Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) indicators	25	47

Source: PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021.  
 \*Participants were provided with a list of 15 metrics to select from

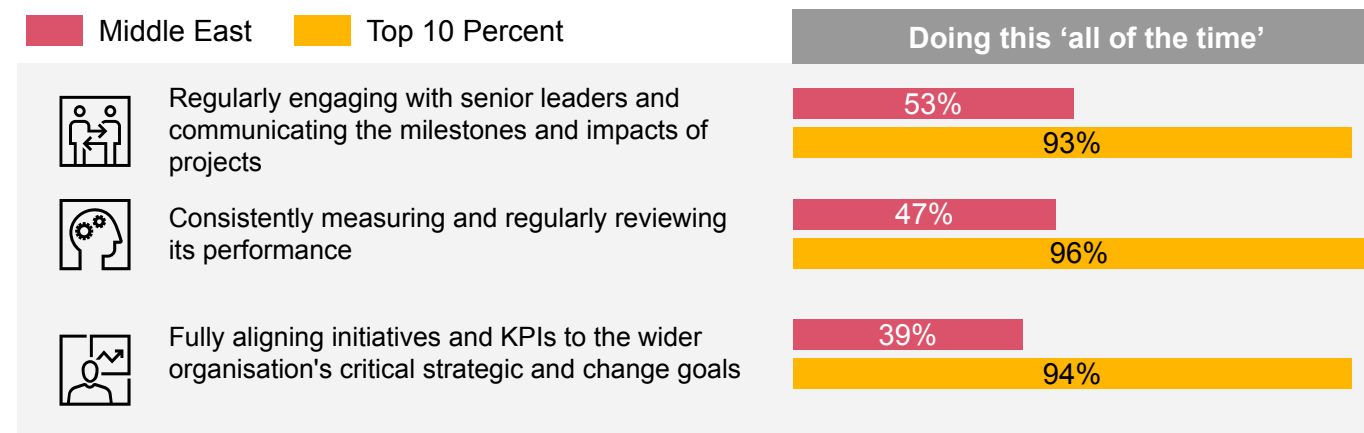
Capturing the additional value that projects and the PMO brings to an organisation is a challenging exercise, yet critical to demonstrating their value for money. Figure 5 shows that The Top 10 Percent communicate the value projects create by developing a greater range of metrics outside of scope, budget and schedule, on average using 10 metrics compared to 7 in Middle East organisations. Our research also finds only half of organisations in the Middle East say they consistently measure and review project performance, and regularly communicate the impacts of projects to senior leaders - compared to over 90% of the Top 10 Percent organisations.

# Rethinking measurement to improve the image of the PMO in the Middle East

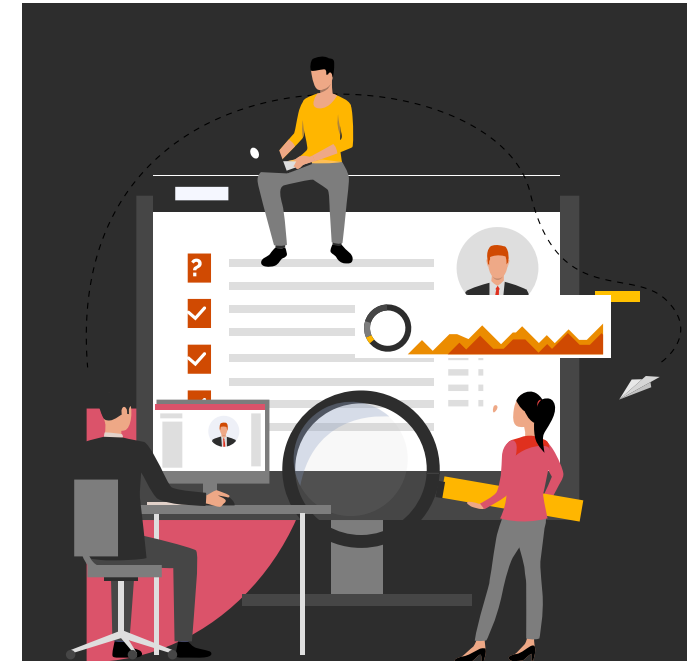
The Top 10 Percent have a strong strategic focus and support the organisation's performance management process, with 94% telling us they are constantly aligning initiatives and KPIs to the wider organisational strategy. Aligning KPIs to organisational strategy is key to making the PMO reporting function effective, providing maximum visibility of key metrics that senior leaders need to make timely, informed decisions. Organisations need to ask themselves, are KPIs strategically relevant? Are they measuring desired outcomes? If not, organisations need to rethink the design of KPIs and move to a more outcome-focused model, where performance is measured by outcome effectiveness and impact.

