



PMI's
PULSE *of the*
PROFESSION®

9th Global Project Management Survey

2017

Pulse at Work

Practitioner's Guide

Transforming the high cost of low performance



About *Pulse at Work: Practitioner's Guide*

Since 2006, PMI has conducted the *Pulse of the Profession*[®], the global survey of project management practitioners. The *Pulse* charts major trends for project management, featuring original market research that reports feedback and insights from project, program and portfolio managers, along with an analysis of third-party data.

Pulse at Work: Practitioner's Guide summarizes *Pulse* data and learnings for the project manager. It includes ways to implement our research findings in your day-to-day work, as well as practical input on successful projects from professionals like you.

After you explore this practitioner-focused companion to *Pulse*, read the complete [*Pulse of the Profession* report](#) to get even greater insight into trends affecting your profession.



Great news in the world of project management:
According to PMI's 2017 *Pulse of the Profession*® report,

Project success rates are on the upswing.



What's helping to drive this success?
Project practitioners like you.

For more than a decade, our *Pulse of the Profession*® research has tracked project management trends and how they impact organizations. And along the way, we've identified a number of challenges to project success.

But our 2017 *Pulse* research uncovered a significant change: projects are performing better... a lot better!

For the first time in five years, organizations are becoming **true champions at driving successful projects—and your contributions are leading the way.** More projects are meeting original goals and business intent. And more are completed within budget. This means a lot less money wasted due to poor project performance—a **20 percent decline**, in fact, from just one year ago.

This promising turnaround supports the long-time *Pulse* perspective:

When proven project, program and portfolio management practices are implemented, more projects are successful.

\$97 million*

Amount organizations waste due to poor project performance for every \$1 billion invested. That's a 20 percent improvement from the \$122 million wasted in 2016.

* Figures are U.S. dollar amounts, but represent a percentage that applies to any currency

Is my project truly successful?

Growing recognition about the importance of effective project management to strategic success puts practitioners directly in the spotlight.

As a result, when it comes to project success, traditional measures of scope, time and cost are no longer enough. For your organization to stay competitive, your projects must also deliver what they set out to do and achieve defined benefits.

Champions vs. Underperformers

When viewing project success through this wider lens, we classified two types of organizations—champions and underperformers.



Champions are organizations that complete 80 percent or more of their projects on time and on budget, and that meet original goals and business intent. They have high benefits realization maturity.



Underperformers are organizations that complete 60 percent or fewer of their projects on time and on budget, and that meet original goals and business intent. They typically have low benefits realization maturity.

Champions have higher project success rates overall than underperformers—92 percent vs. 33 percent—and enjoy more successful business outcomes.



So, what can you learn from champion organizations to guide your own professional success?



ACT AS A STRATEGIC PARTNER WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION



CONNECT STRATEGY AND ACTION



EMBRACE AGILE APPROACHES

Act as a strategic partner within your organization.

Follow the PMI Talent Triangle® to develop your skills

Champions value practitioners with a well-balanced skill set, including development of:

- **Technical skills** (76% prioritize their development vs. 19% of underperformers)
- **Leadership skills** (76% vs. 16% of underperformers)
- **Strategic and business management skills** (65% vs. 14% of underperformers)

These essential skills are illustrated by the **PMI Talent Triangle®**. To become a strategic partner, focus your professional development in these core areas.



Keep pace with change

Dramatic shifts and new trends cause organizations to re-evaluate their own relevancy and ability to meet market demands. These include:



Digital advances
such as the rise of robotics



High customer expectations
fueled by social media



Disruptive organizations
driven by the “share economy”
introduced by companies like Airbnb and Uber



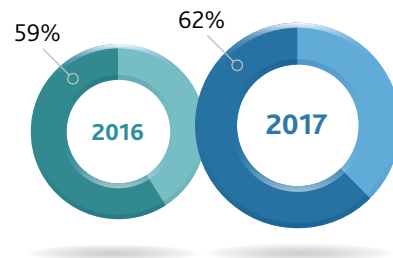
Changing workforces
as older workers retire and younger ones take their place

These factors are leading organizations to seek project professionals with the right mix of technical, leadership and strategic and business management expertise.

Actively engage PMOs and executive sponsors

Champion organizations recognize the value and strategic importance of the project management office (PMO)—81 percent have a PMO compared to 59 percent of underperformers. And, as in previous years, the 2017 *Pulse* confirms that an actively engaged executive sponsor is the top driver of projects meeting original goals and business intent. And that continues to rise—62 percent of projects this year compared to 59 percent in 2016.

To be a strategic partner within your organization, be sure your projects align to the PMO’s strategic goals and you have an actively engaged executive sponsor.



More projects have actively engaged executive sponsors



We asked project professionals like you: How do you keep pace with rapid change and new trends to stay on track with desired project outcomes?



