Agentic AI in Project Management: Are We Ready for Autonomous PMs? [1]

Archana Choudhary

Imagine This…

It's a Monday morning, a project manager logs into their project dashboard expecting the flood of updates and actions to be taken. Instead, he finds something different.

- Risks are already identified
- Stakeholders have received tailored updates
- Resource conflicts are resolved as the schedule has been re-optimized based on real-time data

What once required hours of coordination and decision-making has been executed autonomously.

This isn't futuristic vision. It's an early reality of **Agentic AI** in project management.

For decades, project management discipline has evolved through improvements in methodology, tooling and governance. According to the 2018 Pulse of the Profession®, a global survey conducted by Project Management Institute (PMI), reveals around $1 million is wasted every 20 seconds collectively by organizations around the globe due to the ineffective implementation of business strategy through poor project management practices. This equates to roughly $2 trillion dollars wasted a year. The study shows that on average organizations waste 9.9 percent of every dollar* due to poor project performance, and that around one in three projects (31 percent) do not meet their goals. Reference: pulse-of-the-profession-2018-media-release.pdf

This article explores the rise of agentic AI in project management, beginning with how the discipline has evolved to this point, and why is now at the cusp of most significant transformation path.

[1] How to cite this article: Choudhary, A. (2026). Agentic AI in Project Management: Are We Ready for Autonomous PMs?, commentary, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XV, Issue V, May.

What is Agentic AI?

Agentic AI refers to **autonomous artificial intelligence systems** designed to achieve specific goals with minimal human supervision. Unlike traditional AI, which operates within predefined constraints and requires human intervention, agentic AI exhibits **autonomy, adaptability and goal driven behavior**.

These systems leverage **large language models (LLMs)** and generative AI techniques. Generative AI focuses on creating content while agentic AI extends this by using generative outputs to perform complex tasks autonomously.

Unlike traditional AI tools or copilots that assist with tasks, Agentic AI can:

- Make decisions
- Execute multi-step workflows
- Interact with systems and stakeholders
- Adapt dynamically based on outcomes

The Evolution of Project Management

Project Management has never been static; it has continuously evolved alongside technology shifting organization priority.

- **Traditional Era:** Task and schedule management. Traditional methodology often associated with waterfall approaches, emphasized upfront detailed planning, strict adherence to scope, schedule, and cost baseline. Project manager were execution controllers, ensuring that activities were progressing according to plan. While effective for stable and well-defined environments this model struggled with adapting to uncertainty and rapid change scenarios.

- **Agile Era:** Iterative delivery and team facilitation. This era was marked as a significant change, the shift from control to adaptability and collaboration. Frameworks like Scrum and Kanban redefined the role of a project manager as facilitator of value delivery. Iterative development, continuous feedback and customer-centricity became central principles. This era emphasized responsiveness over predictability, recognizing that value delivery emerges through continuous learning and adaptation

- **Digital Era:** Data-driven decision making. As digital transformation accelerated across industries, project management entered the third phase. Advanced tools and platforms

enabled the real-time tracking of performance metrics and enhanced visibility across organization.

- **Agentic AI Era:** Value Orchestration and intelligent oversight. In the emerging paradigm, AI agents can autonomously plan, execute, monitor and optimize project activity. The role of project manager evolves once again, but not as an executor, facilitator, but as a strategic orchestrator who oversees, governs and align autonomous systems with business objectives.

We are moving from managing work to orchestrating intelligence. Each stage has expanded the scope and impact of the project manager. The rise of Agentic AI elevates the role to a new level of strategic importance, while simultaneously challenging long-held assumptions about ownership, accountability and execution.

Where Agentic AI Fits in the Project Lifecycle

Agentic AI has the potential to transform every phase of project lifecycle delivery. It has ability to align actions with desired outcomes while adapting in real-time.

Initiation

Agentic AI can transform initiation into data-enriched, continuously refined process. By ingesting financial data (financial systems, past project repositories, market intelligence), AI agents can autonomously generate draft business cases, identify strategic alignment, and even recommend benefit of projects if they proceed.

This shifts initiation from one-time approval exercise to continuously validated decision layer. For example, in a large enterprise IT organization, an AI agent could analyze prior infrastructure, corelate it with cost savings, incident reduction metrics, and prepare a proposal to deliver measurable ROI. It can map stakeholders by analyzing communication pattern and organizational structure that may impact project success.

Planning

Agentic AI introduces the concept of living plans, dynamic systems that continuously evolve based on real-time inputs. Instead of manually building schedules, project managers can define objectives and constraints, allowing AI agents to generate optimized plans that account for dependencies, resource availability and risk probability. Most importantly, as execution progresses, the agent continuously recalibrates the plan, adjusting timelines and resource allocations without waiting for periodic reviews.

Execution

This is the phase where Agentic AI begins to demonstrate its most visible impact. Execution becomes partially autonomous. AI agents can:

- Assign and reprioritizes tasks in real time
- Trigger workflows across tools and platforms
- Resolve minor blocker autonomously
- Send automated nudges and updates

Monitoring & Control

This phase has traditionally relied on periodic status updates, dashboards and manual analysis. By the time, a risk is formally identified, it has often begun to impact the project.

