

*Beyond Hype*¹

Introduction, AI and What's on My Radar ²

Ricardo Viana Vargas, PhD

Introduction

This is the first article for a new series in the PM World Journal based on my monthly newsletter where I try to do a deep dive into new topics related to project management or that I am personally interested in. I try to make sense of some of these issues, some of which are of serious concern to many of us, and, of course, how they might impact project management, business agility or organizational transformation. I hope you find my comments interesting or even perhaps a little bit useful.

Will AI Drive the Future of Human Intelligence?

First things first, this is written by a real human, myself! I cannot say the same about the readers. They can be humans, bots, AI tools, or all sorts of technology that have intrinsically become part of our lives.

In recent months, artificial intelligence (AI) has left the corridors of tech companies and the hands of software developers and analysts to become mainstream, accessible by anyone, anytime.

Newly developed AI engines can digest and analyze huge amounts of data in seconds. They can generate incredible insights in plain text, images, and even [videos](#). They are getting smarter as they can attempt to understand the context of the conversations. This is a scary yet exciting reality for everyone, including myself. I only know one thing for sure: More and more AI tools will come, and they will come fast.

Much faster than we think.

Of course, you, myself, and anyone else have the same question: how will these massive changes affect our jobs and lives?

¹ Editor's note: This series of articles by Ricardo Vargas, PMI Fellow and recognized thought leader, is based on his LinkedIn newsletter called [Beyond Hype](#) in which he periodically shares his thoughts on emerging issues and potential concerns related to project management or the PM profession. Ricardo is a former Chair of the PMI Board of Directors and the author or co-author of many books on project management, including the recent [Project Management Next Generation: The Pillars for Organizational Excellence](#) (co-authored with Dr. Harold Kerzner and Dr. Al Zeitoun). Learn more about the author in his profile at the end of this article.

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Is this just hype, or is there something deeper behind it?

We need to remember that hype comes in cycles. The current hype cycle we are living in is attributed to the Generative Pre-training Transformer (GPT), or one of its commercial products developed by Open AI called ChatGPT. GPT is a technology that uses deep learning to produce human-like text.

As someone who is not 100% in the technology business, I see myself far more as a user of these tools than as someone who creates and develops them. Last December, during a short trip to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where I opened the International Project Management Conference, talking exactly about emerging technologies and their impacts on projects, I had the chance to use ChatGPT for the first time. I just typed: Can you prepare an email to my boss with a summary of the following status report? I pasted the report below the text and clicked "Enter."

Bingo. I was stunned by what I saw.

Following that, I used chatGPT, [You](#), and a variety of other tools hundreds of times to determine where the limit was! I tried very hard to deal with my sense of hype and my shock at what I was seeing. You can listen to my experience in a recent [podcast episode](#).

Now we can see that competitors are vying to rival OpenAI's creation. Remember, these are mammoth-size tech companies almost ready to enter the AI war. Anything can happen. In another podcast, I shared [why I think Google's launch of Bard was hurried](#). Google lost \$100 billion in market cap because their AI engine, Bard, wrongly answered a question about James Webb telescope discoveries.

One question that has remained with me since that time is: How can Google, such a large, powerful, and knowledgeable company, make such a significant error by releasing a product that may not be ready for market scrutiny?

Ultimately, AI is what we, as humans, make of it.

Let's look more closely. AI tools may continue to propagate information with the biases that already exist. It can be in your project, in your business, or even in your personal life. AI is biased because humans are biased.

An example is the case of [Hirevue](#), the leading provider platform that uses AI to support its clients in the hiring process. One of the most popular Hirevue tools was facial expression analysis using AI. Based on her/his facial expression, the analysis attempted to assess mood, determination, commitment, and other underlying aspects.

After several studies of the Hirevue results, the Electronic Privacy Information Center filed a complaint against them for their algorithm bias. After a long debate, Hirevue decided to discontinue the facial expression algorithm. This story is perfectly described in this great [Wired](#) article on this topic.

Going now into the use of AI in project management, my colleague Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez and I wrote an [article](#) in the Harvard Business Review to make sense of what is coming for us.

Applying AI and other technological innovations to project management could improve the success ratio of projects by just 25%, equating to trillions of dollars in value and benefits for organizations, societies, and individuals.

