

# Breaking the Mold: Martin Paver on Project Management's Data-Driven Evolution

June 24, 2025



**Like many industries the field of project management stands at a crossroads. Traditional methodologies, while foundational, are being challenged by the relentless march of technology and the growing demand for data-driven insights.**

Martin Paver, the visionary founder of training and advisory company Projecting Success, the >10k strong Project Data Analytics Community and the Project:Hack25 Hackathon event, is at the forefront of this transformation, advocating for a project industry that is collaborative, digitally native, and that positively embraces a culture of continuous learning.

Martin's ethos, deeply aligned with Project Management Global, champions the urgent need for the project industry to embrace AI and digital technology in unconventional ways. He stresses that individuals must take responsibility for their own learning and skill development to avoid being left behind in the next wave of change. And that the organisations to which they belong, must do more to transform the systems and processes that govern its progress.

## **Beyond Automation: True Digital Transformation in Project Management**

Martin challenges the prevailing notion that simply automating existing workflows is sufficient. He uses **risk management** as a prime example, arguing that while automation can accelerate current processes, it doesn't fundamentally change how we approach risk. "Risk management is the human process of guessing what's going to go wrong on a project," Martin states. "Why are we guessing today when we've got large volumes of data that tells us precisely what has gone wrong in the past?"

He points to a wealth of untapped data: issue registers, lessons learned databases, compensation events, and project variation notices. This collective **“data asset,”** as Martin describes it, can be mined through machine learning to proactively anticipate project variance. He shares a compelling anecdote about one public sector organization where 18% of 600 project variation notices were associated with risk, meaning a staggering 82% originated from other sources. This highlights a critical flaw in current risk management practices.

“If that’s the case, we’re using risk management as the main process to manage project variation notices, but it’s not working,” Martin asserts. Instead of merely making risk management “a bit better through,” he advocates for a complete **reimagination of project delivery** driven by an understanding of project variance. This shifts the focus from reactive “guessing” to proactive “anticipation.”

Martin provocatively questions the future role of the traditional risk manager, suggesting that advanced data analytics skills could redefine the project manager’s role entirely. “Just because they’ve done risk in the past, it doesn’t mean that they’re entitled to the risk type jobs in the future,” he remarks, underscoring the need for project professionals to adapt and acquire new capabilities. He envisions a future where data, combined with contextual understanding (like how hot weather impacts train delays, and not just the likelihood of it happening), allows for precise identification of potential issues and their underlying conditions.

## **The Evolving Project Manager: Skills for a Data-Driven Future**

The discussion naturally turns to the evolving skillset of project managers. Martin challenges that while the “personal touch” will always be valuable, the sheer number of traditional project managers may decrease as automation takes hold. However, this doesn’t necessarily equate to less overall headcount. Instead, he sees a shift towards **“insight analysts”** – project professionals equipped with specialized data skills. These individuals won’t simply replace project managers; they will embody a different, more analytical kind of project leadership.

The challenge, then, lies in **upskilling the current workforce**. Martin emphasizes that this isn’t solely about individual training. He highlights systemic barriers, such as IT departments limiting access to data or data residing within supply chains. A **“system solution”** is required, not just individual upskilling.

He points to various avenues for training, from online courses and micro-certifications to apprenticeship schemes. The UK’s apprenticeship levy, offers a mechanism for companies to invest in lifelong learning for their employees. Martin’s own organization, leverages this levy to train individuals with the insights to proactively engage with the new data available to projects to collaborate within this traditional technical domain **“they are there to reimagine what the future of risk management looks like.”** This collaborative approach, often seen in today’s occasion, of the hackathon, fosters a community-driven environment where innovation flourishes at pace.

## **Project:Hack25 and the Power of Community**

This is where events like **Project:Hack25** become crucial. They are more than just competitions; they are dynamic spaces where theoretical knowledge meets practical application. Participants, from seasoned

professionals to new apprentices, come together to tackle real-world project challenges using cutting-edge tools and data.

Martin explains how these hackathons foster a **“flywheel” effect**: senior leaders witness the transformative potential firsthand, leading to “penny dropping moments” that accelerate the adoption of new practices. These events serve as vital incubators for the collaborative, agile, and data-centric approach that Martin believes is essential for the future of project management. They democratize innovation by providing an open platform for experimentation and shared learning, circumventing the often-rigid structures of traditional bodies.

### **Challenging the Old Guard: Open Source vs. Paywalls**

Martin doesn’t shy away from addressing the friction between this forward-thinking vision and the established project management associations. He recounts his experience with developing **“Marvin,”** a new and innovative large language model he trained on publicly available project management documentation. His aim was to **level the playing field** for individuals from smaller businesses who lack the coaching resources available to those in larger organizations.

The initial resistance he faced from the industry, who viewed it as “gaming” the system, exemplifies the industry’s struggle with intellectual property and control. Martin’s response is clear: if the knowledge is developed by the project community, essentially the members of these organizations, it should be openly accessible.

He has found numerous supporters from across the industry, becoming more vocal on the need for more open source access to project methodologies and accompanying data. One such kindred spirit is Adrian Dooley, developer of the [Praxis Framework](#), who open-sourced his body of knowledge, enabling LLM ‘Marvin’ to incorporate it with the authors’ consent. This demonstrates a powerful alternative to the “paywall” model often employed by the main industry project bodies.

Martin argues that relying on outdated, paywalled methodologies, despite the rapid advancements in technology, actively slows down the project industry’s progress. “Unfortunately, the traditionally methodologies are just sticky,” he says of these traditional approaches, “it is a matter of industry volume, simply because there are a lot of people being trained on it.”

To counter this inertia, Martin has co-founded the **Project Data 26 Coalition** which further develops the ideas initiated within the [Project Data Analytics Task Force \(which he co-chaired for 3 years\)](#), [moving beyond advocacy to driving client led change](#). The Task Force helps to drive awareness, the Coalition directs, creates and embeds change. This initiative brings together senior leaders from major client organizations – including the Ministry of Defence, Rolls Royce Submarines, United Utilities, EDF, and the Environment Agency – to collectively drive the future of project delivery. Their direct involvement ensures that the focus remains on real-world needs and co-creating solutions at pace, then learning from it.

This underscores the power of a community-led, client-centric approach to innovation.

### **The Future is Now:**

Martin Paver's insights paint a vivid picture of a project management future that is less about guessing and more about anticipating, less about rigid processes and more about fluid collaboration, and less about gatekeepers and more about open access. Events like Project:Hack25 are not just isolated gatherings; they are crucibles for this transformation, fostering the skills, mindsets, and community needed to navigate the exciting, yet challenging, times ahead for project professionals.

Are you ready to reimagine your role in this shifting landscape?

Find out more about the work that Martin is doing through [Projecting Success](#). You may find this post from [Kathryn Jones](#) helpful, one of the members of the Coalition, where she explains the power of the Coalition's ecosystem.

And for more information on the outcome of the Project:Hack25 and the dates for upcoming events follow the link to the [Project:Hack](#) site.