Agentic AI changes the paradigm by enabling predictive and proactive control. By continuously analyzing patterns across data streams like task completion rates, system performance, team velocity, external dependencies, AI agents can identify early warning signals and intervene before issue escalates.

This moves project control from lagging indicators to leading intelligence.

Closure

This phase is often treated as procedural phase. In practice, valuable insights are often lost or underutilized.

Agentic AI elevates closure into continuously learning engine. AI agents can automatically

- Generate report and insights
- Captures lesson learned into knowledge systems by identifying patterns across success and failure
- Feed insights into future project initiation and planning

When reviewed holistically, Agentic AI connects and optimizes the entire lifecycle as an integrated system. Each phase creates a continuous loop of learning, adaptation and execution.

- Initiation becomes **data-driven and dynamic**
- Planning becomes **adaptive and self-correcting**
- Execution becomes **autonomous and coordinated**
- Monitoring becomes **predictive and proactive**
- Closure becomes **intelligence and self-improving**

Benefits vs. Risks of Agentic AI in Project Management

The Benefits Why Organizations Are Accelerating Adoption

1. **Compression of Decision Cycle:** One of the most immediate advantages of Agentic AI is the ability to dramatically reduce the time between insight and action.
   According to McKinsey & Company, organizations that effectively integrate AI into operations can improve productivity by **up to 40%** largely driven by faster and effective decision making.

2. **Predictive Risk Management:** Research from Gartner suggests that AI-driven predictive analytics can enable earlier risk detection

3. **Operation Efficiency and Cost Optimization:** The project management institute estimates that organizations waste nearly **9-11%** investments due to poor project performance. Agentic AI has the potential to reclaim a substantial portion of this lost value.

4. **Scalability of Project Execution:** As organizations grow, managing multiple projects and portfolio becomes exponentially complex. AI agents can simultaneously manage multiple workflows, coordinate across distributed teams, and ensure consistency in execution standards.

The Risks: A Necessary Realty Check

While the benefits are compelling, Agentic AI introduces new complexities that organization cannot ignore:

Over Reliance on AI

A study by Harvard Business Review Don't Let AI Destroy the Skills That Make Your Company Competitive highlights that exercises dependence on AI can reduce critical thinking and human oversight. Blind trust on automation can lead to failures. Over reliance can lead to this blind spot in complex and rare scenarios.

Data Bias and Quality Issues

AI decisions are only as good as the data they learn from. This system is fundamentally dependent on the data they are trained and operated. Poor data quality can easily lead to unintentional bias.

Loss of Human Judgement

Nuanced, high-stakes decisions still require human context and experience. Not all decisions should be automated. Projects often involve ambiguity, competing stakeholder interests.

Accountability Gap

When AI acts autonomously, who owns the accountability. According to Deloitte, AI trends: Adoption barriers and updated predictions | Deloitte US establishing AI governance and accountability frameworks in one of the top challenges organization faces in scaling AI adoption

A Practical Framework: The AIM Model for Agentic PM

To navigate this transformation, organization and PMs can adopt a structural approach. A framework that balances innovation with control, and autonomy with accountability.

AIM Framework

A (Augment)

Leverage AI for Insights, forecasting and recommendation. AI can analyze historic project data and augmentation can improve the quality and speed of decision-making.

I (Integrate)

Embed AI into workflows, tools and decision making. Integration involves connecting AI agents with enterprise tools such as project management platforms, DevOps pipeline, and infrastructure environments.

M (Monitor)

Establish governance to validate, control and continuously improve AI actions

The goal is to elevate human leadership through intelligent systems. One of the most critical aspects of this phase is defining clear accountability structure. Even when AI executes decisions, human leaders must retain ownership of outcomes.

Agentic AI success depends not only on the algorithm, but on the ability of organization to build governance and new leadership capability. Frameworks like AIM provide a pathway forward, but also underscore a broader truth. In a world where machine can optimize and process at scale, the human quality becomes even more critical.

About the Author

Archana Choudhary

Florida & Texas, USA

Archana Choudhary is Vice President at Deutsche Bank, with over 20 years of experience in IT project management. She is recognized expert in strategy execution, PMO leadership, and project portfolio management having led complex initiatives including bank acquisitions and mergers, as well as Agile transformations that unified siloed teams and stabilized fluctuating priorities under robust PMO structures.

A frequent speaker, author, and PMP mentor, Archana has contributed to PMI global standards and delivered presentations at various PMI chapters, including Dallas, Carolina, North East Florida, Miami Conference, Global Summit, Agile Asia Pacific symposium, among others.

She is an award-winning project management professional, honored at various platforms like Women in Tech as Global Technology Leader, PMI Phoenix. Recognized for leadership excellence, influence and strengthening professional PM communities, contributing to advancing women in project management.

Archana also serves as a judge for prestigious international awards, including PMI PMO Awards, startups and is regarded as a thought leader in the field. She can be contacted at www.linkedin.com/in/archana-choudhary-690875b0