Beyond Maturity: The Productivity Imperative Redefining Project Management in 2025

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The 2025 edition of Wellingtone's *State of Project Management Report* offers a snapshot that feels both familiar and urgent. Beneath its optimistic tone, the findings reveal a profession struggling with productivity, maturity and capability gaps – yet one that also sees its role expanding and its strategic value rising. In short: project management is at an inflection point.

A profession aware of its gaps

Almost half of respondents (46%) are dissatisfied with their organisation's project-management maturity. Only one in five believe their maturity sits at level 4 or 5 – and Wellingtone cautions that even this figure is likely overstated. While processes such as risk management and planning are widely recognised as valuable, many teams still operate in an ad-hoc fashion: 41 per cent of projects run without a defined methodology and nearly half fail to create a scoping document.

That gap between knowing and doing defines much of today's challenge. Practitioners understand what "good" looks like; consistent application, tooling and leadership support remain the missing links.

The persistent pain points

The report's *value-versus-difficulty* matrix (page 8) shows that **benefits realisation**, **resource management**, and **project prioritisation** remain the hardest capabilities to embed. The easier but high-value disciplines – stakeholder engagement, sponsorship and planning – still offer quick wins for organisations seeking visible progress.

Project-performance data underline the cost of these weaknesses: only 38 per cent of organisations mostly or always deliver on time, 41 per cent on budget, and barely 39 per cent realise full benefits. Despite the rhetoric of transformation, more than half of respondents admit their organisations lack a consistent track record of success.

The PMO paradox

Encouragingly, 89 per cent of organisations now have one or more PMOs, yet half are less than four years old. That youth explains the unevenness: while over half of PMOs report a clear remit and objectives, just 40 per cent have a defined service catalogue, and barely half have a committed sponsor.

Still, the trajectory is positive. Compared with 2017, PMOs are maturing fast – evolving from reporting hubs into strategic partners. Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of respondents expect the PMO's scope to grow in future, and 69 per cent believe its perceived value will rise. The tension is that only half foresee any increase in headcount. The message: deliver more, with the same resources.

The productivity squeeze

That reality drives Wellingtone's central theme – the need to close the **productivity gap** through technology and automation. Forty-two per cent of practitioners spend a day or more each month manually collating project reports, and half of organisations still lack real-time KPIs. Meanwhile, 14 per cent still plan projects in Microsoft Excel, with another 11 per cent lacking any dedicated solution. In an era of AI copilots and connected dashboards, these numbers are jarring.

Automation is no longer a "nice to have"; it's the only path to scaling value. The report cites Microsoft's Copilot, Agents and Power Platform as examples of tools that can cut reporting cycles and free PMOs to focus on insight and strategic alignment. The implication for leaders is clear: unless data flow is frictionless, the PMO cannot meet its widening remit.

The skills and culture dimension

Technology will help, but it cannot compensate for weak capability foundations. The top two challenges identified – **poorly trained project managers** and **too many projects running concurrently** – have persisted since Wellingtone's first survey in 2016. Add to that "poor resource management" and "lack of senior-management support," and it's clear that cultural maturity, not software maturity, is the bigger determinant of success.

Closing this gap requires a systemic investment in people: accredited training, sponsorship development, and governance that prioritises fewer, better projects. As Wellingtone notes, lessons-learned processes remain underused and untracked, representing "huge value to be gained" if organisations finally embed them properly.

From maturity to momentum

So where does this leave project leaders in 2025? The data tell a story of a profession that recognises its value but wrestles with execution. Maturity is no longer about templates and audits; it's about throughput, insight and learning velocity.

Forward-thinking PMOs will act on three imperatives:

1. **Digitise reporting and decision-making** – Move from manual collation to live dashboards; re-deploy that recovered time into strategic alignment work.
2. **Prioritise training and sponsorship** – Invest equally in project-manager capability and sponsor effectiveness.
3. **Focus on value realisation** – Build feedback loops that measure benefits beyond project closure and feed insights into new initiatives.

Wellingtone's research shows a profession that is self-aware, technologically curious, and ready to evolve - but still constrained by the basics. As PMOs expand without equivalent resources, automation will be essential to sustain credibility. The organisations that win the next phase of delivery maturity won't just manage projects better; they'll manage productivity itself as a strategic asset.

(Sources: Wellingtone, The State of Project Management Report 2025, pp. 3–10)