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7 Trends Shaping the Future of PPM

Your Guides:
Wes McCoubrie & Jacob Cancelliere

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Agenda

1. Introductions.
2. Explore the top trends in project and work management in 2026.
3. Discuss actionable strategies to adopt these trends.

How the Trends Are Chosen

How We Identify the Trends:

- 250+ expert guides supporting 800+ organizations.
- Data across industries and maturity models.
- Real-world successes, challenges, and opportunities.
- Insights of global conferences (Gartner, PMI) and researched topics from other industry leaders.

Overview of 2026 Trends

1 Standardize SPM

2 Agentic AI

3 Keeping Pace with AI

4 Integrated Ecosystem Mindset

5 Personalized CWM Tools

6 Blurring of CWM, APMR, and SPM Tools

7 Tailored Non Project-based Journeys

Trend 1: Standardize SPM

What We're Seeing

- Scattered data, inconsistent terminology, and silos.
- Stalled decision making, increased confusion, and lack of trust.

Opportunity

- Standardize key definitions, taxonomies.
- Standardization improves clarity, alignment, and provides foundation for AI and predictive insights.

Get on Track with Trend 1: SPM Standardization

- Establish a governance team (EPMO, Business Counsel, …)
- Identify key stakeholder personas
- Create a common taxonomy (Key Operational Definitions)
- Normalize/clean your data
- Integrate Systems of Record
- Build the SPM data model with that clean, connected data
- OCM – Plan for adoption and revisit the plan often

Open Mic

Have you succeeded with creating standards in your organization?

Trend 2: Agentic AI

What We're Seeing

- AI solutions are maturing even faster than predicted, moving from diagnostic (analyze) to prescriptive (advise) to autonomous (act).
- AI Agents can understand goals, constraints, and context. They proactively plan, choose tools, and take action, continuously escalating, validating, and adapting.
- Solution vendors are providing out-of-the-box agents and agent-building capabilities. Analysts are already referring to multiagent systems (MAS) and orchestration.

Opportunity

- Agents are helping materialize the value proposition of AI, centered - for now – on productivity gains.
- Chance to bring AI to life in a way that supports the team, not replacing them.
- Universal availability of APIs allow agents to work across application of record. Use cases are unconstrained.

Get on Track with Trend 2

- Seek education on agentic concepts and real-world examples. Play with in-tool features.
- Progress pragmatically through the analyze, advise, and act outcomes.
- Refine your use cases and develop an AI roadmap.
- Start with simple experiments on mundane, repeatable activities.
- Formalize security policies and risk tolerance guardrails.
- Define an AI change management and resourcing strategy.
  - Appreciate that this topic comes with a certain amount of workforce anxiety.
  - Shift people towards strategy.

Open Mic

- Please share some examples of where you are at with AI and Agents.

Trend 3: Keeping Pace with AI

What We're Seeing

- AI technology continues to outpace realized value.
- Personal adoption and optimism is stalled by lagging organizational readiness.

Opportunity

- Workforce is primed to take advantage of these technologies.
- Organizations with defined guardrails and strong policies can tap into workforce creativity.
- Learn from early adopters.

Get on Track with Trend 3

- Establish foundational organizational policies for security, risk tolerance, and available toolsets.
- Adopt an inquisitive organizational mindset.
- Invest in training, AI literacy, and encourage exploration.
- Communicate your organization's intentions for AI. Remove the threat to your teams and avoid silent subversion.
- Focus on defining progressively complex use cases.
- Adopt deliberately based on industry learnings.

Open Mic

Are you keeping pace?

Trend 4: Integrated Ecosystem Mindset

What We're Seeing

- Disconnected tools create silos, duplicate work and manual steps.
- Duplicate capabilities being leveraged in more than one tool.

Opportunity

- Automate data flow.
- Gain real-time alignment and visibility.
- Shift from disconnected standalone systems to an **ecosystem** that unifies systems across finance, delivery, sales, HR, operations, and strategy.

Get on Track with Trend 4: Improve Your Integration Strategy

- Complete a Capabilities Assessment across your ecosystem.
- Identify opportunities and gaps across your landscape. Focus on removing waste.
- Review personas against capabilities and gaps.
- Use the correct technology enablers (APIs, integration tools, middleware).
- Establish ongoing integration governance and review of your ecosystem.

Open Mic

Do you have systems you have not integrated with Clarity? Why?

