APM AI and Data Analytics Interest Network

Own the Interface or Lose the Project

Taking Control of Human–AI Collaboration

Conference Diagnostic Report

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Because the future belongs to authentic organisations, not just automated ones.

Foreword

Artificial intelligence is no longer a technology on the horizon. It is here, embedded in our tools, shaping our decisions, and challenging the way we think about project delivery. For project professionals, the question is no longer whether AI will affect the profession, but how we choose to lead that transition.

In February 2026, the APM AI and Data Analytics Interest Network held its annual conference under the title “Own the Interface or Lose the Project: Taking Control of Human–AI Collaboration.” Ahead of the event, delegates were invited to complete a bespoke diagnostic designed to capture how project professionals feel, believe, and perceive AI — both personally and within their organisations.

The response was strong: 62 professionals completed the diagnostic, providing rich quantitative and qualitative data across 32 questions. This report presents the findings from that diagnostic, analysed through the lens of Pearson correlations, qualitative theme extraction, and the Human-Centric Data approach developed by Team Animation.

What emerged was not a simple picture of enthusiasm or resistance. It was something more nuanced: a profession that has already made up its mind about AI’s importance, but is waiting for the organisational conditions — the training, the governance, the permission — to act on that conviction. The gap between belief and action is the central story of this data, and closing it is the central challenge for the profession.

We hope this report provides a useful evidence base for organisations, project leaders, and the wider APM community as they navigate their own AI journeys. The data belongs to you — the professionals who shared it — and this report is our attempt to give it back in a form that can inform decisions, provoke reflection, and accelerate meaningful change.

Donnie MacNicol and **Peter Allen**, February 2026

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a diagnostic survey completed by 62 project professionals ahead of the APM AIDA Conference on 26 February 2026. The diagnostic captured personal and organisational perspectives on AI adoption across 32 questions, using a continuous 0–100 scale supplemented by free-text responses on barriers and suggestions.

The data reveals a profession that is convinced of AI's significance but not yet equipped to act on that conviction. Five cross-cutting insights emerged from the analysis:

1. The Belief–Action Gap

Respondents rate AI's importance for future success at 69/100 and its impact on the profession at 65/100, yet business usage averages just 41/100 and training sits at only 36/100. The conviction is there; the enablement is not.

2. Training Is the Critical Bottleneck

Training and support scored lowest of all questions (36/100) and acts as a gateway to nearly every other positive outcome. Correlation analysis shows it links to experimentation (r=0.46), perceived future importance (r=0.43), and use of AI for innovation (r=0.41). Respondents are clear: they want hands-on, role-specific, peer-led learning — not generic awareness sessions.

3. Experimentation Unlocks Everything

The opportunity to experiment with AI (52/100) is the single factor most broadly correlated with positive outcomes across the dataset, connecting to innovation (r=0.51), knowledge capture (r=0.50), productivity (r=0.47), and adoption pace (r=0.47). Those who experience value from AI also report lower anxiety (r=−0.42), suggesting that safe, measurable pilots are the fastest route to confidence.

4. Governance Feels Like a Blocker, Not an Enabler

Clarity of ownership (40/100), priorities (41/100), and policies (42/100) all score in the bottom tier. The qualitative data surfaces a double bind: some cite restrictive controls as their barrier, while others cite the absence of any guidelines. Both groups want to use AI; they need enabling governance that says "here's how," not just "you can't."

5. Usage Is Narrow — but a Rising Tide Is Possible

AI usage is concentrated on productivity (45/100) and innovation (44/100), with higher-value applications like insight, strategy, and governance barely explored. However, strong within-set correlations (r=0.60–0.78) suggest a rising-tide effect: wins in one domain build confidence to expand into others, pointing to a phased roadmap approach.

The report also identifies a key tension **between organisational need for control and individual desire to use AI.** The data shows this is not a simple tug-of-war. Individual conviction and organisational governance are running on separate tracks, with the real gap being ownership rather than control. People do not want less governance — they want governance that enables.

