

## **Eliminate or embrace? The case of the accidental project manager: A narrative review<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This narrative review borrows aspects of the systematic literature review approach to analyse the current state of research relating to the concept of the accidental project manager (APM) – a concept which remains despite the professionalisation of the project context. The review examines the origins, challenges, and impact of APMs, focusing on organisational attitudes, hiring practices, and entry pathways which contribute to the phenomenon. Findings indicate APMs lack formal PM training and face difficulties balancing technical expertise and soft skills. However, organisations inadvertently facilitate APM by downplaying the project profession and underfunding training and compensation. The review advocates for structured support by utilising the Project Management Office (PMO) to facilitate informal learning and knowledge exchange. The paper concludes that the accidental nature of projects extends beyond project manager to roles such as governance, programme manager, and even the organisation itself, requiring further research to explore how deep-rooted the issue is.

**Keywords:** Project manager, accidental project manager, project management, accidental project management, literature review, narrative review.

### **Introduction**

In the past, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, project managers (PMs) were predominantly ‘accidental,’ however, in the decades that followed, a drive for certification and competency led to the professionalisation of the project context (Bourne, 2018). Between 2017-2027, there is anticipated to be a 33% increase in project-related employment (Bishop, 2023), following on from previous bold predictions such as that of Rahim and Duncan (2021), who estimated significant growth and demand in project management (PM) across industries between 2010 and 2020, projecting an indicated 11 million new jobs and \$6.61 trillion in global revenue. Despite the recent professionalisation of PM, Bishop (2023) states that the concept of the ‘accidental project manager’ (APM) remains prevalent. Given the growth of project works, there is a subsequent supply-and-demand issue whereby organisations accelerating the use of PM have no choice but to recruit large numbers of untrained APMs (Green, N.D).

Sergeeva et al. (2018) believe that the days of the APM should be over, however, this paper poses the research question “are accidental project managers actually necessary for industry to achieve growth targets?” By exploring this question, the

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paper aims to add to the dearth of scholarly research in existence relating to the transition of people to PM (Zapf, 2013), by contributing to the study and understanding of the concept of APM (Richardson et al., 2015), in the process, building on Thorn's (2023) paper 'project managers experience and its impact on a project's successful completion: a review of the literature.'

## **Methodology**

This paper deploys a narrative review methodology to describe and discuss the current state of APM from a theoretical and contextual point of view. In doing so, it aims to provide readers with up-to-date knowledge about the topic (Rother, 2007). The paper therefore comprises a subjective examination and critique of the related body of literature, providing insight from a different and unusual perspective (Rumrill and Fitzgerald, 2001) - notably the contradiction surrounding the general narrative, by embracing the concept of APM. There are no acknowledged guidelines for narrative reviews like there is for the systematic literature review (SLR) methodology, like the Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, however, there are aspects of the approach which have been borrowed with the aim of reducing bias in article selection in this paper (Ferrari, 2015).

Whereby an SLR focuses upon a narrow question aimed to synthesise findings from similar studies, the narrative methodology can include a wider variety of studies, hence its use in this case (Greenhalgh et al., 2018). Similarly, while narrative reviews do not typically list databases and methodological approaches used for the review, this will be briefly mentioned in this case to highlight the breadth of sources referred to (Bernardo et al., 2004). Rather than apply strict inclusion or exclusion criteria which explicitly demarcates the boundaries and scope of the review (Sukhera, 2022), this paper used Scopus and Google Scholar to identify studies, complimenting these with inclusion of articles from the non-refereed, practitioner-focused PM World Journal (PMWJ), "a global resource for continuous learning and knowledge sharing related to Programme and Project Management (P/PM)... intended to help advance the global project management profession and to promote professional P/PM" (PM World Journal, 2024). It is the willingness to include studies from sources such as this which make the SLR methodology unsuitable in this case, instead, the narrative methodology allows more flexibility as a complementary form of scholarship (Petticrew et al., 2013).

## **Where do accidental project managers emerge from?**

Before establishing where APMs emerge from, it is important to differentiate between them and career PMs, the latter of whom plan to go into the profession due to a longstanding interest, for example, they may find PM an interesting, challenging, and rewarding pathway. Their APM counterparts, however, perceive PM as a necessary evil, or simply a career step before returning to their actual interest; their own technical field (Bourne, 2005). Higher Education (HE) plays an increasing role in producing PMs for the workplace, with some universities now offering standalone undergraduate degrees in PM (Carroll, 2012), although most limit PM to being embedded within a programme, for example, Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes with

PM as an option (Dannelly and Garrison, 2008). Subsequently, it may be argued PM remains a destination by accident by those for whom PM is embedded in their education, rather than the focus (Richardson et al., 2015).

