

# 5 project management trends taking control in 2021

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This year has seen big changes in labour markets as the Covid-19 pandemic forced organisations to make a rapid shift to remote work and online project management. Project managers and teams suddenly had an even greater responsibility to communicate and collaborate effectively. According to a recent survey by PwC, this trend is set to continue. But what else can project managers expect in the new year?



## Top 5 predictions

- **A greater reliance on hybrid approaches to project management:** [Agile project management](#), characterised by rapid learning and decision-making, is becoming increasingly relevant, but that does not mean more traditional styles are now defunct. A particular style of project management may work successfully for one project but negatively impact another. Organisations and project managers would be well served to explore various elements to create flexible [hybrid approaches](#) to tackling each project. According to the PMI's Pulse of the Profession survey, 89% of the project professionals surveyed in 2019 said that their organisation implemented hybrid project management practices.
- **The impact of artificial intelligence and data analytics:** Various organisations have embraced emerging technology like cloud-based services, artificial intelligence, machine learning and data collection and analysis, and this will likely continue in 2021. Incorporating AI and other technologies into the project management process can minimise human error and help teams and project managers achieve more in less time. Project management professionals do not need to become experts in AI or data analytics in order to prepare for these changes, but they should aim to understand their organisation's plans for AI in order to anticipate changes in their roles and daily work.
- **An emphasis on emotional intelligence (or EQ) in leadership:** The shift to remote work and online project management means project managers' need to develop their [soft skill set](#). Good listening, communication and conflict resolution have become all the more important, as is cultural intelligence and the ability to navigate a multicultural and diverse workplace with sensitivity. They are signs of good leadership and effective management.

- **A closer connection between projects and strategy:** What is project management? Traditionally it has been used as an organisational tool to work toward and achieve goals limited to the launching of a single product or service to meet a particular objective. Under this paradigm, project management is a temporary exercise with a finite start and end, with the role of project manager to guide the project to successful completion. Recently, however, the role of project managers has expanded to include broader strategies and initiatives as the framework is applied to broader strategies and initiatives in an organisation. For project managers who wish to put their skills to better strategic use within their organisation, it is essential to understand the relationship between project, programme, and portfolio management.
- **Project management and change management:** As shown in the most recent [Project Management Survey](#), conducted by the International Project Management Association (IPMA), 63% of organisations conduct projects that include at least some form of change management. This was especially true in 2020 and going into 2020, as the emergence of the novel coronavirus forced many organisations to embrace substantial change initiatives while also completing previously existing projects. Project managers are now frequently left managing not only their own projects but the organisation's change initiatives as well.

These are just some of the emerging trends project management professionals can expect in 2021. Project management courses can help professionals stay on top of changes, whether it be in project management approaches or shifts in the role managers play in the workplace. This can help them stay relevant and in demand in the face of continuing uncertainty in the labour market.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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