

Reimagining Project Management for a New Era ¹

Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez²

Introduction

I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute once again to the *PM World Journal* and to share a new series of monthly articles throughout **2026**. My sincere thanks to **David Pells** for his continued leadership and for inviting me to be part of this global platform that has become a true reference for project professionals around the world.

In this introductory article, I'd like to outline the overarching theme of the series — the *reinvention of project management* — and preview some of the key topics that I will explore in the coming months.

Why Project Management Needs Reinvention

Every major transformation in history — from the building of cities and nations to the creation of new technologies and industries — has happened through projects. Projects have always been the vehicle through which ideas are turned into reality.

Yet, paradoxically, just as the world becomes more project-driven, our profession finds itself struggling to adapt. While organizations now rely on projects to deliver nearly every strategic initiative, **the methods and mindsets we use to manage them were designed for another era** — one of stability, predictability, and control.

We have entered what I call **The Project Economy**: an era where projects are the primary driver of value creation across both business and society. By 2030, more than half of the world's GDP will come from project-based work. But in this new context, project management can no longer be confined to checklists, templates, and Gantt charts. It must evolve into a discipline of **strategic leadership and value creation**.

From Control to Purpose

For the past 50 years, the profession has been shaped around control, process, and compliance. These principles served us well when the world was slower and more linear.

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But they have also created a culture of bureaucracy — where success is measured by adherence to plan rather than impact on purpose.

The new world of work requires something different: **purpose-driven project management**.

This means shifting the focus from “How do we deliver on time and on budget?” to “Why does this project matter?” and “What benefits will it create?”

It also requires new kinds of leadership. The project manager of the future is not a taskmaster, but a **strategic integrator**, someone capable of connecting people, technology, and purpose to deliver real transformation.

Five Shifts Shaping the Future of Project Management

Based on my research, global teaching, and experience working with organizations around the world, I see five major shifts that define the next generation of project management — the ones I will explore in this 2026 series:

- 1. From Process to Purpose**
Projects must start with a clear “why.” Tools like the *Project Canvas* can make purpose explicit, aligning teams and stakeholders around a shared vision.
- 2. From Control to Collaboration**
The best teams today thrive on trust, empowerment, and psychological safety — not hierarchy and reporting. Leadership in projects must become distributed and inclusive.
- 3. From Deliverables to Value**
We need to move beyond tracking outputs to measuring true outcomes — benefits realized, value delivered, and lasting change created.
- 4. From Predictability to Adaptation**
In a volatile world, resilience and learning matter more than rigid planning. Projects must be treated as living systems that evolve continuously.
- 5. From Supervision to Sponsorship**
Project sponsors play a crucial role in enabling success — yet they are often undertrained and underutilized. Developing the “sponsorship muscle” will be one of the most transformative levers for organizations.

The Impact of AI: Toward the Augmented Project Leader

No transformation in our lifetime will reshape project management more profoundly than **artificial intelligence**.

AI takes over repetitive tasks such as reporting, scheduling, and documentation, allowing professionals to focus on what truly matters: **strategy, sensemaking, and stakeholder alignment**.

The rise of AI marks the beginning of the **Augmented Project Leader** — one who combines technology and human insight to deliver smarter, faster, and more meaningful results.

What's Ahead in This Series

Starting in January 2026, I will dive deeper into these topics through a series of monthly articles. Some of the themes I plan to cover include:

- Building a **strategic project portfolio** that connects ambition to execution.
- The rise of **project sponsorship** as a leadership discipline.
- How AI and automation are redefining the **PMO of the future**.
- Designing **adaptive governance** that balances agility with accountability.
- Embedding **benefits realization and impact measurement** into every project.
- Developing the **next generation of project leaders** — capable of leading transformation, not just managing delivery.

Each piece will combine insights from practice, research, and the frameworks I've developed through my work with Hult International Business School, Harvard Business Review, and global organizations navigating major transformation.

A Final Thought

Project management has reached a crossroads. If we continue to do what we've always done, we will deliver the same results. But if we embrace change — purpose, AI, and leadership — we can elevate the profession to its rightful place: as the engine of transformation in the 21st century.

The world doesn't just need project managers. It requires **project leaders** — visionaries capable of connecting strategy with impact, and ideas with execution.

That is the journey I invite you to explore with me in this new series.

Antonio

Disclaimer: ChatGPT was used to support editing and formatting. All substantive content is the author's original work.

About the Author



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Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez, PMI Fellow, is one of the **world's leading experts in Project Management and Strategy Implementation**. He is the author of the "[Harvard Business Review Project Management Handbook](#)" (HBR 2021) and is the **most published author on project management matters in Harvard Business Review**. His upcoming book, [Powered by Projects: Leading Your Organization in the Transformation Age](#), will be published by Harvard Business Review Press in early 2026.

Antonio has brought Project Management to the center of executive leadership, positioning it as a critical capability for transformation in the next decade. He is the creator of influential concepts such as the **Project Economy®**, the **Hierarchy of Purpose®**, and the **Project-Driven Organization™**, which argue that *projects have become the operating system of modern organizations—and the language of future careers*.

His global impact on management and leadership has been recognized by [Thinkers50](#), where he is **the only project management thinker included twice in a row** in the ranking of the world's most influential management thinkers. He is also the recipient of the prestigious **Thinkers50 Ideas Into Practice Award** and a member of the **Marshall Goldsmith 100 Coaches** community.

He was the global Chairman of the Project Management Institute in 2016 and has been recognized as a Fellow of PMI for his contribution to the project management profession. He led the creation of the Brightline Initiative, founded [Projects & Co](#), and co-founded the [Strategy Implementation Institute](#).

His work focuses on advising senior leaders on how to prioritize and implement strategic initiatives and lead transformational change.

Antonio is also the author of “[Lead Successful Projects](#)” (Penguin, 2019), “[The Project Revolution](#)” (LID, 2019). and “[The Focused Organization](#)” (Taylor & Francis, 2014), and has contributed to seven other books. A pioneer and leading authority in teaching and coaching senior executives the art and science of strategy execution and project management. Currently visiting professor at Duke CE, Instituto de Empresa, Solvay, Vlerick, Ecole des Ponts, and Skolkovo.

He is a much-in-demand speaker at events worldwide. Antonio has presented at more than 800 conferences around the world, regularly evaluated as the best speaker. European Business Summit, Strategy Leaders Forum, Gartner Summit, TEDx, and EU Cohesion Policy Conference; are some of the events he has delivered inspirational keynotes.

He is former Sustainability Program Director and Head of Global Program Management Office at GlaxoSmithKline Vaccines. Previously he also served as Head of Project Portfolio Management at BNP Paribas Fortis and Head of Post-Merger Integration at Fortis Bank, leading the acquisition of ABN AMBRO, the largest in financial service history. He also worked for ten years at PricewaterhouseCoopers, becoming the global lead practitioner for project and change management.

Born in Madrid, Spain, and educated in Germany, Mexico, Italy, and the United States, Antonio is fluent in five languages. He is an Economist, has an MBA from London Business School and Insead's IDP. You can follow Antonio through his [LinkedIn Newsletter - Lead Projects Successfully](#). For more information, visit his website at www.antonionietorodriguez.com. He can be reached via email: antonio.nieto.rodriquez@gmail.com