

Dual Engines of Success

The Imperative Synergies
Between Project Management
And Product Management



Forward



The thought leadership report — *Dual Engines of Success: The Imperative Synergies Between Project Management and Product Management* — demonstrates that projects and products have become more intertwined in recent years. In fact, nearly 40 percent of respondents in our research shared that their last project was firmly rooted in product development.

The implications of this are clear: To succeed in this new paradigm, organizations must efficiently integrate practices from both disciplines. With that approach, businesses can develop products and services that attract and delight their customers and, ultimately, fuel growth.

The skills that the most successful practitioners, be they project or product managers, possess are often similar. Beyond technical skills, which are clearly essential, practitioners must think broadly about their work. They need to understand the business drivers of success, know their customers and manage their stakeholders. They need to solve problems effectively, manage their time appropriately and communicate persuasively.

Executives, in turn, need to be purposeful about organizational design and culture. They must advocate for close collaboration between project and product teams, clarify roles and mitigate resource struggles by setting a clear strategic direction, so that projects and products can deliver maximum value without friction.

The roles of project and product managers are distinct, regardless of their shared skillsets, but they are two sides of the same coin. They are symbiotic, both offering slightly different perspectives, but both are essential to organizational success.

Whether you are a project manager, a product manager, or a little of both, the capabilities identified in this report are key for your career growth.

PMI teamed up with Agile Alliance to produce this report and include insights from experts on project and product management. Don't hesitate to check the many tools, resources, certifications, eLearning opportunities and networking events to help you hone these skills.

Together, we will elevate the project profession, our organizations and our world!

Pierre Le Manh, PMP
President & CEO
Project Management Institute

Executive Summary

As organizations shift toward product-led growth and digital transformation, PMI is exploring the collaboration between project management and product management as a key to delivering sustainable value. This report reveals how project management and product management intersect, the shared skill sets and practices that enable effective collaboration, and the key foundations that help professionals work together while managing common tensions. Based on surveys of almost 1,400 practitioners and 37 in-depth interviews with industry experts, the report demonstrates that in today's competitive environment, adding value and taking responsibility for project success beyond execution is essential.

Project and product professionals often speak the same language. Our research reveals that they rely on the same core skills, including communication, planning, problem-solving and time management. The research also shows that professionals have often worked in both roles, with 79% of product managers having at least some experience in project management. Further, 92% of product managers in our survey agreed that project management skills were useful in their profession.

Investing in strong integration across the project management and product management professions at the organizational level is a strategic approach that can result in better customer outcomes aligned with organizational goals.

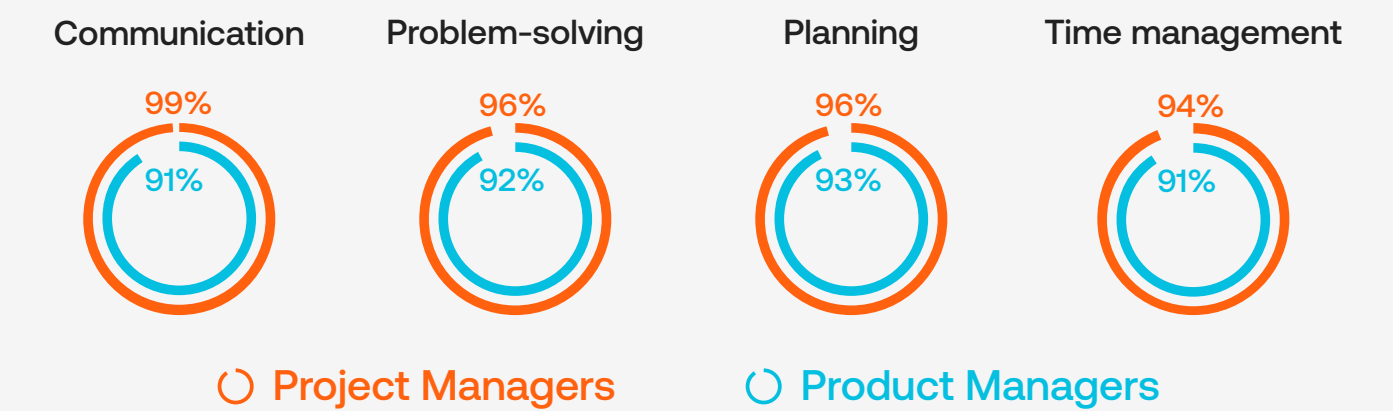
To support this integration, we explore the increasingly dynamic partnership of project and product professionals through the lens of the M.O.R.E. framework from PMI. First presented in our [Maximizing Project Success](#) report, the M.O.R.E. call to action emphasizes the need for project professionals to deliver enhanced value through managing perceptions, owning project success beyond project management success, relentlessly reassessing project parameters, and expanding perspective. By adopting the mindset of M.O.R.E., project and product teams can transcend conventional execution measures and deliver greater, long-term value to their organizations and stakeholders.

This mindset can also overcome the common obstacles to effective collaboration between these two roles: lack of role clarity, resource constraints and managing conflicts. We share solutions to these challenges and explore how using agile practices as a tool for collaboration can create greater efficiency and deliver greater value by maintaining open communication while remaining aligned and flexible.

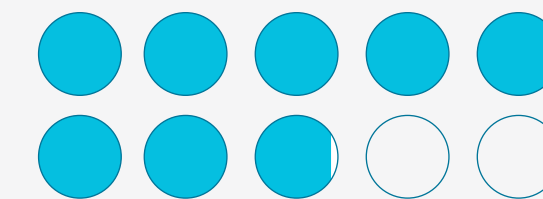
The report concludes with recommendations for both individual professionals as well as organizations to achieve fruitful collaboration and smooth integration between product and project roles. These recommendations serve as a guide to amplifying the smooth and successful delivery of products that meet customer needs and deliver maximum value to organizations.

Critical Skills

Four of the top most important skills were the same for the project and product professionals



Experience Overlap



79%

of product managers have previously worked in a project management role

Education and Training

92% of product managers indicated that project management skills are important in their role

82% of product managers have had some form of project management training in the past

39%

of survey respondents in PMI's *Maximizing Project Success* report cited their last project was a product development project

76% of these product managers pursued project management trainings without being required by their employer

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Introduction

Organizations have increased their focus on product-led models, and with good reason: growth. According to Forbes,¹ companies have recently pivoted to a product-led growth (PLG) model over traditional sales-led models to leverage shifts in buyer behavior, lower customer acquisition costs, higher customer retention, faster sales cycles and rapid scalability. This development reflects a broader reframing of success — one that demands organizations expand their perspective beyond execution to outcomes that deliver stakeholder value and business success.

Fortune 1000 companies have witnessed a tenfold growth of chief product officers (CPO) during the past three years, with over 40% of these companies now having a CPO.² According to the 2024 CPO Insights Report, 30% of Fortune 1000 CEOs are predicted to be former CPOs by 2027. A Gartner survey³ reinforces this trend, revealing that 75% of organizations surveyed have, or are planning to hire, a CPO. Based on our analysis of LinkedIn Talent Insights data⁴ in January 2025, more than 2.6 million professionals carry product manager-related titles, and there are currently 52,400 full-time open positions available in this field. Additionally, 54% of 100 global companies analyzed employ both project managers and product managers, further evidence that project and product excellence require collaborative ecosystems to thrive (for more details, see Appendix B).

In this product-focused world, project teams frequently work on product development projects within the overall product lifecycle. According to the Maximizing Project Success research⁵ from PMI, 39% of survey respondents cited their last project was a product development project. When project managers expand their perspective beyond the individual project to understand its role in the full product lifecycle, they can ensure their projects drive toward the overall product vision.

Project and product professionals have the opportunity and responsibility to manage stakeholder perceptions and collaborate to achieve their common objective of getting products from concept to market. By adopting shared ways of working, these professionals can move beyond confusion to clarity to ultimately deliver success.



