

Global Project Management 2025: A Year in Review

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2025 in Project Management has been a transformative year that tested and elevated the project profession worldwide. In the face of economic uncertainty and rapid change, organizations doubled down on projects to drive strategic goals - from digital overhauls to sustainability initiatives - reaffirming that effective project delivery is a linchpin of success.

This end-of-year round-up reflects on the major trends, inflection points, and shifts in capability that defined global project management in 2025, and how the profession's role is evolving across sectors and regions.

Surge in Demand Amid a Talent Crunch

Project management continued its global growth streak in 2025. There are now nearly **40 million** project professionals worldwide - [a talent pool comparable in scale to the world's software developers or nurses](#). Yet demand still far outpaces supply. [PMI's Talent Gap report](#) warns that **up to 30 million** new project managers will be needed by 2035 to support global growth. Fast-growing regions like **South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and China** are fueling much of this demand through major infrastructure builds and digital expansion. In these regions, the project profession is booming - PMI even notes sectors such as construction, manufacturing, IT, and healthcare could see talent needs surge by **66%**.

By contrast, **North America and Europe** face a more acute talent crunch as aging workers retire faster than new talent enters. This talent shortage is more than a hiring challenge - PMI's CEO described it as a **"barrier to progress"** at a time when every industry must adapt to change. The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs 2025* likewise highlighted project managers as a critical, high-growth role - ranked

the **12th fastest-growing job globally** – essential for navigating transformation across the economy. In short, the world is recognizing that change happens through projects, and skilled project leaders are in high demand.

One encouraging sign is the profession's resilience and attractiveness post-pandemic. In the UK, for example, **average project professional salaries jumped 10%** from 2023 to 2025 (from £47.5k to £52.5k) – **the first significant rise since pre-2020**. Confidence is high: project managers feel optimistic about their career prospects and their organizations' futures. Professional credentials are also on the rise, with **over 1.7 million PMI certification holders** worldwide. This upskilling trend is reflected in surveys: globally, **63% of employers** identify skill gaps as a top barrier to transformation, and **85% plan to prioritize upskilling their workforce** over the coming years. The takeaway is clear – investment in project talent and capability is ramping up to meet the growing demand.

Evolving Capabilities and the Strategic PM

Amid this boom, 2025 saw a notable shift in the capabilities expected of project professionals. Technical know-how and credentials remain important, but organizations are increasingly seeking project leaders with broader **business acumen and strategic insight**. PMI's Pulse of the Profession 2025 report revealed that while most project professionals rate their business acumen as moderate, only **18% boast high proficiency in it**. This represents a significant opportunity (and need) for upskilling. The ability to understand business context – to look beyond the immediate task to the project's value proposition – is what turns a project manager from a tactical troubleshooter into a **"strategic value creator"**.

In practice, this means project managers are taking a bigger seat at the table in 2025. They are expected to connect projects to organizational strategy, customer outcomes, and long-term impact, not just deliver on time and budget. As **PMI's chief executive put it**, project professionals who **"take ownership beyond delivery, connecting projects to business value and long-term impact"** will be **indispensable partners to the C-suite** in the coming years. This evolving role is evident across sectors: from IT project managers steering digital strategy, to infrastructure program managers aligning megaprojects with national policy goals.

Crucially, the so-called **"power skills"** – leadership, collaborative ability, problem-solving, and adaptability – have become core competencies. **Analytical thinking remains the top skill in demand**, but resilience, flexibility and agility now follow closely. Organizations learned from recent crises that plans can capsize overnight; they value project leaders who can anticipate risks, pivot quickly, and rally teams through uncertainty. The project profession has embraced this mindset: lesson-learning, knowledge sharing, and agile approaches are part of the new DNA. In essence, 2025 cemented the project manager's evolution from project executor to **change agent** and strategic partner.

Performance and Delivery: Focus on Value and Outcomes

Even as the profession's stature grows, the sobering reality is that project performance still leaves much room for improvement. Delivery metrics in 2025 show many organizations struggling to consistently

achieve intended outcomes. Studies indicate that barely **one-third of projects** are truly completed successfully by conventional measures. Similarly, only about **34% of organizations** report that they mostly or always deliver projects on time, and the same low proportion mostly stay on budget. Cost overruns average a hefty **27% across projects**. These figures underscore persistent challenges in schedule management, cost control, and benefits realization. In fact, a **2025 industry survey** found **benefits management** – ensuring that projects realize their promised value – to be the number one difficult practice to embed, alongside resource management and project prioritization. Too often, projects still output deliverables without fully achieving the strategic benefits they set out to create.