Despite advancing focus on PM amongst universities, Rwelamila and Ssegawa (2014) note that, in some regions, only one in seven university programmes in PM are deemed even moderately effective, with many of them failing to exploit the soft issues of PM. Harpham (2017) is also critical of university as an entry point to PM, noting graduating is not enough, and reflecting on real-world experiences of PM is a big part of development. Borg and Scott-Young (2020), on the other hand, praise undergraduate education as a direct pathway into the project profession. Their findings indicate work-ready attributes are consistent with industry needs, although a variable in this is university reputation. Although this may suggest employer bias based towards 'big name' universities who they perceive to be providing more comprehensive education than their lesser-known counterparts, it does call for a more consultative approach between institutions and industry to form a standardised curriculum across providers which ensures consistency and a perceived benchmark which graduates meet. Achieving standardisation is, however, a challenge noted by Ahsan et al. (2013). Their study considering PM job adverts notes a focus upon soft skills, but with variables of country and industry. This means that, from one organisation to the next, different attributes are sought; for example, in some fields, technical expertise may be more relevant than in others where the tilt may be towards general PM skills.

PM entry points are not limited to HE, as Ndhlovu and Weeks (2013) note the diverse backgrounds PMs come from, and the varied career paths they may have had up to that point. Second careers, whereby a person changes profession during their working life, are not just becoming increasingly common in the modern dynamic work environment (Helppie-McFall and Sonnega, 2017) but are becoming an inescapable reality for many (Jain, 2014). People may make the change to prioritise flexibility, lower stress levels, or to prioritise fulfilment over finance (Helppie-McFall and Sonnega, 2017). For some, this transition is smooth (Baruch and Quick, 2007), but for others, it is challenging, with many needing career counselling and ongoing support with the process (Dash, 2018). PM is a viable second career option, with many utilising their base of technical or managerial expertise to gain entry, albeit with limited project competency (Darrell et al., 2010). This pathway aligns with their enterprising interests, although many have had little career guidance and know little about the project route before making the transition (Havermans et al., 2019), suggesting PM careers information, advice, and guidance (CIAG) requires improvement. Other entry routes to PM include internal pathways; for example, rising through the ranks of operations and leadership and being awarded project responsibility due to their effective leadership (Marion et al., 2014), or as happens in research, the individual may have applied for funding which, upon being granted, they assume responsibility for the project (Kuchta and Yakivets, 2023).

Exploring further the career decision making which leads people into PM, Akkermans et al. (2019) refer to career theories, noting boundaryless career theory is the most common lens through which to view entry to PM, however, others including protean,

social cognitive, career construction, and sustainable career theories are lesser-used alternatives which may yield insight. Boundaryless careers are those which transcend a single organisation, where an individual will port their skills to alternative settings (Sullivan, 2001). Critique of boundaryless career theory includes its inability to acknowledge challenges faced by women and ethnic groups (Pringle and Mallon, 2003). Subsequently, there is opportunity to further explore career theories, particularly protean, and the impact of associated variables on uptake in constructs such as PM (Hall et al., 2018).

In summary, this chapter establishes that APMs often find themselves in PM roles unintentionally, compared with their career PM counterparts who pursue the role with intent. There is an increase in HE offerings of PM education, although this is mostly embedded within wider management programmes like MBAs, hence there is varied education quality with some universities either better preparing graduates for the profession, or inaccurately being perceived to do so. PM attracts individuals from diverse backgrounds including those making career transitions, and career theories such as boundaryless models help explain entry paths, though limitations remain, including the challenges faced by underrepresented groups.