In this report, we first explore the shared skills, responsibilities and experiences that project professionals and product professionals can use to build mutual understanding. Then we discuss common obstacles to strong collaboration and how practitioners can utilize their shared foundations to overcome these obstacles and deliver results.

In this report, we delve into:

-  The interconnectedness of these two professions and how they often “speak the same language,” leveraging shared skill sets and practices in their work to deliver M.O.R.E. success.
-  Key foundations professionals can lean on to build effective methods of working together while avoiding common tensions.
-  What collaboration between these professions looks like, highlighting where the lines are clear (or blurred) between professions, and how — whether executing a project or product — teams can set themselves up for success.

“Any market that’s not organized around customers and products is automatically hamstrung by the fact that they don’t have their systems designed to release quickly to get a product out in the hands of this growing market.”



John Johnson, Project Management Center for Excellence at the University of Maryland, United States

About This Research

This report is based on a multi-national survey, executed and analyzed between June and September 2024. The 1,370 respondents included 619 product professionals and 751 project professionals. The survey was conducted in multiple languages, including English, Arabic, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish. Respondents were located in the United States, India, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico (see Appendix A for a breakdown of the survey respondent base).

We conducted two rounds of in-depth interviews before and after the quantitative survey with 13 project managers and 16 product managers to deepen our understanding of the common and unique experiences of professionals working in these disciplines. In addition, in 2025 we conducted seven supplemental interviews with experts across academia and the product management profession who shared their experiences and best practices around these collaborations. Notably, this included discussions with agile experts, including from the Agile Alliance, to further the integration with our new partners and strengthen this report’s relevance across our audiences. Their insights and real-world examples have informed many of the findings and opportunities shared in this report.

Unlocking M.O.R.E. Through Project-Product Collaboration

Success is no longer defined by completing projects on time, on budget and within scope. It’s about delivering meaningful, measurable value — as perceived by customers, stakeholders and the market. That’s the shift at the heart of the M.O.R.E. framework from PMI, and this report shows how it comes to life when project and product professionals join forces.

M.O.R.E. is a call to action and, when applied to collaboration between project and product professionals, allows individuals and organizations to:

- Shift from task-based execution to results-driven ownership
- Navigate role complexity through shared competencies
- Break siloes and leverage common ground for optimized delivery
- Enhance adaptability and resilience by maintaining ongoing alignment with business goals

This isn’t a set of tools. It’s a shift in mindset. And it’s how organizations can turn collaboration into competitive advantage.

The table on the right shows how each element of M.O.R.E. comes to life in project-product collaboration.

Element	Insight
M. Manage Perceptions Project and product professionals work with various stakeholders with different demands and expectations, and different perspectives of value. The delivery of valued outcomes requires clear communication along with trust and shared understanding. As an example, managing perceptions plays a prominent role in early understanding of customer needs that will be addressed throughout the product lifecycle — a product that is built via a project.	The vast majority of professionals in both roles highly valued communication. When working on teams, project and product professionals can align goals and reduce friction by fostering transparent and easy-to-understand communication formats.
O. Own Project Success Success goes beyond task completion to joint ownership of outcomes. Teams with shared roles, objectives and definitions of success are more likely to take projects from development to market, and generate real business and user value. With 39% of projects building products, the mindset shift towards long-term value creation is clearly an imperative.	Stakeholder alignment, shared vision and a focus on key skills as opposed to titles are all essential components to drive success. Teams with a broad and mutual understanding of project/product value can align that vision with execution.
R. Relentlessly Reassess Parameters In the face of continuous change in markets, industries, consumer behavior and stakeholder expectations, continuous alignment between projects and products are necessary to ensure that both are remaining relevant and valuable over the lifecycle.	Iteration and product development go hand in hand. Shared foundational ways of working — especially agile practices — can ensure teams are able to navigate changes and complexity to deliver successful outcomes.
E. Expand Perspective Both roles operate within larger strategic contexts. Professionals who share a common vision and focus on broader impact can better position their work within business, organizational and societal goals.	Even when applied in different contexts, project and product managers rely on the same foundational competencies and backgrounds. Clear role distinctions, alignment and broader stakeholder engagement can support teams in ensuring their projects and products deliver.

Building a Foundation for Collaboration

The Shared Ground Between Project and Product Managers

Key Insights

- Project and product professionals have similar skills in their repertoire, which include communication, problem-solving, planning and time management, demonstrating that the two roles rely on similar skill sets.
- The demand for project management skills among product professionals is widespread. A total of 82% have had some form of project management training and 76% pursued this training on their own.
- Seventy-nine percent of product managers have a project management background — a clear indication of the strong overlap between the two roles and the availability of opportunities for cross-functional growth.

Successful product development requires a clear, customer-focused vision as well as effective delivery aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. Within any organization — whether a large one where project management and product management are the domains of different teams, or a small one where the roles are often combined — the foundation for successful integration is already in place, guided by the shared skills that bring project and product professionals together. Instead of focusing on role distinctions, professionals should take advantage of how these skills can drive collaboration to achieve business outcomes.

As Patricia Roettger, manager of product marketing, WorldatWork, United States, says, “The more you know about your job or someone else’s, the better you can be at your job. Whether product management or project management, you can be better at what you’re doing.”

Regardless of the specific organizational context, both roles need to manage perceptions of success beyond hard metrics, focusing on delivery of value through applying the mindset of M.O.R.E. to own success holistically. Similarly, according to McKinsey research,⁶ great product management requires balancing value for both internal and external stakeholders, going beyond adoption metrics and collaborating across the value chain to define success more comprehensively.

In this section, we’ll dive into:



The key skills and commonalities between project and product managers.



Shared experience as a foundation for effective collaboration.