Large-scale public projects mirror these challenges. This year, the UK's Government Major Projects Portfolio (a £996 billion portfolio of infrastructure and transformation programs) reported that only **14% of its projects had a "Green" delivery confidence** – meaning a high likelihood of successful delivery. The majority were rated Amber (significant issues to manage) and 15% Red (undeliverable without major change). While such ratings partly reflect the huge complexity and ambition of today's initiatives, they also serve as a reality check. Delivery **confidence** is a scarce commodity, and improving it will require concerted effort in planning, risk mitigation, and governance.

The encouraging news is that organizations are acting on these insights. There is a stronger emphasis on **value-centric project management** – defining clear outcomes up front and tracking benefits through the project life cycle. Portfolio management and prioritization are being strengthened to ensure the **"right" projects** are done in the first place. Many companies and governments are also investing in delivery frameworks and training to raise **project maturity levels**. For instance, the newly formed UK National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) was established in 2025 to **integrate strategic planning with project delivery oversight at the highest levels of government**. Reforms like these aim to close the gap between lofty strategic aims and on-the-ground execution capacity. The message is clear: it's not enough to start more projects – success will be measured by how reliably those projects deliver real, sustainable benefits.

Digital Transformation and Innovation in Delivery

Digital transformation remained both a driver and enabler of project management trends in 2025. On one hand, organizations across industries are launching massive digital projects – from IT modernization to AI deployments – to stay competitive. On the other hand, the **practice** of project management itself is being reinvented by technology. Project teams have more digital tools at their disposal than ever, and emerging tech is boosting productivity and insight. For example, data analytics and AI are now mainstream in project risk management – fully **83% of enterprises** report using analytics to forecast project risks and proactively address issues. AI-driven project management software can parse status data, predict schedule slippage, and even auto-generate project plans or status reports, augmenting the project manager's capabilities.

Worldwide, the adoption of AI in project work has accelerated this year. In regions like Asia-Pacific, a remarkable **89% of companies are pursuing AI-driven innovation** in their operations, and much of this innovation is realized through projects. We also see techniques like machine learning applied to portfolio decision-making (e.g. selecting which projects to fund) and to resource optimization. Beyond AI, other digital trends are leaving their mark – from the continued spread of **Agile and hybrid**

methodologies (often enabled by collaboration tools) to the exploration of blockchain for project contracts and transparency. The net effect is a profession that is becoming more data-informed and tech-savvy. Project managers in 2025 are expected to be fluent in digital tools and comfortable managing distributed, often remote teams using online platforms. The best project leaders combine **digital fluency with domain expertise** – they can leverage automation for routine tasks while focusing human effort on complex problem-solving and stakeholder engagement.

This tech-driven evolution is improving certain outcomes. Studies show Agile projects significantly outpace traditional ones in success rates, and companies citing high digital maturity in project management tend to report better on-time delivery and value realization. However, technology is not a panacea; it brings its own challenges such as data security and the need to upskill teams. The key is that project professionals now have to continuously **adapt to new technologies**, integrating the useful innovations (AI, cloud, advanced analytics) to handle rising project complexity. As one industry observer put it, *thriving in project management now means embracing tools that help manage uncertainty and complexity, rather than shying away from them*. 2025 has proven that the future of project work is inextricably linked with technological transformation.

Sustainability and ESG: Projects Driving Purpose

A defining theme of 2025 has been the integration of **sustainability** and ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) principles into project management. Sustainability is no longer a “nice-to-have” – it has become a **top-three priority on the C-suite agenda**, right alongside technology adoption and AI. Organizations around the world are under pressure to reduce carbon footprints, improve social impact, and strengthen governance, and they increasingly realize that these goals must be delivered through concrete projects and programs. This year saw a wave of green transformations: renewable energy projects, climate resilience infrastructure, supply chain decarbonization initiatives, and community development programs, all managed with formal project discipline. Project managers are at the forefront of turning lofty climate pledges and sustainability targets into actionable plans.

