

Artificial Intelligence and the Technical Program Manager: How AI Changes Organizational Value Creation ¹

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing how organizations produce, analyze, and communicate information. As the cost of generating information declines, organizational value begins to shift from information production toward the ability to interpret information, develop shared understanding, coordinate action, and make sound decisions. This shift has important implications for the role of the Technical Program Manager.

Building on themes introduced in PMI's *The Standard for Artificial Intelligence in Portfolio, Program, and Project Management*, this paper examines how artificial intelligence changes where organizations create value and, consequently, where Technical Program Managers create value.

Rather than proposing a new framework or competency model, the paper offers a practitioner perspective on the changing economics of information and the growing importance of interpretation, governance, coordination, and judgment as information work becomes increasingly automated.

Within that environment, the enduring value of the Technical Program Manager lies in helping organizations transform information into shared understanding, coordinated action, and better decisions.

1. AI Changes the Economics of Information

PMI's *The Standard for Artificial Intelligence in Portfolio, Program, and Project Management* provides guidance for applying artificial intelligence within portfolio, program, and project management. A complementary question is what happens to organizational value as artificial intelligence changes the work itself—and what that means for Technical Program Managers.

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Every major technological shift changes where organizations create value.

For decades, organizations have invested heavily in acquiring, analyzing, organizing, and communicating information. Information was expensive to produce and difficult to scale. Much of knowledge work therefore centered on generating reports, synthesizing data, documenting decisions, and sharing information across teams. The ability to produce timely, accurate information often distinguished high-performing organizations from the rest.

Tasks that once required hours of research, analysis, and documentation can now be completed in minutes. The capabilities of artificial intelligence will continue to evolve, but one trend is already apparent: producing information is becoming significantly less expensive.

The implications extend beyond productivity. Technological change also alters the economics of the work it affects.

When the cost of producing something falls, attention tends to move toward the activities that create greater value. Artificial intelligence appears to be following the same pattern. Information can now be produced at a scale and speed that were previously difficult or expensive to achieve.

Information itself is not becoming less important. It is becoming less scarce.

That changes the source of advantage. Producing more information is less differentiating when everyone can produce more of it. What matters increasingly is how effectively an organization interprets information, develops a common understanding of what it means, and translates that understanding into decisions and coordinated action.

