

The £13.75 Billion Question: What Happens When Nobody Can Agree What “Superhuman AI” Actually Means?

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Microsoft and OpenAI are negotiating the future of artificial intelligence based on a milestone that’s about as clearly defined as “when pigs fly”—and your project delivery future depends on the outcome

Right, let’s talk about something that’s been rattling around in my brain like a marble in a biscuit tin.

[Microsoft is in “advanced talks” with OpenAI](#) to hammer out a deal that could fundamentally reshape how every project gets delivered in the next decade. The stakes? Only Microsoft’s entire AI strategy and £13.75 billion in investment.

But here’s the absolutely mental part: the whole negotiation hinges on something called “AGI”—Artificial General Intelligence—and as the TechCrunch report cheerfully notes, “no one can really agree on what that means.”

It’s like trying to plan a project where the definition of “done” is “when we achieve something brilliant,” and everyone’s got a different idea of what brilliant looks like. Sound familiar?

Because if you’re a project manager, you’ve probably lived this nightmare, except usually the stakes aren’t quite so... civilisation-altering.

The Deal That Could Change Everything (If Anyone Can Figure Out What It Actually Means)

Let me paint you a picture of what's happening here, because it's properly bonkers when you think about it. Microsoft has pumped £13.75 billion into OpenAI and built their entire Azure OpenAI Service around the ChatGPT maker's technology. They've integrated this stuff into Copilot across Windows, Office, and GitHub. Basically, Microsoft has bet the farm on having exclusive access to OpenAI's brain.

But here's where it gets interesting: [the current deal between these two tech titans expires in 2030, or whenever OpenAI declares they've achieved AGI—whichever comes first](#). And when that happens, OpenAI could theoretically cut Microsoft off entirely.

Imagine spending £13.75 billion on a business partnership that could end the moment your partner decides they've invented something "generally intelligent"—except nobody's bothered to define what that actually means.

It's like signing a contract that says "this agreement ends when we achieve greatness" and then spending the next five years arguing about whether greatness means winning a local pub quiz or solving world hunger.

According to Bloomberg's sources, these negotiations could wrap up "in a few weeks," with Microsoft reportedly seeking an equity stake in the "low- to mid-30% range" in a restructured OpenAI. But the real question isn't about percentages—it's about that bloody AGI milestone that's hanging over everything like a sword of Damocles made of algorithms.

So What Actually Is AGI? (Spoiler: It's Complicated)

Here's where things get properly philosophical, and I'm about as qualified to discuss philosophy as I am to perform brain surgery with a spoon. But stick with me, because understanding what AGI actually means is crucial to grasping why this Microsoft-OpenAI drama matters for anyone who delivers projects for a living.

[According to McKinsey](#), AGI is "a theoretical AI system with capabilities that rival those of a human." Sounds simple enough, right? Wrong. Because what does "rival those of a human" actually mean?

Current AI—including the ChatGPT that's probably helping you write emails right now—is essentially a very sophisticated prediction machine. It can predict, with scary accuracy, what word should come next in a sentence because it's been trained on vast amounts of text. It's brilliant at pattern recognition, but it's not actually understanding what it's saying any more than a parrot understands Shakespeare when it recites "To be or not to be."

AGI, on the other hand, would supposedly have human-like cognitive abilities including reasoning, problem-solving, perception, learning, and language comprehension. [It would pass the Turing test](#)—meaning you couldn't tell the difference between talking to it and talking to a human. Some definitions even suggest it would have emotional abilities like empathy and could consciously grasp the

meaning behind what it's doing.

So Microsoft and OpenAI are negotiating a deal based on a milestone that might not happen for decades, centuries, or possibly ever. It's like planning your retirement based on when humans develop the ability to photosynthesize.

The Problem with Building Your Empire on Quicksand

Now, let's talk about why this matters for those of us who actually have to deliver real projects in the real world. Microsoft has built their entire AI strategy around OpenAI's technology. [As they proudly announced in January](#), they have "rights to OpenAI IP (inclusive of model and infrastructure) for use within our products like Copilot."

But what happens if OpenAI wakes up one morning and decides they've achieved AGI? Suddenly, Microsoft could lose access to the technology that powers everything from their project management tools to their office suite. It would be like discovering that the foundation of your house is built on quicksand, except the quicksand is controlled by a company that can't decide what solid ground looks like.