2.1 | Similar But Not the Same: Understanding the Differences

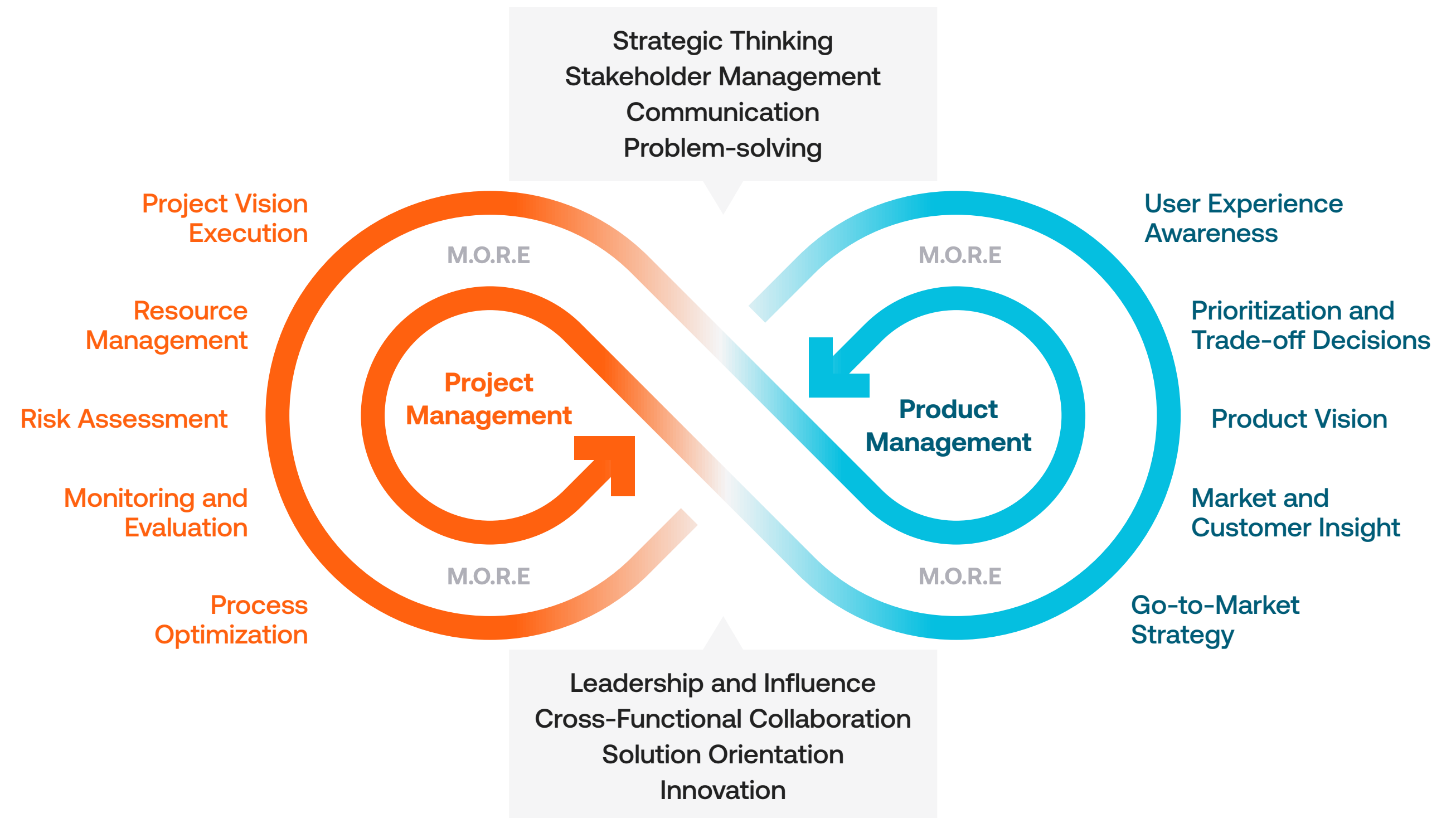
Project management and product management approach business challenges from different perspectives, yet both rely on a set of core competencies essential for success. Product management maintains continuous customer value delivery through product development and lifecycle management. Practitioners in this role must have knowledge about consumer behavior, market dynamics and competitive analysis to maintain product vision alignment with current business objectives.

Project management, on the other hand, aims to produce results that meet business objectives, with a broad perspective on the dynamics of risks, resources and ways of working across the enterprise's entire portfolio. Projects have their own lifecycles; these often overlap with part or all of the product lifecycle. Their outcomes often contribute to developing or enhancing products and services, executing strategic plans and operational transformations.

Regardless of timeline and scope differences, both functions deal with complex situations while building relationships with stakeholders through strategic planning and operational execution, and both functions seek to deliver on a unified project/product deliverable. To do so successfully, project and product professionals must collaborate to translate strategic vision into delivery outcomes.

Figure 1 reflects insights from subject matter experts on how project and product management are both critical to delivering successful projects and products, and share responsibility for overall success. This can help practitioners identify the competencies their role requires and apply the appropriate skill sets. In the next section, we'll discuss the shared skills, based on our research, that empower these professionals to deliver on the product vision.

FIGURE 1. Project Management and Product Management Competencies



Note: Insights reflect perceptions shared by the PMI community and subject matter experts.

2.2 | Beyond Roles: Common Capabilities for Achieving Success

Our research highlights that despite the distinct focus of each role, the competencies essential for success are largely the same. Four of the topmost important skills were the same for project and product professionals (Figure 2). More than 90% of respondents indicated that communication, problem-solving, planning and time management were very or extremely important skills. The Pragmatic Institute’s 2024 State of Product report⁷ similarly shows that product managers regularly spend their time on key activities that overlap with common project management responsibilities. These activities included defining plans and budgets, and planning and communicating a product roadmap.

While project managers and product managers differ in the ways they deliver value, success is built on the same foundation. When applied in collaboration, these shared skills can drive customer-centric value delivery while ensuring the product stays aligned with the organization’s goals. Rather than dividing the efforts by roles, organizations and professionals can benefit from a solution-oriented approach that focuses on these competencies. As Simon Walkerden, program PMO manager, Ocado Group, United Kingdom, puts it, “We need to move away from the job titles and move more into project roles. We need people that are masters of everything.”



FIGURE 2. Key Skills for Success for Both Project and Product Managers

Key Skills for Success	Overall	Project Managers	Product Managers
Communication	95%	99%	91%
Problem-solving	94%	96%	92%
Planning	94%	96%	93%
Time management	93%	94%	91%

Q: Thinking about the skills that enable you to be successful in your professional role, please indicate how important each is for you.

Note: The percentages shown reflect the proportion of respondents who rated these as *Very Important* or *Extremely Important*.
Base size: Project Manager, n = 751; Product Manager, n = 619



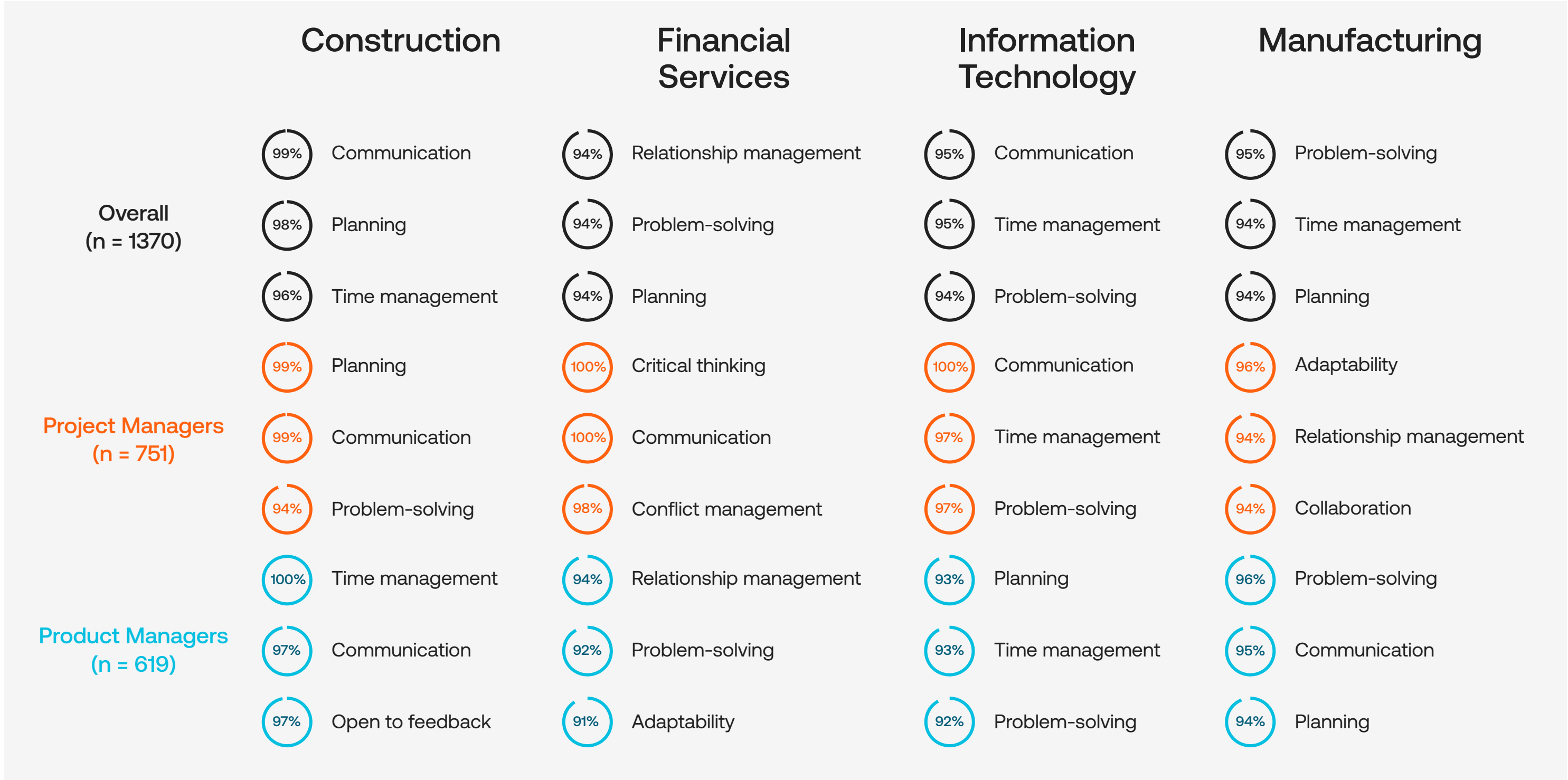
Four of the topmost important skills were the same for project and product professionals.

