

HELIXR

Our Integrity. Your Future.

Project Leadership

In today's dynamic landscape, discover insights into navigating projects in evolving businesses.

LEE PRESTON
Senior Project Manager



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"Effective leadership alone is insufficient for project success; it must also combine project management principles serving as foundational guidelines to support strategic thinking, decision making and problem solving, whilst guiding the behaviour of the project team."



Introducing our Project Management Expert

Lee's expertise in leadership, decision making and people management gained over a 23-year military career, fed naturally into his transition to Project Management.

Lee has a strong belief in continuous development which contributes towards his high performance. Setting an example as a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and Scrum Master (CSM), with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management, and a Level 5 CIPD certification in Human Resources Management, Lee encourages and promotes continuous development to his team and others around him.

Lee passionately believes that as a leader, manager, and team member, one is only as good as the team in its entirety; each member brings a unique skill set and individual traits that contribute to collective success.

Through effective coaching and mentoring, collaboration with multi-functional and self-managing teams, Lee prides himself on the empowerment and trust of his teams to deliver results. He combines his professional skills with extensive experience in leadership, effective communication, stakeholder management and engagement, whilst enhancing individual team member's abilities, confidence and competencies, to ensure success.

Executive Summary

Project leadership necessitates a distinct form of effective guidance due to its unique nature.

In contrast to routine business operations with established roles, projects involve diverse entities that do not regularly interact, such as multiple organisations, departments, functions, or vendors. Additionally, projects often carry heightened stakes and expectations compared to regular operations, attracting input from a wider spectrum of managers, executives, senior contributors, and stakeholders. This dynamic frequently leads to increased confusion and conflict. Consequently, successful projects consistently exhibit effective leadership behaviours from a broader range of participants.

The creation of a project environment emphasising vision, creativity, motivation, enthusiasm, encouragement, and empathy significantly contributes to favourable outcomes, aligning closely with leadership attributes. Leadership, encompassing attitude, talent, character, and behaviours, plays a pivotal role in influencing individuals within and beyond the project team toward desired results.

In navigating the intricate landscape of project dynamics, leadership emerges as the linchpin that brings cohesion to diverse project entities. The project leader, acting as the orchestrator of this multifaceted ensemble, must not only exhibit a deep understanding of the project's objectives but also foster an inclusive and collaborative environment. Effective project leadership involves not just managing tasks and timelines but inspiring a shared vision, encouraging innovation, and facilitating open communication. In this unique setting, leaders must adapt to the evolving needs of the project, displaying resilience and decisiveness when facing challenges.

By fostering a culture of trust and accountability, project leaders empower team members to contribute their unique skills and perspectives, creating a constructive collaboration that propels the project toward success. Thus, the role of leadership in projects extends beyond traditional management; it embodies the art of unifying diverse talents and navigating complexities with a strategic and people-centric approach.

However, acknowledging that leadership alone is insufficient for project success, this whitepaper underscores the importance of incorporating planning, control, quality, and audit measures through the selection of the relevant project approach by analysing key influential factors, along with other project management principles and values that also align with Helixr's core values. By combining effective leadership with a comprehensive project management approach, organisations can enhance the likelihood of achieving their project objectives.

This document aims to offer valuable insights and guidance for the successful delivery of your organisation's project goals. It explores the selection of a suitable project methodology or approach, based on a projects business case / charter and its high level requirements, in order to competently plan and execute the project deliverables.



Introduction

Project Management, an established discipline with roots spanning centuries, has evolved into an indispensable practice in today's dynamic business landscape.

While a project inherently represents a temporary undertaking aimed at delivering a unique product, service, or result, its impacts often extend far beyond its initial scope, influencing lasting or even permanent outcomes and how the business operates beyond project completion.

