



The Nine AI Adoption Challenges in Projects

...and how to overcome them

A practitioner reference for project professionals

This reference brings together the nine challenges that most often undermine AI adoption in projects. Each one sets out what goes wrong, the practical fixes, and the key point to take away. Use it as a prompt for a team conversation, a governance review or an honest assessment of where your own AI adoption currently stands.

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The nine challenges at a glance

Nine recurring obstacles to AI adoption in projects. Each is introduced on the pages that follow, with the practical fixes that reduce it.

1**Resistance to Change****2****Over-Reliance on AI****3****Data Quality &
Availability****4****Tool Integration
Challenges****5****Lack of Clear Objectives****6****Accountability and
Transparency****7****Unapproved AI Use
(Shadow AI)****8****Ethical Considerations
and Bias****9****Keeping Pace with AI
Regulation**

How to use this reference

Work through the nine challenges with the people who deliver your projects. For each one, ask three questions: is this happening here, who owns it, and what would we need to change to say it is under control? Some of the fixes sit within a single project and can be started immediately. Others are organisational and belong with the PMO, IT, Information Security or whoever owns AI policy, so identify the right owner before committing to an action. Where several challenges apply at once, start with the one causing the most rework.

1

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

...and how to overcome it

People are often the greatest barrier to AI adoption, not the technology itself.

- Many project professionals **haven't been given the chance** to build confidence with AI tools.
- Others have **legitimate concerns** – accuracy, ethics, and what it means for job security.
- And for many others, **no one has yet shown** how AI improves project delivery in practice.

PMI research: Only **20% of project managers** report extensive or good practical experience with AI tools.

THREE WAYS TO OVERCOME RESISTANCE

1. **Invest in education** so project teams understand how to use AI tools effectively.
2. **Improve AI risk literacy** by explaining the risks, safeguards and governance controls.
3. **Apply structured change management** by celebrating early successes and demonstrating measurable benefits.

KEY TAKEAWAY

AI adoption increases when people know how to use AI tools well, work within an AI governance framework, and can see how AI improves project delivery in practice.

2

OVER-RELIANCE ON AI

...and how to overcome it

The more reliable AI becomes, the less carefully we tend to check it.

- When AI consistently produces useful outputs, **careful review gives way to a quick glance**.
- Errors that would once have been caught **pass unnoticed**.
- And **core project management skills** are practised less often.

THREE WAYS TO PREVENT OVER-RELIANCE

1. **Make validation visible** by recording who reviewed each AI-assisted deliverable.
2. **Sample outputs for deeper review** to catch performance drift and hidden assumptions.
3. **Keep project management skills sharp** through training, mentoring and practice.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Organisations that invest in AI literacy, encourage continuous professional development and require evidence of reviews against AI-assisted deliverables are more likely to achieve ethical, efficient and effective human-AI collaboration.

3

DATA QUALITY & AVAILABILITY

...and how to overcome it

In AI-assisted projects, the tools are only as useful as the project data you give them.

- Project data is often **scattered across spreadsheets, various other tools and meeting notes**.
- Feed an AI tool fragmented and incomplete data and you get **fragmented and incomplete assistance**.

TWO SIGNIFICANT FIXES

1. **At PMO level, treat data readiness as a strategic initiative:** run an AI Data Readiness Project to collect and clean previous project data. Establish standards for the ongoing creation, storing and maintenance of project data.
2. **Within each AI-assisted project, assess data readiness** and plan how to make the best use of the AI assistance with available data.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Data readiness is a governance responsibility. Consolidating and governing project data helps facilitate more ethical, efficient and effective human-AI collaboration in projects and programmes across the portfolio.

4

TOOL INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

...and how to overcome them

Successfully integrating AI into project environments requires addressing three issues.

- **Adopting AI based on market hype** rather than actual business needs wastes resources.
- **Excluding IT and Security** from early decisions leads to unexpected compatibility and compliance issues.
- **Automatic vendor updates** and unpiloted deployments disrupt workflows and introduce risks.

THREE ORGANISATIONAL FIXES

1. **Define your requirements first.** Start from the problems you need AI to solve, then evaluate tools against them.
2. **Assess compatibility early.** Involve IT and Information/Cyber Security before adoption, not after.
3. **Introduce capability in a controlled manner.** Pilot first, especially where vendor updates switch features on for you.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Successful integration is not simply about connecting systems. It is about ensuring AI capabilities fit both the organisation's technology environment and its governance requirements.

5

LACK OF CLEAR OBJECTIVES

...and how to overcome it

AI is often introduced because the technology is available, not because it solves a defined problem.

- Without explicit objectives, AI adoption becomes **opportunistic rather than deliberate** and the outcomes are hard to evidence.
- Start with a project. What does it need assistance with? **The objective defines the outcome, not the technology.**

TWO PRACTICAL FIXES

1. **Define AI assistance objectives during project planning.** Document what AI should achieve and which activities it supports. Tool selection follows business need.
2. **Agree how success will be measured.** Set measurable criteria using the tools, such as reduced reporting effort or reduced requests to iterate on a management-reviewed project artefact.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Clearly stated objectives remain one of the simplest ways to ensure AI use is purposeful, measurable and aligned with project outcomes.