More than 90% of respondents indicated that communication, problem-solving, planning and time management were very or extremely important skills.

By industry, our research shows that professionals prioritize different skills depending on the sector. Notably, within construction, 100% of product managers consider time management important to their roles, whereas project managers in this field prioritized planning, communication and problem-solving. In information technology, where project methodologies, responsibilities and workflows may differ, product managers rated planning as their most important skill (93%), whereas project managers said the same of communication (100%). For a more complete list of the most important skills across select industries by role, see [Figure 3](#). For differences by geography, see Appendix C.



FIGURE 3. Top Skills by Industry



Q: Thinking about the skills that enable you to be successful in your professional role, please indicate how important each is for you.

Note: The percentages shown reflect the proportion of respondents who rated these as *Very Important* or *Extremely Important*.
Base size: Project Manager, n = 751; Product Manager, n = 619

How Top Skills Help Professionals Do M.O.R.E.

The categories in Figure 4 are based on a factor analysis, highlighting groups of top skills project managers and product managers indicated as important and how they align with the M.O.R.E. framework.

Notably, many of these skills were associated with one another for both project and product managers. For example, this was true for depth of technical expertise and breadth of technical expertise, both crucial skills for practitioners to Own Project Success.

Six skills differed in their placement based on respondent role. Visionary, adaptability, negotiation, creativity, problem-solving and collaboration, while highly valued by both project and product managers, were associated with different skill groupings for each.

For instance, for product managers, visionary and creativity were also associated with Owning Project Success, whereas project managers leveraged vision to Manage Perceptions and creativity to Expand Perspective.

In Figure 4, these diverging skills are highlighted to show how practitioners across roles use the same foundational skills in different ways based on their differing needs. Regardless of use, this figure highlights how project and product managers can hone shared competencies in various ways to address all aspects of M.O.R.E.

FIGURE 4. Alignment of Project and Product Management Skills with M.O.R.E.

M. Manage Perceptions		O. Own Project Success	
Project Management	Product Management	Project Management	Product Management
- Emotional intelligence - Conflict management - Cross-cultural sensitivity - Resilience - Visionary - Adaptability - Negotiation	- Emotional intelligence - Conflict management - Cross-cultural sensitivity - Resilience	- Depth of technical expertise - Breadth of technical expertise	- Depth of technical expertise - Breadth of technical expertise - Visionary - Creativity
R. Relentlessly Reassess Parameters		E. Expand Perspective	
Project Management	Product Management	Project Management	Product Management
- Communication - Time management - Organization - Planning	- Communication - Time management - Organization - Planning - Problem-solving - Collaboration	- Critical thinking - Open to feedback - Relationship management - Persistence - Risk management - Commitment to continuous learning - Problem-solving - Creativity - Collaboration	- Critical thinking - Open to feedback - Relationship management - Persistence - Risk management - Commitment to continuous learning - Adaptability - Negotiation

Fostering Collaboration Through Communication

Both roles are characterized by the need for effective communication. It allows information flow between and among teams and stakeholders. A Harvard Business Review publication⁸ points out that poor communication skills by a product manager can lead to misalignment among different teams, duplicated work or missed deadlines, and failed projects. On the other hand, effective communication can remove friction between departments and lead to a more trusting work environment. Organizations can expect to see less friction and increased team synergy by encouraging a culture of effective and proactive communication.

Thinking in Solutions, Not Problems

The ability to solve problems represents another shared competency between project and product managers. Project managers apply these skills to identify risks, manage resources and tailor approaches to maintain project progress. Product managers rely on problem-solving to address customer issues and make strategic choices. It enables professionals to translate market trend analysis into strategic actions which determine product direction. This competency enables both roles to identify solutions and correct areas that are not aligned with business objectives.

Generative AI (GenAI) can be a valuable tool in the problem-solving process by supporting brainstorming, decision-making and risk analysis. The PMI report [First Movers' Advantage](#)⁹ explores how GenAI can contribute to problem-solving for project professionals. By automating some routine tasks, GenAI tools can also free professionals to focus more on strategic aspects of the work, which will result in better problem-solving.



Elevating Skills with Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The PMI report [Pushing the Limits](#)¹⁰ discusses how organizations are leveraging GenAI to expand their boundaries and change the way they work, shifting their focus to more complex tasks. Data analysis emerges as one of the top tasks identified for its impact and usage. AI is also making a significant impact on other tasks related to these skills, such as creating a communication management plan, conducting risk reviews and assessments, creating a project schedule and timeline, and tracking project progress against the schedule, among others.

This change indicates that as users become more comfortable with GenAI, they are moving on to more sophisticated applications; this presents an opportunity to innovate new approaches to project management and product development within their organizations.

Effective Planning and Efficient Time Management

Planning and time management are the operational backbone of both roles in any organization. These skills help product managers navigate through the product launch process to ensure that the product is market ready and will deliver the maximum value to the clients.

Forbes¹¹ emphasizes that true time management is about prioritizing focus and adding value, not simply scheduling tasks. For product managers, this translates into having enough bandwidth to concentrate on the strategic priorities that have the most positive impact on product success. Project managers also need a systematic approach to time management to manage resources effectively, proactively address risks and reduce inefficiencies, and deliver results on time.

Planning is important for project and product professionals looking to align their team’s work with outcomes. The 2024 State of Strategy Management Practice report¹² indicates that strategic planning needs to extend its focus past task management. Modern planning requires organizations to use data-based methods which link internal strengths to external market conditions while integrating sustainability and risk management and promoting information sharing across departments. Dr. Michael O’Connor, senior research program director, Medtronic, United States, notes, “Planning is an area that can often get overlooked. It is very important to spend the right amount of time planning to ensure the highest quality of product or service and not have to repeat tasks.” Planning can be considered a continuous discipline that enables project and product leaders to drive long-term value through adaptation and prioritization.

Spotlight

The Need for Strong Communication

“Communication with our team members is essential, as is negotiation in terms of managing conflict and deadlines.”



Ketevan Nozadze, digital advisory manager,
BDO Digital Georgia, Georgia

“You must be good at negotiation and decision making. It’s all about people management and how you’re targeting their mindset.”



Devyani Rathee, project manager, ADNEC Group,
United Arab Emirates

“We need to communicate upfront, especially for big decisions with a lot of stakeholder involvement where it’s even more important to be agile. Those decisions will have a long-lasting impact on the life of the product.”