About the Diagnostic

Purpose and Design

The diagnostic was designed to capture a holistic picture of how project professionals relate to AI, moving beyond simple adoption metrics to explore feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and the organisational context in which AI decisions are being made. It was structured around four core questions:

1. What do you feel, believe and perceive about AI?

2. How do you perceive your organisation has reacted to AI?

3. What role has AI taken in your organisation?

4. What are the barriers to AI adoption and suggestions to overcome them?

This structure reflects the Human-Centric Data (HCD) approach: capturing the feelings, beliefs, and perceptions that drive decisions and behaviours, which in turn shape project outcomes.

Instrument

The diagnostic comprised 32 items across four sections. The first three sections used a continuous slider scale from 0 (Very Low) to 100 (Very High), allowing respondents to express degrees of sentiment rather than forcing categorical choices. Two additional items captured personal style and organisational culture on two-axis grids (Reserved–Assertive / Relationships–Logic for personal style; Centralisation–Collaboration for organisational culture). The final section captured open-text responses on barriers to adoption and suggestions to overcome them.

Sample

62 professionals completed the diagnostic ahead of the conference, representing approximately one third of total conference attendees. While not a statistically representative sample of the wider profession, the respondent group provides a meaningful snapshot of engaged professionals within the APM AI and Data Analytics Interest Network. The findings should be read as indicative of the views and experiences of this community, with further research recommended to validate patterns at scale.

Analysis Approach

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics (means, medians, standard deviations) and Pearson correlation coefficients across all question pairs. Qualitative free-text responses were analysed thematically, with sentiment analysis and word-frequency mapping providing additional texture. Cross-cutting insights were developed by triangulating quantitative patterns, correlation relationships, and qualitative themes.

AI tools (Claude, ChatGPT, NotebookLM) were used to support the analysis, including hypothesis testing, pattern identification, and the generation of visual summaries. All AI-generated outputs were reviewed and validated by the authors.

Section 1: What Do You Feel, Believe and Perceive About AI?

This section examines how individuals relate to AI: their levels of anxiety and knowledge, their personal and business usage, the value they have experienced, the training they have received, and the importance they place on AI for their careers and the wider profession.

Importance and Impact: A Strong Consensus

The data shows clear conviction about AI's significance. The importance of AI in respondents' careers averaged 66/100, while its perceived impact on the project management profession scored 65/100. The importance of AI for future organisational success was rated highest of all at 69/100. The majority of responses clustered in the upper-right quadrant when these two dimensions were plotted together, indicating broad agreement that AI is both personally and professionally important.

This consensus is significant. It means that advocacy and awareness are not the primary challenges. The profession has already internalised the message that AI matters.

Anxiety and Knowledge: More Hubris Than Angst

When anxiety was plotted against knowledge, a distinctive pattern emerged. The majority of respondents sat in the lower-left quadrant: low anxiety, but also relatively low self-assessed knowledge (anxiety mean 40/100, knowledge mean 46/100). Applying the "Power of Doubt" framework (adapted from Professor M. Smets, University of Oxford), this positions most respondents in the "hubris" zone — confident but potentially under-informed.

Fewer respondents appeared in the high-anxiety quadrants. Those with high knowledge and high anxiety ("angst") may represent informed professionals who understand the scale of the change ahead. Those with low knowledge and high anxiety ("paralysis") were rare. The relative absence of paralysis is encouraging, but the prevalence of hubris suggests a risk: confidence without depth may lead to under-investment in the skills, governance, and critical thinking that safe AI adoption requires.

Usage: Personal Outpaces Business, but Both Lag Belief

Personal usage of AI averaged 43/100 and business usage 41/100 — both well below the importance scores. When plotted together, personal and business usage showed a positive relationship: those using AI personally tended to use it at work too, and vice versa. Several outliers at the high end of personal usage suggest individuals who are pushing ahead regardless of organisational support.

When personal usage was cross-referenced with personal style (Reserved–Assertive axis), more assertive individuals tended to report higher personal usage. This is consistent with personality-driven adoption: people who are naturally action-oriented and fast-paced are more likely to experiment with new tools independently.

Training and Support: The Weakest Link

Training and support received the lowest average score in the entire survey at 36/100, with nearly a quarter of respondents scoring it below 15. This is the single most striking finding in the personal perspective data.