The TechCrunch report notes that if OpenAI "suddenly declares it has achieved AGI and cuts off access, Microsoft would lose a huge strategic advantage." That's putting it mildly. Microsoft would lose the core technology that's driving their entire AI transformation.

And here's the really mental part: OpenAI could theoretically declare AGI achievement based on their own internal definition. There's no independent body that certifies AGI, no standardised test, no global committee of experts who get to vote on whether we've crossed the threshold. It's like having a contract that ends when one party decides they've become "really good at stuff."

The Great AGI Definition Disaster

Think about it from a project management perspective. Imagine you're working on a project where the client says the deliverable is complete when you achieve "excellence," but they refuse to define what excellence means. You'd run screaming from that contract, wouldn't you? Yet here we have two of the world's biggest tech companies negotiating a deal worth billions based on exactly that kind of vague, undefined milestone.

The problem is that AGI isn't just about technical capabilities—it's about consciousness, understanding, and meaning. Current AI can write poetry, but does it understand what poetry means? It can solve complex mathematical problems, but does it grasp the concept of mathematics? It can have conversations, but is it actually thinking, or just very convincingly pretending to think?

These aren't just academic questions. They're the difference between a tool that helps you manage projects more efficiently and a system that could potentially replace human project managers entirely. And the answer depends entirely on how you define AGI.

Some definitions focus on performance—if an AI can outperform humans at most cognitive tasks, it's AGI.

Others focus on generality—if an AI can learn and adapt to new situations like a human, it's AGI. Still others focus on consciousness—if an AI truly understands what it's doing, it's AGI.

Microsoft and OpenAI are negotiating based on a milestone that could mean anything from “slightly better ChatGPT” to “artificial consciousness that makes humans obsolete.” The uncertainty isn't just about timing—it's about what they're actually trying to achieve.

What This Means for Your Next Project (Hint: It's Not Good)

Right, let's get practical for a moment. What does this corporate soap opera actually mean for those of us who have to deliver projects with real deadlines for real clients?

First, the obvious problem: if you've built your project delivery methodology around Microsoft's AI tools, you're essentially gambling on a partnership that could end at any moment based on criteria that nobody can define. It's like planning a wedding when you don't know if the bride and groom will still be speaking to each other by the time the invitations go out.

But there's a deeper issue here. The Microsoft-OpenAI situation highlights just how quickly the AI landscape is changing, and how little control any of us have over the tools we're becoming dependent on. Today's cutting-edge project management AI could be tomorrow's obsolete technology, not because something better came along, but because two companies couldn't agree on what “better” means.

The real problem isn't just vendor lock-in—it's definition lock-in. We're building our professional futures around technologies whose fundamental goals are undefined and possibly undefinable.

Consider this scenario: OpenAI announces they've achieved AGI based on their internal definition. Microsoft loses access to the technology. Your AI-powered project management tools suddenly stop improving, or worse, stop working entirely. Your competitors who backed different platforms are suddenly three steps ahead. You're left scrambling to learn entirely new systems while trying to deliver projects with tools that are rapidly becoming obsolete.

This could happen not because the technology failed, but because two companies couldn't agree on what success looks like. It's like having your project cancelled not because you missed a deadline, but because the client and the sponsor couldn't agree on what “finished” means.

The Awareness Gap: Why Most People Are Sleepwalking Into Chaos

The vast majority of project managers have absolutely no idea this is happening. While Microsoft and OpenAI are negotiating the future of artificial intelligence based on undefined criteria, most project professionals are still debating whether to upgrade from Excel to proper project management software.

It's like watching people argue about whether to buy a horse or a bicycle while Tesla is mass-producing

electric cars that might spontaneously combust if two companies can't agree on what "transportation" means.

I was at a project management conference last month (yes, I know, I need to get out more), and during the coffee break, I overheard a conversation that perfectly encapsulates this problem. One project manager was explaining to another how he'd recently discovered that you could use AI to help write project status reports. The other was taking notes like he'd just learned about fire.

Meanwhile, in the same building, there were probably people whose entire project delivery methodology depends on AI tools that could disappear overnight if OpenAI decides they've achieved something that nobody can define.