Lucio Miura Turco, program manager, Embraer, Brazil

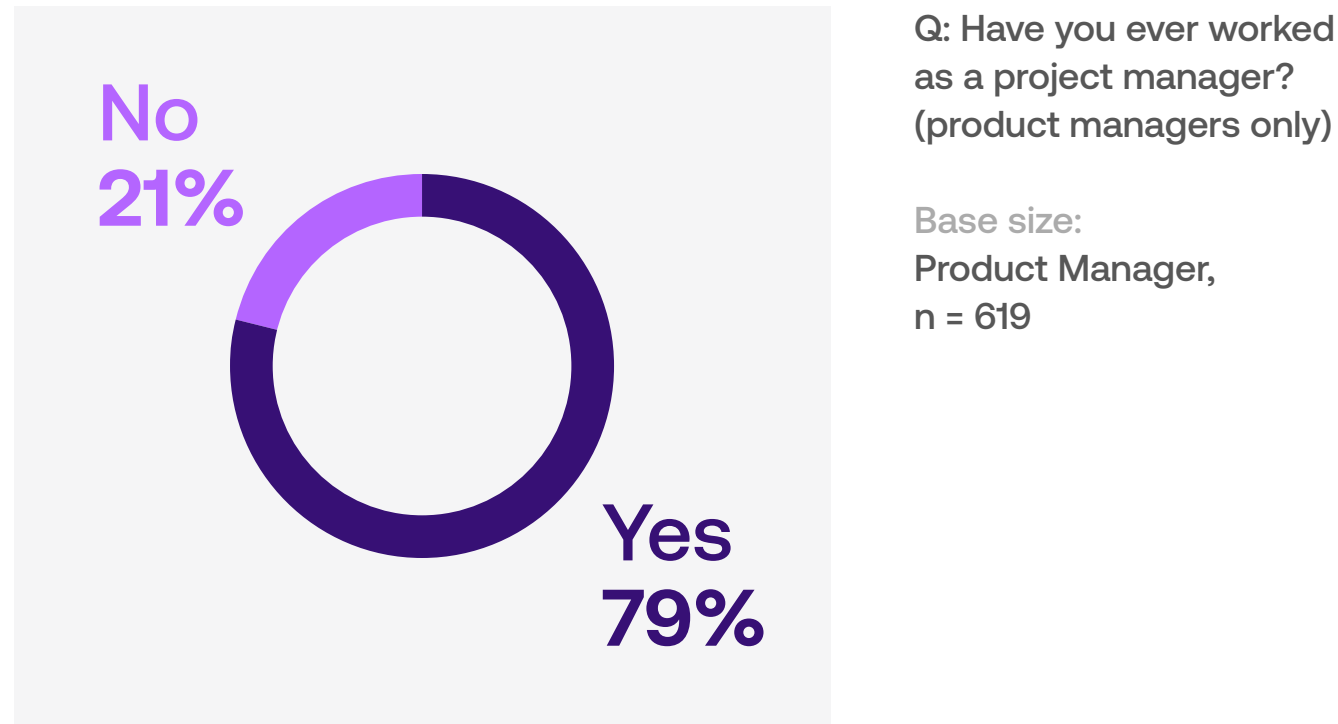


2.3 | Experience Overlap: Merging Perspectives

In addition to shared skills, our research also reveals a considerable overlap in work history. A large majority (79%) of product managers previously worked as project managers, either formally or informally (Figure 5). These results show that product managers are not only aware of project management but have hands-on experience, reinforcing the notion that the competencies required for success in both fields are closely related.

This finding also suggests that organizations may have an understanding of the key similarities between these roles, and with it the possible expectation that professionals wear multiple hats, especially in dynamic and fast-changing or resource-constrained environments.

FIGURE 5. Experience Overlap Between Project and Product Managers



Our subject matter experts confirm this reality on the ground. Jon Ward, transformation lead, Beneficial Consulting, United Kingdom, discussed his experiences with organizations employing joint project-product positions. “I see the project manager as the product manager in the product environment. Many businesses don’t need two people — just one role. Even with multiple teams working on the same product backlog, there is only one product person.”

Devyani Rathee, project manager, ADNEC Group, United Arab Emirates, spoke to this as well, particularly in an environment using agile approaches. “When working as a product manager and as a project manager, you are standing on the edge of both roles. You know what you want in a product, but you simultaneously have to justify this new agile world in which you are working. The challenge is in how you navigate that role when the lines between product and project are blurred.”

With the existence of blended roles filled by one professional, the need for shared practices and project skills regardless of role are clear, as practitioners may find themselves juggling both at once.

In such an environment, professionals are expected to understand both the full project lifecycle and the full product lifecycle. The latest Pulse of the Profession^{®13} research from PMI highlights this need for a more holistic understanding of organizational structures and the connection among projects, products and success. Notably, those with more business acumen, including an understanding of the full project life cycle, context and broader goals, were more likely to meet business goals on their projects and experienced less project failure.

I see the project manager as the product manager in the product environment. Many businesses don’t need two people — just one role. Even with multiple teams working on the same product backlog, there is only one product person.”



Jon Ward, transformation lead, Beneficial Consulting, United Kingdom

Our data shows that when asked which role their skills were most aligned with, product managers most commonly chose project management (54%) and vice versa (36%).

As Figure 6 shows, this recognized alignment is evidence of the synergies between these two roles, and indicates that professionals in these two areas realize their shared skill set, and that their competencies are transferable. Whether an organization distinguishes between project and product management roles or not, the success factor is not the job title but the utilization of core skills across these roles, and the collaborative work environment these professionals foster.