When training was plotted against experimentation, a positive relationship was visible: those with more training tended to report more opportunity to experiment. Similarly, training correlated with perceived value from AI. The correlation analysis confirmed these relationships: training links to experimentation (r=0.46), future importance (r=0.43), and use of AI for communications (r=0.42) and innovation (r=0.41).

The qualitative data reinforced this picture. Respondents described wanting practical, domain-specific training applied to real project management tasks. Requests included role-based clinics, shared prompt libraries, one-to-one coaching, and short workshops where colleagues demonstrate what they have built. The message is clear: the profession needs hands-on, contextualised, peer-led learning — not awareness sessions delivered through skills hubs.

Authority to Change: Unevenly Distributed

Authority to change business processes averaged 48/100 with a high standard deviation of 24, indicating wide variation. This matters because authority links to business usage (r=0.32) and pace of adoption (r=0.32), but barely correlates with policy maturity (r=0.05) or guardrails (r=0.07). People with authority appear to be pushing ahead with AI adoption irrespective of whether organisational governance is in place.

Section 2: How Has Your Organisation Reacted to AI?

This section examines the organisational environment: the clarity of vision and values, the maturity of policies and guardrails, the pace of adoption, and the relationship between centralisation and collaboration.

Vision, Values, and Ethics: A Mixed Picture

Clarity of the vision and purpose around AI averaged 51/100, with clarity of ethics and values slightly higher at 57/100. When plotted together, there was a cluster of respondents in the lower-left quadrant — organisations with neither clear vision nor clear values around AI. A smaller group in the upper-right had both. The spread suggests that while some organisations have begun to articulate their AI direction, many have not.

This matters because vision and values provide the foundation for everything else: governance, training priorities, experimentation boundaries, and the communication of how roles will evolve. Without them, adoption happens ad hoc.

Priorities, Ownership, and Pace: The Governance Deficit

Three governance-related questions scored in the bottom tier of the entire survey: clarity of priorities around AI (41/100), clarity of ownership and direction of AI (40/100), and maturity of policies related to AI (42/100). Robustness of guardrails scored 48/100, though with a high proportion of respondents who appeared uncertain about what guardrails exist.

The pace of adoption averaged 46/100. When pace was plotted against priorities, a significant group reported high pace but low priority clarity — suggesting organisations where AI is being adopted rapidly without clear strategic direction. When pace was plotted against ownership, a similar pattern emerged: fast adoption but unclear ownership.

This is the governance deficit: AI is entering organisations faster than the frameworks needed to manage it responsibly.

Guardrails and Policies: Two Sides of the Same Coin

The strongest within-set correlation in the organisational questions was between policy maturity and guardrails (r=0.64). This suggests that respondents experience these as deeply linked: where policies are mature, guardrails tend to be robust, and where policies are absent, guardrails are too.

The qualitative data revealed a double bind. Respondents in regulated industries cited data security, classification restrictions, and lack of approved tools as hard barriers. Others pointed to the opposite problem: the absence of guardrails left them feeling unsafe to experiment. Both groups want to use AI; they need different things from their organisation to do so.

Centralisation and Collaboration: A Blended Model

Organisational culture scores sat close to the midpoint on both centralisation (55/100) and collaboration (53/100), indicating no dominant model. When centralisation was plotted against pace, the data suggested that highly centralised organisations tend to adopt AI more slowly, possibly because innovation is constrained by approval processes.

The correlation analysis added nuance: more centralised organisations showed slightly stronger links to having a clear vision (r=0.32) and guardrails (r=0.24), while more collaborative cultures also correlated with guardrails (r=0.31). This suggests the issue is not centralisation versus autonomy, but whether anyone has taken ownership at all. A blended model — central guardrails combined with high-visibility peer support and local experimentation — appears most likely to succeed.

Section 3: What Role Has AI Taken in Your Organisation?

This section examines how AI is being used across ten project management domains, introduces the AI Archetypes Framework as a lens for understanding these roles, and identifies the pattern of adoption.