FIGURE 1

The Shift in Organizational Value Creation

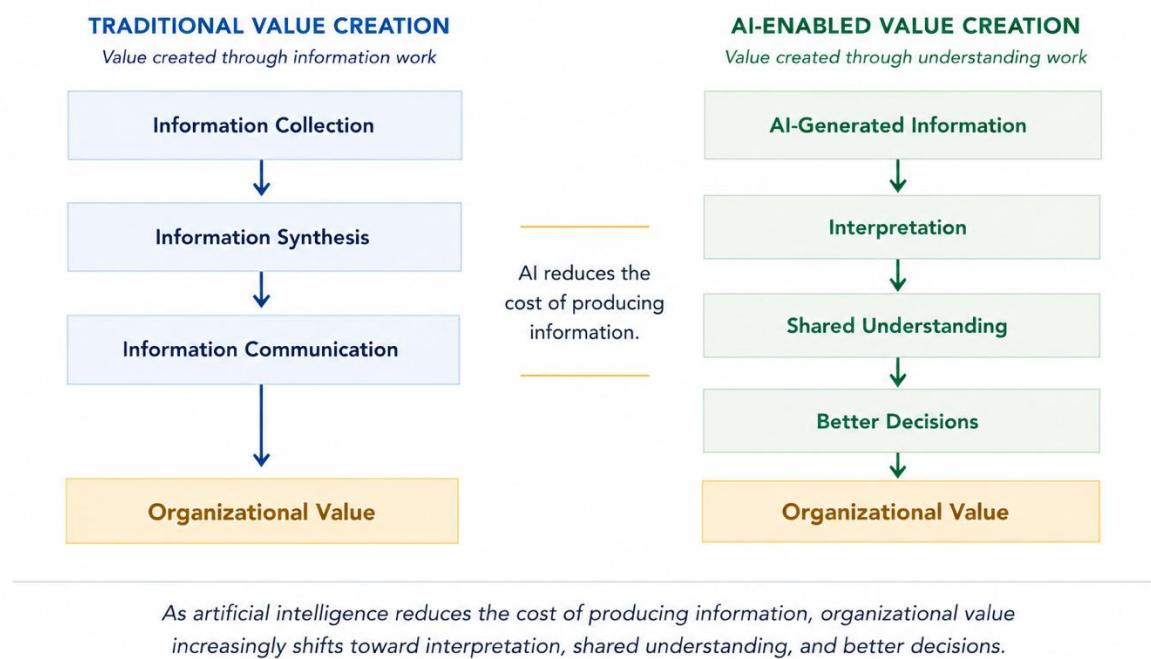


Figure 1 illustrates this movement. Traditional knowledge work placed substantial organizational effort into collecting, synthesizing, and communicating information. AI can assume a growing share of that work, shifting attention toward what follows: interpreting information in context, building shared understanding across stakeholders, and making better decisions.

The implications extend well beyond adopting a new technology. When the economics of information change, the capabilities through which organizations create value change with them.

2. Where Technical Program Managers Create Value

If producing information is becoming less expensive, the next question is where organizations continue to create value.

The answer begins with recognizing that information alone rarely changes organizational outcomes.

Reports do not create alignment.

Dashboards do not establish shared understanding.

Recommendations do not coordinate execution.

Organizations still have to interpret what information means, reconcile different perspectives, establish priorities, and translate decisions into coordinated action. This work has always existed, but much of it was obscured by the effort required to produce the information itself. As AI assumes more of that work, what follows becomes more visible.

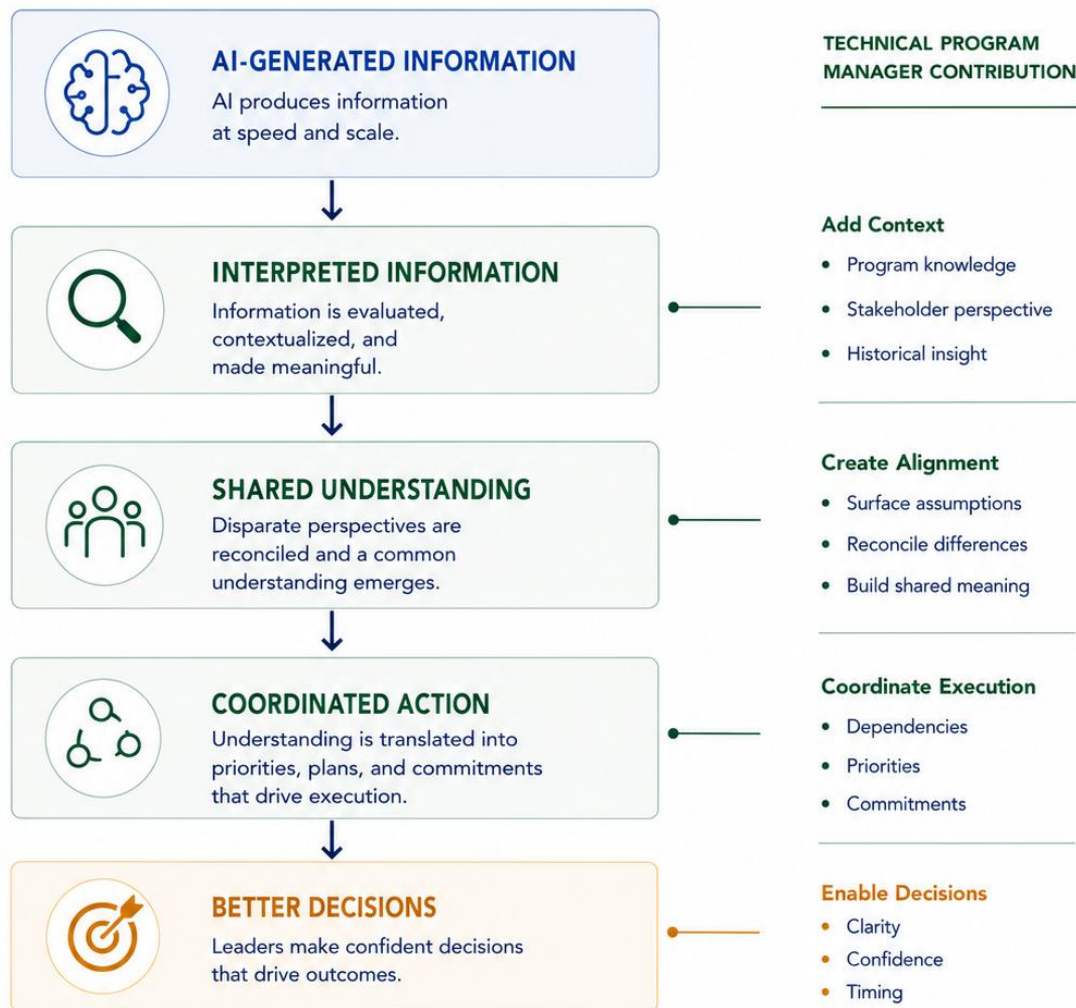
And more consequential.