At the heart of effective project management lies the constructive collaboration between a resolute project team and crucial stakeholders, all orchestrated by the project manager. Together, they collaboratively work towards a shared objective, meticulously determining the most fitting, widely recognised, and proven practices for each facet of the project. The success of any project is intricately woven into the fabric of leadership and management, where practitioners apply project management principles, processes, tools, and techniques to guide their endeavours.

The project team assigned to these ventures, are equipped with a diverse set of key skills which are fortified with a wealth of business and specialised knowledge. This amalgamation empowers them to not only meet but surpass the expectations of clients, customers, and other stakeholders that are profoundly impacted by the project. Through a strategic blend of expertise and application, project management becomes the driving force behind the seamless execution and delivery of impactful outcomes.

Think of project management as the guide through a journey, not just a checklist of tasks. It leaves a lasting mark on how a business succeeds by adapting, being creative, and connecting with the goals of the organisation. In this way, project management is a tool that helps businesses successfully navigate changes well and that the results achieved are always meaningful in the evolving landscape of modern businesses.

"Think of project management as the guide through a journey, not just a checklist of tasks."





Unique projects require unique approaches

Every project possesses its own distinct characteristics, varying from straightforward and foreseeable to intricate and precarious.

Accordingly, the management of each project demands a tailored approach as employing a uniformed level of project management rigor across all projects is inefficient. Despite this, numerous organisations and project managers adhere strictly to project management doctrines without customisation, rather than adapting their strategies to the specific project requirements. One potential risk in project management lies in a project manager's reluctance to change in considering an entirely different approach if they are well-versed in a particular project management methodology. Often, project managers try to shape a project to fit a predetermined methodology due to their familiarity with it. To enhance project management effectiveness, project managers and their teams must be open to diverse project management approaches, aligning them with the unique business environment, risks, target audiences and the complexity of each project.

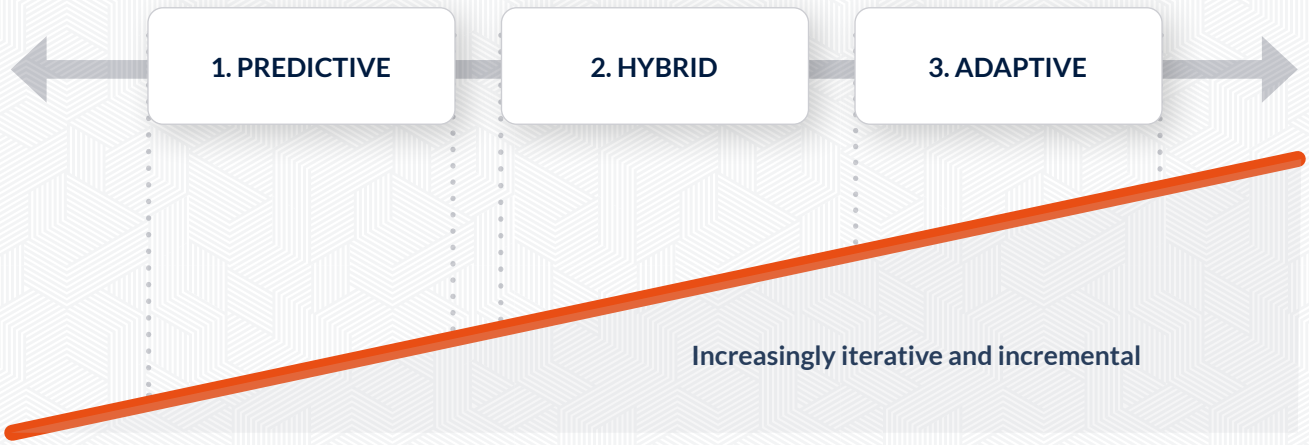
For both novice and seasoned project managers, determining the appropriate approach for a project can be challenging. Some project managers strictly adhere to a specific project management methodology, either dictated by the organisation's project management office or personally selected, irrespective of the project's size or complexity. On the other hand, others opt for a less stringent approach, leaving room for flexibility and adaptability. The challenge lies in avoiding the tendency to force all projects into a rigid framework, as this can lead to excessive planning thus hindering project progress.