Current Usage: Concentrated at the Productivity End

Respondents rated the extent to which AI is being used across ten domains. The results show a clear hierarchy:

AI Use-Case Domain	Average	Tier
Productivity – automating routine tasks	45/100	High
Innovation – accelerating idea generation and testing	45/100	High
Knowledge – capturing and sharing organisational learning	39/100	Mid
Communications – enhancing staff, client, and partner comms	38/100	Mid
Leadership Support – improving decision-making	38/100	Mid
Strategy – modelling scenarios for long-term decisions	38/100	Mid
Operations – coordinating and streamlining delivery	35/100	Mid
People & Culture – supporting wellbeing and collaboration	34/100	Low
Insight & Oversight – revealing unseen risks or patterns	29/100	Low
Values & Governance – tracking alignment with ethics and purpose	21/100	Low

The gap between the top (productivity and innovation at 45/100) and the bottom (values and governance at 21/100) is substantial. Most organisations are using AI for what might be called “low-hanging fruit”: drafting, summarising, automating repetitive tasks, and generating ideas. The higher-trust, higher-complexity applications — surfacing hidden risks, modelling strategic options, tracking alignment with organisational values — are barely being explored.

The Rising-Tide Effect

The correlation analysis revealed something important: the use-case domains are strongly inter-related, with many correlations above r=0.60 and peaking at r=0.78 between innovation and productivity. This suggests a rising-tide effect: organisations that begin using AI in one domain tend to expand into others. Success breeds confidence, and confidence enables exploration.

This has practical implications. Rather than trying to introduce AI across all domains simultaneously, organisations may be better served by a phased roadmap: securing quick wins in productivity and innovation, then building outward into knowledge, operations, and communications, before tackling the higher-trust domains of insight, strategy, and governance.

The AI Archetypes Framework

To help non-technical leaders understand and govern the roles AI plays within their organisations, this research introduces the AI Archetypes Framework. Adapted from Carl Jung's model of human archetypes, this proprietary framework (developed by Peter Allen, Prosilience) identifies ten distinct "roles" that AI can occupy in a project environment:

Archetype	Role Description
The Task Accelerator	Automating routine tasks to boost output
The Public Face	Enhancing staff, client, and partner communications
The Revealing Mirror	Revealing unseen risks, biases, or patterns
The Institutional Memory	Capturing and sharing organisational learning
The Coach/Mediator	Supporting wellbeing, collaboration, and performance
The Possibility Generator	Modelling scenarios for long-term decisions
The Creative Disruptor	Accelerating idea generation and testing
The Integrator	Coordinating and streamlining delivery across systems
The Autonomous Decision Maker	Improving planning and efficiency through automated decisions
The Core Identity	Tracking alignment with ethics, trust, and purpose

The framework shifts the conversation from what AI can do to what AI can be. Most organisations today are engaging primarily with the Task Accelerator and the Creative Disruptor. But as confidence, data quality, and governance mature, AI will increasingly occupy roles that require higher levels of trust and organisational alignment — the Revealing Mirror, the Autonomous Decision Maker, and the Core Identity.

This progression is not automatic. It requires deliberate leadership decisions about which roles AI should occupy, what values should be embedded, and what governance is needed for each. The diagnostic data shows that most organisations have not yet had these conversations.

Section 4: Barriers to Adoption and Suggestions to Overcome Them

The final section of the diagnostic asked two open-text questions, framed as conversations with a trusted colleague. 55 respondents described barriers to AI adoption and 51 offered suggestions to overcome them. The responses were analysed thematically, with sentiment analysis providing additional context.

Barriers: Five Core Themes

Sentiment analysis of the barrier responses showed 84% negative sentiment, with fear (52%) and sadness (27%) as dominant emotions. Five themes emerged:

1. Security, Confidentiality, and Regulation

The single most frequently cited barrier. Respondents in regulated industries described strict data classification requirements, concerns about sensitive information entering uncontrolled environments, and security policies that prevent access to AI tools entirely. For these respondents, the barrier is institutional, not personal.

> *"Work in a regulated industry with strong security requirements."*

> *"Stringent controls and regulations over the sensitivity of data and its classification."*

2. Lack of Organisational Strategy and Governance

Many respondents described the absence of a clear organisational direction for AI. Without a strategy, adoption becomes ad hoc, investment is unfocused, and individuals are left to make their own decisions about what is and is not appropriate.

> *"Lack of a clear strategy on how AI will be adopted within the organisation, lack of vision."*

> *"The fact that there are no guardrails."*

3. Capability Gaps and the Value Proposition

Adoption stalls when staff lack training or cannot identify role-specific use cases. Several respondents noted that generic awareness is insufficient; they need to see AI applied to their specific work.