In order to align desired outcomes with key strategic goals, major stakeholders need to be consulted when KPIs are designed. Our research reveals that in the Middle East, only 65% of organisations with a PMO actually engage the PMO in the development of success metrics, and only 42% engage the C-Suite. Measures being developed without collaboration between the PMO and senior leadership risks the development of metrics which fail to align to the organisation's strategic vision. The Top 10 Percent organisations further refine measurement by involving a greater variety of stakeholders, including customers, consultants and external stakeholders, to ensure metrics focus on the outcomes that really matter.

**Figure 6: Approach to measurement - Middle East vs Top 10 Percent**



Source: PMI and PwC. 2021. PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021

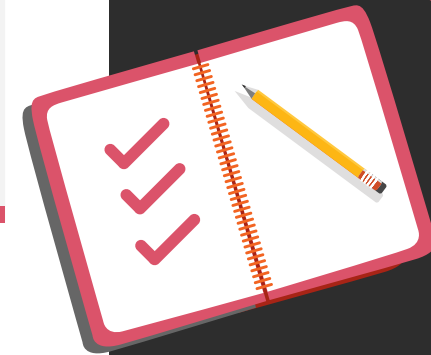


PMOs in the Middle East should follow in the footsteps of the Top 10 Percent, by implementing a consistent programme of measuring project success, based on a diverse breadth of metrics. Aligning their KPIs to the wider organisational strategy, and communicating project success with senior leadership, will allow them to push measurement beyond traditional metrics and focus on the outcomes that successful projects can bring.

# Call to **action**

Identifying the right measures is key

- ✓ Start the conversation of project and PMO success with outcome based measurements. The iron triangle remains important but they should not be the only measures. Collaborating across the organisation to develop the measures that matter is key to demonstrating project success and empowering **Project Influencers** to become changemakers in their organisations.

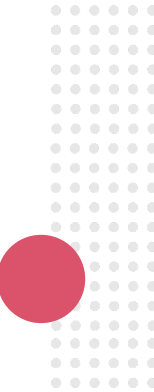


# 05

## Embracing technological change in the Middle East



The sudden upheaval brought about by the pandemic has only reminded us of the role technology plays in dealing with unprecedented change. Organisations have had to be agile and resilient, in some cases shifting entire workforces online. Emerging from the pandemic, digital transformation will play a key role in allowing organisations to recover and grow. [The 24th PwC CEO Survey](#) points out that while this is particularly true in the Middle East - where 59% said they plan to significantly increase their investments in digital transformation - business leaders are concerned that cyber concerns and a lack of skills will threaten this transition. If the profession is to help its project managers grow into digitally enabled **Project Influencers**, then a significant investment in tech solutions and training will be essential. As our [‘Who is the Modern Project Manager’](#) report explains: this investment will not replace project managers, but rather, free them up to build relationships, influence outcomes and achieve the strategic goals of their organisation.