### **Organisational attitudes towards project management and hiring regimes**

This section argues that, in light of the shift from PM as an individual competency to an organisational competency (Bauhaus, 2002), organisations are somewhat responsible for APM-related challenges. According to Bourne (2005), it is organisations who are keeping the concept of the APM alive, by appointing ‘almost anyone’ to the role of PM, which Rwelamila (2007) links to the prevalence of low maturity levels amongst project-orientated organisations (POOs). The common phrase ‘money talks’ is evidence of poor organisational attitudes towards PM, for example, many company executives around the world continually underfund projects and view the role of PM as an add-on to a job description, without appropriate compensation (Puleo, 2004). Furthermore, supposed ‘resource constraints’ mean PM staff regularly do not gain access to the formal training they require and subsequently find themselves using ad-hoc methods to implement projects due to lack of knowledge (Orfano and Slaght, 2016). This is reinforced by Chaza (2016) who notes a lack of funds for investment in the talent development of PMs, despite ample investment in orthodox management areas, highlighting ‘sheer ignorance’ of the need for qualified project professionals. Furthermore, Thomas et al. (2002) note challenges in getting executives on-side regarding the value of PM, and in some cases, organisations actively do not want to ‘call a project a project’ despite it fitting the characteristics, thus undermining the complexity of it (Marion et al., 2014). There are also projects which are described as ‘white elephants,’ those which carry little value but are executed regardless, which are deliberately lacking in structure and sufficient staff, hence are set up to fail (Rwelamila, 2007).

In addition to inappropriate compensation and lack of support, PMs are being expected to do more than they used to, reflected in the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) - the second edition by the Project Management Institute (PMI) (2000) did

not have people management as within scope of PM, but when this was added in the third edition (PMI, 2004), it added a Human Resources (HR) dynamic to the job (Kar and Mitra, 2015). Furthermore, the role is being increasingly linked to wider organisational strategy, supporting strategic vision, organisational objectives, strategy development, implementation, and execution (Rodriguez, 2005). Add into the mix that organisations are seeking the perfect, optimal candidate who has the right personality, experience, and competence (Takalo and Hassan, 2016), expectation scope is ultimately too wide.

Poor attitudes towards PM as a concept are reflected in hiring regimes - since most organisations do not have a systematic approach when it comes to PM selection (Thobejane, 2008). Despite the extent of the transition to a PM role being described as 'identity transformation,' (Zapf, 2013), organisations tend to assign a person to a project simply because they were available at the time or had the capacity, rather than basing the hire on underlying skills (Bourne, 2005). Not only does this mean lots of APMs, but it also means lots of informal PMs, meaning there may be people of whom the experiences of PM are not captured by existing research since they, nor their employer, ever recognised them as a PM (Orfano and Slaght, 2016). Within hiring regimes, there is also the variable of who hires the APM. After all, deciding who joins an organisation is one of the most important decisions the organisation makes (Horstman, 2019). As in-house recruitment comes with its difficulties, some organisations opt for the use of external recruitment agencies, who can support with advertising, shortlisting, and in some cases, decision making (Florea, 2014). Benefits of external agencies include the speed of hire and reduced cost, especially at seniority levels of PM (Shellshear and Oh, 2024), however, Mustafa and Chandrasekar (2023) note they are not exempt from being influenced by cognitive bias, using unstructured interview approaches, and human errors in decision making. This highlights that selection errors can be made by both in-house recruitment teams and external agencies (Sutherland and Wocke, 2011). Effective hiring comes back to aforementioned PM maturity levels. Project Management Maturity (PMM) Models (PMMMs), of which there are several, consist of levels which an organisation can measure and assess themselves against, and look to enhance its PM capability (Crawford, 2006). The creation of a Project Management Office (PMO), a support function for an organisation's portfolio, is linked with increased levels of PMM (Bezuidenhout et al., 2024). This function can perform hiring tasks effectively and achieve high maturity corresponding with adequate selection of the right candidates (Karrenbauer et al., 2024).

In summary, this section discusses the challenges posed as a result of organisational attitudes towards PM as a profession, and subsequent hiring practices. It argues that organisations are partly responsible for the concept of APM due to recruiting underqualified individuals often in underpaid roles with a lack of support, thus demonstrating low maturity as project-based organisations. In some cases, the role is undervalued by viewing it simply as an addition to another role and providing limited training, citing budget constraints as the reason why. A lack of systematic selection process often reliant on external recruitment agencies who may introduce bias and



error due to low PM understanding only reinforces the need for PMOs to improve maturity and hiring efficacy.

