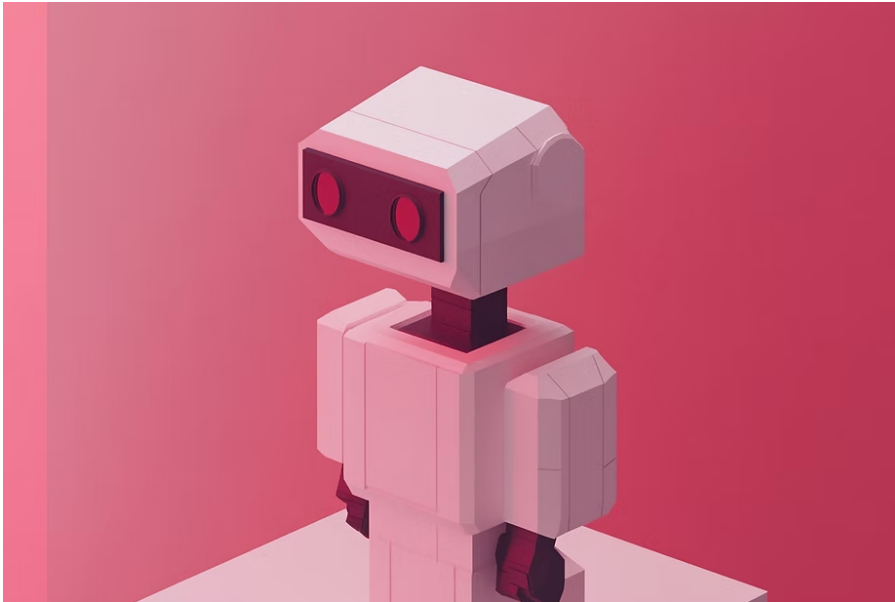


The Interns Are Now Managing Robots: Is Your Project Team Ready?

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Insight from Yoshi Soornack

Just a few years ago, the idea of a junior consultant managing a team of AI agents sounded like science fiction. Today, at KPMG, it is the new reality.

The Big Four firm is training its newest recruits to oversee digital workforces, a move that signals a seismic shift in the professional services landscape and a stark warning for project managers everywhere: the age of the AI colleague is here.

For decades, consulting has been a well-trodden career path. Graduates cut their teeth on the ‘grunt work’, endless hours spent formatting slide decks, crunching numbers in spreadsheets, and transcribing meeting notes.

It served as a crucial training ground for those aspiring to reach the strategic pinnacles of the profession. However, agentic AI is systematically deconstructing that model.

KPMG’s initiative, spearheaded by their global AI workforce lead, is not a tentative pilot programme. It is a strategic overhaul of their talent development model. “We want juniors to become managers of agents,” **Cleobury** stated in a recent interview with Business Insider.

This is not just a catchy soundbite; it is a fundamental reimagining of the junior consultant’s role. Instead of being bogged down by administrative and analytical tasks, they are being positioned as strategic orchestrators of AI-powered teams.

The End of Grunt Work as We Know It

The implications for project delivery are profound. The traditional project team structure, with its hierarchical layers of analysts, consultants, and managers, is on the verge of obsolescence.

In its place, a new hybrid model is emerging, one in which humans and AI agents collaborate in a fluid and dynamic manner. At **Project Flux**, we have been anticipating, this is the tangible future of AI in the workplace. Seeing a powerhouse like **KPMG** actively implement this strategy is a resounding validation of that foresight.

At the core of this transformation is a catalogue of AI agents that KPMG is building and deploying. These are not simple chatbots or automation scripts. They are sophisticated digital assistants capable of performing complex tasks autonomously, such as:

- Creating presentation slides: Generating entire decks from raw data and strategic inputs.
- Analysing data: Identifying trends, anomalies, and insights from vast datasets in minutes, not days.
- Conducting in-depth research: scouring internal and external sources to provide comprehensive briefings on any given topic.

This automation of entry-level tasks is designed to free up human consultants to focus on higher-value activities. As **Cleobury** puts it, the goal is to return to the core of what consulting used to be: “That person who’s got the strong hand on our client’s back, showing them the direction they need to go through, steering them, helping them with their conversations.”

Accelerating Careers and Capabilities

This shift is not about replacing humans but augmenting them. KPMG’s global trusted AI transformation leader, Sam Gloede, emphasises that the firm does not anticipate any impact on its headcount. “What’s changing will be the shape, not the size,” she asserts.