FIGURE 2

Transforming Information into Organizational Capability

AI generates information.

*Technical Program Managers transform it into the understanding,
alignment, and coordination that drive results.*



AI generates information. Organizations create value by transforming that information into shared understanding, coordinated action, and better decisions.

Producing information is only the beginning. Its value depends on what an organization is able to do with it. Different stakeholders bring different experiences, assumptions, incentives, and priorities to the same information, making interpretation inherently contextual. Shared understanding requires those differences to be surfaced and reconciled, not simply another report or analysis to be distributed.

Shared understanding must then travel into execution. Priorities have to be established, dependencies managed, commitments aligned, and work synchronized across teams. Better decisions emerge from this progression because leaders are acting from a clearer understanding of context, trade-offs, and organizational reality.

This is where the Technical Program Manager's contribution becomes more significant. AI can generate information rapidly; Technical Program Managers help organizations make sense of it, develop shared understanding, coordinate execution, and create the conditions for better decisions. Their value lies less in producing the information itself and more in enabling the organizational capabilities that turn it into results.

3. The Capabilities That Create Organizational Value

The changing economics of information do not require Technical Program Managers to abandon their traditional responsibilities. They change the relative value of those responsibilities. Interpretation, shared understanding, cross-functional coordination, decision enablement, and organizational judgment have always been part of effective program management. As AI assumes more information work, these capabilities move closer to the center of the TPM contribution.

Interpretation

Artificial intelligence can generate information, but meaning depends on context. Engineering, product management, finance, security, and executive leadership may interpret the same analysis differently because each brings its own priorities, assumptions, and constraints. Technical Program Managers help make those differences visible and establish a common understanding of the situation before the organization attempts to act on it.

Facilitating Shared Understanding

Information can be widely available without being commonly understood. Different teams may read the same report, review the same dashboard, or participate in the same meeting and still leave with different interpretations of what matters.

Technical Program Managers help close that gap. They facilitate the conversations that surface assumptions, test competing perspectives, and reconcile consequential differences. The objective is not agreement for its own sake, but enough shared understanding to support coordinated decisions and action.

Cross-Functional Coordination

Shared understanding matters because organizations have to act on it. Modern programs span interconnected teams whose priorities, dependencies, commitments, and timelines continually affect one another. AI can help identify those dependencies and make execution conditions more visible. Coordination still requires people to negotiate priorities, resolve conflicts, build commitment across organizational boundaries, and adapt as circumstances change.

Technical Program Managers operate in those spaces between teams. They connect decisions, dependencies, and commitments so that shared understanding can become coordinated execution.