Global bodies and industry groups underscored this linkage between projects and sustainability outcomes. The **OECD**, for instance, **emphasized that evidence-based project selection and prioritization** should account for **sustainability risks and value for money**, ensuring investments deliver long-term public value. The Project Management Institute in partnership with Green Project Management released a new **Project Sustainability Reporting Guide** in late 2025, which pointedly notes that **“sustainability commitments are realized (or fall short) at the project level.”** It urges leaders to embed ESG metrics into project governance and reframe project delivery as a **driver of sustainable value**, not just financial results. In practice, this means using frameworks (like the P5 standard and SDG alignment) to assess a project’s impact on natural, social, and economic capital – and adjusting decisions accordingly.

Many organizations are moving from talk to action. Deloitte’s 2025 global survey found sustainability remains a **top priority generating business value**, with executives reporting increased investment and even **revenue growth from sustainability efforts**. Technology and AI are being harnessed to improve sustainability tracking – for example, using AI to optimize energy use in projects or to measure carbon impacts. There is also a rise in **sustainability-focused PMOs** and roles (e.g. Climate Project Managers, ESG Program Directors) to ensure projects deliver on green objectives. All this points to a maturation:

sustainability is being operationalized through project management. Project professionals are learning to balance the triple constraint (scope, time, budget) with a “quadruple constraint” that includes **environmental and social dimensions**. As [one guide challenged executives](#): if your projects aren’t truly sustainable (beyond just “less bad” than before), it’s time to elevate practices toward regenerative outcomes.

Strengthening Governance and Resilience

In 2025, organizations also put a spotlight on **governance** and **resilience** in project delivery. High-profile project failures and volatile global conditions (from economic swings to geopolitical tensions) have driven home the need for robust oversight and agile risk management. Effective project governance – clear decision rights, accountability, stage gates, and portfolio oversight – is viewed as a critical success factor to prevent projects from derailing. This year, we saw examples like the UK’s NISTA (formed by merging its infrastructure commission and project authority) aiming to provide an integrated governance model for major projects. By aligning long-term strategic planning with delivery assurance, such models seek to ensure that projects are realistic, well-scoped, and supported throughout their lifecycle.

Across both public and private sectors, there’s a trend toward **portfolio-wide visibility** of project health. Aggregated delivery confidence assessments, like those published by NISTA, help leaders see where risks concentrate and where interventions are needed. They also encourage a proactive stance on issues such as capacity constraints and supply chain bottlenecks – for example, adjusting project sequencing to avoid overloading scarce resources. In an uncertain world, building **resilience** into project portfolios is paramount. This involves not only risk identification but cultivating flexible plans and contingencies. Many organizations now conduct scenario planning as part of project kickoffs, and they invest in cross-training team members to handle unexpected challenges. It’s telling that “**resilience, flexibility and agility**” were highlighted among the most differentiating skills for growing job roles in [the WEF’s outlook](#). Project managers are leading the charge in embedding those qualities into their teams and workflows.

Better governance and resilient practices are yielding improvements. Stakeholders have greater transparency today on how projects are tracking, and there’s increased willingness to course-correct early (rather than hide bad news). We’re also seeing more projects incorporate **safeguards for sustainability and ethics** within governance – e.g. independent reviews for ESG compliance or community impact. Notably, 2025’s discourse in the project community placed ethics and stakeholder trust as central to governance. Good governance isn’t just about hitting targets; it’s about ensuring the **right projects are done in the right way**, with accountability to the public or customers they ultimately serve. This principle, championed by organizations like [the OECD](#), is guiding project professionals to elevate their practice beyond pure delivery into stewardship of value and positive impact.

Conclusion: A Profession at an Inflection Point

As 2025 draws to a close, the project management profession stands at a remarkable inflection point. The year’s trends – surging global demand, expanding skill requirements, tech-driven evolution, sustainability integration, and enhanced governance – all signal that project management is more critical than ever before. Projects large and small are the vehicles of change in business and society, and those who lead them are increasingly viewed as **change makers** and strategists, not just schedulers. The challenges are

certainly evident in the data (talent gaps, mixed delivery performance), but so is the commitment to growth and improvement. Through initiatives in upskilling, new methodologies, and knowledge sharing across regions, project professionals are rising to meet the moment.

On every continent, 2025 witnessed project managers enabling progress: from deploying vaccines and renewable energy solutions to delivering complex IT systems and infrastructure that connect communities. The emphasis on **outcomes and benefits**, rather than just outputs, is redefining success in the field. Equally, the embrace of agility and resilience is making project teams more prepared for whatever comes next – be it economic shifts or technological breakthroughs. In sum, the state of global project management in 2025 is one of **dynamic evolution**. It's a profession continuously learning and adapting, carrying the lessons of past projects into future endeavors.

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