The new shape of the workforce will see junior consultants accelerating their career progression at an unprecedented rate. From day one, they will immerse themselves in strategic discussions, exposing them to senior leaders and complex problem-solving far earlier than their predecessors.

The Consulting Pyramid Is Crumbling: Emergence of the AI-Driven Obelisk Model

The historic consulting pyramid model, which relied on large teams of interns and junior analysts supporting senior managers, is undergoing rapid change. Agentic AI is now at the core of firms such as [KPMG](#), [PwC](#), [Deloitte](#), and [EY](#). Previously, consulting value depended on young staff performing research and preparing presentations. Experienced experts mainly guided strategic decisions.

Generative AI and digital agents are replacing this traditional structure. Tools like PwC’s Agent OS and Deloitte’s Zora AI, along with EY’s agentic tax workflow, automate much of what once took weeks to

complete. They handle compliance, forecasting, research, and report creation quickly.

KPMG's Workbench brings together digital agents who act as auditors, drafters, or compliance supervisors. There is now less reliance on vast junior teams. Instead, the focus has shifted to transparency, detailed audit trails, and building trust in digital solutions.

The new model resembles a "consulting obelisk." It relies on a smaller, highly skilled network of consultants. These professionals must integrate, supervise, and extract insights from AI agents.

This change is not just about reducing headcount. The Big Four firms have shown that agentic systems help scale expertise and maintain compliance globally. Consultants now supervise digital workflows and interpret AI-generated recommendations.

These shifts compress delivery timelines and flatten organisational hierarchies. They also require new skills, such as proficiency in AI tools, digital governance, and ethical reasoning relevant to daily project work.

"That is a much more valuable use of their time. It helps them develop technical capabilities faster because they can get to the depth of what they need to be focused on." – Sam Gloede

The professional services industry shares this sentiment. PwC has stated that its new accounting hires will be performing managerial roles within three years, as they will be overseeing AI that handles routine audit tasks.

This rapid upskilling will create a new generation of consultants who are adept at managing hybrid human-AI teams, a skill that will be in high demand across all sectors.

The Project Manager's New Mandate

So, what does this mean for project managers? The key takeaway is that the way we resource and manage projects is about to undergo a fundamental disruption.

The traditional approach to building large teams to handle labour-intensive tasks is no longer viable. Instead, project managers will need to become adept at leveraging AI agents as a core part of their delivery capability.

This requires a new set of skills and a new mindset. Project managers will need to:

- Understand the capabilities of AI agents: What tasks can be automated? What are the limitations? How can they be integrated into existing workflows?

- Develop new project planning and estimation models: How do you factor in the productivity gains from AI? How do you account for the cost of developing and maintaining AI agents?
- Lead hybrid teams: How do you foster collaboration between humans and AI? How do you manage the performance of a digital workforce?

This is not a distant future; it is happening now. The AI revolution is not just about technology; it is about talent.

The firms that will win in this new era are those that can successfully integrate AI into their workforce and empower their people to work alongside it.

Transforming Project Management: From Human Hierarchies to Agentic Collaboration

This shift means project managers must change how they think and act. In the past, leaders focused mainly on delegating tasks, checking progress, and managing people. Now, the manager must orchestrate collaboration between human consultants and AI agents.

Managers are expected to know which tasks to assign to digital agents. This includes routine tasks like automating invoices, analysing large datasets, and ensuring compliance. They must also redesign old workflows so that teams can benefit from agentic outputs. Optimising business processes for speed and accountability is now essential.

Agentic teams do more than just improve efficiency. They help organisations retain knowledge, guarantee compliance, and respond quickly to new client requests.

Firms such as PwC and KPMG are now upskilling staff across all levels to support this new way of working. The focus is on cultivating AI literacy and equipping professionals with the skills to supervise their digital teammates effectively and responsibly.

The Time to Act is Now

The change at KPMG serves as a clear indication that the professional services industry is approaching a critical moment. The move from AI as a tool to AI as a colleague is accelerating, and project managers who fail to adapt will be left behind.

The question is no longer whether AI will transform project delivery, but how you will lead that transformation.

Are you ready to manage a team of robots? The interns are.

It is time to get ahead of the curve. Start exploring how you can integrate AI agents into your projects, upskill your team, and redefine what it means to deliver value in the age of AI.

Do not wait for the future to happen to you. Subscribe to Project Flux and start building the

future of project delivery today.