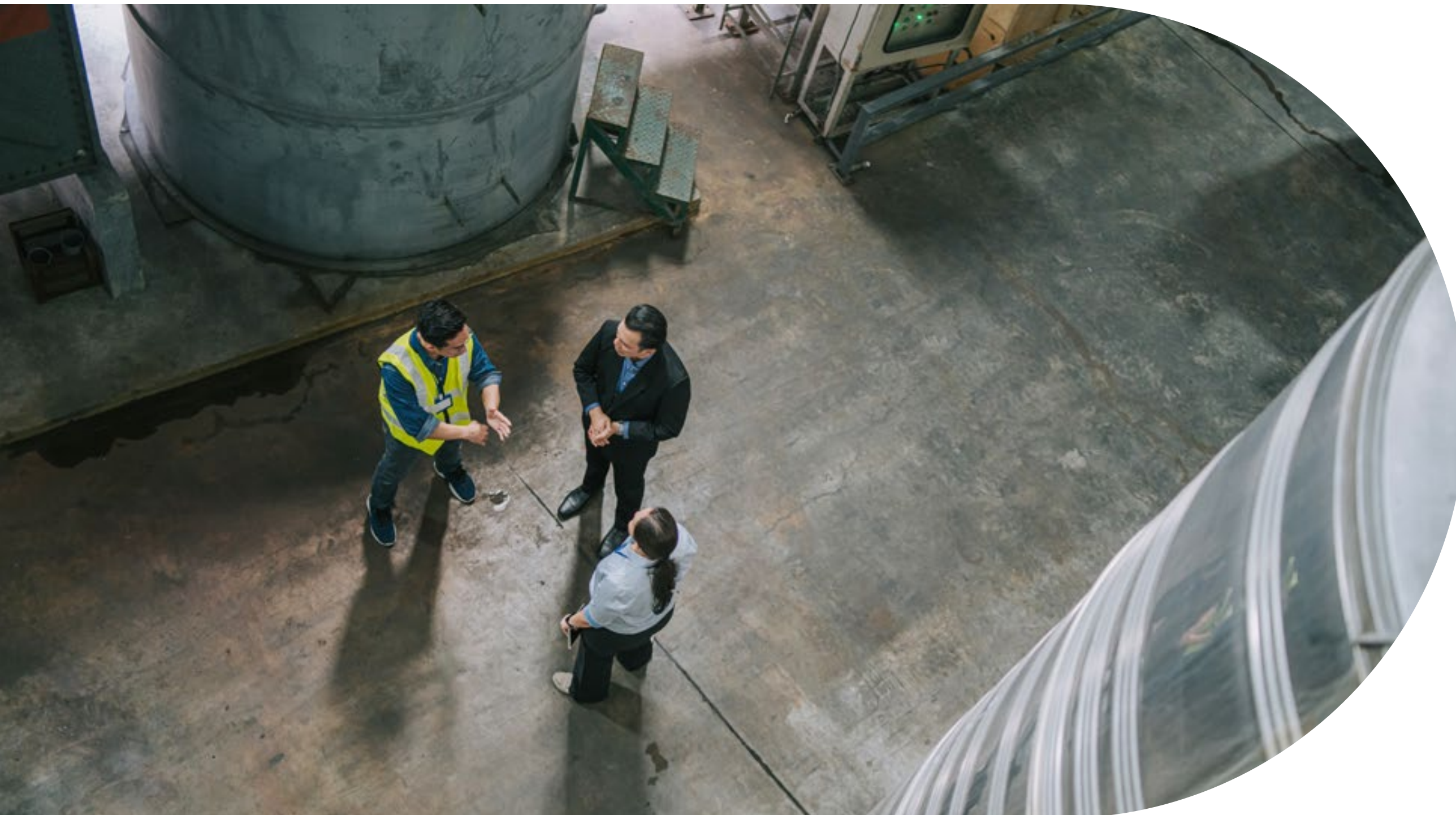
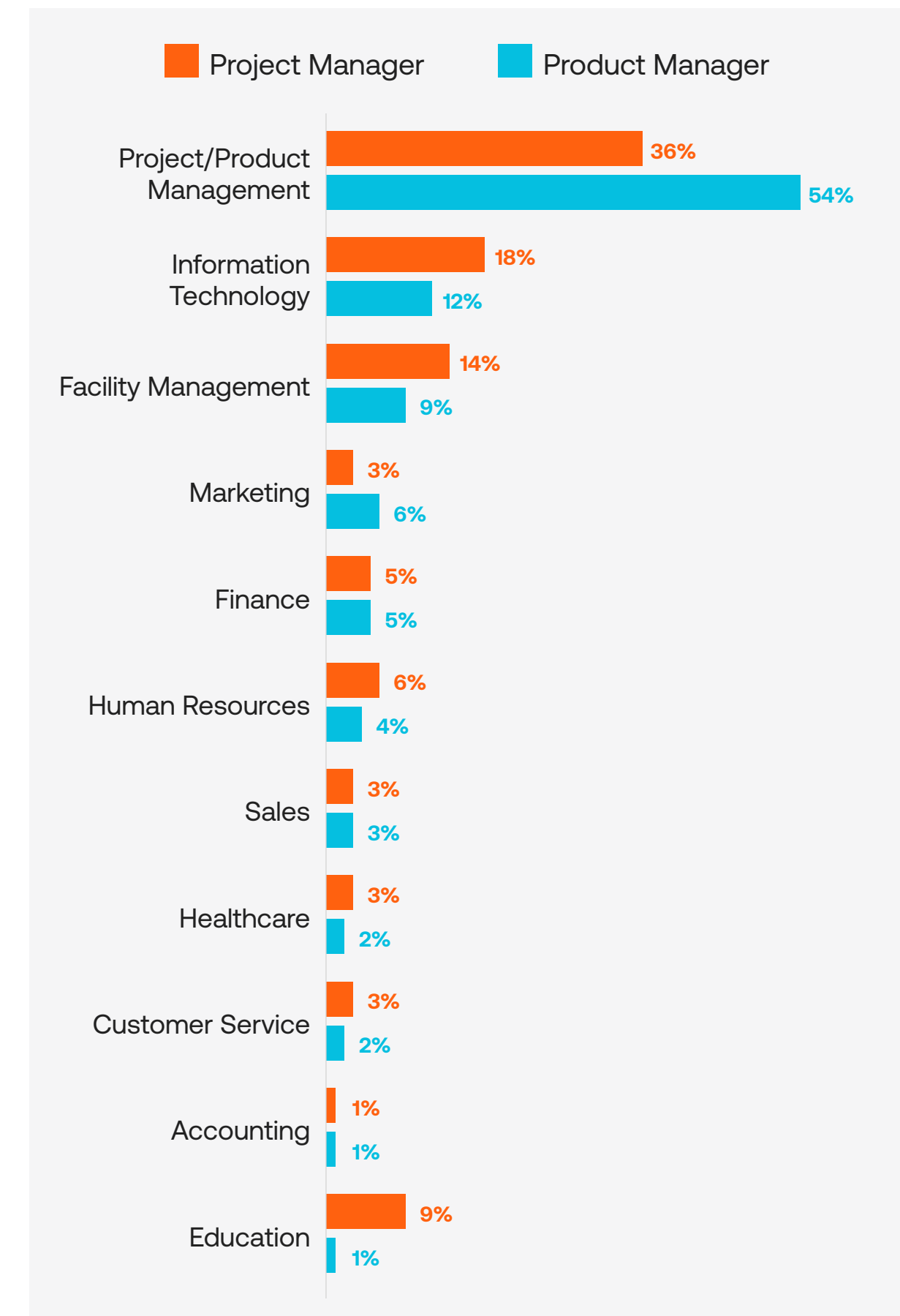


FIGURE 6. Skill Alignment with Other Roles



Q: If you had to change your job to another professional role, which role do you think your current skills align best with?

Base size: Project Manager, n = 751;
Product Manager, n = 619

2.4 | Education and Training: Developing Expertise Across Roles

Our data shows that the vast majority (82%) of product managers had some form of project management training in the past.

Notably, 76% of those who pursued training did so on their own (see Figure 7). This self-initiated pursuit of project management skills indicates that many product managers recognize the importance of project skills in product development and proactively pursue these skills to improve their capabilities.

