

# Growth and Success: The importance of business strategy and leadership – Part 1

Because when projects  
succeed, society benefits



# Introduction

In today's volatile business landscape, the ability to adapt and thrive is more critical than ever. While external forces — be they political, economic, or technological — can disrupt even the most robust plans, organisations that embed project management at the heart of their strategy have a significant advantage over their peers. Project management is not merely a discipline for delivering isolated pockets of work. It is a profession that enables businesses to anticipate change, manage risk and deliver outcomes to seize new opportunities.

By integrating project management principles into strategic planning, leaders can ensure their organisations remain agile, resilient and primed for growth. This approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where lessons learned are rapidly incorporated and teams are empowered to innovate and respond to changes in their environment. The result is not just the successful delivery of projects, but the creation of lasting value through improved productivity and a sharper focus on long-term objectives.

This paper is based on a roundtable discussion featuring senior leaders from a wide range of industries. It explores the factors underpinning growth and success, the role that effective project management plays in each of them, and explains how these can be implemented within business.



**Alistair Godbold**

Vice President, Association  
for Project Management

In a world where change is the only constant, a well-crafted business strategy is the compass that guides organisations through uncertainty. Strategy is not simply a plan on paper; it is the deliberate alignment of vision, resources, and action that enables businesses to anticipate challenges, seize opportunities, and achieve lasting success. Without a clear and adaptable strategy, even the most talented teams can falter.

Yet, strategy alone is not enough. Its true power is unlocked when it is brought to life through disciplined execution. This is where project management becomes indispensable. By embedding project management from ideation through to completion, businesses can deliver the transformations necessary to achieve their goals.

Project management provides the tools and mindset needed to translate strategic goals into actionable initiatives, manage risk proactively, and ensure that progress is measured and sustained. Forvis Mazars was pleased to host the roundtable discussion that informed this paper and I hope readers will be able to use the ideas put forward by contributors to influence strategies, strengthen culture and work towards growth that is sustainable and meaningful.



**Christian Fell**

Director, Forvis Mazars



# Making growth and success sustainable

Political volatility, rapidly changing consumer demand and short-term profitability pressure all pose challenges for long term growth strategies. But complexity and uncertainty should not be excuses for inaction.

More than three-quarters (77%) of business leaders in the UK say their organisation updates its strategy more than once a year (49% say their strategy is updated at least quarterly)\*. This approach reflects an understanding in business of the importance of adapting quickly to changing conditions.

For leaders who are already doing this, it's important that projects and project management principles are integrated within their strategy from the start, and in any updates. This enables the business to look beyond the immediate life cycle of its projects in the planning stage and continuously thereafter. This can unlock gains such as slower replacement rates, reduced lifetime maintenance and lower environmental costs, all of which contribute to triple bottom line sustainability.

Furthermore, leaders who integrate project management principles into their strategies all reported benefits from doing so in a survey by APM.

## The most-cited benefits were:

- increased adaptability
- clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities
- better risk management



\* Survey of 501 UK-based business leaders carried out by APM and Censuswide, September 2024.



**"Sustainable growth is essential. Don't go for growth at all costs. Short term gains do not work in the long run."**

Andrew Hulbert  
Founder, Pareto FM



# Doing more with less

The UK has experienced significantly slower productivity growth than comparable countries since the global financial crisis: France, Germany and the United States. Had pre-2007 productivity trends continued, British workers would be 16% more productive today than they actually are. Economists and policymakers have referred to this as Britain's "productivity puzzle"\*.

AI and automation represent an opportunity to improve productivity, but this is true in other countries too. Good project management can be a competitive differentiator by taking organisations 'beyond digital' by delivering projects efficiently, on budget, to desired levels of quality, and in a way that delivers value for customers or clients.

Unlocking this differentiator depends on having the right people and processes in place.

## Processes

If you think of every process as a ladder, AI may be useful for taking out the first few rungs, but human oversight is still needed. People still need to check outputs and make decisions. Make sure you have the right people and processes in place before you start growing.

**Processes should be in place for the following aspects of any project:**

- **Monitoring** – Baselines should be set for scope, cost and schedule. Risk and change logs should be created. Establish clear criteria for reports; who needs to see what and how often?
- **Controls** – Assess whether the proposed work is worth doing, prepare for work before it's done and think about what might go wrong before it's done (and what would need to be done about it).
- **Communication** – Good communication is one of the most important factors affecting project success. Task management tools like Asana or Monday.com can support this. Hold regular structured meetings, provide shared access to important documents like risk registers, and put mechanisms in place for people to voice concerns.

\* <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/britain-is-falling-behind-the-us-and-productivity-is-largely-to-blame/>



**"As an SME, our challenge day-to-day is keeping customers happy. Expectations are changing so, each year, that gets harder. You have to be better than your competitors."**

Dan Channer,  
Group Managing Director, Haslams



# Doing more with less (continued)

## People

Having the right people in certain key roles – especially leadership roles – is another important aspect for unlocking the power of projects as a productivity booster. While this may sound obvious, research by APM has found that poor leadership and lack of clear governance are among the main barriers to organisations being able to deliver projects effectively.

If the right people and processes are in place, technology can help make that sustainable. Continuity of people – especially at sponsorship level – is an important contributor to success.

