

Closing the Foresight Gap: An AI-Enabled Governance Model for Enterprise Transformation Programmes ¹

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Abstract

Enterprise digital transformation programmes represent some of the most significant organisational investments in modern business. Yet research consistently indicates that approximately 70 percent of large-scale transformation programmes fail to deliver expected outcomes on time, within budget, or with intended benefits realised. This paper argues that the primary cause of this persistent failure is not technical capability or methodology, but a structural governance deficit: the inability of traditional Programme Management Offices to convert programme data into timely, predictive intelligence for decision makers.

The author introduces the Foresight Gap, defined as the delay between when a programme's data first signals a problem and when leadership is positioned to act on it. The paper presents the Brightmind Foresight Framework, a four-stage AI-enabled governance operating model built to close this gap. Drawing on eighteen years of direct programme delivery experience across enterprise transformation programmes with combined values exceeding \$900 million, the author argues that closing the Foresight Gap represents the single highest-leverage governance intervention available to transformation leaders.

Keywords: *transformation governance, programme management office, AI-enabled PMO, Foresight Gap, predictive governance, enterprise transformation, decision intelligence*

1. Introduction

Every failed transformation programme had the signal months before the slip.

That is the uncomfortable conclusion I have reached after eighteen years of leading Programme Management Offices on large-scale enterprise transformation initiatives across multiple industries and geographies. I have sat in steering committees explaining

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why a milestone has slipped. I have reviewed RAID logs that contained, in quiet and unassuming language, an entry raised weeks earlier and never acted upon. I have watched capable, experienced teams deliver technically accurate status reports on programmes that were already in serious trouble.

The data knew. The governance did not listen.

This paper is about that gap. It has a name: the Foresight Gap. And it is, in my experience, the single most under addressed failure mechanism in enterprise transformation delivery.

The purpose of this paper is to do three things: to define the Foresight Gap precisely, to explain why traditional governance structures cannot close it, and to introduce the Brightmind Foresight Framework, the four-stage AI-enabled governance operating model I have developed to address it. My previous article in this journal, "The Human Edge in Complex Programmes" (Olaghere, 2025), addressed the human dimensions of programme leadership. This paper addresses the structural and analytical dimensions: the governance architecture that either enables or prevents leaders from acting on what their programmes already know.

2. The Scale of the Problem: Why Transformation Governance is Failing

The failure rate of large-scale transformation programmes is one of the best-documented and least-resolved problems in professional project management. Research by McKinsey and Company consistently places the failure rate of large transformation initiatives at approximately 70 percent, measured against expected outcomes on time, within budget, and with intended benefits realised. The Standish Group's CHAOS Report, tracking IT project outcomes for more than three decades, reaches comparable conclusions.

At an aggregate level, this represents a substantial and recurring loss of enterprise value, with failed or underperforming transformation programmes contributing to billions of dollars in unrealised productivity across global markets.

These figures have remained stubbornly consistent for years despite significant advances in project management methodology, certification, tooling, and practitioner education. Their persistence suggests that the root cause is not what the profession has traditionally assumed it to be.

2.1 What the conventional explanations miss

The most commonly cited causes of transformation failure are familiar: poor change management, weak executive sponsorship, scope creep, vendor underperformance, and

cultural resistance. These are all real contributors. But in my experience, they are symptoms of a deeper structural failure in how transformation programmes are governed. They are what failure looks like when it arrives. They are not why it arrived.

The underlying problem in almost every case is not the absence of good people, good tools, or sound methodology. It is a governance model fundamentally designed to look backward. Traditional PMO functions are built to explain what has already happened. They produce status reports describing last week. They record risks that someone has already recognised and articulated. They escalate issues after those issues have already impacted delivery.

The discipline of programme governance, as most organisations currently practise it, is a retrospective discipline applied to a forward-moving problem.

2.2 The three root failure modes

Based on my delivery experience, three structural failures account for the overwhelming majority of transformation delivery problems.

The first is plans that do not stack up. The integrated programme plan often appears coherent at the milestone level and breaks down when delivery begins. Critical path activities are assumed rather than scheduled. Dependencies between workstreams are implicit rather than explicit. The plan reads well in a steering committee pack and fractures under contact with reality.

The second is dependencies that nobody owns. In a programme of any real complexity, the most dangerous dependencies are not the ones recorded in the dependency log. They emerge laterally between workstreams that were not expected to need each other: a data migration that depends on a finance approval that depends on an organisational design decision that has not yet been made. These dependencies are visible in the aggregate programme data long before they are visible to the programme team.

The third, and most damaging, is decisions that are postponed until the contingency is gone. Leaders avoid difficult choices about scope, resourcing, and vendor performance because the immediate costs feel high. Each week of delay quietly consumes a week of programme contingency. By the time the decision is finally made, there is no buffer left to absorb it. The programme is rebaselined. Then it is rebaselined again.

Decision velocity is the most under-managed lever in transformation governance. Most contingency is not lost to unforeseen risk. It is lost to foreseen risks that nobody acted on in time.