FIGURE 7. Product Managers Value Project Management Skills and Training

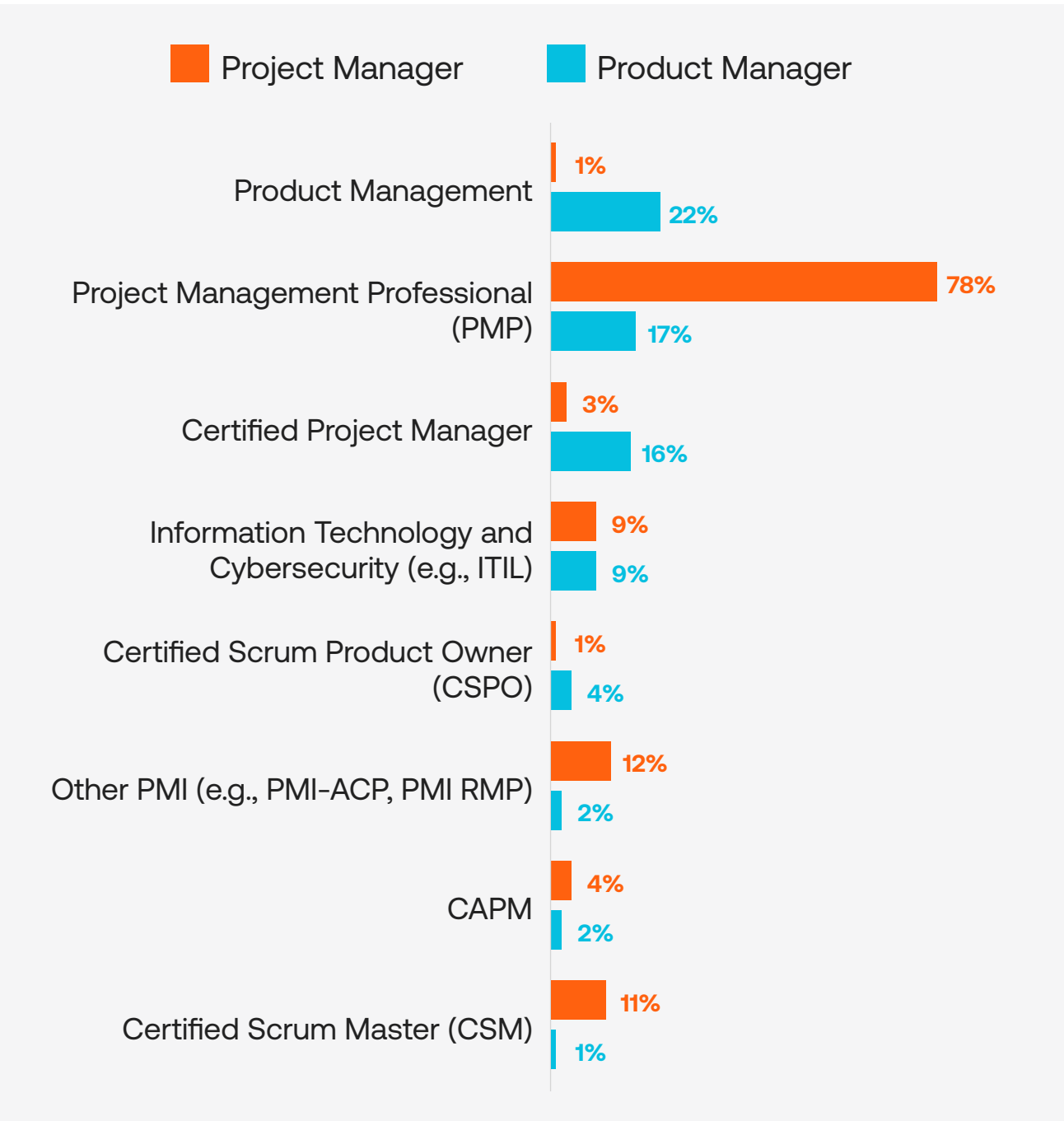


Q: Have you ever had any project management training?
Q: Did you seek out the training on your own or were you asked to participate in the training by your employer?

Base size: Product Manager, n = 619

While both project managers and product managers hold specialized certifications relevant to their positions, our data also shows that a considerable number of product managers also held Project Management Professional (PMP)® and other project management certifications (17% and 16%, respectively) (see Figure 8). This further illustrates the trend that product managers see project management skills as a key component of product-focused expertise. This trend may be due to many organizations’ employment of a single professional who performs and is responsible for both project management and product management functions.

FIGURE 8. Professional Certifications



Q: What professional certification(s) have you obtained?

Base size: Project Manager, n = 751; Product Manager, n = 619

When asked about the value of project skills in their roles, 92% of product managers said these skills were extremely or very important (see [Figure 9](#)). Rachel Domba, owner, Domba & Company, United States, spoke to this value. “At the end of the day, if you don’t know what all the moving parts are of bringing a product to market or managing a product in market, you can’t be effective as a product manager. You don’t know what your product needs. You don’t know what [kind of] cross functional team you need. The best way to do it is to have project management experience.”

The product managers who said project skills were extremely important shared some distinct characteristics.

Notably, they were more likely to consider their careers successful (54%) compared to just 24% of those who did not consider project skills to be critical; they were also more likely to feel they were on track to achieve their professional goals (54% vs. 25%).

Further, the fact that those who prioritize these skills report higher career satisfaction and success suggests that project management competencies are not only useful for day-to-day job performance but are also a strategic asset for long-term career progression.

This group of product managers was also more likely to have pursued project management training, hold professional certifications, and feel their certifications were ‘extremely valuable.’ These professionals embrace a learning culture and certification as evidence that they consider project management central to their core responsibilities in their current and future roles.

“In any change process, education is key — it’s about upskilling, unlearning, and relearning. That’s part of the job.”



Taghi Paksima, founder of The Uplift Academy, product & leadership agility coach, Agile Alliance, Germany

We acknowledge with respect the passing of Taghi Paksima, whose insights contributed to this article. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to share his perspective.

“Continuous improvement for individuals includes constant learning and upskilling. Keeping up with the latest methodologies, technologies, and techniques, along with learning adjacent skills, is one key to being a high-performing cross-functional team member.”



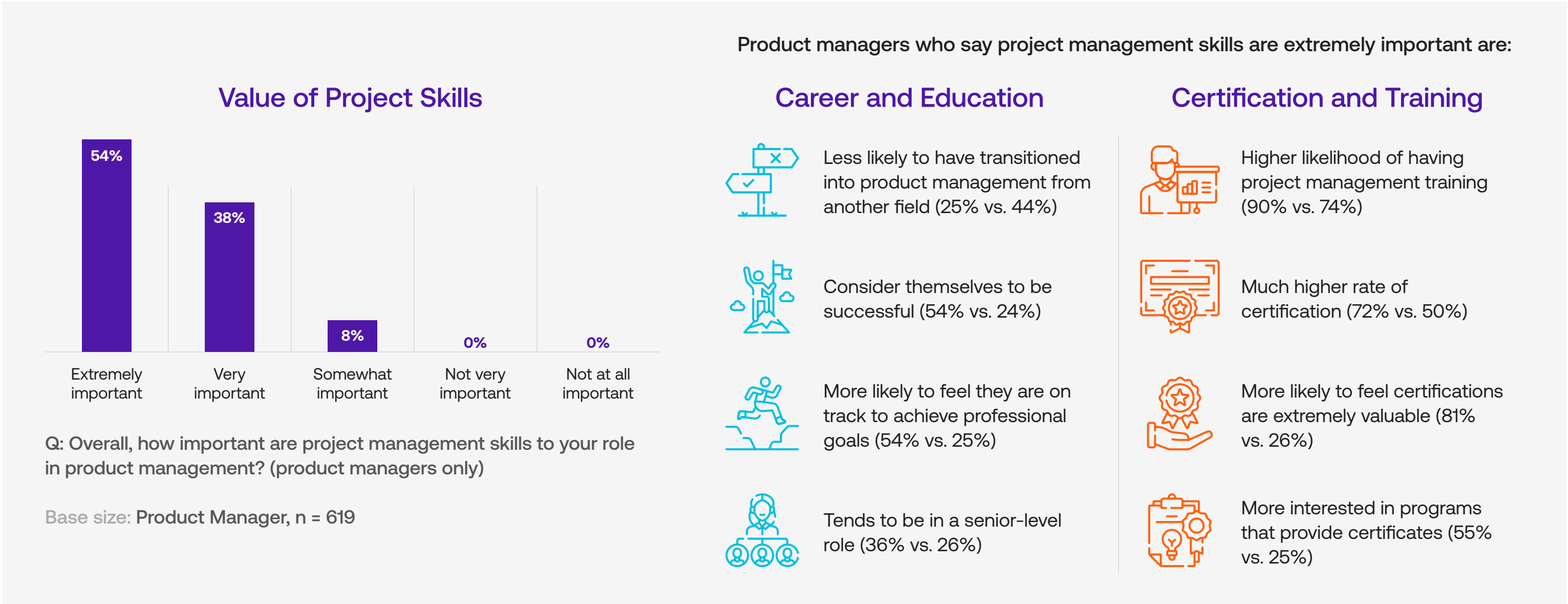
Jon Leslie, chair, Agile Product Management Initiative, Agile Alliance, and founder, product & business agility advisor, Broad Cove Insights, USA

“Since I pursued the PMP® certification in 2008, I have been working as a project and product manager and the certification has always played a key factor in my roles. As a product manager now, I recognize the value produced by project managers on the team.”



Enrico Marongiu, software product manager, Eurotech, Italy

FIGURE 9. Comparison of Product Managers Who Consider Project Management Skills to Be Essential in Their Role and Those Who Do Not



Key Takeaways

- Organizations should foster higher levels of collaboration between project and product managers to maximize impact by recognizing their complementary strengths and shared skill sets rather than focusing on role distinctions.
- The two professions share essential critical skills, which include communication, problem-solving, planning and time management. Although professionals in project and product management may apply and prioritize these skills differently depending on their context, success in either role increasingly requires a well-rounded skill set, including strategic thinking, technical detail, execution and process optimization.
- Product managers frequently pursue project management skills; those who do achieve better job satisfaction along with career success, indicating that these competencies are vital for professional development and role fulfillment.