### **How do APMs identify, what characteristics do they have, and what challenges do they face?**

As highlighted in the previous section, most PMs enter the profession as APMs mid-to-late career, often as a second career following a technical position (Bishop, 2023). This means greater numbers of APMs are acting part-time, and as such, are exposed to limited training and education since it is assumed a) they already possess such knowledge and skills, b) no such training and education is on offer, or c) it is on offer, but they cannot attend due to their shift pattern or flexible working arrangement (Darrell et al., 2010). Similarly, the majority of people responsible for projects are not explicit PMs, they are undertaking the activity as part of a wider role that they play (Garrett, 2011), for example, an operations manager may act as PM when their team moves from one building to another as part of an office relocation. In other cases, technical experts may be conscripted into the PM due to their perceived expertise, whilst in others, the individual 'naively' self-selects for the role (Zapf, 2013), which may be due to protean career attitudes whereby the individual acknowledges the career impact such activity may have (Bishop, 2023).

Those who transition to the role of PM from orthodox management positions, whether formal or informal, tend to find their general management abilities are not entirely applicable in project situations (Graham, 1992). Business-as-usual (BAU) activity tends to be repeatable processes or products, so when challenges emerge, there are standardised ways of problem-solving; however, projects often have challenges which are unprecedented (new and different) and require a learning orientation to address (Graham, 1992). Furthermore, Harpham (2017) notes many people on a project team report to other managers, meaning a different kind of leadership is needed from the PM, focused upon relationship development, networking, and influence. This requires people willing to function as leaders in every sense of the word, for example, providing resources, support, and confidence (Pinto and Kharbanda, 1995). Graham (1992) notes APMs may not acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of their project teams given they are used to their own team being composed of similar people who are wholly different to those in other departments, subsequently pressing forward as if everyone understands the goal, like they would in BAU activity.

In the case of people transitioning from technical positions to PM, they tend to possess strong scientific aptitudes which correlate to a lack of political and organisational awareness, and interpersonal communication skills (Green, N.D). There are lots of cases where APMs were appointed based on technical expertise without consideration of their PM skills, and it is important to note some do succeed, however, others run projects into the ground (Ndhlovu and Weeks, 2013). It is, however, noted that an organisation should not actively seek out only non-technical persons for project positions, since even such people yield mixed results in performance (Ndhlovu and Weeks, 2013), highlighting the complex nature of what exactly to look for in a successful PM. It may be the aforementioned mix of scientific aptitudes paired with

lack of PM training which contribute to this, since personality has been linked to facilitating or inhibiting project outcomes (Ye et al., 2015). In particular, attempting to juggle the multiple hats of entrepreneur, technical partner, and team captain (Ensworth, 2001), while undertaking project planning works which are non-technical in nature but require PM expertise, such as compilation of procurement documentation and setting of criteria for tender assessments (Ma, 2014), can ultimately push an APM too far. As they struggle to navigate these project-specific challenges throughout the stages (Ensworth, 2001), there is a risk APMs who lack self-awareness may lose control of emotions, thus spreading toxicity, and breeding low empathy, compassion, and resilience (Fitzpatrick, 2022). This is reinforced in a study conducted by Prater and Kirytopoulos (2024), who find differences in optimism levels between seasoned PMs and newcomers in the profession, with variables of significance including a) number of years' experience, b) public or private sector status, and c) PM certifications, all of which impact optimism.

It appears some APMs do, however, acknowledge themselves as accidental and try to do something about it - with Kenworthy (2024) noting the rise of virtual communities and people within looking for information, advice, and guidance relating to Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) topics. Similarly, Gray and Ulbrich's (2017) framework can be used to assist APMs, as reflective practitioners, in identifying what kind of PM they are currently, and how they may transition to a different PM type to increase their success rates, with 'ambiguity acceptance' and 'translation skills' as two important dimensions to target.

Exploring gender in APM, it is generally the industry within which the PM operates, rather than the PM profession itself, which dictates male-to-female ratio, for example, Yan et al. (2024) refer to the low 13% of female representation in the Australian construction industry. Agyekum et al. (2022) refer to stagnating careers of female PMs due to a lack of career aspirations and planning, however, the glass ceiling metaphor - invisible barriers preventing women from advancing to top positions (Purcell et al., 2010), may be a contributing factor to this. The seniority of PM roles may also be debated, for example, whether a PM is seen as equivalent to a manager, senior manager, or top manager; with Yan et al. (2024) referring to PM in the lowest bracket. In their study, results indicate 86% of female managers are working at the project level, while few reach the top level, however, such data may be skewed in organisations where the title PM represents a more senior entity. These findings contradict earlier exploration of gender in PM by Duong and Skitmore (2003), who found challenges experienced by female PMs tend to also be experienced by their male counterparts, and that there are few differences between variables of experience, level of management, and industry type. In summary, this triggers questions around a) are women less or more likely to be APMs, and b) is seniority, i.e., PM role fit in the organisational hierarchy, a variable in the prevalence of APM?

