Governance Takes Center Stage: São Paulo's Project Management Market at Mid-2026 [1]

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Introduction

This report revisits the three recurring angles established in this author's February 2026 baseline for the São Paulo region: governance maturity, delivery capacity, and market professionalization (do Carmo, 2026a). It updates each angle using developments observed through the first half of 2026 and, where relevant, the opening weeks of the third quarter. The report closes two items flagged earlier in the year: the VMO Summit 2026, treated as an observable signal of the PMO-to-VMO discussion, and the July 2026 PMP® examination transition, identified in the April report as a development to watch (do Carmo, 2026b). It also reviews selected project management events whose agendas illuminate the broader Brazilian conversation. Because public event programs and training offerings are market signals rather than audited maturity data, the conclusions below are framed as evidence of direction, not as a statistical measurement of adoption.

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1. Returning to the Baseline

In February 2026, this column introduced three recurring angles for observing the São Paulo project management market: governance maturity, delivery capacity, and market professionalization (do Carmo, 2026a). Six months later, governance has moved most visibly. The PMBOK® Guide, Eighth Edition explicitly includes governance among its seven project management performance domains (PMI, 2025a), while artificial intelligence has become more prominent in standards, credentialing, training, and event agendas.

Delivery capacity and market professionalization have also changed, although the evidence at mid-year is more concrete for credentialing and capability-building than for labor-market outcomes. The sections below therefore distinguish official data and program information from this author's interpretation of what those signals may mean for the São Paulo market.

2. Angle (a): Governance Maturity and the VMO Question

São Paulo's portfolio and risk management practices continued a pattern already visible in February: larger organizations increasingly frame project governance in terms of value delivery rather than schedule and cost compliance alone. This orientation was the explicit premise of VMO Summit 2026, held in São Paulo on May 12-13. In its fourth edition, the event was presented by UGlocal as a national gathering focused on value-creation strategies, bringing together leaders from projects, processes, technology, innovation, strategy, transformation, and operations (UGLOCAL, 2026). Its continuity and breadth are useful indicators that the PMO-to-VMO discussion has become more institutionalized in Brazil's management community.

Comparison with 2025 should remain at the level of event discourse rather than company-by-company maturity. The 2025 Summit emphasized foundational questions about the VMO concept and featured practitioners from organizations including Yamaha, Braskem, Philips, Itaú Unibanco, Dasa, Copel, and Mercado Livre (UGLOCAL, 2025). The 2026 edition continued the discussion with a stronger emphasis on value strategy and organizational integration. That evolution suggests a maturing conversation; it does not, by itself, demonstrate that participating organizations have completed a transition from PMO to VMO.

A second VMO-focused event, the VMO Starters Summit, was held in São Paulo on June 25-26 for organizations and practitioners at earlier stages of the value-management journey (BLUEPRINTT, 2026a). The coexistence of an established VMO Summit and an introductory-format event suggests that the topic now addresses more than one maturity level within the market.

An academic editorial published in Revista de Gestão e Projetos frames the VMO as an emerging governance model rather than merely a rebranding exercise. Silva and Rosamilha (2025) describe the VMO as a structure intended to integrate value management with strategic execution, while noting that conceptual development and empirical evidence remain incomplete. This caution is important for the Brazilian market: event growth and executive interest indicate momentum, but reliable adoption rates and outcome data are still scarce. The next stage of the discussion should therefore move from definitions and conference visibility to evidence of how VMOs alter prioritization, benefit realization, and strategic decision-making.

3. Angle (b): Delivery Capacity and the PMP Exam Transition

The talent gap identified in February remains a major constraint on delivery capacity, although a global projection should not be read as a São Paulo-specific forecast. PMI's 2025 Global Project Management Talent Gap report estimates a worldwide project workforce of approximately 39.6 million in 2025 and projects that demand could rise by as much as 64% by 2035, producing a shortfall of up to 29.8 million qualified professionals under the high-growth scenario (PMI, 2025b). Construction, manufacturing, and IT services, all materially represented in São Paulo's economy, are among the sectors facing substantial demand growth.

The most concrete development of the period was the PMP® examination transition on July 9, 2026, previously identified in the April report as an open question (do Carmo, 2026b). PMI's revised Examination Content Outline significantly redistributed the domains: People fell from 42% to 33%, Process from 50% to 41%, and Business Environment rose from 8% to 26%. The updated examination comprises 180 questions, including 170 scored items and 10 unscored pretest items, to be completed over 240 minutes (PMI, 2026a; PMI, 2026b). The revised outline also expands case- and scenario-based assessment and includes graphic-based and point-and-click formats. PMI's job task analysis incorporates artificial intelligence and sustainability into the contexts in which project professionals are expected to work (PMI, 2026b).

The significance of the reweighting is not that Business Environment replaces technical execution; People and Process still account for 74% of the assessment. Rather, the change makes it harder to separate delivery competence from governance, compliance, organizational change, strategic alignment, and benefit realization. For candidates and employers, the credential now tests more explicitly whether a project manager can connect execution decisions to the environment in which value is created.

