

## Look to 2018: Trends in Project Management

By PMR Journalist Yu Yanjuan

Editor's note: This article was originally published in Project Management Review in China in January 2018. "Project Management Review" Magazine is sponsored by State Grid Yingda Media Investment Group. The magazine provides an all-dimensional multi-perspective introduction to latest domestic and international project management research advances and application cases. Main columns: Cover Articles, Top Interview, Foresight, Chief Viewpoint, International Perspective, Special Research, Career Pulse, PM+, etc. For more information, please visit: <http://www.pmreview.com.cn/> (English version will be online soon) or contact us at [yuyanjuan2005@163.com](mailto:yuyanjuan2005@163.com).

**1. Stacy Goff:** past President of IPMA-USA / 2015 IPMA Honorary Fellow / ProjectExperts CEO / Speaker / Author / Consultant 曾任IPMA美国分会主席、IPMA荣誉会员、CEO、作者、演讲者

**Chinese way of managing projects.** In December 2014, a monumental IPMA Research event, in Tianjin, covered a range of interesting topics that asserted the following: China has five major literary foundations, going back over 2,000 years, for a Chinese way of managing projects, that, while including Western approaches, is rich with more advanced ways of integrating China's strengths. This is potentially, greater than a trend!

**More focus on application rather than certification only.** In too many countries, the majority of training in project management for the last 20 years has focused on exam preparation. Because the half-life of learning-not-applied is cited as 2-6 weeks, most of this has little performance improvement in projects. Knowledge alone is inadequate for project performance. Skill (applied knowledge) and mentored application (experience, with coaching), resulting in true competence, is the performance advantage for those who use their learning funding wisely. Smart organizations understand this.

**Emphasis on soft skills.** While project and program processes (and methods, a subset) are important, their effective delivery depends on the "soft side". Leadership, interpersonal skills, and team-building have much more to do with project success and business success with projects than all processes and methods. And the smartest organizations not only understand this, but it is their competitive advantage, as they use projects and programs as their change agents to deliver their strategic plans.

**2. Reinhard Wagner:** IPMA 2018 Chairman of the Council IPMA2018年主席

**Change.** The world is changing rapidly, which increases the pressure on organizations to change.

Change is performed through projects and programs. The management of a change project means to organise change activities, plan them in regards of time, cost and resources and monitor and control the success of its implementation. Change management activities make sure that the people actually understand the reason for change and what's in for them, to overcome potential resistance to change through collaboration, communication and coordination between all stakeholders involved.

**Agile.** A second key trend is the need for agile management, which does not mean a new methodology, but a mindset, which means changing the way of thinking and acting. The governance framework allows the project teams to be more flexible and adaptive to the context of their activities.

### **3. Mark Dickson:** Chairman of PMI board of Directors PMI 2017 年度董事会主席

Project management trends depend to some extent on the industry.

**Rise of mega projects.** In the infrastructure or construction industries the most significant trend has been the rise of the mega project. Mega projects require more sophisticated project control systems and broader management and leadership skills from the project managers. Project managers can no longer rely on their specialist technical skills and need to be able to understand and communicate across disciplines and even industries and lead large teams.

**Rise of agile methodologies.** In the information systems and particularly in the software industry the most significant trend has been the rise of agile methodologies.

### **4. David Pells:** Managing editor of Project Management World Journal (PMWJ 总编)

**Complexity.** This has been a topic of research and discussion in the PM profession for the last 10-15 years; I think it is just now being recognized for the impact it is having on programs, projects and PM.

**“Value” and by extension “benefits” realization.** The focus on value and benefits gets to the underlying causes of project success and failure. This focus also brings attention back to organizational strategies and the alignment of programs and projects with strategy, benefits and value. Doing a project well is almost meaningless if it's the wrong project for the wrong reasons.

**Change management and the need for “Agility”.** Everyone recognizes frequent changes in the world – technological, economic, political, social. The pace of change in project environments also seems to be accelerating. Rapid changes combined with increasing complexity and the focus on value have led to the need for more agility, more flexibility to react, adjust and replan in order to be successful (to increase value or to avoid outright project failure).