> *"Levels of understanding about what it can do and how to get it to do it."*

> *"Lack of domain-specific use cases."*

4. Trust and Quality Concerns

Scepticism about output accuracy, bias reinforcement, and the absence of human review remains a significant barrier. This is not resistance to AI per se, but a legitimate concern about reliability in professional contexts where errors carry real consequences.

> *"Trusting what the AI delivered."*

> *"The confidence in the quality of the outputs."*

5. Practical Adoption Friction

Even where willingness exists, practical obstacles slow progress: lengthy approval processes, difficulty proving return on investment, and insufficient time to investigate and adopt new tools.

> *"Not getting access to the AI systems in a timely manner or approvals taking too long."*

> *"Insufficient time to investigate and adopt, tracking gains."*

Suggestions: From Barriers to Action

The sentiment of the suggestions responses flipped dramatically: 60% joy and 61% positive sentiment. Respondents were not defeated by the barriers; they had clear ideas about what would help. Six themes emerged:

1. Run Small, Real-Work Pilots

The most common suggestion: start with tightly scoped pilots using real tasks and safe data, measure outcomes, and use the results to build stakeholder confidence.

> *"Develop a limited pilot to demonstrate value with a real-life example."*

2. Establish a Central Strategy

Align leadership sponsorship with dedicated resources to ensure AI adoption is deliberate, not ad hoc.

> *"Agreement on a vision and strategy for driving value from AI for project management."*

3. Provide Role-Specific Enablement

Move beyond generic modules towards workshops and coaching tailored to specific functional workflows. Make it practical and peer-led.

> *"1-to-1 personal coaching approaches rather than throwing skills hubs, videos, guides at people."*

4. Define Clear Usage Guardrails

Streamline security checks and establish safe, approved environments for experimentation. Publish simple frameworks covering approved tools, data classification rules, and human-in-the-loop expectations.

> *"Quick-track cyber security checks, governance in place and training for users."*

5. Cultivate Learning Ecosystems

Build communities of practice, prompt libraries, and show-and-tell sessions that spread success through social proof rather than top-down mandates.

“Develop a community of practice that encourages experimentation and a ‘fail fast’ approach.”

6. Address the Fear Factor

Several respondents noted that fear about job displacement creates guarded, defensive responses to AI adoption. This needs explicit leadership messaging about how roles will evolve, not disappear.

Cross-Cutting Insights

The following five insights emerge from triangulating the quantitative data, correlation analysis, and qualitative themes across all sections of the diagnostic. They represent the patterns that cut across the four diagnostic questions and point to the most important leverage points for the profession.

Insight 1: The Belief–Action Gap

We know it matters, but we're not doing it yet.

Respondents overwhelmingly recognise that AI will be critical to the future of project management. The importance of AI for future success (mean 69/100) and its perceived impact on the profession (65/100) both score well above the midpoint, and importance to individual careers sits at 66/100. Yet when we look at what is actually happening, there is a striking drop-off: personal usage averages just 43/100, business usage 41/100, and the pace of organisational adoption only 46/100.

This is not a case of people being unaware or unconvinced. The conviction is there — what is missing is the bridge between recognising AI's significance and being equipped and enabled to act on it. The correlation data supports this: those who do use AI in business report significantly higher value (r=0.59) and faster organisational adoption (r=0.46).

The implication is that the conversation needs to shift from "AI awareness" to "AI enablement" — practical training, approved tools, and protected time to practise. The belief side of the equation is already solved; it is the doing side that needs attention.

Insight 2: Training and Support Is the Critical Bottleneck

Of all the individual readiness questions, training and support received the lowest score (mean 36/100), with nearly a quarter of respondents scoring it below 15. This is not just a standalone concern — the correlation analysis reveals it acts as a gateway to almost everything else. Training is positively linked to experimentation (r=0.46), the perceived importance of AI for future success (r=0.43), and the extent to which people are using AI for communications (r=0.42) and innovation (r=0.41).