In summary, this section explores the characteristics and challenges of APMs, many of whom enter the role in the middle or late stages of their careers with little formal PM training. They may juggle multiple roles or transition from technical positions, meaning their expertise and personality may not align, at least in the short term, with the

demands of the PM role. APMs face challenges of limited support from the organisation, and complex team compositions which require excellent interpersonal and leadership skills beyond that of an orthodox manager. Additionally, gender disparities remain, impacting career progression and resulting in underrepresentation in senior project roles, although the definition of 'senior project roles' is debated. APMs can turn to virtual communities and toolkits which support self-assessment and skill improvement.

### **Impact of the accidental project manager**

The impact of APMs is hard to settle upon since there is often confusion between what constitutes project success and what constitutes project management success, in other words, a successful project could contain significant management failings and vice versa (Young and Zerjav, 2021). This means the issue of the APM may be better or worse than current research suggests, since APMs may not be effectively gauging outcomes of their projects as they may be unfamiliar with tools such as budget reviews, project plans, and project reviews - therefore, their stated impact may be inaccurate (Green, N.D). What is known, or at least suggested at this point, is that APM failures risk losses in the billions when it comes to projects in developing economies (Chaza, 2016). The risk is not limited to financial either - the project owner's legal position is at risk; they did after all sanction the recruitment of the PM and have a duty of care when it comes to issues such as misleading tender documentation (Ma, 2014).

It is known that Agile projects, in particular, are a challenge for APMs (Fitzpatrick, 2022), and when those projects begin failing, excessive funds and resources are required to be pumped in as part of the rescue operation, or the project is outsourced to consultants at even higher costs (Chaza, 2016). This is reinforced by Hackman and Loebe (2018) who refer to a case where lack of formal PM expertise and the massive nature of the project led to its breakdown into smaller, constituent projects. While in this case the project was ultimately successful, it was this costly breakdown which led to three PM interventions as opposed to one, when formal PM techniques could have enhanced and increased efficiency of the project. Similarly, Ye et al. (2015) refer to a case where a troubled project had three consecutive PMs with a range of background, skills, and personality types; reinforcing the turnover of PMs due to their accidental nature.

The term 'accident' can be correlated to 'mistake,' which is how some APMs feel about the profession when they experience such events as the aforementioned - they express regret about going into the field and the bad experience puts them off (Richardson et al., 2015). In other cases, the accident prone APM is the opposite and does not realise until too late that they are ill-suited or ill-prepared for the assignment, hence never sought support (Pellegrinelli and Garagna, 2010). This only snowballs into further failing projects which may include high levels of corruption or attendant project failure due to poor or non-delivery of scope, massive cost, or schedule overruns (Chaza, 2016). However, this paper challenges the notion that the appointment of the APM is a sure path to project failure (Thobejane, 2008), since internally recruited or accidental PMs often show advantages in the understanding of



the organisational context, culture, and processes; so are well-positioned to take up the post subject to the correct preparation, training, ongoing support and development (Ye et al., 2015).

In summary, this section shows that the impact of APMs is complex, since there requires differentiation between project success and PM success. Given that APMs may lack essential skills such as budgeting and project reviews, they may misjudge project outcomes meaning project success is either over- or under-played, leading to data which support or rejects the theory of APM being flawed by inaccurate reporting, for example, surveying or interviewing APMs and asking for their perceived successes and failures is just that - perception. Agile projects in particular pose challenges for APMs, as do legal issues which result from lack of contract law knowledge. Given many APMs progress from internal positions, they benefit from understanding the organisational context and nuances, which paired with the right training and support can minimise future failures.

### **How can accidental project managers be supported?**

In light of the professionalisation of the industry, certifications and career paths should have consigned the concept of APM to the past, but this has not happened (Bourne, 2018). Darrell et al. (2010) actually find many individuals called upon to undertake PM have little-to-no preparation, meaning such certifications and support are either ineffective, or not accessed sufficiently enough. Training, however, is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and successful PMs will be able to effectively balance the demands of technical, with HR 'people-oriented' training; the latter arguably being more important as many PM challenges revolve around personnel management issues (Pinto and Kharbanda, 1995). Training could centre around PM methodologies, external courses, tutorials, or mentoring (Ensworth, 2001); however, it could address APM specifically - with the Project Management Institute (PMI) offering a dedicated training package consisting of a four-day workshop to address APM (Partner, 2019).