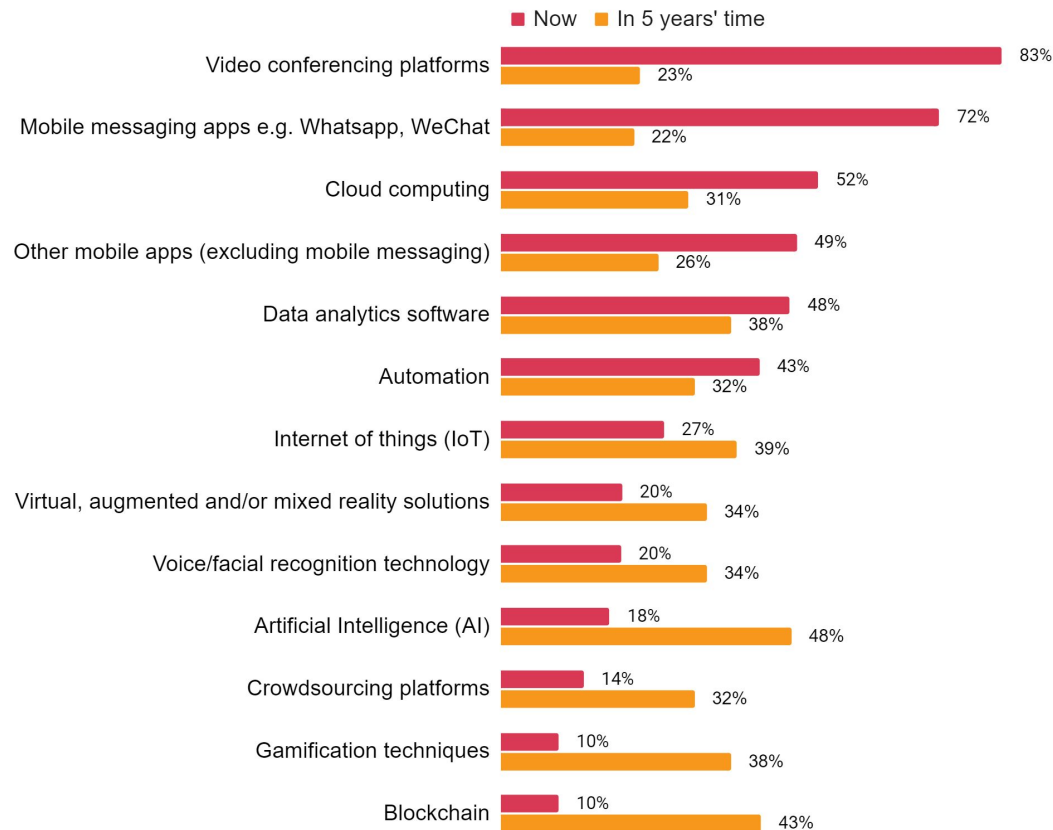


# Embracing technological change in the Middle East

## A range of barriers to the use of technology in the region

Our research shows that organisations in the Middle East, and elsewhere, are not fully taking advantage of technology, with a range of barriers making adoption difficult.

**Figure 7: Technology used to improve the management of projects in Middle East (currently and in 5 years' time)**



In the context of the pandemic, it is unsurprising that technology which has enabled remote working has been used most commonly to improve the management of projects.

As figure 7 shows, 83% of organisations in the Middle East say they have been using video conferencing platforms, while 72% (vs 61% globally) have been using mobile messaging applications. However, the use of more advanced technologies, like the internet of things (27%), artificial intelligence (18%) or blockchain (10%), remain modest by comparison. Our survey highlights that organisations are optimistic about technology adoption going forward with predictions of a greater uptake of these tech enabled solutions in 5 years' time. More than twice as many predict they will use artificial intelligence, and four times as many say they will use blockchain.

### The Global Top Ten Percent

While The Top 10 Percent have also embraced collaborative tools and communication platforms to guide them through the pandemic, more of these organisations are already using a more extensive suite of technologies and tools to help improve the management projects. For example, 51% say they use the internet of things (Middle East - 27%) and 70% use cloud computing (Middle East - 52%).

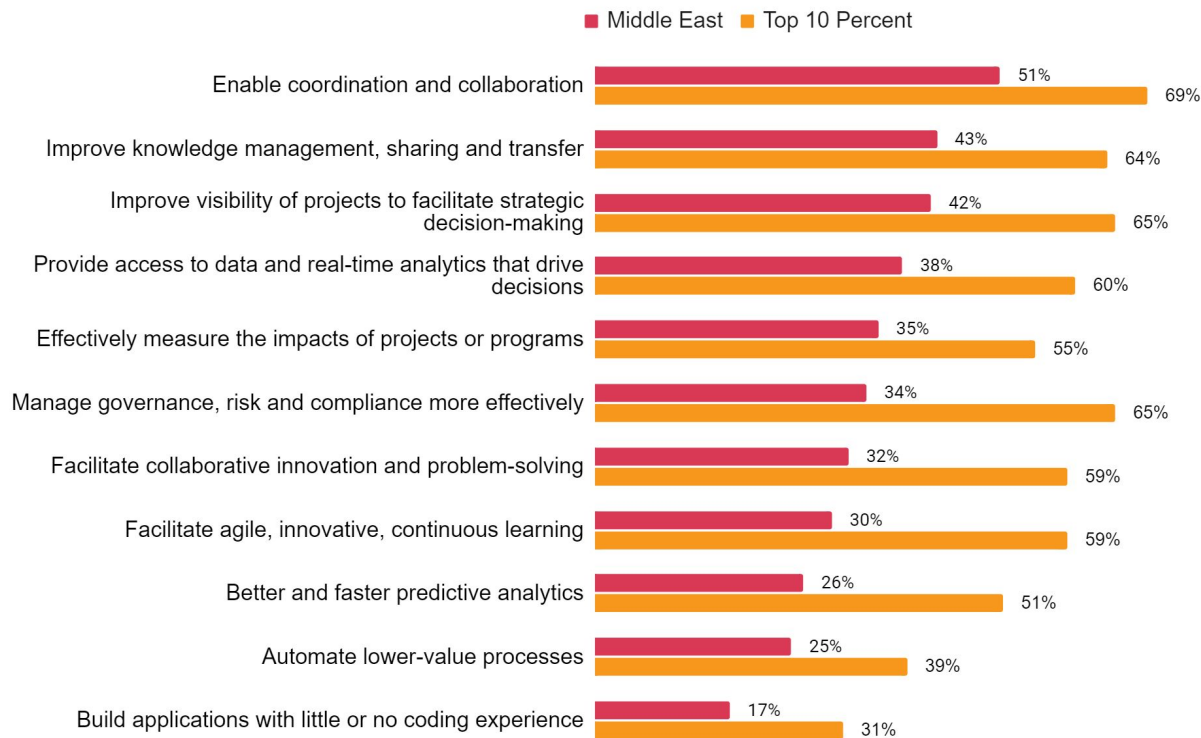
Source: PMI and PwC. 2021. PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021.