The qualitative data reinforces this powerfully. Respondents are not asking for generic awareness sessions — they want domain-specific, practical training that shows AI applied to real project management tasks. There are also calls for role-based clinics, shared prompt libraries, and short workshops where colleagues demonstrate what they have actually built. The message is clear: upskilling needs to be hands-on, contextualised, and peer-led — not a one-off awareness exercise pushed out through a skills hub.

Insight 3: Experimentation Is the Strongest Lever — and Demonstrated Value Is What Reduces Anxiety

The opportunity to experiment and innovate with AI (mean 52/100) is the single question most strongly correlated with tangible outcomes across the entire dataset. It connects to innovation (r=0.51), knowledge capture (r=0.50), productivity (r=0.47), communications

(r=0.46), strategic scenario modelling (r=0.44), and insight and oversight (r=0.43). No other individual factor shows this breadth of impact.

Crucially, there is a direct link between value experienced and anxiety. Those who report higher value from AI also report meaningfully lower anxiety (r=−0.42). This suggests the quickest route to building confidence is not more theory or reassurance — it is safe, evidenced wins that prove usefulness in people's actual work. Experimentation also links to the pace of organisational adoption (r=0.47), suggesting that organisations which create room to experiment do not just get better individual outcomes — they accelerate their entire adoption journey.

Recommended action: Run two to three tightly scoped pilots with safe data, measure outcomes (time saved, quality uplift), and turn them into reusable case studies.

Insight 4: Governance Feels Like a Blocker, Not an Enabler — and Culture Is Part of the Fix

Organisational governance-related questions consistently sit in the bottom tier of scores: clarity of ownership and direction (40/100), clarity of priorities (41/100), maturity of policies (42/100), and pace of adoption (46/100). Robustness of guardrails scores 48/100, though notably with a high proportion of uncertain responses.

This creates a double bind visible in the qualitative data. Respondents in regulated industries cite data security, classification restrictions, and lack of approved tools as hard barriers. Others point to the absence of guardrails as its own problem — they want to use AI but do not feel safe doing so without clear organisational guidelines. The correlation between policy maturity and guardrails is strong (r=0.64), suggesting these are experienced as two sides of the same coin. People need governance that enables rather than just restricts: simple, practical frameworks covering approved tools, data classification rules, human-in-the-loop expectations, and escalation routes, alongside secure sandboxes for pilots.

But governance alone will not shift the dial. The qualitative data also surfaces fear about job security. People talk about colleagues believing AI will make roles redundant, and that this creates guarded, defensive responses to adoption. This needs to be met with explicit leadership messaging about how roles will evolve, not disappear — and what the organisation's commitment is to its people through the transition.

Insight 5: AI Usage Is Narrow — Start Where Appetite Is Highest, Then Scale

When asked about the extent to which AI is being used across nine project management domains, the pattern is revealing. Productivity and innovation lead at 45/100. But usage drops sharply for insight and oversight (29/100), strategy (38/100), people and culture (34/100), and values and governance (21/100 — the lowest score in the entire survey).

The strong within-set correlations in these use-case questions (many above r=0.60, peaking at r=0.78 between innovation and productivity) suggest a rising-tide effect: organisations that begin using AI in one domain tend to expand into others. But right now, most usage remains at the low-hanging-fruit stage. Combined with the finding that anxiety about AI has

essentially no correlation with any of these use cases (all near r=0.00), the barrier is not fear — it is a lack of exposure and practical know-how.

Recommended phased roadmap: Phase 1: productivity and innovation quick wins to build confidence. Phase 2: knowledge capture and operational delivery support. Phase 3: insight, oversight, strategy, and governance use cases — backed by the stronger controls and trust that earlier phases will have built.

The Tension Between Organisational Control and Personal Ambition

A deeper analysis of the relationship between individual conviction and organisational governance revealed a key dynamic that cuts across all sections of the diagnostic.

Individual conviction and organisational governance are running on separate tracks

People have already decided AI matters to their careers (mean 66/100) and the profession (65/100), but this barely correlates with whether their organisation has a clear vision, priorities, or guardrails (all $r < 0.18$). These two things are happening independently.

Those with authority are pushing ahead regardless

Authority to change processes links to higher business usage ($r=0.32$) and faster adoption ($r=0.32$), but has almost no relationship with policy maturity ($r=0.05$) or guardrails ($r=0.07$) — suggesting people with influence are working around governance, not through it.