3. Introducing the Foresight Gap

These three failure modes share a common mechanism: a delay between when the programme's data first signals a problem and when leadership is positioned to act on it. I call this the Foresight Gap.

The Foresight Gap is not a failure of information. Most transformation programmes generate substantial data: risk registers, resource plans, financial forecasts, dependency maps, schedule updates, and workstream status narratives. The problem is that this data sits in fragmented, disconnected tools, read by different people for different purposes, never systematically integrated or analysed as a unified signal.

The Foresight Gap is therefore a failure of intelligence architecture. The programme knows more than the governance structure allows leadership to see.

3.1 A practitioner example

On a global manufacturing transformation I supported, the System Integrator's contract covered Train the Trainer delivery only. There was no agreed owner for end-user training delivery, and the training materials being produced were not receiving sign-off from Business Subject Matter Experts. I raised this dependency gap as a risk on multiple occasions. Each time it was acknowledged. Each time it was not acted upon.

The signal was unambiguous in the programme data. Training sat on the critical path. The handoff between System Integrator delivery and end-user readiness had no assigned owner. The sign-off process for materials was broken. Anyone with access to the integrated data could see, weeks in advance, that training was going to slip, and that when it slipped, it would take the go-live with it.

That programme was rebaselined four times. The training risk I raised in week one became, in a more formal register, the official root cause cited in week forty. The data had known. The governance had not been built to listen.

This pattern is not unusual. Across multiple industries and geographies, I have seen the future of a programme written in its data weeks or months before it became visible to leadership. The Foresight Gap was open, and no mechanism existed to close it.

4. Why Traditional PMO Structures Cannot Close the Foresight Gap

The traditional PMO is a reporting function. Its primary outputs are highlight reports, RAID logs, dashboard updates, and steering committee packs. These are valuable artefacts.

They are also, by design, retrospective. They describe the state of the programme as it was when the data was collected, typically one to two weeks before the report is read.

Four structural limitations prevent traditional PMO functions from closing the Foresight Gap:

- **Fragmented data:** Programme data is distributed across multiple platforms including spreadsheets, project management tools, financial systems, and enterprise applications. No unified view exists, so no unified analysis is possible.
- **Retrospective orientation:** Reports describe events that have already occurred. By the time an issue appears in a highlight report, it has typically been developing in the data for weeks.
- **Manual signal detection:** The identification of risks depends on individual practitioners recognising and articulating concerns. Risks that emerge from the intersection of multiple data streams, or that nobody has yet noticed, are invisible to manual processes.
- **Decision latency:** Even when risks are identified, the journey from identification to executive awareness to decision can take multiple reporting cycles. In a programme where each week of delay costs contingency, this latency is expensive.

These are not failures of effort or competence. They are architectural limitations. The traditional PMO was designed for a world of periodic reporting and manual governance. It was not designed for the volume, velocity, and complexity of data that a modern enterprise transformation programme generates.

5. The Brightmind Foresight Framework

The Brightmind Foresight Framework is an AI-enabled governance operating model designed to close the Foresight Gap by combining traditional PMO discipline with applied artificial intelligence. It is not a replacement for the PMO. It is an extension of it: one that transforms the governance function from a retrospective reporting operation into a predictive intelligence system.

The framework is organised into four continuous stages that run throughout the life of every programme it supports. These are not sequential phases. They form a continuous loop, each feeding the next.

5.1 Stage One: Sense

The Sense stage consolidates fragmented programme data from multiple sources into a single transformation intelligence layer. Every programme artefact is treated as a stream of signal: schedules, RAID logs, resource plans, financial trackers, dependency maps, and critically, the language used in weekly status report narratives.

Most governance functions read status narratives for factual content: what has been completed, what is at risk, what actions are open. The Sense stage reads them as signal. A shift in language, a pattern of hedging, or a recurring mention of a specific workstream can indicate a concern not yet formally articulated. Treating the narrative layer of programme reporting as data is one of the most underexploited opportunities in transformation governance.

The output of Sense is not a report. It is a continuously refreshed picture of the programme estate, richer and more integrated than any single tool in the governance infrastructure can produce.

5.2 Stage Two: Predict

The Predict stage applies AI and analytical techniques to the integrated intelligence layer to identify patterns, early warning signals, and emerging delivery risks before they surface through conventional reporting channels.

This includes identifying dependency gaps that will cause milestone slippage before either workstream lead has raised a formal concern; detecting resource capacity constraints affecting delivery windows three to four weeks in advance; identifying financial variance trends that indicate forecast deterioration before period-end reporting; and flagging sentiment shifts in status narratives that correlate historically with escalation risk.

The Predict stage does not eliminate uncertainty. What it does is compress the Foresight Gap: reducing the interval between when the data signals a problem and when a human being with decision-making authority becomes aware of it.

5.3 Stage Three: Decide

Predictive intelligence is only valuable if it reaches the right person, at the right level of abstraction, in time to act. The Decide stage translates the outputs of the Predict stage into decision-ready intelligence for programme leadership.

This means presenting a risk not as a data observation but as a decision question. Instead of reporting that a dependency log contains an unresolved item, the Decide stage

presents it as: this dependency, if unresolved by a specific date, will delay this milestone by an estimated number of weeks and consume this proportion of the remaining programme contingency. Leadership receives the information required to make a fast, informed decision, not a status update that invites further analysis.