# Embracing technological change in the Middle East

## Adopting technology - The Top 10 Percent

The Top 10 Percent also look to technology to support their project managers in more dynamic ways, beyond providing updates and basic reporting (figure 8). When compared with organisations in the Middle East, around twice as many of the Top 10 Percent use technology to provide better and faster analytics and a similar proportion use technology to facilitate continuous learning. Crucially, 55% of the Top Ten Percent say they are using technology to effectively measure the impact of projects (versus 35% in the Middle East), helping organisations to implement a more consistent programme of measurement. The use of technology across the organisation also has the added benefit of freeing project managers from repetitive tasks, allowing them to spend more time collaborating with the organisation on strategic and creative initiatives.

**Figure 8: How technology is being used by project managers beyond providing updates and basic reporting: (Middle East organisations vs Global Top 10 Percent)**





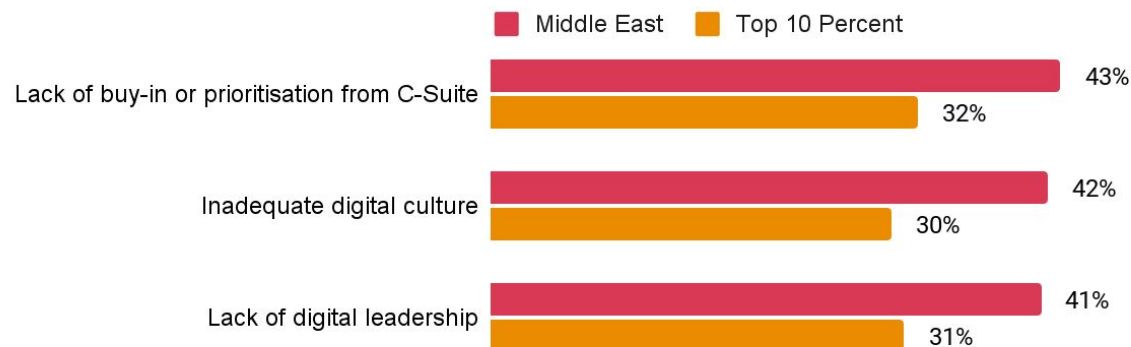
# Embracing technological change in the Middle East

Adopting technologies such as these will only be possible if PMOs ensure they have enough skilled people to implement and use them. Not only that, but our research shows that a range of operational, leadership and digital trust barriers challenge the adoption of technology, both in the Middle East and around the world.

It is clear that budget constraints will need to be eased if technological innovations are to see widespread rollout in PMOs in the region, with 58% saying that cost is an operational barrier when implementing technology. Cyber concerns and a lack of skills - both cited by business leaders as challenges to growth [in the 24th CEO Survey](#) - are also threatening the adoption of technology in project based organisations in the region, with 37% saying a lack of key technology skills among project teams is a barrier and 36% highlighting cyber security as a concern. Lastly, we are reminded of the importance of developing a close relationship to the C-Suite, with over 40% of organisations saying that a lack of digital leadership, digital culture and insufficient C-Suite buy-in, is making it difficult to implement technology.

When adopting technology, cost, cyber concerns and the lack of availability of key skills also act as barriers for the Top 10 Percent of organisations. However, as figure 9 shows, they generally face fewer leadership or cultural obstacles.