6

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

...and how to maintain them

If a team cannot explain how a recommendation was reached, the decisions that follow are hard to justify.

- Stakeholders need confidence that AI-assisted decisions and deliverables are **explainable and backed by accountable individuals**.
- AI use should be transparently disclosed and the person accountable for a deliverable or decision should be named.

THREE PRACTICAL FIXES

- 1. Document AI use as normal project governance.** Record where AI was used, what informed the output and who approved it.
- 2. Prefer tools that support transparency.** Explainable AI (XAI) helps users understand how conclusions were reached.
- 3. Keep human accountability unambiguous.** Responsibility for decisions and deliverables stays with named individuals.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Transparency and accountability build trust. They also provide the necessary governance foundation needed for ethical, efficient and effective human-AI collaboration in projects.

7

UNAPPROVED AI USE (SHADOW AI)

...and how to address it

Shadow AI refers to employees' unapproved use of AI tools or services.

- A 2026 Wakefield Research survey found **two-thirds of office professionals had used AI at work knowing it was not permitted**, because the unapproved tools were better than the approved ones.
- Prohibition alone leaves the underlying business need unmet and the risk unmanaged.

THREE PRACTICAL FIXES

1. **Educate.** Many instances of shadow AI arise because people are unaware that approved tools can provide the capability needed.
2. Establish a straightforward process for **evaluating new AI tools so that useful innovations can be assessed rather than hidden.**
3. **Use monitoring of AI tool use to improve governance**, not simply to enforce compliance.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Prohibition does not address the business need for ethical, efficient and effective human-AI collaboration. Shadow AI is a symptom of a cause that needs to be uncovered and addressed.

8

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND BIAS

...and how to mitigate them

AI learns from data. Where that data carries historical bias, AI reproduces it.

- Consequences are greater where AI-informed recommendations influence decisions, stakeholder engagement or resource allocation.
- **Bias is only part of it.** Fairness, privacy and human oversight all need deliberate consideration.

TWO FIXES

1. **Treat bias and ethics as a project risk.** Assign ownership, agree risk responses, and implement the risk reduction actions.
2. **Maintain meaningful human oversight.** AI should inform professional judgement rather than replace it. When AI outputs appear biased, update the draft deliverable and provide feedback to the tool, thereby reducing future bias.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Bias and ethical concerns require deliberate risk management and informed human oversight throughout the project life cycle.

9

KEEPING PACE WITH AI REGULATION

...and how to stay compliant

A project or programme governed to today's rules can be non-compliant before it reaches closure.

- EU AI Act obligations are phasing in, ISO/IEC 42001 is maturing, and sector regulators are issuing their own expectations.
- **Long-running projects and programmes are the most exposed.**

THREE PRACTICAL FIXES

- 1. Assign responsibility for monitoring AI regulations.** One named individual or team should track all AI legislation, standards and policy changes.
- 2. Identify and communicate** the obligations that apply to projects.
- 3. Review compliance throughout.** Build AI governance into stage gates and project reviews.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Regulatory compliance is about keeping AI assistance governed and appropriate throughout the project life cycle, so that teams benefit from ethical, efficient and effective human-AI collaboration whilst remaining compliant.

Where governance fits

Read together, the nine challenges point to the same conclusion. Almost none of them are technology problems. Individually each one is manageable. Left unaddressed, they compound, and the organisation ends up carrying risk it has never assessed while claiming benefits it cannot evidence.

The AI Project Governance Framework (AIPGF) provides the structure for addressing these challenges and facilitating ethical, efficient and effective human-AI collaboration in projects and programmes. It is accredited by APMG International at Foundation and Practitioner levels.

Start with the AIPG-CMM self-assessment

Establish your current AI project governance maturity and receive a free report with improvement recommendations.

<https://aipgf.pro/aipg-cmm-self-assessment/>

Assess

Review your current projects against the nine challenges and record which are present, who owns them and what evidence exists.

Establish

Put the governance responsibilities, disclosure practices and review points in place within your existing project life cycle.

Embed

Build AI literacy across the team so that the controls are applied by people who understand why they exist.

QUICK SELF-CHECK

Tick the challenges you can currently evidence as under control. Every unticked box is a governance conversation waiting to happen.

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|---|---|
| ☐ 1. Resistance to Change | ☐ 6. Accountability and Transparency |
| ☐ 2. Over-Reliance on AI | ☐ 7. Unapproved AI Use (Shadow AI) |
| ☐ 3. Data Quality & Availability | ☐ 8. Ethical Considerations and Bias |
| ☐ 4. Tool Integration Challenges | ☐ 9. Keeping Pace with AI Regulation |
| ☐ 5. Lack of Clear Objectives | |

AI Project Governance Framework

Certification, guidance and practitioner resources for governing AI in projects, programmes and portfolios.

www.aipgf.pro



Sources referenced in this document: Project Management Institute research on practical experience with AI tools, and a 2026 Wakefield Research survey on unapproved AI use at work. Prepared by Emanuela Giangregorio, Project Management in Practice, assisted by claude.ai.