"You must embrace change, as it is the only certainty. While the goals of a project may remain stable, the means of reaching them may get modified or even redone. The only way to keep pace with change is communication—talk to people, listen to them, ask questions. Bad news is good! If someone shares something we weren't expecting, we can take steps to help the situation."

David Maynard, MBA, PMP

Project Manager Instructor | Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA



"My staff attends workshops to stay on top of new trends. We hold a weekly 'book club' and monthly sessions on skills such as facilitation, work breakdown structure and managing issues. When we discover a new concept has merit, we introduce it slowly on a project with minimal risk and low organizational exposure to ensure it fits with our culture and doesn't waste resources. If it works, we try to duplicate the results on a more complex project to determine if it is worth the effort to make the change."

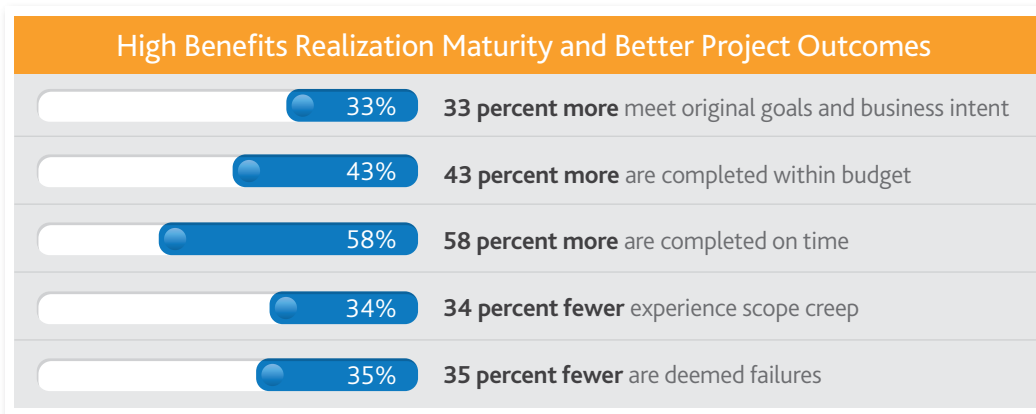
Dan Furlong, DHA, FHIMSS, PMP

Director, Project Management Office | Charleston, South Carolina, USA

Connect strategy and action.

Identify benefits and align them to strategy

Benefits realization management (BRM) is an important way to align your projects with organizational strategy. Organizations that report high benefits realization maturity also experience better project outcomes—33 percent more projects meet original goals and business intent.

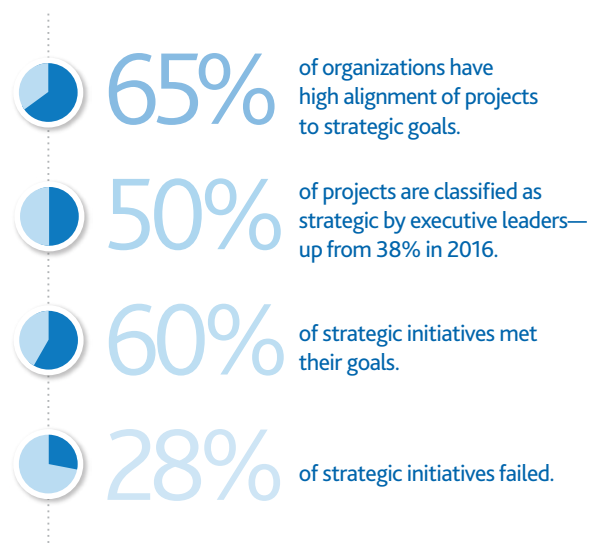


Create clear requirements and a vision for your projects

Thirty-nine percent of organizations surveyed say that inadequate requirements gathering is the primary cause of project failure, while 30 percent cited inadequate vision or undefined goals for the project. Project leaders must look beyond simply technical aspects of the project, and incorporate a more holistic viewpoint of the organization’s strategy and business goals.

Take a focused approach

Our research shows that many senior leaders acknowledge that their organizations struggle to bridge the gap between shaping strategy and implementing it day to day. Even so, we found that 65 percent of organizations have high alignment of projects to strategic goals. Project and program managers must intently manage strategic initiatives to avoid wasting time and money.





We asked project professionals like you: How do you align your projects with organizational strategy to avoid wasting time and money?



"I advise people to take a look at the project scope that's been defined and see where it aligns with other strategies within the organization. By asking a few questions during the initiation phase, you can find out whether the project will contribute to more than one strategy and include those things within the scope and requirements gathering for that project."

Karen Chovan, MASC, PEng, PMP

Principal, Sustainability Advisor | Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada



"Organizational and project commitments are initially aligned when developing the project work proposal. The project leader then attends organizational level strategy meetings to make sure project outcomes continue to be in line with the organization's strategic goals. Adjustments are made for changes in customer needs, new technologies or funding reapportionment; otherwise, the organization expects the project will perform and deliver at a level equal to or better than promised in the proposal."