**5. Oliver F. Lehmann:** professor / PMP / President of the PMI Southern Germany Chapter of PMI 德国南部分会主席、教授

**Situational Project Management.** Situational Project Management builds on the observation that the same practice that has been successful in one project situation may fail in another one. Project managers need to fill their methodical toolbox with a set of different practices to be able to respond appropriately to different situations.

**Project Business Management.** Project Business Management deals with customer-contractor relationships in complex Project Supply Networks (PSNs). A majority of project managers works in customer projects, and their percentage is growing. They are tasked to bring money home to ensure the contractors' survival and make customers happy to secure their employers' future. Their customers must at the same time develop a "Mission Success First" culture across the PSN, driven by a common desire of all PSN members to value completing over competing.

**6. Paul Dinsmore:** PMI Honorary Fellow, international speaker and author of management books PMI 荣誉会员, 国际演讲家, <<AMA 项目管理手册>>作者

**Emphasis on governance.** Project management has evolved from a single-project focus to encompass multiple projects, programs, portfolios, enterprises, PMOs, executive sponsorship and increasing broader company-wide involvement, including at the governance level, now referred to as EPG (Enterprise Project Governance). Understanding the full scope of enterprise project governance is essential for people that deal with projects, whether the view is from the board room, the executive suite, the project management office, the project war room or from the project trenches. All pieces of the project world are interconnected, thus a holistic view helps all parties across the enterprise work towards systematically completing quality projects on time, within budget and to the clients' satisfaction. This across-the-board synergy, under the banner of EPG, makes a major contribution towards surpassing company goals and boosting organizational agility.

**Organizational agility.** The growing influence of agile approaches to developing IT projects has inspired organizations to also desire agility on a broader scale. Agility requires adopting the agile mindset and spreading the concept throughout the organization, taking agile-approach models and adapting them, and learning how to be agile in spite of bureaucratic processes.

**7. Te Wu:** Professor / CEO / Expert on Strategic Business Execution 教授、CEO、企业战略执行专家

**Tailoring project management.** Project Management is becoming more sophisticated, and tailoring project management will be the major theme in 2018. Companies should tailor the project management processes and approach to their organization.

**Program and portfolio management.** Program management and even portfolio management will also achieve higher recognition and acceptance than ever before. Organizations no longer suffice with just doing projects well; they are looking for synergy through program management and better selection through portfolio management. However, these integration activities have a cost, and that is the balancing of risks.

The distinction between agile and traditional approaches to project management will be blurred and a continuum of practices ranging from the very adaptive to the very discipline will emerge.

**Risk management** across projects, programs, and portfolios will become more commonplace.

**8. Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez:** Professor / Author / Speaker / PMI Past Chair 曾任 PMI 主席、教授、作者、演讲家

**More Projects.** With the current speed of change, products become commodities very quickly, so companies will be looking for new products and new sources of revenue much faster than in the past. That means many new projects and new opportunities for professional project managers.

**Focus on Benefits and Impact.** Technology and global competition are speeding up the way companies and products are developed. Product launches, successes, and failures are coming faster than ever. The negative side of that is that companies don't have the patience or ability to wait. We must deliver faster, and our project approach has to evolve—not necessarily to agile or DevOps, but projects must especially now focus on benefits, and find ways to obtain them quickly.

**From Project Manager to Project Leader.** Companies are looking for people who can bring growth, change, create value, bring discipline, work across the business, and develop high-performing teams. The more we as a profession focus on how our projects can contribute on those terms, the better. Organizations want to know how you will contribute to the bottom line or the business strategy and benefits.

**9. Joop Schefferlie:** Vice President of IPMA Certification IPMA 认证处副主席

**Agility.** A lot of companies (not only ICT and Finance) are changing their organizations and the way they manage changes into Agile. This means, for example, that the balance of competences that people need to be successful is changing.

**Projectification of societies.** The time and money we spend in doing projects is increasing. In Europe already over 35%. This means that more people need to know something about how to manage a project.

**10. Adrian Dooley:** Honorary Fellow at APM APM 荣誉会员

There are two trends that have been growing in 2017 and will start to have a real impact in 2018.

**Understanding of agility.** The first is the greater understanding of agility. In the last couple of years lots of people have jumped on the Agile bandwagon as if it is the answer to all project problems. They are wrong and the profession is starting to realise this. In 2018 we will start to talk about agility as something that we apply to different degrees according to the context of each project. It isn't a binary choice between Agile vs. Waterfall; it's about how much agility we need to apply to respond to different levels of uncertainty in every project.