Decision Enablement

Technical Program Managers rarely hold authority for an organization's most significant decisions. They can nevertheless have substantial influence on the conditions under which those decisions are made.

Accurate information is only one requirement. Leaders also need context, visibility into dependencies, clarity about trade-offs, and an understanding of organizational risk. Technical Program Managers bring those elements together, helping leaders see not only the decision in front of them but its implications for the broader system and the organization's ability to execute.

Organizational Judgment

Organizational judgment becomes more valuable as analytical and administrative work becomes easier to automate. It is reflected in which issues receive attention, when a decision is escalated, how competing priorities are balanced, and where limited resources are invested. These questions rarely have answers that can be derived from information alone.

Technical Program Managers contribute by helping organizations interpret complexity, expose hidden assumptions, and recognize when a seemingly local decision carries broader consequences. In doing so, they help create the conditions for sound collective judgment.

None of these capabilities replaces the traditional responsibilities of the Technical Program Manager. They reveal where those responsibilities create their greatest organizational value. AI can reduce the effort required to produce and analyze information; the harder organizational work remains making sense of it together and acting on that understanding effectively.

4. Governance as an Organizational Capability

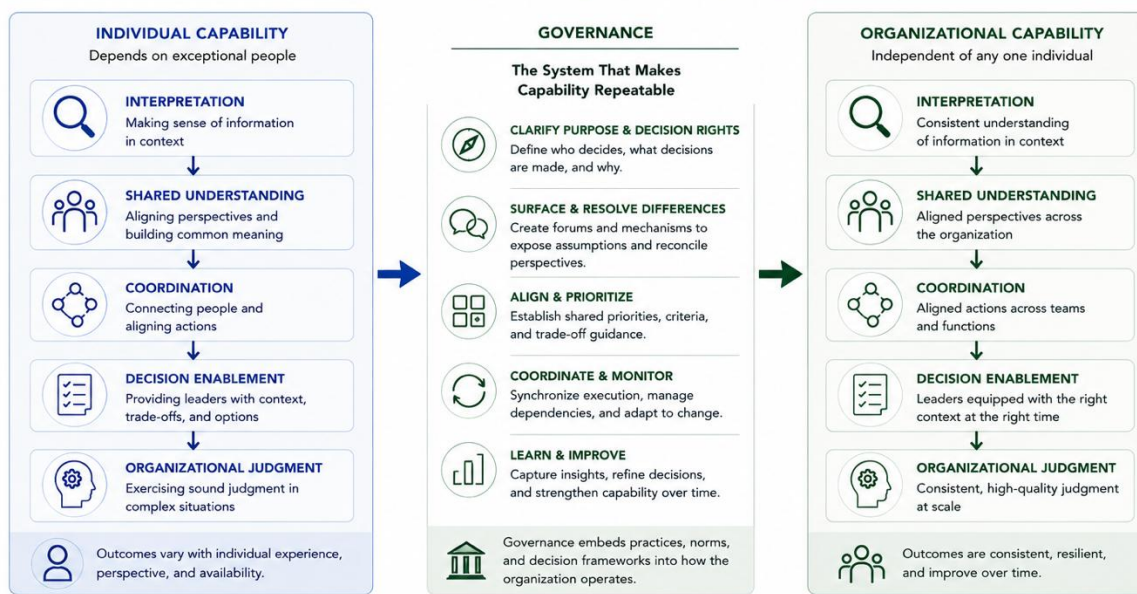
The capabilities described in the previous section are often associated with experienced Technical Program Managers. Successful interpretation, coordination, and decision support may appear to depend on the expertise of exceptional individuals. That can work within a program or team. It becomes far less reliable at organizational scale.

Capability must eventually become institutional rather than personal. Governance provides the structures, decision rights, communication pathways, and operating practices that allow organizations to develop shared understanding, coordinate execution, and make informed decisions consistently across teams.

FIGURE 3

From Individual Capability to Organizational Capability

Governance transforms individual expertise into repeatable organizational capability.