Striking the right balance between comprehensive project management methodologies and their complete rejection is crucial for effective project management.

Project managers and their teams should carefully assess various project management processes and practices to identify those most suitable for each project. This involves a thoughtful consideration of the applicability of each project management process to the unique circumstances of the project. In the contemporary landscape, project approaches must acknowledge the inherent uncertainty in many projects. Crafting a project's approach involves recognising the diversity within projects—expectations may evolve, timelines may be constrained with imposed deadlines, budgets may be limited, and stakeholder involvement may vary.

Various development approaches exist, and diverse industries may employ distinct terminology to denote these approaches. The three frequently utilised methods are predictive, hybrid, and adaptive as illustrated below, these approaches are commonly perceived as a spectrum, ranging from the predictive approach at one end to the adaptive approach at the opposite end.

Examples of varying approaches with infographics are given on the next page for context:





1. Predictive and plan-driven approach

Predictive project management techniques involve planning and controlling projects based on a detailed analysis of historical data, assumptions, and predictions through methodologies such as Waterfall and Prince 2 (Projects IN Controlled Environments). These approaches are particularly useful when the project requirements and scope are well-defined, and there is a high degree of certainty in the project environment. While these methodologies provide overarching frameworks, specific project management techniques may be employed within each methodology. For example:

Outline predictive techniques	
Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)	The WBS breaks the project into smaller, more manageable tasks to create a hierarchical decomposition of the work to be executed. This helps in organising and defining the total scope of the project.
Critical Path Method (CPM)	Identifying the critical path, which is the sequence of activities that determines the longest duration of the project. CPM helps in scheduling activities, determining project duration, and identifying tasks that cannot be delayed without delaying the entire project.
Gantt Charts	Gantt charts provide a visual representation the project schedule, showing tasks and their dependencies over time. This allows for easy monitoring of progress and identification of potential delays.
Resource Levelling	The allocation of resources efficiently to avoid overloading or underutilising resources. Resource levelling helps in optimising resource allocation to ensure a smooth flow of work throughout the project.
Risk Management	The identification of potential risks early in the project and develop strategies to mitigate or respond to them. This includes risk analysis, risk prioritisation, and the creation of contingency plans to address unforeseen events.
Change Control	Implementation of a change control process to manage changes to the project scope, schedule, or budget. This involves assessing the impact of changes, obtaining approval, and updating project documentation accordingly.
Earned Value Management (EVM)	The measurement of project performance by comparing the planned value, earned value, and actual cost of work performed. EVM provides insights into project progress, cost performance, and forecasting future performance.
Quality Management	The development of a comprehensive quality management plan to ensure that project deliverables meet the specified quality standards. This involves a quality assurance and quality control process throughout the project lifecycle.
Communications Planning	The establishment of effective communication channels and protocols to keep stakeholders informed about project progress, changes, and any issues that may arise.



"Effective project leadership involves not just managing tasks and timelines but inspiring a shared vision, encouraging innovation, and facilitating open communication."

Common Themes

As both PRINCE2 and the Waterfall methodologies fall within the umbrella of the more traditional and predictive approaches in project management, whilst remembering they are different approaches in their own rights, they both share and have common themes such as:

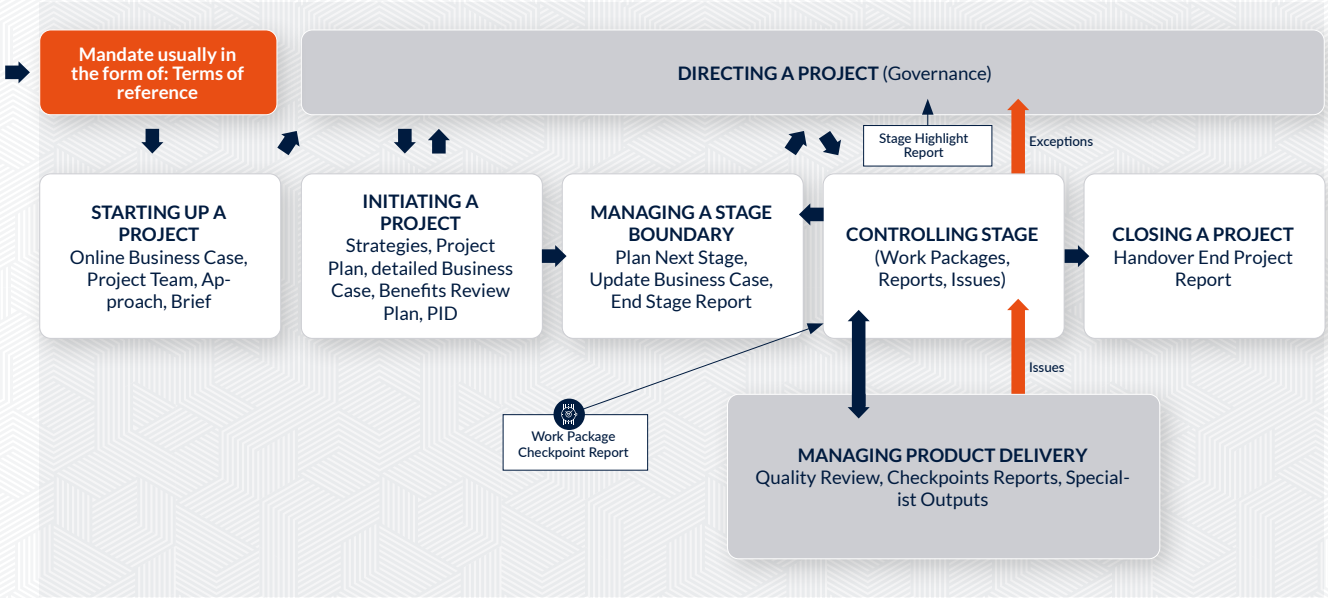
- Sequential Phases
- Detailed Planning
- Controlled Change Management
- Emphasis on Documentation
- Risk Management
- Clear and Defined Roles and Responsibilities
- Formal Project Closure

While these characteristics highlight the similarities between PRINCE2 and Waterfall, it is essential to note that PRINCE2 is a project management framework that can be adapted to various project scenarios, including those using iterative and agile approaches. Waterfall, on the other hand, is a specific methodology with a fixed, sequential structure. The degree of flexibility and adaptability may vary between the two depending on the specific implementation and adaptation of PRINCE2.



Comparison of PRINCE2 and Waterfall

PRINCE2 is a structured project management framework that incorporates principles, themes, and processes to guide project execution. While it allows for flexibility and adaptability, it shares some characteristics with the Waterfall methodology. PRINCE2 includes techniques such as product-based planning, risk management, and change control, emphasising a systematic and controlled approach to project management. These techniques help ensure that projects are well-planned, risks are identified and mitigated, and changes are managed effectively, aligning with predictive project management principles. The below network diagram depicts the 7 principles and processes of PRINCE2:



On the other hand, the Waterfall method involves a linear progression through defined phases, such as requirements gathering, design, development, testing, deployment, and maintenance. This approach is characterised by comprehensive planning at the outset and a sequential execution of tasks. It emphasises thorough documentation and has a strict change control process.

This linear progression aligns with techniques such as the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) for breaking down the project into manageable tasks and the Critical Path Method (CPM) for scheduling and managing task dependencies.





2. Adaptive Approach

Adaptive methodologies are invaluable in managing projects facing heightened uncertainty and volatility, anticipating changes throughout the project's duration. At the project's initiation, a well-defined vision is established, and the initial set of known requirements undergoes continuous refinement, detailing, modification, or replacement in response to user feedback, environmental factors, or unforeseen events during project and product reviews.