The immediate implication for São Paulo's training ecosystem is structural rather than yet statistically measurable. Courses and practice examinations aligned with the previous weighting must devote substantially more attention to business context and governance, while instructors must prepare candidates for richer scenarios and visual information. It is too early to claim measured changes in candidate behavior or pass rates, but the direction of adaptation is clear from the official examination design.

4. Angle (c): Market Professionalization

The professionalization landscape in São Paulo widened through concrete capability-building activity during the first half of 2026. PMI São Paulo offered an official PMI-PMOCP® preparatory program from May 5 to 28, focused on leading and evolving strategic PMOs, in partnership with other Brazilian chapters (PMI SÃO PAULO, 2026a). From May 18 to June 10, the chapter also ran a course on generative artificial intelligence for project management, covering automation, reporting, data use, risk analysis, and no-code tools (PMI SÃO PAULO, 2026b). These offerings extend development beyond conventional PMP exam preparation into two areas central to this report: governance structures and applied digital capability.

In this author's assessment, credentials work best when embedded in a development ecosystem comprising formal education, supervised practice, community engagement, and continuous learning. Where credentials accumulate without proportional delivery capability, organizations risk certified résumés outpacing actual governance and execution maturity. The issue is not the expansion of credentialing itself, but whether training is connected to workplace practice and to governance mechanisms that convert knowledge into results. Programs centered on strategic PMOs and applied AI are encouraging precisely because they address capability, not only test readiness.

5. Semester in Review and Early Q3: Major Project Management Events in Brazil

Beyond São Paulo specifically, the first half of 2026, together with the opening weeks of the third quarter, produced a dense calendar of national and international project management events. Four clusters stand out, not as a representative sample of the entire profession, but as observable agenda signals related to governance, value delivery, and artificial intelligence.

Value and portfolio governance. Alongside the VMO Summit and VMO Starters Summit already discussed, São Paulo's June conference calendar included a Governance, Risk & Compliance Summit on June 10 (BLUEPRINTT, 2026b). The appearance of governance, risk, compliance, and value management as stand-alone conference themes suggests that they are moving beyond subsidiary tracks within broader project or agility events.

National congress. The CBGPL, Congresso Brasileiro de Gestão, Projetos e Liderança, held in Gramado, Rio Grande do Sul, from April 28 to 30, brought together the Brazilian PMI chapter network and a senior speaker roster. The official program included Ricardo Vargas, Carolina Boros, Carolina Latorre, Mario Trentim, and Alice Altissimo, among others (CBGPL, 2026). Their roles across consulting, central banking, PMI leadership, and aerospace illustrate the breadth of the governance and value conversation. More importantly than the prominence of individual speakers, the program placed strategy, leadership, transformation, and execution on the same national platform.

Project controls and AI. Project Controls Expo Brasil, held in São Paulo on April 14-15, included sessions on artificial intelligence for project maturity assessment, presented through a Vale case, and on context graphs in project contract administration (PROJECT CONTROLS EXPO, 2026). These topics show AI-governance discourse moving into the operational disciplines of project controls, contractual information, and decision support. The evidence here is still agenda-level: it shows what practitioners are discussing, not yet what performance improvements have been achieved.

International exchange. PMI São Paulo's Giga Projects: Americas Exchange, held online on July 15, convened project professionals from Brazil, Canada, the United States, and Mexico to discuss planning, governance, and delivery in large sporting events (SYMPLA, 2026). Although smaller in format than the national congresses, it positioned the São Paulo chapter in direct dialogue with peers across the Americas on large-scale program delivery.

Taken together, these programs and events provide further evidence of a broader pattern: governance and artificial intelligence are moving from specialist subjects toward recurring organizing themes in Brazil's project management conversation. The claim should remain proportional to the evidence. Conference agendas demonstrate attention and institutional activity; they do not by themselves establish market-wide maturity or successful adoption. That distinction should guide future reporting.

6. Closing

The three angles set out in February have each moved during the first half of 2026, although at different speeds. Delivery capacity absorbed a major credentialing shift through the PMP examination transition. The increase in Business Environment from 8% to 26% is a clear signal that strategic context and governance matter more explicitly within qualification, while People and Process remain the majority of the assessment (PMI, 2026a; PMI, 2026b). Market professionalization widened through strategic PMO and AI capability programs. Governance, however, is the strongest cross-cutting theme, visible in the PMBOK 8 performance-domain structure, VMO event discourse, national congress programming, and project-controls agendas.

As this column has argued before, speed without governance is not acceleration; it is unmanaged risk arriving faster. At mid-2026, that principle is increasingly relevant to the adoption of artificial intelligence in project delivery. The observable market is moving quickly, but evidence of sustained organizational outcomes still lags behind the visibility of events, courses, and new terminology. Forthcoming contributions will therefore shift toward featured and peer-reviewed research on project governance and AI applied to project management, with particular attention to the Brazilian market. The open question is not whether these themes have reached the agenda, but whether governance structures will convert them into measurable value.

7. Disclosures, Use of AI

(1) Disclosures. The author declares no conflicts of interest. (2) Use of AI. Large language models from OpenAI and Anthropic assisted with drafting, source checking, and language editing. The author reviewed and verified all content; no confidential or proprietary data were provided to the models; all third-party ideas are cited; and the tools are not listed as authors or responsible for the claims.

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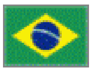

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