On the First Global Standard for Artificial Intelligence in Project Management: What It Is, Why It Matters, and What It Changes[1]

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

11 June 2026

Re: On the Subject of a Global Standard for AI in Project Management

Dear David,

On June 9, 2026, the Project Management Institute published The Standard for Artificial Intelligence in Portfolio, Program, and Project Management (ISBN 978-1-62825-891-2). Maybe most project management practitioners are not yet aware of its existence. They should be.

This is the first globally recognized, consensus-based professional standard dedicated to defining how artificial intelligence should be adopted, governed, and integrated across portfolio, program, and project management. Developed through PMI's rigorous voluntary consensus process and spanning about 300 pages, it is structured around seven substantive sections.

The foundation is a set of eight principles: strategic value alignment, AI-specific risk management, governance and compliance, people and culture readiness, ethics and professional responsibility, stakeholder engagement, continuous optimization and innovation, and data quality. These are not aspirational statements — they are the normative backbone from which all other guidance derives.

Built upon those principles are five performance domains, each with defined activities, interdependencies, and outcome criteria: Managing Stakeholder Expectations About AI; Defining the Scope for AI; Designing AI Architecture With Quality and Reliability; Executing Strategic AI Goals; and Managing AI Risks and Uncertainties. The standard then maps a seven-phase AI life cycle — from initiation and planning through data collection, model development, deployment, monitoring, optimization, and end-of-life — and provides tailoring guidance for predictive, adaptive, and hybrid PPPM approaches.

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A dedicated section addresses the legal and ethical landscape in depth, including data governance, intellectual property, accountability, and the evolving global regulatory environment.

Two structural choices deserve special mention. First, the standard explicitly models AI along an Automation–Assistance–Augmentation continuum, from routine task automation to full human-capability augmentation — establishing a shared conceptual language for how human and machine intelligence interact across the management spectrum. Second, and crucially, it frames AI as both a tool for managing PPPM and a deliverable to be managed through PPPM, providing the organizing logic that practitioners and organizations have been missing.

Why this Standard is disruptive? Until June 9, 2026, any organization integrating AI into its project management practices was doing so without a globally recognized professional reference. That absence was not merely an inconvenience — it was a governance gap with real consequences for risk, accountability, and organizational value delivery. This standard closes that gap, and in doing so, it changes several things at once. For project managers and PMO professionals, it redefines the baseline of professional competence. Managing AI-driven projects or AI-enabled workflows without reference to a recognized standard will increasingly be indefensible — much as managing projects without reference to any established framework was a generation ago. The standard will become the reference point for professional development curricula, competency frameworks, and certification programs.

For organizations, it provides the governance architecture that internal AI strategies have largely lacked: a principled, structured approach to AI adoption that is auditable, scalable, and aligned with regulatory expectations. This is particularly significant in the context of the EU AI Act, which is progressively entering into force and imposes stringent governance, transparency, and accountability requirements on high-risk AI systems — many of which operate directly within project and portfolio contexts. A professional management standard aligned with that regulatory trajectory is not a convenience: it will become a compliance enabler. For the project management community as a whole, the signal is unambiguous: AI in PPPM has crossed the threshold from early adoption and experimentation into professional standardization. Standards shape professions. This one will.

A personal perspective: on stakeholders, and on convergence. I had the privilege of contributing to this Standard as a Contributor and Reviewer. My contribution naturally concentrated on the aspects relating to stakeholder management, an area to which I have devoted substantial research and practice over the years. That focus was not incidental. The standard's treatment of stakeholder engagement is, in my view, one of its most consequential dimensions. Managing stakeholder expectations about AI — the first

and in many ways most foundational of the five performance domains — is not simply a communication exercise. It is a governance act. AI systems alter the distribution of perceived value, risk, and control among all project stakeholders; failing to manage those dynamics with rigor and intentionality is one of the most predictable routes to AI adoption failure, regardless of technical quality.

Some readers of this Journal will know that I have been developing and publishing on the relationship between stakeholder management and generative AI for the past two years. And for those who wish to explore the theoretical foundations more deeply, my book The Stakeholder Perspective, Second Edition (Taylor & Francis/Routledge, ISBN 978-1-041-14837-1) has just been published, offering a comprehensive framework for stakeholder value management that speaks directly to the challenges this standard addresses. The convergence is not coincidental. It reflects where the profession is heading.

Sincerely yours,

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