Remember, approximately \$48 trillion is invested in projects every year. To make things even more challenging, according to the Standish Group, [only 35% of projects are considered successful](#). The wasted resources and unrealized benefits of the other 65% are mind-blowing.

The feedback on the article was fascinating. I received on my social media channels hundreds of messages, questions, and comments.

After seeing the interest from our community, Antonio and I decided to do a free webinar on March 3, 2023, at 9:00 AM ET. The webinar discussed the article and its implications further. We had 800 people register from around the world. The interest (and concerns) in the PM community is real and growing. We had a tremendous discussion and plan to do it again soon.

Let's make sense of all of this together. If we understand what is here now, we will be much more able to drive the future and understand not only the ChatGPT of today but, for sure, the ChatGPTs of tomorrow.

What is on My Radar Recently

Too Much Passion for Your Job?

I loved [Bartleby's recent column](#) at [The Economist, which came](#) with a highly provocative and insightful article about passion for the job. It is definitely worth reading.

11 Tech Trends to Watch in 2023

If you are visual and find #infographics as great as I do, check out the Visual Capitalist Infographic: [11 Tech Trends to Watch in 2023](#). Maybe you can help me to figure out how to understand "Immortality as a service" 😊

Trains Too Wide for Tunnels

Project failures can be truly **EPIC**. The Spanish government has spent more than €250 million on trains that are too big to fit in the network's tunnels. This will delay by two years the delivery of the much-expected trains. Learn more in this [BBC post](#).

Quick Announcements

The 5 Minutes Podcast has reached 12 million views since its release in 2007. You can listen to the episodes on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), and many other platforms. They are free and creative commons. You can listen, share, enjoy, and download every episode on [my website](#).

My workshop on Portfolio Management **PMRank** is the new addition to my online school. Now you can attend the globally recognized workshop on project prioritization at your own pace. Learn more and enroll [here](#). Use the coupon PMRANK2023 to get a special introductory price.

Your Voice Matters!

If you have any suggestions, comments, or anything that will help me make my writing, newsletter or these articles better, please send a note to me at info@ricardo-vargas.com with your suggestion. I would love to hear from you.

About the Author



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Ricardo Viana Vargas is Managing Partner at Macrosolutions, past Executive Director of the Project Management Institute's Brightline Initiative, past Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services ([UNOPS](#)) Infrastructure and Project Management Group, and former Chair of the PMI Board of Directors. Passionate about transforming ideas into action and a popular speaker at international PM events, Ricardo is recognized worldwide as a chief advocate for the project economy. Specializing in implementing innovative global initiatives, capital projects and product development, he has directed dozens of projects across industries and continents, managing more than \$20 billion in global initiatives over the past 25 years.

Ricardo shares his expertise with millions of professionals around the globe through his "[5 Minutes Podcast](#)," which he's hosted since 2007. He has written [16 books](#) on project

management, risk and crisis management, and transformation, which have been translated into six languages and sold more than half a million copies. His latest book [Project Management Next Generation: The Pillars for Organizational Excellence](#), in partnership with Dr. Harold Kerzner and Dr. Al Zeitoun has recently been released.

Ricardo's influence on project management was affirmed when he became the first Latin American to be elected Chairman of the Project Management Institute. More than two decades ago, he founded Macrosolutions, a global consulting firm with international operations in energy, infrastructure, IT, oil and finance. Between 2016 and 2020, Ricardo directed the [Brightline Initiative](#), a Project Management Institute think tank bringing together leading organizations in a coalition dedicated to helping executives bridge the expensive, unproductive gap between strategic design and delivery.

Prior to his work with Brightline, Ricardo was Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services ([UNOPS](#)) Infrastructure and Project Management Group, leading more than 1,000 projects and \$1.2 billion in humanitarian and development projects. He has worked as a venture capitalist and entrepreneur in artificial intelligence, blockchain, big data, chatbots and machine learning resulted in tools and products that have revolutionized how users bring agility and agile management into project management software.

Ricardo holds a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Federal Fluminense University in Brazil and an undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering, as well as a master's degree in Industrial Engineering from Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil. He can be contacted at ricardo@ricardo-vargas.com or ricardo-vargas.com or LinkedIn: [com/in/ricardovargas](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ricardovargas).