The gap between these two realities isn't just about technology adoption—it's about fundamental awareness of how quickly the landscape is shifting. Most project managers are thinking in terms of tools and processes, while a small group is thinking in terms of intelligent systems that could either revolutionise or completely disrupt project delivery, depending on how two companies define "intelligence."

And here's the truly mental part: the people who are most at risk are often the ones who are least aware of the risk. If you're still managing projects with spreadsheets and email, the Microsoft-OpenAI situation probably won't affect you directly. But if you've embraced AI-powered project management tools, you're essentially betting your career on a partnership that's built on quicksand.

The Definition Problem That's Bigger Than Microsoft and OpenAI

Let's zoom out for a moment, because the Microsoft-OpenAI AGI debacle is actually a symptom of a much larger problem. We're in the middle of an AI revolution, but nobody can agree on what we're revolving towards.

The problem isn't just that we can't define AGI—it's that we can't define intelligence, consciousness, understanding, or any of the fundamental concepts that determine whether AI is a tool or a replacement. And these aren't just philosophical questions anymore. They're business-critical decisions that affect everything from project budgets to career planning.

Consider the implications for project management specifically. If AGI means "AI that can perform any cognitive task a human can perform," then AGI could potentially manage entire projects autonomously. Planning, scheduling, resource allocation, risk management, stakeholder communication—all of it could be handled by an AI system that never gets tired, never plays favourites, and never forgets to update the project status.

But if AGI means "AI that truly understands what it's doing and why," then we might be decades or centuries away from AI that can handle the nuanced, relationship-heavy aspects of project management. An AI might be able to optimise a schedule, but can it have a difficult conversation with a stakeholder

who's being unreasonable? Can it read the room during a tense project meeting? Can it provide the kind of emotional support that keeps a team motivated during a challenging delivery?

The answer depends entirely on how you define AGI, and that definition determines whether project managers become obsolete or become supercharged.

Microsoft and OpenAI are negotiating based on a milestone that could mean either outcome. They're essentially flipping a coin to determine the future of human-AI collaboration, except the coin is made of philosophy and nobody can agree which side is heads.

The Truth About Building on Shifting Sand

Here's something that might make you slightly uncomfortable: the Microsoft-OpenAI situation reveals just how little control any of us have over the technologies that are reshaping our industries.

We like to think that technological progress is predictable and manageable. We plan our careers, invest in training, and build our businesses based on the assumption that we can see the trends coming and adapt accordingly. But the AGI milestone situation shows how quickly everything can change based on decisions that are completely outside our control.

Microsoft has spent £13.75 billion and built their entire AI strategy around a partnership that could end the moment OpenAI decides they've achieved something that might not even be achievable. If that's not a metaphor for the uncertainty we're all facing, I don't know what is.

The really uncomfortable part is that this uncertainty isn't going away. Even if Microsoft and OpenAI sort out their current disagreement, we're still left with the fundamental problem that nobody can define what we're trying to achieve with AI. Every AI company, every research lab, every tech giant has their own definition of success, and those definitions are often mutually incompatible.

We're building our professional futures on technologies whose goals are not just undefined, but possibly undefinable. It's like trying to navigate using a map where all the landmarks keep moving and nobody can agree on which direction is north.

For project managers, this creates a particularly acute problem. Our job is to manage uncertainty and deliver predictable outcomes. But how do you manage uncertainty when the tools you're using to manage uncertainty are themselves fundamentally uncertain?

What You Can Actually Do About This Madness

Right, enough doom and gloom. Let's talk about practical steps you can take to protect yourself from the AGI definition disaster and the Microsoft-OpenAI uncertainty.

First, diversify your AI dependencies. If you're currently all-in on Microsoft's ecosystem, start exploring alternatives. Not because Microsoft is bad (they're not), but because putting all your eggs in one basket is never a good strategy, especially when that basket is currently being fought over by two corporate giants

who can't agree on what eggs are.

Look at tools like [Monday.com](https://monday.com), ClickUp, Asana, and other platforms that are developing their own AI capabilities. Many of these companies are building AI features that don't depend on the OpenAI partnership, which means they're less vulnerable to the AGI milestone uncertainty.

Second, focus on AI literacy, not AI dependency. Instead of becoming an expert in specific AI tools, become an expert in understanding what AI can and can't do well. Learn to evaluate AI capabilities critically, understand the limitations of current technology, and develop an intuitive sense of when AI recommendations make sense and when they don't.