Two equal and opposite frustrations coexist

Some respondents cite overly restrictive controls as their barrier, while others cite the absence of any guardrails at all. Both groups want to use AI — they just need different things from their organisation.

The real gap is ownership, not control

Clarity of ownership and direction scored just 40/100 — the lowest of all governance questions. The issue is not that organisations are being too controlling; it is that in many cases, nobody has taken the reins at all.

People do not want less governance — they want enabling governance

The data points to a need for frameworks that say “here’s how you can use AI safely” rather than either blanket restriction or silence. Organisations that provide this are likely to unlock the individual ambition that is already there.

In summary: the tension is not between “organisation wants control” and “people want freedom.” It is between “organisation must manage risk” and “people need practical permission, tools, and skills to deliver value safely.” When the permission layer is missing, the result is hesitation, workarounds, and inconsistent adoption.

Human-Centric Data: The Missing Context for AI

A recurring theme throughout this research is the importance of context — not just what people are doing with AI, but why, and in what organisational and interpersonal conditions.

The project profession has historically been context-poor. Traditional project reporting focuses on scope, schedule, and cost: lagging indicators that tell you what has already happened. The feelings, beliefs, and perceptions that drove the decisions leading to those outcomes are rarely captured. Why did the team prioritise that risk? What biases shaped the procurement decision? Did people feel safe enough to raise concerns? These questions go unanswered because the data is never collected.

Human-Centric Data (HCD) addresses this gap. Developed by Team Animation, HCD focuses on measuring the human factors that drive project outcomes: psychological safety, wellbeing, quality of relationships, diversity of thought, perception of risk, and the biases that influence decisions. This data is gathered in a near-real-time, anonymised, and transparent manner, identifying weak (or not so weak) signals and lead indicators that give leaders the opportunity to act on insights before problems become crises.

Why HCD Matters for AI

The diagnostic data from this conference is itself an example of HCD in action: capturing how people feel about AI, what they believe about their organisations' readiness, and how their perceptions shape their behaviour. The insights it has produced — the belief–action gap, the training bottleneck, the governance deficit — would not have emerged from traditional project reporting.

But HCD has a deeper relevance for AI. As AI tools become more embedded in project decision-making, they need context to operate effectively. An AI tool that analyses project performance data without understanding the human dynamics behind it — the team tensions, the leadership pressures, the cultural norms — will produce technically accurate but practically misleading outputs. HCD provides the contextual layer that AI currently lacks.

The integration of HCD with traditional project performance data and AI-driven analysis represents a significant opportunity: enabling real-time, context-rich decision-making that accounts for both the quantitative metrics and the human factors that determine whether a project succeeds or fails.

The HCD Principles

HCD operates under five principles: transparency (data and its purpose are visible to all), anonymity (individuals are protected), continuity (measurement is ongoing, not one-off), non-intrusion (collection is lightweight and respectful), and action orientation (data exists to inform decisions, not to generate reports). These principles are particularly important in the context of AI, where the temptation to automate measurement without regard for these safeguards is real.

Next Steps

This report represents a snapshot — a single diagnostic applied to a specific group of engaged professionals at a moment in time. Its value lies not in definitive conclusions but in the patterns it reveals and the questions it prompts. The following next steps are recommended:

For Organisations

Close the enablement gap. Shift investment from AI awareness to AI enablement: practical training, approved tools, protected experimentation time, and clear governance that says "here's how" rather than "you can't."

Take ownership. Clarity of ownership scored lowest of all governance questions at 40/100. Someone needs to own the AI agenda — not just the technology, but the strategy, the governance, the training, and the conversation about how roles will evolve.

Start with pilots, then scale. Follow the rising-tide effect: begin with productivity and innovation quick wins, measure outcomes, build case studies, and use that confidence to expand into higher-trust use cases.

Publish enabling guardrails. Provide simple, practical frameworks: approved tools, data classification rules, human-in-the-loop expectations, escalation routes, and secure sandboxes for pilots.

For Project Professionals

Invest in your own AI literacy. The data shows that those who experiment report higher value and lower anxiety. Start small, use safe data, and build from there.

