

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR INNOVATION, R&D, AND FUZZY PROJECTS

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CHAPTER EXCHANGE  
A PMI CHAPTERS COLLABORATION

## Project Management for Innovation, R&D, and Fuzzy projects

Oct 21, 2022 @ 14:00 UTC

Marcus Glowasz, Panelist  
Europe

Gonzalo Baca, Panelist  
Latin America

Priscilla Kagwiria Bakx-Kabai, Panelist  
Middle East



### Event Recap Taiwo Popoola

Project Management for Innovation, R&D, and fuzzy projects.

Key takeaway is the acronym "LEADER"  
#pmichapterxchange

**L: Listen** to the context of your project to know which methodology to use: agile or waterfall or hybrid.

**E - Extent** is important - agile can be applied to any kind of projects e.g pharmaceutical, engineering, construction, ... but the "extent at which it will be applied is what matters".

A - Approval or acceptance of the methodology is required by the project stakeholders for proper alignment.

**D - Delivery of value** to the customer or stakeholders is very important irrespective of the methodology.

**E - Elaborate progressively** is the concept that's common to both agile and waterfall because the project becomes clearer as we progress.

**R - Risk management** is important irrespective of the methodology, in order to minimize project failures.

# LEADER



## Middle East Priscilla Kagwiria Bakx-Kabai



### Question:

How does a project manager's role change in innovation, fuzzy, research projects?

### Answer:

Due to the unique context of every organization, team and project, there is no one correct way to define the role of a project manager in innovation, fuzzy and research projects. At the end of the day, no matter what type of project one is leading or managing, the main purpose is to deliver value to stakeholders. Innovative, fuzzy and research projects have their own challenges in terms of how value delivery teams are organised and how stakeholders engaged. So, the role of a project manager is not about firefighting, running reports, box-checking, or note-taking. The best project managers today, no matter what type of project they are running, are leveraging new ways of working to influence the outcomes, build relationships, and achieve the strategic goals of their stakeholders and organizations.

### Question:

What project management approach is best suited for innovation, R&D, fuzzy projects?

### Answer:

The project management approach that is suited for an innovation, R&D or fuzzy project is very context specific, but generally, a tailored hybrid approach would be most suitable. Each project will require an individual approach for every innovation due to the characteristic of innovations - the creation of something new and the myriad of risks and uncertainties involved in the creation of anything new. It might therefore seem like a great challenge to identify the "right" way to manage these projects upfront, but if a project team employs the practice of systems thinking, progressive elaboration, rolling-wave planning, and ultimately putting people first by having frequent interactions with stakeholders to align on value delivery, retrospection, welcoming change in the process and pivoting/adapting accordingly, the chances of success are significantly increased.



## North America Chastine Lynch



### Question:

How does a project manager's role change in innovation, fuzzy, research projects?

### Answer:

A project manager will need to accept the ambiguity of the project. Accepting that the project will need to start before all of the scope and risk is identified.

### Question:

What project management approach is best suited for innovation, R&D, fuzzy projects?

### Answer:

Taking a more agile approach for the reduced knowledge of scope. This will allow the project team to start exploring the requirements of the project, instead of stalling for long periods of time to develop the scope in full.



## Europe Marcus Glowasz

### Question:

How does a project manager's role change in innovation, fuzzy, research projects?

### Answer:

The project manager becomes more a facilitator rather than a manager, mainly because fuzzy projects usually mean that there is insufficient information available to have full clarity on the projected outcome of a project. Hence, the project manager has a prioritized task to ensure that missing information becomes available for appropriate decision-making to move ahead with a project. He/She needs to be comfortable setting intermediate goals without having clarity on the overall goal of the project. Such type of project also requires project managers to let loose of a fixed mindset and see uncertainty and complexity as an opportunity and not as a constraint. It means that while information is gathered to reduce fuzziness and uncertainty, it could result in a new and unexpected direction of the project, requiring a certain adaptability and agility.



### Question:

What project management approach is best suited for innovation, R&D, fuzzy projects?

### Answer:

I would not prescribe any specific methodology to those types of projects. Primarily innovation projects are based on experimentation, research, and creativity. By prescribing a methodology, you are already limiting your creative potential. Of course, a project still needs a structured way of managing it but the suitable method should be decided on a case-by-case basis. In a way, you'd let your creativity flow into the project approach as well and make it suit you, your team, and the project. The factors that play a role here would be linked to industry, organizational culture, investment cycles/budget, innovation type, etc.

However, the nature of those projects definitely require a highly flexible and adaptive approach that embraces risk-taking and experimentation.



## Latin America Gonzalo Baca Reyes

### Question:

How does a project manager's role change in innovation, fuzzy, research projects?

### Answer:

The role of project management in fuzzy projects tends to move to a more reactive one, when the future or the path are not well defined the role of the PM is to align efforts looking for progress towards the objective. Regarding the values and aptitudes of the PM the communication skills and knowledge of the process, both technically and administrative, are more important than in "normal" projects because it is harder to depend on your team.



### Question:

What project management approach is best suited for innovation, R&D, fuzzy projects?

### Answer:

The approach that's more suitable for this kind of project is a mixture of conventional waterfall to keep track of the long term, and an agile approach to advance in the short term. This solution should be tailored specifically to the needs and requirements of the organization and also to the kind of innovation that's being tried to accomplish (new product development needs one solution, and a new business process may need another).



## Africa Dr. Lambert Ofoegbu

### Question:

How does a project manager's role change in innovation, fuzzy, research projects?

### Answer:

What comes to mind when a project manager is involved in innovation, fuzzy, and research projects is the changing role from a basic project manager to more of a portfolio manager. For a basic project manager, the mindset is as simple as downstream delivery of time, cost, scope, and quality within some rudimentary project performance parameters. The changing role that necessitates putting on the cap of a portfolio manager involves the ability to optimize value for innovation, fuzzy, and research projects.

The portfolio manager's perspectives operationalize the whole essence of the project. Knowing when a project's desired value is achieved, eroded, or non-existence makes the difference. It includes some elements of program management in terms of benefits realization, entrenching the broad spectrum of organizational project management domains of portfolio, program, and project.

Though innovation, fuzzy, and research endeavours are regarded as projects, they are more or less of operations because of not outrightly having time, cost, and scope objectives. The endeavours seem ongoing and yet imbibe

the precepts of management by projects. A project manager involved in all these should discern the changing role.

### Question:

What project management approach is best suited for innovation, R&D, fuzzy projects?

### Answer:

The project management approach is best suited for innovation, R&D, fuzzy projects is a hybrid project management approach. Hybrid would enable the required minimal process using a blend of the waterfall, as well as involve the desired responsiveness through agile project management principles. Being lean and agile wins the day during innovation and fuzzy projects that changes are usually fast paced.

Oh yes, the structure is necessary, and the agility required is. The question becomes, to what extent? The hybrid of positioning on a matrix that satisfies the project's requirements becomes indispensable. Depending on the project, the organization, and the industry: a suitable hybrid position on the continuum wins the day. For a waterfall-oriented industry/organization, a reasonable blend of agility is required. Invariably, an agile-oriented industry/organization would also require a mixture of the waterfall for consistency.

## Project Management for Innovations, R&D, and Fuzzy Projects

October 21, 2022



# Thank you for Participating

672

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57

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6

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