AI can accelerate information. Governance ensures that organizations consistently transform that information into understanding, alignment, coordinated action, and better decisions—regardless of who is in the room.

Governance is often viewed primarily through the lens of oversight, compliance, and process control. Those functions matter, but they describe only part of its organizational purpose. Governance determines how decisions are made, where differences are surfaced, how priorities are reconciled, and how information moves into action. It does not replace human judgment. It creates the conditions under which sound judgment can be exercised consistently.

AI makes this role more consequential. Analyses can be generated, risks summarized, dependencies identified, and possible actions recommended in seconds. The harder questions remain: Which priorities should prevail? Which assumptions need to be challenged? When does a risk justify escalation? Who has the authority to resolve competing perspectives? Technology can inform those questions. Governance establishes how the organization answers them.

Technical Program Managers help make that governance work in practice. They facilitate decision forums, clarify criteria and decision rights, surface competing interpretations, manage cross-functional dependencies, and help leaders establish shared understanding. The objective is not simply to administer governance processes or maintain their artifacts. It is to improve the quality of the organizational conversations and decisions those mechanisms exist to support.

Organizations capable of repeatedly turning information into coordinated action do not depend on exceptional individuals getting it right every time. They build the conditions that make effective interpretation, coordination, and judgment repeatable. Governance is what allows those capabilities to persist across teams, decisions, and changing circumstances.

5. The Limits of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Context

Organizations have always operated under conditions of uncertainty. Artificial intelligence can change the amount of information available and the speed at which it can be analyzed. It does not remove the uncertainty, competing priorities, or conflicting interests within which organizational decisions are made.

That raises a reasonable question: as AI becomes more capable, do interpretation and judgment become less important?

AI can identify patterns, generate recommendations, compare alternatives, and synthesize increasingly complex situations. Yet organizational decisions rarely present themselves as analytical problems alone. Technical Program Managers work in environments shaped by evolving requirements, competing stakeholder interests, resource constraints, and incomplete information. Better analysis can illuminate those conditions without resolving them.

Organizations act on what information means within that context. Two leadership teams presented with the same analysis may reach different conclusions because they bring different assumptions, priorities, experiences, and tolerances for risk. AI can make the analysis available faster and at greater scale. It cannot determine which organizational objective should take precedence or which trade-off the organization should accept.

In that sense, artificial intelligence is better understood as an amplifier of organizational capability than as a substitute for it. Organizations with strong governance, effective coordination, and sound decision practices can use rapidly generated information to act with greater clarity and speed. Those without these capabilities may simply reach conflicting conclusions more quickly.

For Technical Program Managers, the implication is significant. Their contribution is not to compete with AI's ability to analyze information, but to work where analysis meets organizational reality. They surface assumptions, clarify trade-offs, connect perspectives, and help leaders establish enough shared understanding to make decisions that can actually be executed.

Human expertise therefore does not disappear as AI becomes more capable. Its center of gravity shifts. The more readily organizations can generate information and analysis, the more consequential their ability to interpret what they are seeing, exercise judgment, and coordinate action becomes.

AI can accelerate understanding. It cannot make an organization understand.

6. New Organizational Failure Modes

Misalignment, conflicting priorities, inconsistent decisions, and coordination problems are not products of artificial intelligence. They are familiar consequences of trying to coordinate people, teams, and decisions across complex organizations.

What AI changes is the speed at which those conditions can propagate.

Information can be generated in seconds, alternatives analyzed quickly, and recommendations produced with little of the effort previously required. Organizations with strong interpretation, governance, and coordination capabilities can use that speed to improve performance. Without those capabilities, speed can amplify divergence just as easily as alignment.

Shared understanding does not emerge simply because information moves faster. Teams can still operate from different assumptions, leaders can assign different meaning to the same evidence, and stakeholders can pursue priorities that make sense locally but conflict organizationally. AI accelerates the information surrounding those differences without necessarily resolving the differences themselves.