Build peer learning networks. The strongest lever in the data is experimentation, and the qualitative data points to communities of practice, prompt libraries, and show-and-tell sessions as the most desired support mechanisms.

Think beyond productivity. The AI Archetypes Framework shows ten distinct roles AI can play. Most professionals are engaging with only two. Consider where AI could serve as an Institutional Memory, a Revealing Mirror, or a Possibility Generator in your context.

For APM and the Wider Profession

Scale this diagnostic. 62 respondents provide a meaningful snapshot, but the patterns identified here warrant validation at scale — across sectors, seniority levels, and organisational types. A larger sample would enable segmented analysis and more robust conclusions.

Track change over time. AI adoption is moving fast. Repeating this diagnostic annually would create a longitudinal dataset capable of tracking whether the belief–action gap is closing, whether training is improving, and whether governance is maturing.

Champion Human-Centric Data. The profession's greatest risk with AI is not the technology itself but the assumption that quantitative data alone can drive good decisions. HCD provides the context that project data — and AI — currently lacks.

Reflective Questions

We leave readers with the questions posed at the close of the conference:

1. If you were told to use AI on your project tomorrow, what would be your first thought?

2. Is your organisation's current approach to AI a deliberate strategy, or is it mostly just happening to you?

3. Which decisions in your projects are already being shaped by AI — even if no one has formally agreed that they should be?

4. What is the AI question nobody in your organisation is willing to ask out loud?

Appendix: Summary Statistics and Key Correlations

A. Descriptive Statistics — All Quantitative Questions

Question	Mean	Median	Std Dev	N
1.1 Anxiety towards AI*	40	38	19	62
1.2 Knowledge of AI*	46	47	20	62
1.3 Personal usage of AI	43	44	22	62
1.4 Business usage of AI	41	44	21	61
1.5 Value experienced from AI	51	50	23	62
1.6 Training and support received	36	32	23	62
1.7 Opportunity to experiment	52	50	23	62
1.8 Importance of AI in career	66	72	21	62
1.9 Impact on PM profession	65	70	19	62
1.10 Authority to change processes	48	50	24	62
2.1 Clarity of vision and purpose	51	50	22	60
2.2 Clarity of ethics and values	57	52	22	59
2.3 Clarity of priorities around AI	41	42	21	60
2.4 Pace of AI adoption	46	50	22	61
2.5 Clarity of ownership and direction	40	38	22	60
2.6 Importance of AI for future success	69	74	22	61
2.7 Maturity of policies	42	42	18	59
2.8 Robustness of guardrails	48	50	21	58
4.1 Values & Governance	21	15	20	57
4.2 Communications	38	36	24	58
4.3 Insight & Oversight	29	25	22	57
4.4 Operations	35	33	22	57
4.5 Knowledge	39	38	24	57
4.6 Innovation	45	47	25	57
4.7 Productivity	45	49	25	57
4.8 Strategy	38	36	24	57
4.9 People & Culture	34	31	23	56
4.10 Leadership Support	38	37	22	57

** Anxiety and Knowledge are reversed scales for interpretation (higher = more anxious / more knowledgeable). All other scales: higher = more positive.*

B. Key Pearson Correlations

Selected correlations of r ≥ 0.40 or of particular analytical significance:

Variable A	Variable B	r	Strength
Business usage	Value experienced	0.59	Strong
Experimentation	Innovation use	0.51	Strong
Experimentation	Knowledge use	0.50	Strong
Training	Experimentation	0.46	Moderate
Experimentation	Productivity use	0.47	Moderate
Experimentation	Pace of adoption	0.47	Moderate
Importance (career)	Value experienced	0.45	Moderate
Training	Future importance	0.43	Moderate
Training	Comms use	0.42	Moderate
Anxiety	Value experienced	−0.42	Moderate
Training	Innovation use	0.41	Moderate
Policy maturity	Guardrails	0.64	Strong
Authority	Business usage	0.32	Weak
Authority	Pace of adoption	0.32	Weak
Authority	Policy maturity	0.05	None
Importance (career)	Org vision	0.18	None
Innovation use	Productivity use	0.78	V. Strong

Full correlation matrix available on request. Correlations calculated using Pearson product-moment coefficients across 62 respondents.

End of Report

Produced for the APM AI and Data Analytics Interest Network