Trend 5: Personalized CWM Tools

What We're Seeing

- Overwhelming tool ecosystems.
- Brain overload that leads to decision fatigue.
- Decreased productivity from context switching.
- Work management experiences that don't adapt to individuals.
- Low engagement and poor usability.

Opportunity

- Work is personalized to your preferences. Tools are easy to use, even fun!
- Increase focus, engagement, and productivity.
- Remove the mental load from users.

Get on Track with Trend 5: Design Your Personalized Work Environment

- Learn what's possible by staying current on tool advancements.
- Prepare your data foundation for personalization.
- Define success metrics and gamify where appropriate.
- Evaluate team technology and processes.
- Assess vendor roadmaps for alignment.
- Redesign roles and processes for AI agents.
- Train your workforce to adopt AI-augmented ways of working.

Trend 6: Blurring of CWM, APMR, and SPM Tools

Collaborative Work Management (CWM) | Adaptive Project Management and Reporting (APMR) | Strategic Portfolio Management (SPM)

What We're Seeing

- The tool ecosystem is as blurry as ever, even as further tiering is defined.
- Capability distinctions no longer align with tool taxonomies.
- Analysts struggling to keep up with encroachments.

Opportunity

- Organizations can refocus on current and future state business capabilities to drive tool selection and investment.
- Be wary of the overpromise.

Get on Track with Trend 6

- Assess your current maturity and tool ecosystem. Including adoption and data quality.
- Understand your long-term growth plan.
- Map that growth plan and confirm tools can scale with it.
- Engage a long-term partner who understands maturity, ecosystems, and vendor roadmaps.

Be cautious of hype and tools that claim to “do everything” without proven depth.

Open Mic

- Are you seeing CWM tools appear in your organization?

Trend 7: Tailored Non Project-based Journeys

What We're Seeing

- Many companies claim to be product-led, yet culture, finance, and governance remain project-centric.
- Transformation fatigue.
  - **Cultural:** Employees disengage when ceremonies feel forced rather than empowering.
  - **Financial:** Budgets prevent long-term product planning.
  - **Operational:** Work is still assigned to individuals instead of teams, creating burnout and churn.

Opportunity

- Align culture, teams, and funding around shared outcomes and flexible frameworks to deliver what the customer wants.

Get on Track with Trend 7: Unified Evolution

- Create guiding principles and internally define "product."
- Build a culture focused on value streams:
  - Initiate training and education on value.
  - Build cross-functional product teams aligned to value.
- Pilot team-first funding models and iterate; start small.
- Pair AI insights with coaching to elevate decision-making.
- Mitigate the risks of too much autonomy and over-customization by driving standards across product teams.

Open Mic

- Are you managing other investments and Projects?

Synthesized Trends of 2026

- Clean, standardized data and shared taxonomies are foundational to every advanced capability.
- AI is moving faster than organizations, and that's okay. In the short-term, focus on policy, literacy, roadmaps, use cases, and smart experimentation.
- Connected ecosystems outperform single platforms, making integration a strategic advantage.
- CWM, APMR, and SPM tools are converging; choose tools that match your growing maturity.
- Product and value-stream thinking are rising, supported by capacity-based forecasting and team-of-teams models.
- Adaptive, personalized work experiences are becoming standard through AI and context.
- Culture, governance, and cross-functional alignment determine success, more than tools or frameworks.

Get on Track with All Trends

- **Standardize your language and data foundation.** Nothing works without a clean and consistent foundation. Create shared definitions across portfolios, products, finance, and delivery. Clean, structured data is the backbone of trust, visibility, and AI-driven insight.
- **Strengthen integration and governance.** Connect key systems across your ecosystem (SPM/PPM, CWM, ERP, CRM, HRIS, ITSM). Move from one-time integrations to ongoing governance with clear ownership and data controls.
- **Build a practical AI adoption strategy.** Start with low-risk, high-value use cases. Define where AI agents can show, recommend, and act. Add policy, training, and ethical guardrails to support safe AI expansion.
- **Modernize your operating model.** Shift from project-centric practices to product-aligned teams, capacity-based forecasting, and value-stream funding. Give teams the autonomy and accountability to deliver measurable outcomes.
- **Prepare your workforce for AI-augmented, personalized work.** Equip employees to supervise agents, use adaptive CWM tools, and navigate more dynamic, personalized digital experiences.

Questions?

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