The resulting failures may be difficult to recognize. Teams can confidently pursue conflicting priorities while believing they are aligned. Leaders can make individually well-informed decisions that do not cohere at the organizational level. Programs can execute efficiently while gradually diverging from strategic intent because underlying assumptions were never surfaced or reconciled.

The danger is not necessarily bad information. It is good information interpreted differently and acted upon faster.

For Technical Program Managers, that creates a different kind of visibility challenge. Traditional execution signals may show that work is progressing while concealing differences in interpretation underneath it. TPMs must be attentive to where assumptions diverge, where apparent agreement masks different meanings, and where locally rational decisions are beginning to pull the organization in different directions.

Surfacing those differences early becomes part of the work. Through deliberate discussion, clarification of assumptions, and renewed shared understanding, Technical Program Managers can help address divergence before it appears as missed commitments, conflicting execution, or strategic drift.

The implications extend beyond individual programs. Faster access to information does not guarantee better organizational outcomes; it increases the importance of recognizing whether people are acting from the same understanding in the first place. In an AI-enabled environment, organizations that can detect and reconcile hidden divergence before it reaches execution will have an advantage over those that merely move faster.

7. The Technical Program Manager as an Organizational Capability

The Technical Program Manager's work does not become obsolete as AI assumes more information work. Its center of gravity shifts.

TPMs have long organized work, coordinated delivery, managed dependencies, facilitated communication, and supported governance. Those responsibilities remain essential. What

changes is how their organizational value is understood. Activities that may appear administrative on the surface often serve a deeper purpose: they create the conditions for people to interpret complex situations, coordinate across boundaries, and make decisions that can be executed.

This makes the Technical Program Manager more than a manager of program execution. Positioned across teams, functions, and decision forums, TPMs can see where assumptions differ, where dependencies connect otherwise separate decisions, and where apparent alignment begins to break down. They help the organization make those relationships visible before they become execution problems.

FIGURE 4

The Changing Center of Gravity of the Technical Program Manager

The work remains familiar. The organizational value it creates shifts.

Artificial intelligence increasingly automates and accelerates the visible work of the Technical Program Manager, revealing and amplifying the underlying organizational capabilities that drive value.