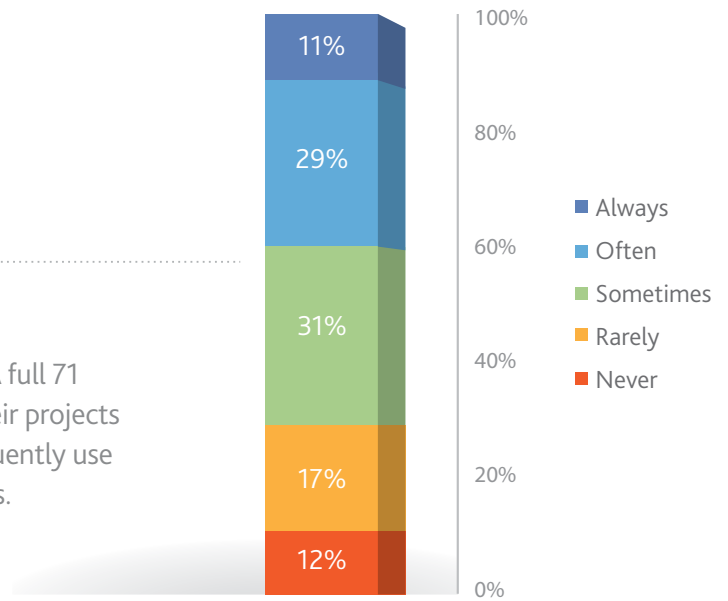
Thomas Pavelko

Program and Project Manager | Sunnyvale, California, USA

Embrace agile approaches.

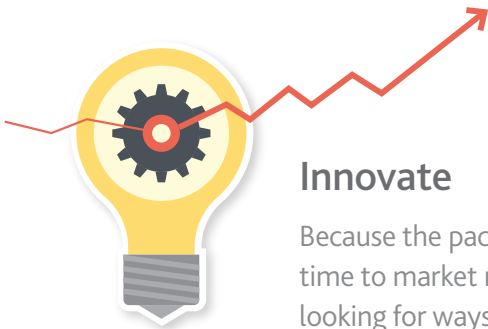
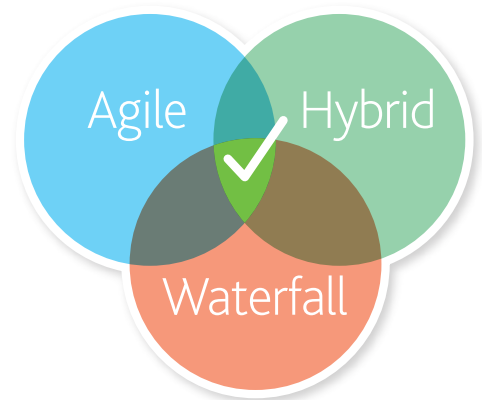
Recognize the value of agile

The use of agile approaches to manage projects is growing. A full 71 percent of organizations report using agile approaches for their projects sometimes or more often, and 55 percent of champions frequently use agile approaches compared to 24 percent of underperformers.



Tailor your approach to your project’s needs

Today, one in five projects uses a hybrid approach—applying elements from agile, waterfall and other project management approaches. Perhaps as significant is the percentage of projects that used something other than agile, hybrid or waterfall approaches, which could be a further blend or customization of other approaches (23%).



Innovate

Because the pace of innovation and change is faster all the time, your projects’ time to market must keep up. By taking an agile approach and continually looking for ways to innovate and deliver projects faster and more efficiently, you are on your way to consistent project success.



We asked project professionals like you: Have you driven a successful project by using an agile or hybrid approach?



"Using agile approaches, frameworks and thinking enabled us to do far more in the same timeframe and with the same money than was originally expected. The importance of putting the customer first, doing only the most valuable things, demonstrating value often, and having highly motivated and engaged teams can't be overstated. Instead of an IT project to procure and implement a learning management product, it became a business project where we implemented learning management, which has another level of business value."

Lawrence Cooper, PMI-ACP, CPM, PMP

Activator and Agility Series Facilitator | Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



"Yes, but before the term 'agile' was used, on a software project for the displays the NASA Space Shuttle crew used during re-entry. We started with the information and format we thought should be displayed and coded the pages accordingly. The crew members looked at them, tried them out in a simulator, suggested a lot of changes, and we went back to work to modify the displays. This iterated again and again for well over a year. The technical team never grew frustrated—it was our mission to give the crew what they needed to do the job."

David Maynard, MBA, PMP

Project Manager Instructor | Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA

Keep looking up!

As success rates rise, so do opportunities for project, program and portfolio managers.

Your hard work and dedication to the profession drive change across the globe. To keep project successes soaring, seek ways to be a strategic partner, connect strategy and action, and embrace agile approaches.


- ▶ Download the 2017 *Pulse of the Profession*® report for the complete picture.

[Download >](#)

- ▶ Read more about our *Pulse* research and other Thought Leadership.

[Read more >](#)

- ▶ Exchange your challenges, solutions and stories with other practitioners in our LinkedIn® discussion group!

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