Aligned with Agile methodologies, adaptive project management techniques prioritise flexibility and responsiveness to change throughout the project lifecycle. Particularly beneficial in dynamic and uncertain environments where requirements may evolve and stakeholder priorities can shift, these techniques offer effective strategies for navigating challenging circumstances. The below table outlines key adaptive project management techniques with a brief description:

Outline adaptive techniques		
Agile Methodologies:	Scrum	An iterative and incremental framework that emphasises flexibility and collaboration. It involves short development cycles called sprints, regular feedback, and continuous improvement.
	Kanban	Focuses on visualising the workflow and limiting work in progress. It helps teams manage and optimise their work by balancing demand with available capacity.
Iterative Development:	Incremental Development	Breaks down the project into smaller, manageable parts, or increments. Each increment represents a portion of the overall functionality and is developed and delivered independently.
Continuous Integration and Continuous Delivery (CI/CD):	CI/CD Pipelines	Automate the process of integrating code changes and delivering software to production. This ensures that changes can be quickly and reliably deployed, promoting frequent releases and adaptability.
Adaptive Planning:	Rolling Wave Planning	Involves planning only the phases or activities that are imminent, allowing for adjustments as the project progresses and more information becomes available.
Dynamic Prioritisation:	MoSCoW	Categorises requirements into Must-haves, Should-haves, Could-haves, and Won't-haves. This helps teams focus on the most critical features and adapt priorities as needed.
Continuous Feedback:	Regular Retrospectives	Teams periodically reflect on their performance and identify areas for improvement. This continuous feedback loop allows for adjustments to processes and practices.
Customer Collaboration:	Servant Leadership	Leaders focus on facilitating the success of their teams rather than commanding and controlling. This approach fosters collaboration and empowers team members to make decisions.
Cross Functional Teams:	Multi-disciplinary	Teams comprised of individuals with diverse skills work collaboratively to address a variety of tasks. This promotes adaptability as team members can collectively respond to changing requirements.



Common Themes

Although there are numerous adaptive techniques, they all possess and share several common principles and themes that contribute and enable project teams to navigate complex and dynamic environments. They focus on the delivery and customer expectations that differentiate them from a more conventional predictive and plan-driven methodology:

- Flexibility, Adaptability and Responsiveness
- Iterative and Incremental Development
- Customer and Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement
- Continuous Feedback and Improvement
- Cross-Functional Teams
- Dynamic Focus and Prioritisation
- Visual Reporting
- Proactive Risk Management
- Empowerment

Pros and Cons

While adaptive project management techniques offer numerous advantages, their successful implementation requires careful consideration of project characteristics, team dynamics, and organisational culture, Like any process or technique there are always pros and cons that also need to be considered such as:

Pros	Cons
Flexibility and Adaptability	Uncertain Project Scope
Early and Predictable Delivery	Lack of Predictability in Cost and Schedule
Continuous Improvement	Dependency on Team Expertise
Reduced Risk of Failure	Resistance to Change
Enhanced Team Collaboration	Potential Scope Creep
Higher Product Quality	Overemphasis on Short-term Goals
Transparency and Visibility	Resource Allocation Challenges
Increased Stakeholder Engagement	Documentation Challenges
Empowered Teams	Potential Burnout