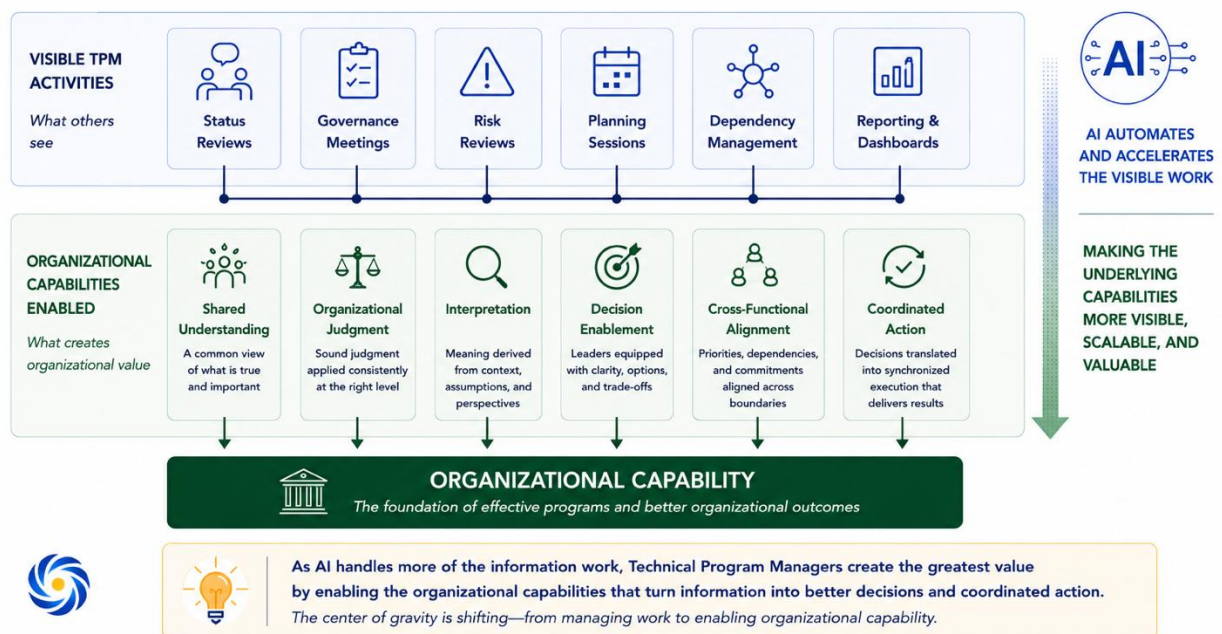


Figure 4 distinguishes between the visible activities of the role and the organizational capabilities those activities enable. A status review is not valuable simply because status was reviewed. A dependency discussion matters because it can expose consequences across teams. A governance forum creates value when it improves the decisions made through it. AI may reduce the effort required to prepare the artifacts and information surrounding these activities, giving Technical

Program Managers greater opportunity to focus on what the activities are intended to accomplish.

That distinction also changes how the profession should be evaluated. Reporting quality, schedule adherence, governance compliance, and administrative efficiency remain useful measures, but they capture only part of the contribution. The harder questions concern what those activities produce: Did stakeholders develop a common understanding? Were consequential differences surfaced early? Did leaders have the context required to make a sound decision? Could teams translate that decision into coordinated execution?

These outcomes are more difficult to measure than whether a report was delivered on time. They are also closer to the organizational value the role exists to create.

Few roles operate as consistently across organizational boundaries as the Technical Program Manager. That position gives TPMs an unusual vantage point on how information is interpreted, how decisions interact, and how commitments move into execution. AI can strengthen that position by reducing the administrative burden surrounding the work, but the organizational capability comes from what the TPM helps people do together.

The future of the profession is therefore unlikely to be defined by competition with artificial intelligence. The more useful relationship is complementary. AI expands an organization's capacity to generate, analyze, and synthesize information. Technical Program Managers expand its capacity to interpret that information in context, develop shared understanding, coordinate action, and exercise sound organizational judgment.

Together, those capabilities allow organizations to do something neither technology nor individuals can accomplish independently: turn information into coordinated organizational capability.

The tools will change. The organizational need will not.

8. Practical Implications for Technical Program Managers

The shift described throughout this paper does not require Technical Program Managers to reinvent their role. It does require them to reconsider what they are trying to accomplish through work they already perform.

As information becomes easier to generate, producing another report, summary, or status update creates little additional value unless it improves organizational understanding or enables

action. The practical question is no longer simply whether AI can perform a task more efficiently. It is what the task enables the organization to understand, decide, or do.

Consider familiar program artifacts. A status report may accurately describe progress without revealing whether stakeholders interpret that progress in the same way. A governance meeting may review risks and dependencies while leaving the assumptions behind them unresolved. A decision log may capture what was decided without preserving the reasoning, trade-offs, or conditions that made the decision appropriate. The artifact still matters. Its organizational value depends on what it makes possible.

That places greater emphasis on interpretation before communication. AI can summarize large volumes of information, identify patterns, and prepare material for discussion. The Technical Program Manager still has to determine what matters within the program's context and where stakeholders may draw different conclusions from the same evidence. Sometimes the most valuable work happens before a recommendation is presented: surfacing the assumptions underneath it and making competing interpretations visible enough to examine.

The same principle applies to meetings. Organizational conversations become more useful when they are designed around the understanding or decision that needs to emerge rather than the information participants need to review. AI-generated summaries can be distributed in advance. Meeting time can then be used to examine trade-offs, resolve consequential differences, and confirm decisions, ownership, dependencies, and unresolved questions.

The objective is not simply a shorter meeting. It is a meeting that changes what the organization is able to understand or do afterward.

