Project Management Becomes More Digital – and More Human: Five Key Insights from the GPM Seminar Day 2025

Berlin, Germany – September 17, 2025 – Just ahead of the IPMA World Congress in Berlin, the German Project Management Association (GPM) hosted its annual Seminar Day. The event was more than a sequence of workshops. Together, the sessions built a vision of the future of project management: moving away from purely methodological questions toward broader trends that show how projects can succeed in a world of constant change. Five themes stood out clearly, each explored from different perspectives by the speakers.

1. People and Values at the Center

Project management today is far more than coordinating tasks and deadlines. At its core are people – their values, expectations, and conflicts. Franziska Höhne emphasized that traditional hierarchies no longer work in globally distributed teams. Leadership now succeeds through values and relationships, not authority. Christoph Maria Michalski, known as the "Conflict Navigator," demonstrated how his ConflictFLOW system does not smooth over tensions but makes them productive. Jessica Nagel presented real-world scenarios from digital teams: part-time staff who feel excluded or friction arising when managers rely blindly on AI forecasts.

Key insight: People are moving to the center of project management – values, empathy, and dialogue matter more than hierarchy.

2. Resilience and Adaptability

A second trend focuses on the resilience of teams. Three out of four project professionals report that their mental health is affected by projects – a finding highlighted by Karsten Röttger and Anja Zeitschel. Using the "seven pillars of resilience," from optimism and self-responsibility to future orientation, they demonstrated how teams can navigate crises and emerge stronger. Lissi Schlachter added a structural dimension with Objectives and Key Results (OKRs): short cycles, flexible goals, transparent review. Together, these approaches mark a paradigm shift – away from rigid planning, toward systems that can absorb stress and treat change as the norm.

Key insight: Resilience is now a critical resource – blending personal strength with organizational agility.

3. Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence

Few topics loomed as large as digital transformation. Jessica Nagel stressed that "future skills" are about much more than mastering tools: information management, virtual communication, ethical action, and trust in hybrid teams are emerging as core competencies. Uwe Techt, in his session "AI Power," showed how artificial intelligence is already automating reporting, assessing risks, and simulating resources. But he cautioned: AI provides suggestions, while decisions remain human. At the same time, the technology creates new tensions: employees may feel disadvantaged by algorithm-driven task assignments or overlooked when outdated data forecasts dictate action.

Key insight: AI increases efficiency but does not replace human judgment – technology is reshaping collaboration.

4. Transparency and Participation

Where control once dominated, projects today rely on openness. OKRs are a prime example: goals are developed collaboratively, reviewed regularly, and made visible to all. This shifts team dynamics by distributing responsibility. The use of AI also highlights the importance of transparency: black-box risk assessments are not accepted; only explainable indicators create trust. Nagel further noted that virtual teams only function when rules, roles, and information flows are clearly defined. Transparency has become a core principle – it does not replace control, but it creates accountability and enables collaboration on equal terms.

Key insight: Transparency builds trust and shared responsibility – it is replacing traditional top-down control.

5. Projects as Learning and Development Systems

It also became clear that projects are no longer understood solely as a means to deliver results. They are also learning spaces for individuals and organizations. Röttger and Zeitschel showed how resilience lessons can transfer from one project to another. Michalski described conflicts as training grounds for better communication. Schlachter's OKR framework explicitly relies on continuous feedback loops and retrospectives to systematically anchor learning. Projects are becoming development systems where not only products emerge, but competencies grow – from individual team members to the organization as a whole.

Key insight: Projects are platforms for learning – they create outcomes while simultaneously developing competencies.

The Common Thread: Balancing People and Technology

The impulses from the GPM Seminar Day can be summed up in one message: the future of project management will be both more digital and more human. AI, automation, and data analytics boost efficiency, but success depends on values, resilience, conflict capability, and a culture of transparency. Projects are no longer just vehicles for executing strategies; they are also platforms for learning and personal growth. The key to future success lies in balance – between technological progress and human strength.

About GPM and IPMA

GPM (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Projektmanagement e. V.) is the leading competence network for project management in Germany and the GPM is the National Member Association of IPMA in Germany, with over 6,500 members. The International Project Management Association (IPMA) is a global umbrella organization for project management, with member associations in over 70 countries.