## Appointing sponsors

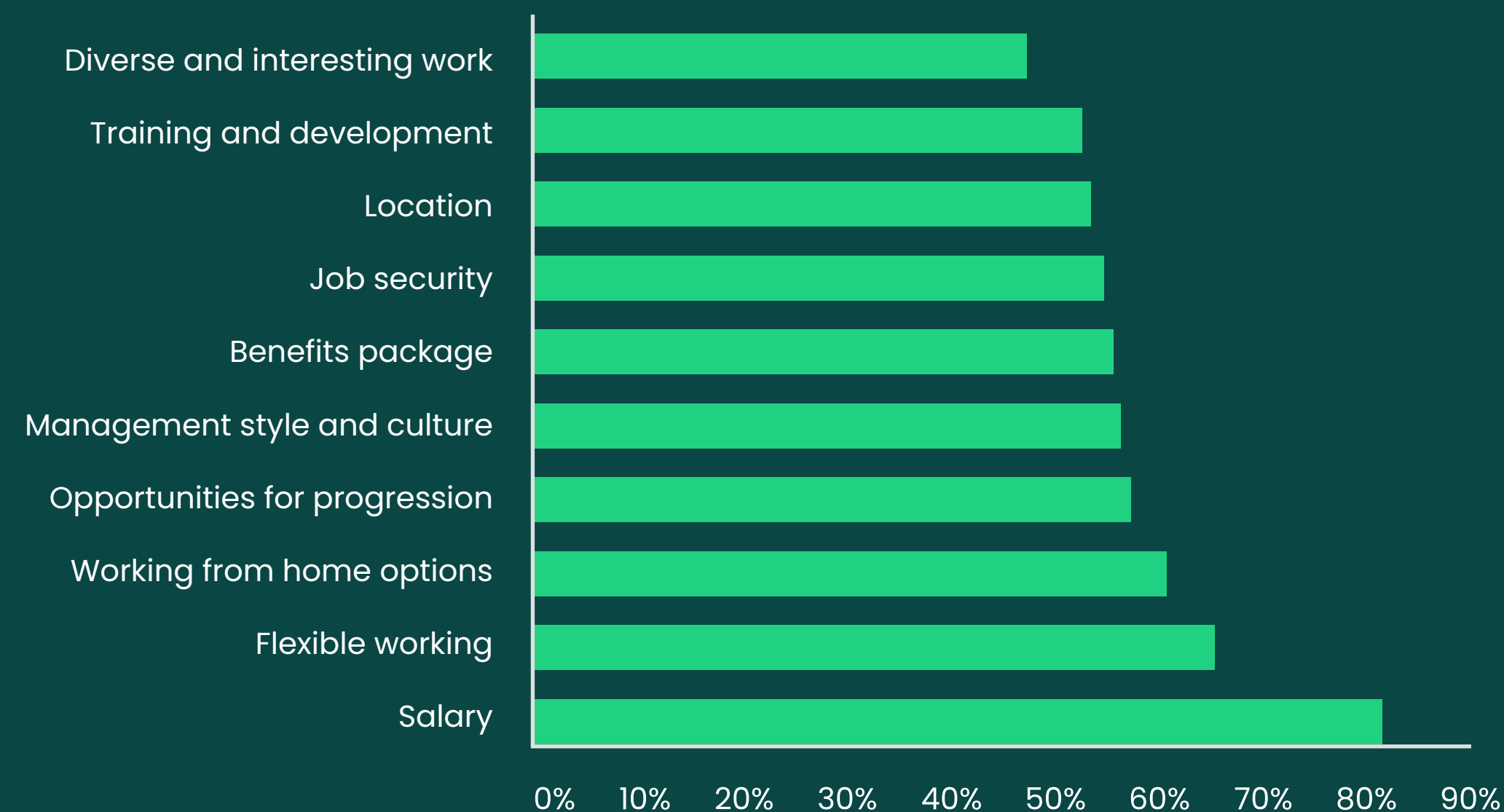
Sponsors (or senior responsible owners) play a crucial role in promoting, advocating and shaping project work. They oversee the conduct of a project or programme, remaining accountable for the realisation of the benefits during and after delivery. It is possible for someone without a background in project delivery to be an effective sponsor, but appointing someone with leadership skills is essential. They must have the status and authority to influence the deployment of the project or programme. Also, sponsors must have clarity of their role, authority and responsibilities.

## Retaining talent

Employee turnover affects not only productivity but also competitiveness, sustainability and profitability. Retaining existing talent – as well as attracting new talent – is therefore a key enabler of growth.

APM's *Salary and Market Trends Survey* found two-thirds of project professionals are happy to stay in their current role, but a third say they're likely to change jobs in the next year. While salary is an important pull factor, it is not the only one.

## Top ten important factors for project professionals when looking for a new job



Source: APM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2025

## Retention strategies can therefore focus on:

- Building career advancement frameworks
- Providing flexible work options
- Simplifying the application process for internal applicants
- Creating compelling benefits packages (e.g. above-average holiday allowance or pension contributions)
- Creating a positive and inclusive culture – help people to know how their role contributes to overall strategy and success, and make people feel they're part of a purpose-driven organisation

There is unlikely to be a singular, shared employee experience in any organisation. Tactics to increase retention therefore require segmentation and nuance. Understanding employee needs will help organisations adopt strategies that improve employee performance and reduce turnover.



# About APM

The Association for Project Management (APM) is a professional membership organisation that sets the standards for the project profession and raises its profile. APM is the only chartered organisation representing the project profession in the world. As a registered charity, APM delivers learning and networking opportunities, qualifications, research, resources, events, and best practice guidance for the project community, helping the profession deliver better.

APM currently has over 42,000 members and more than 470 corporate partners based in 140 countries.

## Further resources

- [What is Project Controls?](#)
- [What is Project Sponsorship?](#)
- [APM Planning, Monitoring and Control Interest Network](#)
- [APM Salary and Market Trends Survey 2025](#)
- [The Executive Edge podcast – Why Project Management Is the Secret Weapon for Strategy Execution](#)







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membership organisation  
for the project profession**

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