The Decide stage is where the Foresight Gap is actually closed. Sensing and predicting are preconditions. The gap closes when a leader acts on an accurate, timely signal before the contingency is consumed. In practical terms, this stage converts governance from observation into action, which is the point at which programme outcomes are materially influenced.

5.4 Stage Four: Learn

The Learn stage closes the loop. Delivery outcomes are fed back into the analytical models that power the Predict stage, creating an adaptive system that improves in accuracy over time and across programmes.

This is what distinguishes the Foresight Framework from a static governance methodology. Each engagement provides evidence that refines the predictive capability for subsequent programmes. Over time, the framework becomes more effective precisely because it has been used.

6. Research Foundation and Intellectual Lineage

The Foresight Framework has a traceable intellectual lineage extending to primary empirical research conducted in 2013. My MBA dissertation at Durham University Business School, published independently on Zenodo (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17122283), examined project management competencies and project success in the rail industry through primary fieldwork at Transport for London and Bombardier Transportation. Among the key findings: effective decision-making was empirically identified as one of the most significant predictors of project success, above both technical competence and process adherence.

That finding established a research question I have been working on ever since: if decision-making effectiveness is the top predictor of success, and if most governance structures are not designed to support timely, high-quality decisions, what governance model would be?

The Brightmind Foresight Framework is my answer to that question, twelve years after it was first posed. The formal white paper, "Closing the Foresight Gap: An AI-Enabled

Operating Model for Enterprise Transformation Governance," published through Brightmind Consultancy in 2025, establishes the full conceptual and methodological foundations for professional and academic reference.

7. Practical Implications for PMO Practitioners

The Brightmind Foresight Framework is a comprehensive operating model, but its underlying principles can be applied incrementally by any PMO practitioner regardless of current tools or AI capability. The following represent practical starting points.

7.1 Treat status narratives as data

Begin reading your programme's weekly status narratives not just for factual content but for signal. Train yourself to notice shifts in language, the introduction of hedging terms, the quiet reframing of risks as assumptions. These are early indicators that require no AI capability to detect, only a shift in how the PMO reads what it already receives.

7.2 Map the gap between signal and decision

In your next programme governance review, ask a simple question: when was this risk first visible in the programme data, and when did leadership first make a decision about it? The interval between these two points is your Foresight Gap. Measuring it is the first step to closing it.

7.3 Reframe RAID management as intelligence, not administration

The RAID log is one of the most underexploited governance assets in transformation delivery. In most programmes it is maintained as an administrative record. Reframing it as an intelligence asset, by tracking the velocity of risk movement, the age of unresolved issues, and recurring patterns across workstreams, transforms it from a compliance document into a predictive instrument.

7.4 Build decision questions, not status updates

The most direct way to begin closing the Foresight Gap without any technology investment is to change what the PMO presents to leadership. Replace status updates with decision questions. Instead of "Risk 47 remains open," present "Risk 47 will consume three weeks of contingency if not resolved by Thursday. The decision required is X. Options are A, B, or C." This reframing, applied consistently, will improve decision velocity on any programme.

8. Conclusion

The Foresight Gap is the governance profession's most consequential unsolved problem. It is the mechanism through which capable teams, with adequate tools and sound methodologies, still deliver programmes that fail. It is present on every transformation programme I have worked on. It is present, in some form, on every large programme currently in delivery.

Closing it does not require a wholesale replacement of existing PMO practice. It requires an extension of it: one that integrates programme data more completely, applies analytical intelligence to that data systematically, and presents the resulting insight to leadership in a form that enables faster and better decisions.

The Brightmind Foresight Framework offers one structured approach to achieving that extension. But the principle it embodies is available to every practitioner today, regardless of tools or technology. The programme's data is trying to tell you something. The governance model is your mechanism for listening. Build it to listen early, and act on what it hears before the contingency runs out.

That is the discipline of foresight. And it is what separates the programmes that succeed from the ones that do not.

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10. AI Declaration

Elements of this paper were supported by the use of AI tools, for structuring, editing and refining language. All concepts, insights, and conclusions are based on the author's professional experience and independent analysis.

About the Author



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Joyce Olaghère is an Enterprise Transformation Governance Specialist with over eighteen years of experience leading Programme Management Office functions on large-scale digital transformation programmes across multinational organisations in the healthcare, nuclear energy, financial services, telecommunications, luxury retail, media, and public infrastructure sectors. Her engagements have supported programmes with a combined investment exceeding \$900 million across operations in the United Kingdom, United States, Germany and Netherlands.

Joyce is the Founder and CEO of Brightmind Consultancy, where she developed the Brightmind Foresight Framework, an AI-enabled governance model designed to improve transformation outcomes by enabling predictive, intelligence-led decision-making. She holds an MBA from Durham University Business School. She can be contacted at joyceolaghère@gmail.com and via LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/in/joyceolaghèrepmspecialist](https://www.linkedin.com/in/joyceolaghèrepmspecialist).