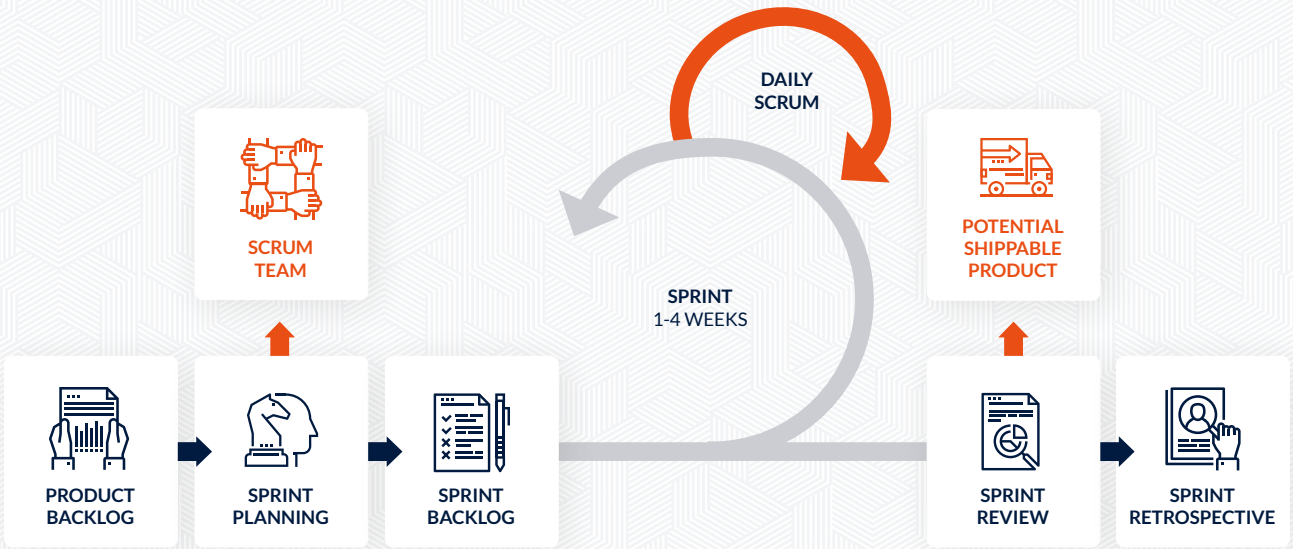


Among the adaptive project management techniques, Agile methodologies are the most commonly used. Specifically, Scrum and Kanban are widely adopted in various industries for their flexibility, iterative approach, and emphasis on collaboration. Below is a brief overview and process flow diagram of Scrum:

Scrum

- **Iterative and Incremental:** Scrum divides the project into small, manageable iterations called sprints, usually lasting two to four weeks culminating in a showcase of accomplishments to stakeholders at each iteration's conclusion otherwise known as a Sprint Review within the Scrum framework. Each sprint results in a potentially shippable product increment.
- **Roles:** Scrum defines specific roles, including Product Owner, Scrum Master, and Development Team. These roles emphasise collaboration and shared responsibility.
- **Artifacts:** Scrum utilises artifacts such as the product backlog, sprint backlog, and burndown charts to provide transparency and help manage the flow of work.
- **Events:** Sprint Planning, Sprint, Daily Scrum, Sprint Review, and Sprint Retrospective

Although agility extends beyond a mere development framework, agile approaches are inherently adaptive but more importantly a mindset that the project team and organisation are required to adopt.





3. Hybrid Approach

In the realm of development methodologies, a hybrid approach represents a strategic fusion of both adaptive and predictive methodologies. This nuanced approach proves highly advantageous in scenarios marked by uncertainty or risk surrounding project requirements, particularly when deliverables lend themselves to modularisation or when contrasting project teams are entrusted with their development. While the hybrid approach exhibits a greater degree of adaptability than a purely predictive approach, it falls short of the full adaptability characterising a purely adaptive approach.

Hybrid methodologies often incorporate iterative or incremental development strategies.

- An **iterative** approach proves beneficial for refining requirements and exploring diverse options. This method may yield a satisfactory level of functionality before the final iteration.
- An **incremental** approach focuses on delivering a product through a series of iterations. In each iteration, functionality is added within a predefined period, known as a timebox. The deliverable is considered complete only after the final iteration.