**Figure 9: Leadership/cultural challenges when using technology : (Middle East organisations vs Global Top 10 Percent)**



Source: PMI and PwC. 2021. PMI and PwC Global Survey on Transformation and Project Management 2021.



Research shows that a range of operational, leadership and digital trust barriers challenge the adoption of technology, both in the Middle East and around the world



# Call to action

A digital mindset needs to be adopted at pace

- ✓ Widespread digital upskilling and a cultural shift towards a digital mindset at C-Suite level, and within the PMO, needs to happen at pace.

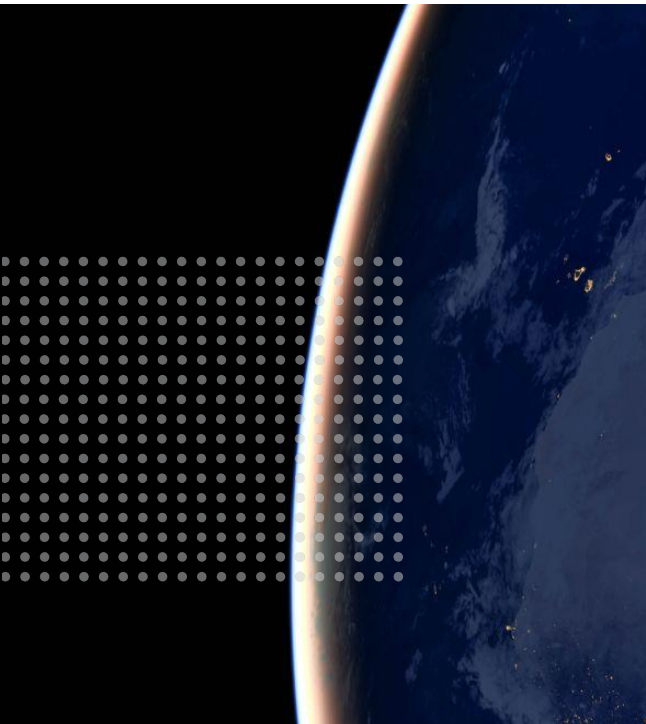
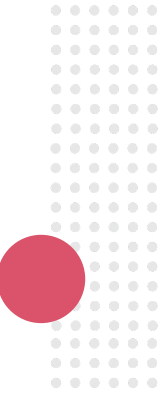


# 06

## Navigating the pandemic and recovering quickly



As in the rest of the world, the pandemic forced the overwhelming majority (85%) of project managers in the Middle East to work remotely. While this inevitably caused widespread disruption to a multitude of business operations, those in the profession remained resilient, quickly adapting to new ways of working. In fact, nearly two thirds say they have been more effective in their role since working from home. In response to the pandemic, 54% of PMOs in the region say they prioritised supporting the acceleration of new ways of working, while 48% say that planning for post-COVID recovery and a quick return to normal business operations was front of mind.



# Navigating the pandemic and recovering quickly

However, while PMOs focused on remaining agile and adapting to the ever changing circumstances they found themselves in, there were still some aspects of the role that project managers found more difficult to carry out. Around a third say that developing personal skills such as collaboration, relationship building and leadership - ranked by organisations in the region as some of the most important attributes of the project manager - proves difficult when working remotely. The Top 10 Percent found the transition to remote working even smoother; 78% say they found themselves to be more effective in their role and only 13% found it difficult to develop key collaboration, leadership and relationship skills.

Even with the smooth transition to new ways of working, 42% of organisations in the region (vs 17% of the Top 10 Percent) say they will return to an entirely/mostly in person working situation in 12 months' time. This isn't reflected on the global stage, where hybrid working (60%) is expected to be by far the most popular approach. That being said, around half of organisations in the region do expect to adopt a hybrid approach. As some of the most important elements of the role are often the most difficult to carry out when working from home, organisations should implement further training to support staff when working remotely. Currently in the Middle East, 28% (44% of Top 10 Percent) say that building trust, communicating, collaborating and managing effectively in a remote work environment is a top priority when it comes to investing in training for project managers.



# Call to action

Adapting to new realities is necessary

✓ While many will return to mostly in person working, for around half, hybrid working is set to become the norm. Project managers will need more support and training in how to effectively manage projects and navigate the nuances of managing teams remotely.



Tracking your PMO's level of maturity is crucial if you are to highlight its strengths and opportunities.

Our GCC PMO Maturity Index can assess your PMO's current maturity levels across core competencies, benchmarking your organisation against its peers and quickly highlighting the best in class criteria. **Register [here](#)** for your complimentary report and exclusive access to the index.

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