This is crucial because regardless of how the Microsoft-OpenAI situation plays out, we're going to see a proliferation of AI tools with different capabilities, different strengths, and different definitions of success. The project managers who thrive will be the ones who can navigate this landscape intelligently, not the ones who become dependent on any single platform.

Third, double down on the uniquely human aspects of project management. If AGI is coming (however it's defined), the project managers who survive will be the ones who excel at things that AI can't do well: emotional intelligence, creative problem-solving, relationship management, and the ability to navigate the messy, irrational world of human behaviour.

"In a world where AI handles the data, humans handle the drama." And trust me, there's always plenty of drama in project delivery.

We're All Guinea Pigs in Someone Else's Experiment

So here we are, watching two tech titans negotiate the future of artificial intelligence based on a milestone that's about as clearly defined as "when we achieve awesomeness." Meanwhile, the rest of us are building our careers and businesses on technologies that could fundamentally change or disappear entirely based on decisions we have no control over.

The Microsoft-OpenAI AGI situation isn't just a corporate drama—it's a perfect example of how the AI revolution is happening to us, not with us. We're all guinea pigs in someone else's experiment, and the experimenters can't even agree on what they're testing for.

But here's the thing: this uncertainty isn't necessarily bad news. Yes, it's uncomfortable to build your professional future on shifting sand. But it also means that the landscape is still being shaped, and there's still time to position yourself intelligently for whatever emerges.

The project managers who thrive in the next decade won't be the ones who picked the right AI platform—they'll be the ones who learned to navigate uncertainty, adapt quickly, and maintain their value regardless of how the technology evolves.

The Microsoft-OpenAI situation will resolve itself one way or another. Either they'll sort out their differences and create a stable partnership, or they'll go their separate ways and we'll see a more fragmented but

potentially more innovative AI landscape. Either outcome creates opportunities for project managers who are prepared.

Your Mission: Stop Being a Passenger in Your Own Career

Right, enough philosophising. Here's what you need to do, starting today, to protect yourself from the AGI definition disaster and position yourself for whatever comes next:

This week: Have a serious look at your current AI dependencies. If you're using Microsoft's AI tools, that's fine—but make sure you understand exactly what you're depending on and what would happen if those tools suddenly changed or disappeared. Start researching alternatives, not because you need to switch, but because you need to understand your options.

- This month: Start experimenting with AI tools from different providers. Try ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and whatever else is available. Use them for project management tasks—writing communications, generating risk assessments, creating project plans. The goal isn't to become an expert in any single tool, but to develop an intuitive understanding of what AI can and can't do well.
- This quarter: Begin building AI literacy into your professional development. Read about AI capabilities and limitations, understand the difference between current AI and theoretical AGI, and start thinking about how different AI scenarios would affect your role. You don't need to become a technical expert, but you need to become an intelligent consumer of AI technology.
- This year: Position yourself as someone who understands both the potential and the limitations of AI in project delivery. Become the person your colleagues come to when they need to understand how AI can help with project management, but also when they need to understand why AI isn't a magic solution to every problem.

The goal isn't to predict the future—it's to be prepared for multiple possible futures.

The Microsoft-OpenAI AGI negotiations are just the beginning. We're about to see more corporate dramas, more undefined milestones, and more uncertainty about what AI actually means and where it's heading. The project managers who survive and thrive will be the ones who learn to navigate this uncertainty intelligently.

Don't wait for someone else to define AGI for you. Don't wait for Microsoft and OpenAI to sort out their differences. Don't wait for the perfect AI tool or the ideal moment to start learning.

The future of project delivery is being written right now, and it's being written by people who can't agree on what they're trying to achieve. You can either be a character in that story or a footnote. But you can't be a passenger.

Start experimenting. Start learning. Start building the skills you'll need for a world where the definition of

intelligence is up for grabs and the tools you depend on could change overnight.

The Microsoft-OpenAI situation isn't an anomaly—it's a preview of what's coming. More uncertainty, more undefined milestones, more corporate negotiations that could reshape entire industries based on criteria that nobody can agree on.

The question isn't whether you're ready for AGI—it's whether you're ready for a world where nobody can agree on what AGI means, but everyone's betting their future on achieving it anyway.

Time to stop being a passenger in your own career and start learning to drive in a world where the destination keeps changing and nobody can agree on the route.