An illustrative application of the hybrid methodology could involve the use of an adaptive approach for developing a product marked by significant uncertainty in requirements, followed by the deployment of said product using a predictive approach. Alternatively, in projects with dual deliverables, the hybrid methodology may manifest in the adoption of an adaptive approach for one deliverable and a predictive approach for the other. This strategic synthesis of methodologies not only enhances project adaptability but also provides a tailored solution to effectively navigate diverse challenges.

This framework is represented within the SAP activate methodology which is part of a wider SAP Activate framework consisting of three vital pillars that help and guide project managers:

- SAP Best Practices
- Guided Configurations
- SAP Activate Methodology

Once the Project roadmap has been established, then the six SAP Activate methodology phases can be leveraged to complete the implementation. These phases are Discover, Prepare, Explore, Realize, Deploy and Run.





"The percentage of projects that fail is fairly high – a whopping 70% of all projects fail to deliver what was promised to customers. The implementation of a management process, however, is shown to reduce the failure rate to 20% or below."

TEAMSTAGE

"A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be."

ROSALYNN CARTER



Tailoring the project and approach

While certain fundamental project management practices are essential, their application must be tailored to the specific context.

In the process of "tailoring," the project manager, in collaboration with the project management team, assumes responsibility for determining the suitability of each process and the appropriate level of rigor for its implementation. Project managers and their teams are advised to meticulously evaluate each process, ensuring its relevance to the project they are currently undertaking.

To select the right development approach for your project, a number of influencing factors should be considered, these are categorised into three sections, the product, service, or result; the project; and the organisation. The subsequent sections outline the variables associated with each category:

The Product, Service, or Result

- Degree of Innovation
- Requirements Uncertainty
- Scope Stability
- Ease of Change
- Delivery Options
- Risk
- Safety Requirements
- Regulations

The Project

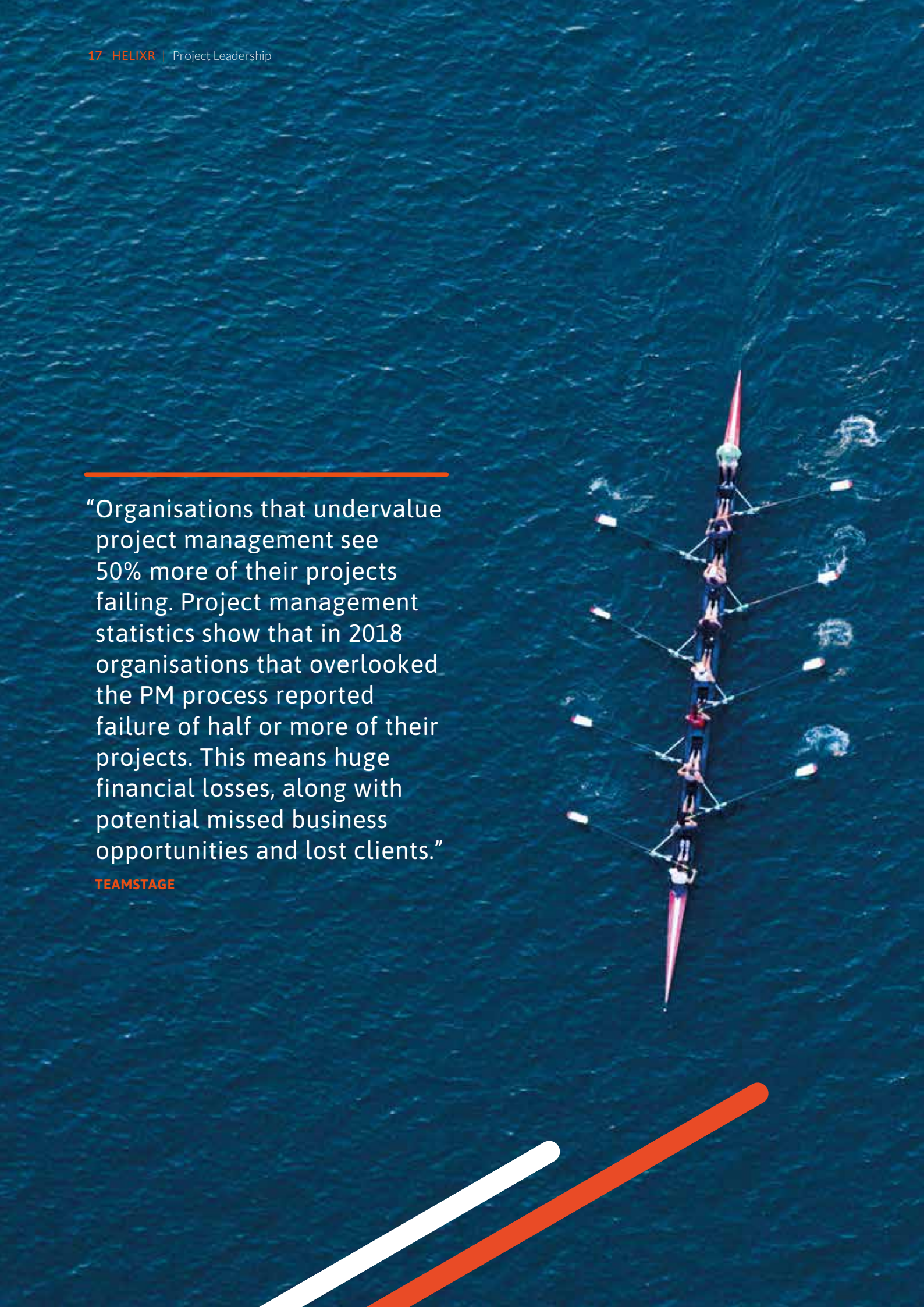
- Stakeholders
- Schedule Constraints
- Funding Availability