Exploring support mechanisms further, there is much that can be done to ensure APMs have access to this beyond training. Assessments such as Bourne's (2005) 'three dimensions of PM,' which allows PMs to self-assess as novice, competent, or successful in areas of craft, leadership, and relationships, may support in personal development planning (PDP). Furthermore, toolkits such as Cross's (2003) book which focuses upon the experiences of PMs via real-world projects, are in essence mechanisms for lessons learned sharing, or knowledge management (KM), transfer (KT), and exchange (KE). While effective, such toolkits and associated methodologies and techniques designed specifically to address APM are few and far between (Baccarini and Darrell, 2006). Creation of a PMO, if the organisation does not have one, can help in providing such resources, for example, via the development of quality assurance (QA) templates, verification of project data, and mentor-mentee allocation (Ensworth, 2003).

The PMO is a form of organisational support; a concept which can influence the behaviours of project staff, including job satisfaction and subsequent acts of

withdrawing or even quitting (Zhang et al., 2012). In one way, this is about moral support such as acknowledging contributions and remaining vigilant about project staff wellbeing given the often-stressful environment (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In their study of perceived organisational support for retaining and satisfying PMs, Ekrot et al. (2018) find that despite PMs desiring autonomy and decision-making power (Ling and Loo, 2015), many still want to feel satisfied and want access to a defined career path and opportunities, although some see training as burdensome due to their high workload, particularly if they do not have long-term career aspirations.

Challenging the narrative that PMs need access to regular, formal training and development opportunities, Marion et al. (2014) ultimately find that learning on the job is a necessity in the PM arena, and no amount of training can prepare a person for that. This is reinforced by Day et al. (2014) who find much of this informal learning is about dealing with novel challenges, which may lack readily available information to solve, hence learning-by-doing rather than learning-by-studying being the only solution. This means that much of an APM's development path is unknown, as they do not know what they will need to learn and how to do this until the moment arises, however, having a plan is imperative in maintaining their own motivation and crafting a career path (Marsick, 2009). In a study of what and how PMs learn from their experiences, Savelsbergh et al. (2016) note interpersonal skills, the scope of the PM role, self-efficacy, and general leadership are what was taken away from the sample's learning experiences, however, most of these learning experiences were informal and innate.

In summary, this section highlights that APMs often lack formal training despite the professionalisation of the industry which has occurred over several decades, fuelled by professional bodies and membership organisations. This may be due to structured training and certifications not meeting the needs of APMs, since much learning and skills is acquired through experience rather than formal methods. Support strategies which carefully balance technical, and people skills are essential given the complexity of personnel management - a key area introduced to the scope of the PM role by later editions of PMBOK. A focus on informal learning mechanisms such as self-assessment tools and knowledge sharing resources can aid development, although intervention from PMOs can ensure there is structure to the unstructured.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

In conclusion, this paper challenges the narrative that the APM should be eliminated (Puleo, 2004), and instead posits that the industry needs APMs and should be doing more to support them. This is, in part, because every project failure is catastrophic, but also because the industry needs APMs to remain in the profession long-term if it is to move forward (Bourne, 2005). Future research should, therefore, include empirical research on skill requirements for PMs (Ye et al., 2015), to form a skillset framework which can act as a model for developing APMs (Ndhlovu and Weeks, 2013). As the discipline of PM continues to evolve, future research should also explore other variables which are contributing factors to project success or failure (Thorn, 2023), in the hope this sheds more light on the true impact of APM.

This paper also focuses on the shift from PM as an individual competency, to PM as an organisational competency (Bauhaus, 2002). Rather than relying on the 'hero PM,' the highly skilled person who single-handedly drags a project to success (Bourne, 2018), attention should instead be paid to project-based organisations and the wider context - noting the broad nature of the term 'accidental profession' (Bishop, 2023). This means future research should explore the accidental PBO and POO (Bauhaus, 2002), accidental governance (Chaza, 2016), accidental programme managers (Pellegrinelli and Garagna, 2010), and accidental project team members (Kuchta and Yakivets, 2023). Ultimately, this paper concludes that accidental roles are prevalent throughout the project world, beyond simply the role of the project manager, and calls for investigation of this.

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