New PMI Research Reveals Strategy–Execution Gap Is Undermining Transformation – And How to Close It

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Project Management Institute (PMI) has released new research linking the global strategy–execution gap directly to how organisations run projects—and outlining a clear, evidence-based pathway to dramatically improve the odds that transformation efforts deliver real value.

The report, *Step Up: Redefining the Path to Project Success with M.O.R.E.*, arrives as CEOs face relentless pressure to reinvent their organisations. A companion survey of senior executives shows that 93% must rethink or reinvent their business model or operating approach at least every five years, with nearly two-thirds doing so every two years or more frequently. Two-thirds say they are currently accelerating digital and AI transformation.

Yet the biggest obstacle is not ambition, capital, or technology. It is execution.

The most commonly cited barrier to reinvention (35%) is a disconnect between planning and delivery—what PMI identifies as the strategy–execution gap.

Only half of projects succeed—and that puts transformation at risk

The global study of more than 5,800 project professionals, stakeholders and knowledge workers finds that only half of projects meet a modern definition of success: delivering value that exceeds the effort and cost involved, as judged by all key stakeholders. Thirteen percent of projects fail outright, while 37% deliver only part of the expected value.

"At a time when organisations are making unprecedented investments in digital, AI, sustainability and business model change, they simply cannot afford a 50/50 success rate," said Pierre Le Manh, President and Chief Executive Officer of PMI. "The strategy–execution gap isn't abstract. It shows up every day in misaligned, under-resourced projects measured against the wrong outcomes."

He added: "When leaders say their biggest challenge is turning plans into results, they are really describing project success. If strategy is to work, the hit rate of the projects delivering it must rise."

The M.O.R.E. approach: from project delivery to value delivery

To understand what differentiates high-performing organisations, the research identifies four behaviours that strongly predict whether projects deliver full value. Together, they form the M.O.R.E. framework:

- **Manage perceptions** by shaping stakeholder understanding and building trust
- **Own success** beyond time and budget, focusing on value delivered
- **Relentlessly reassess** to anticipate change and continuously adjust
- **Expand perspective** to connect projects to broader organisational and societal outcomes

The impact is striking. Net Project Success Score—the percentage of successful projects minus outright failures—rises from 27 when none of the M.O.R.E. elements are used to 94 when all four are applied consistently. Yet only 7% of professionals say they are doing so today.

"These findings give leaders what they've been missing: a practical, data-driven playbook for closing the strategy–execution gap," said Le Manh. "M.O.R.E. reframes success around value, outcomes and perception. It moves project leaders from task execution to true ownership of transformation."

AI, agility and the human side of execution

The CEO research highlights that structural barriers—not lack of intent—are slowing progress. Executives cite outdated skills, rigid operating models, fragmented accountability and slow decision-making as major constraints. Many organisations are clear on purpose, but lack the agility to reallocate talent and capital at speed.

AI is a central driver of reinvention: 72% of executives say AI and automation are pushing them to rethink their operating model. The research confirms that AI can materially improve outcomes when paired with strong human leadership. Professionals who integrate AI tools into their workflows report a 17-point increase in project success.

"AI creates value only when bold ideas are translated into executed initiatives," said Le Manh. "Our data shows the real advantage comes from blending AI with the human capabilities embedded in M.O.R.E.—judgement, communication, adaptability and leadership."

From insight to global movement

PMI is embedding the M.O.R.E. framework across its standards, learning experiences and community initiatives to support adoption at scale. This includes:

- New learning pathways focused on M.O.R.E. behaviours
- Updated standards and guidance defining success in terms of value and stakeholder outcomes
- Expanded recognition of teams delivering complex, high-impact work through the M.O.R.E. mindset

"As reinvention becomes a permanent condition, project success is no longer a technical concern—it is a board-level imperative," Le Manh said. "Closing the strategy–execution gap starts with how projects are defined, led and measured. M.O.R.E. gives organisations a consistent way forward."

Read the full *Step Up: Redefining the Path to Project Success with M.O.R.E.* report and explore the data HERE.

Survey Methodology

Step Up: Redefining the Path to Project Success with M.O.R.E. draws on insights from more than 5,800 project professionals, stakeholders and knowledge workers across industries worldwide, collected with independent research firm Kantar.

The 2025 CEO Quant Survey includes responses from 300 senior executives across regions and sectors, examining the pace of reinvention, its drivers and the primary barriers to executing strategy at speed.