The Organisation

- Organisational Structure
- Culture
- Organisational Capability
- Project Team (Size and Location)

In addition to these influencing factors, Project Managers must possess a number of skills and in combination with the influencing factors listed above, a project manager can tailor the project approach in a way that optimally aligns with the project's unique characteristics, stakeholder expectations, and environmental factors.

- Analytical Skills
- Communication Skills
- Adaptability
- Risk Management
- Project Management Methodologies & Documentation Knowledge
- Leadership Skills
- Problem Solving
- Negotiation Skills
- Time Management
- Technical Competence
- Continuous Improvement



"Organisations that undervalue project management see 50% more of their projects failing. Project management statistics show that in 2018 organisations that overlooked the PM process reported failure of half or more of their projects. This means huge financial losses, along with potential missed business opportunities and lost clients."

TEAMSTAGE

Conclusions

Taking all of these approaches and methodologies into account, it becomes evident that effective project leadership stands as the linchpin in the intricate landscape of project dynamics, providing cohesion to diverse entities and ensuring a lasting impact.

The synthesis of effective leadership behaviours within a project environment that values vision, creativity, motivation, and empathy is fundamental to success.

However, the journey towards successful project delivery is not a static endpoint but an ongoing commitment to adaptability and learning. The amalgamation of effective leadership with a tailored project management approach demands a continual reassessment of project needs and an openness to emerging methodologies that align with the unique project demands. This dynamic process ensures not only the achievement of immediate project objectives but also contributes to broader organisational goals, fostering a culture of innovation, resilience, and continuous improvement.

This holistic synergy not only aligns teams toward common objectives but also navigates challenges adeptly, by understanding the intricate interplay of internal and external factors, this approach ensures adaptability in the face of uncertainties, contributing not just to the achievement of project success but also to the broader triumph and resilience of the organisation.



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Helixr is a business restructuring and ERP services consultancy, based in the UK, with a global reach, expertise and experience that focuses on the Life Sciences sector.

Want to find out more? Book a consultation today.

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