**"Best Practice".** The second trend relates to what is often referred to as "Best Practice". 2018 looks like the year that "Best Practice" becomes completely free on the World Wide Web. [www.praxisframework.org](http://www.praxisframework.org) is freely available in four languages with the Chinese translation due to be complete soon. This can only be of great benefit to the profession.

**11. Osmar Zózimo:** Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Modern Project Management* 现代项目管理杂志主编

**Project design capabilities as strategy.** Design management capability is essential competence for project teams. It enables designing adaptive project framework to cope with complexity and innovation issues as natural corporate process. Design management can lead to innovation by developing product/services based on experiences and knowledge gathered from user-centric design; organizational-centric design and society-centric design.

It mainly impacts the project aim about saving, speed-up and agility that only comes out through problem-solving approach implementation and emergent technology alignment that should be provided by project evolving planning under design management analysis.

**12. İpek Sahra Özgüler:** PMP, Project Manager, PM Consultant, PM World Journal Correspondent (PMWJ)记者，项目经理，项目管理咨询师

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Big Data, Industry 4.0 and other innovations are shaping a new world. Everything is changing including the behavior of individuals as well as the behavior of the organizations. My top three trends of 2018 are:

**Portfolio management.** The world is getting more complex and unpredictable. In order to achieve their strategy and objectives in this changing world, organizations are starting to use portfolio management.

**Change management.** In this fast paced world, efficient change management is getting more and more complicated and important. PMI mentioned, "Change is inevitable and accelerating.

Organizations that manage it effectively will pull ahead of their competition. Change initiatives are time consuming and costly, but by approaching change management with a disciplined approach, organizations can survive and thrive.”

**Determine the right delivery management method.** “Agile, or waterfall, or blended.” Choosing the right delivery management method is a new and popular question for the organizations.

Of course, the trends are not limited to just three categories. Agile project management, multi-cultural project management, innovation project management, customer-oriented project management, digital transformation management, sustainability in project management are the other trends in project management.

**13. Peter Taylor:** PMO expert, author of eighteen books, including No.1 bestselling project management book, *The Lazy Project Manager* 专家、畅销书作者

A four-year study by LeadershipIQ.com, which interviewed more than 1,000 board members from 286 public and private organisations that fired, or otherwise forced out, their chief executive, found that the number one reason CEO's got fired was mismanaging change!

Now business growth, even business existence, is built increasingly from such change; strategic change – new markets, new products, change driven through regulatory demand, change driven to maintain market share, change driven by mergers and acquisitions, changes driven by new executives, and so on.

Put those two parts together, a world where executives get fired on a regular basis for mismanaging change and a business world of increasing change, and you have a high-risk scenario it seems in many board rooms across the world.

There is no hiding away from change, today or in 2018! John F. Kennedy wisely stated that ‘Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.’

Whilst the consequences of not being a good leader of an organisation who both drives and manages change is apparent at a personal and career perspective, based on the above study, the impact on the organisation itself can be truly devastating.

I offer up five challenges to all organisations in 2018 that are significantly change (and therefore project) driven:

- The challenge of investing in the right portfolio dashboard (that simply means getting a good and accurate view from the very top)
- The challenge of investing in real executive change sponsorship - those who are entrusted with being ultimately responsible for change
- The challenge of investing in a chief projects officer (or similar title) supported by a PMO

(Project/Program/Portfolio Management Office) to consider and direct the overall change programs across all parts of the business

- The challenge of investing in the means to know the true status of your strategic change/project investment (having good analysis and good reporting and ultimately knowing, accurately, how it is all progressing)
- The challenge of investing in professionalising the project capability and competence within the organisation

Change is inevitable and risky; it needs to be taken seriously.

*[To see the original PRM version with photos, click here](#)*

**Acknowledgements:**

On behalf of PMR Magazine, I express sincere gratitude to all the experts participating in our interviews. Thank you for your time, patience and enthusiasm.

**Contact:** For contribution, comments or suggestions, please contact journalist Yu Yanjuan at [pmreview\\_cn@163.com](mailto:pmreview_cn@163.com) or [yuyanjuan2005@163.com](mailto:yuyanjuan2005@163.com).