Governance artifacts deserve similar scrutiny. Dashboards, risk registers, roadmaps, decision logs, and dependency trackers are more than records of program activity. They make organizational conditions visible. Their value increases when they expose changing assumptions, conflicting priorities, unclear decision rights, or early signs that execution is diverging from intent. If AI reduces the effort required to maintain these artifacts, Technical Program Managers can spend more time examining what the artifacts are actually revealing.

Escalation presents a different challenge. Faster access to information can create more signals than leaders can meaningfully evaluate. The TPM's role is not to escalate more; it is to distinguish activity from consequence. Which issue genuinely requires leadership attention? What happens if no decision is made? Who owns the decision, and at what level can it be resolved? AI may help identify emerging risks, but effective escalation still depends on framing the issue so that the organization can act on it.

Decision support follows the same logic. Leaders rarely need another volume of information for its own sake. They need clarity about the decision in front of them, the assumptions on which it depends, the available alternatives, the trade-offs involved, and the consequences of delay. AI can assist with analysis, scenario development, and synthesis. Technical Program Managers connect those outputs to the organization's actual priorities, constraints, dependencies, and capacity to execute.

None of this requires Technical Program Managers to become experts in every artificial intelligence technology. They need enough fluency to recognize where AI can reduce administrative effort, accelerate analysis, or broaden access to information—and enough judgment to recognize where technological output ends and organizational work begins.

That boundary matters.

The opportunity is not simply to automate existing TPM activities. It is to use automation to reclaim time and attention for the work those activities were intended to support: making sense of complex situations, strengthening shared understanding, resolving cross-functional differences, improving governance, and enabling decisions that can be carried into execution.

For many Technical Program Managers, this is less a reinvention than a clarification. The profession has always created value through more than schedules, reports, meetings, and processes. Artificial intelligence makes the distinction easier to see—and gives Technical Program Managers an opportunity to focus more deliberately on the organizational capability underneath the visible work.

9. Conclusion

Every major technological shift changes where organizations create value. Artificial intelligence appears to be doing the same. As producing and analyzing information becomes easier, advantage moves toward what organizations are able to do with that information: interpret it in context, develop shared understanding, coordinate action, and exercise sound judgment.

The Technical Program Manager provides a useful lens through which to see this shift. TPMs have long worked at the intersection of information, decisions, dependencies, governance, and execution. AI does not remove the need for that work. It makes clearer which parts of it create organizational value.

The long-term impact of artificial intelligence may therefore be less about replacing human work than revealing the work that mattered most all along.

Organizations have never succeeded simply because they possessed information. They succeed when people can determine what it means, reconcile different perspectives, make decisions under uncertainty, and coordinate action across organizational boundaries. AI can make information dramatically more abundant and analysis more accessible. The organizational challenge begins with what happens next.

For Technical Program Managers, that is less a new direction than a clearer articulation of the profession's contribution. The tools, techniques, and workflows will continue to change. The need to create understanding across boundaries, connect decisions to execution, and help organizations act coherently will remain.

Artificial intelligence changes the economics of information. It does not eliminate the organizational work required to turn information into value.

The organizations that benefit most from AI will not necessarily be those that generate the most information. They will be those that make better sense of it—and act on that understanding together.

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Imran Afzal is the creator of Seeing Organizations™, a philosophy for understanding organizations by revealing the invisible relationships that shape visible behavior. His work explores the human and cognitive dimensions of strategy execution through concepts such as Shared Understanding, Organizational Cognition, Shared Interpretation, and Interpretation Debt, helping leaders better understand the conditions that enable coordinated execution and organizational learning.

Drawing on more than two decades of experience leading enterprise transformation, strategy execution, PMO modernization, governance, and organizational change across global technology organizations, Imran combines practitioner experience with original thought leadership. Through The Strategic PMO blog and Seeing Organizations LinkedIn newsletter, he publishes essays, practitioner papers, and field guides that help leaders better understand—and improve—strategy execution.