Building Bridges

The Power of Collaboration Between Project Managers and Product Managers

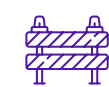
Key Insights

- Some challenges to effective collaboration include constraints on resources, conflicts and ambiguous roles. Organizations can overcome these challenges by defining roles, improving workflows and encouraging cross-functional teamwork.
- Collaboration between project and product managers should start before the execution phase. Early alignment clarifies roles and responsibilities, prevents misunderstandings, reduces friction and assures that projects and products advance according to business goals.
- Project and product managers can deliver optimal outcomes through collaboration and shared way of working. Choosing effective approaches that enable agility and facilitate effective communication can reduce obstacles and ensure value delivery.

According to the [Maximizing Project Success](#) report¹⁴ from PMI, organizations must now consider whether projects deliver tangible and perceived value to stakeholders that was worth the effort and expense. In product-led environments, this shift calls for a closer relationship between project and product management to ensure the delivery is in line with business objectives and market needs.

To better understand the value of, and challenges to, effective collaboration, we gathered qualitative insights from interviews with project and product professionals. These insights give a clear picture of the strategic impact of effective collaboration between these two roles.

In this section, we'll dive into:



Common obstacles that can hinder collaboration between the two professions.



The value of aligning product and project goals at the outset.



How shared ways of working, including agile practices, can facilitate alignment and flexibility.



3.1 | Obstacles to Strong Collaboration

While good collaboration can yield more effective delivery, there are obstacles that can stem from a variety of sources, including role clarity, resource management and a lack of communication and conflict management. These obstacles can slow progress, reduce efficiency and in some cases cause friction between teams.

Obstacle #1: Lack of Role Clarity

Our research shows that product managers have many skills and capabilities that overlap with those of project managers. As a result, the lines between these roles can blur. However, recent Forbes insights^{15,16} show that role clarity is not a formality but is a critical driver of team performance and decision-making. It sets an environment that supports innovation and teamwork because team members feel assured that they will not violate boundaries while working together effectively to solve problems.

The absence of clear roles leads to inefficient work processes, which creates frustration and conflict between employees, thus demotivating them and impacting outcome delivery. The need for role clarification is crucial even during temporary cross-functional initiatives because existing norms do not apply. Defining roles and expectations at the beginning of projects creates the trust required for a productive working environment.

“The biggest areas of friction I’ve seen are where the product manager and the project manager don’t know their role and haven’t established their lanes. The [project manager] I work with and I have a very good understanding. He’s one of the most effective partners I’ve had from a project management perspective. We both know our roles and that works out really well,” says Sean Daniels, senior product manager, Glacier Bancorp, United States.

Obstacle #2: Resource Constraints

In many situations, one professional fills both project and product management roles; in others, one may be assigned at the initiation of the product lifecycle, and the other joins the team much later. “There are organizations that don’t have a project manager. What those groups actually end up doing is the product managers effectively become project managers. You need project managers to get the work through all the teams, and to communicate [with stakeholders]. When it’s not there, product managers end up being pulled into a project manager role. Then the product work doesn’t get done or it’s done very poorly,” says John Johnson, Project Management Center for Excellence at the University of Maryland, United States.

Not all organizations have the benefit of both roles, and it’s not unusual for product managers to take on project management responsibilities and vice versa. As Jon Ward, transformation lead, Beneficial Consulting, United Kingdom, says, “Typically the project managers are subject matter experts as well as project management experts. That’s why they fit into product management mode very easily.”

Employing blended roles is often accompanied by trade-offs, however. Important project aspects may be overlooked, thereby leading to inefficiency or risk in project execution. Dr. Michael O’Connor, senior research program director, Medtronic, United States, says, “Professionals in blended roles need to understand both the project and product requirements. Doing so allows them to blend requirements in a way that increases the success of the project and minimizes problems during the project lifecycle.” When it’s not possible to have dedicated roles, product managers should improve their project management abilities and project managers should deepen their product and industry expertise to effectively contribute to success and reduce risks.

Obstacle #3: Managing Conflicts

Given how closely practitioners in project and product management work and share responsibility for product success, alignment and conflict-resolution strategies are essential. Handoffs are a common source of this conflict but, when handled effectively, can be used to improve communication and understanding to ensure uninterrupted progress and value delivery. For instance, a product manager may focus on building a new cutting-edge feature to make the product stand out in the market, whereas a project manager ensures that teams have a clear plan to bring that feature to life while maintaining the product timeline.

Ming Yeung, compliance manager and acting COO and CCO, Blockchain Venture Capital Inc, Canada, pointed out that, regardless of the transitions between teams that need to happen, project managers and product managers can align on their shared goals. “The roles of project manager and product manager are often interconnected. If you look at the project lifecycle and the product lifecycle, it’s often that product management is much longer. There’s always a conflict trade off, but whatever role it is, the common goals are pretty much the same.” Finding that common ground can be essential for smooth transitions throughout the product lifecycle.

Dr. Vanita Ahuja, director RICS SBE – Noida and group academic head (Design and Built Environment), Amity University Uttar Pradesh, India, concludes that understanding is at the heart of working well across these roles. “Teams need to have trust and have to balance the objectives of product managers and project managers. Product managers need to have some understanding of project management and project managers need to understand that the creative vision of a product manager needs to be included in the scope.”

Spotlight

It Takes A Village: Additional Stakeholders Are Needed for Strong Collaboration and Success

Our experts not only stressed the need for strong collaboration between product managers and project managers, but also highlighted how other departments and stakeholders are crucial to positive outcomes and refinement. Product and project managers together can bring these stakeholders to the table and manage their expectations.

“Every function, whether it’s accounts and finance or it’s the PMO, all departments need to understand the project/product dynamic. A supply chain is as weak as its weakest link and if any department does not understand this dynamic, then teams cannot deliver.”



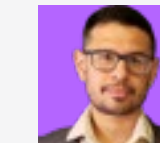
Dr. Vanita Ahuja, director RICS SBE – Noida and group academic head (Design and Built Environment), Amity University Uttar Pradesh, India

“If human resources has no idea about the difference between product and project, then they cannot hire well nor provide good job training if they don’t understand the role delineation and responsibilities.”



Jack Hsieh, president, Maestro Project Management Consultants, Taiwan

“Sales needs to communicate expectations to the customer. Sometimes, when a project manager joins an initiative, the sales team has promised too much. Then, they and the product manager need to talk with the client and tell the truth. The customer needs to be oriented and educated to do what’s right. This is how we drive success. Even if we don’t have everybody on board, we reduce the risk.”



Francisco Chagas, mentor and consultant in portfolio management governance and PMO, GFB Holding & Mentor, Brazil

“A compromise solution is tough. An aircraft needs to perform well throughout its entire lifecycle, which requires the involvement of the people who develop the product, those who handle the business side, and someone accountable for understanding the customer.”



Marco Infantozzi, eVTOL program manager, Embraer, Brazil

3.2 | Early Alignment is Key

Collaboration between project and product management should begin at the strategic planning stage. Aligning roles and goals early on ensures that both functions are working in sync from the onset of an initiative. Burkhard Meier, finance transformation PMO lead, Deloitte, South Africa, recommends that project managers and product managers engage with one another's core responsibilities to enable effective partnership throughout the product life cycle. "Project managers should work closely with product managers to understand the product vision, while product managers should actively participate in project planning. Fostering a culture of shared responsibility and continuous collaboration, rather than viewing handoffs as discrete events, can help alleviate tensions."

Tensions on teams juggling competing styles and interdependent deliverables are expected, but early alignment can help mitigate these challenges. "The same is true with other stakeholders," says Francisco Chagas, mentor and consultant in portfolio management governance and PMO, GFB Holding & Mentor, Brazil. "Making sure the whole team is on the same page from the outset helps level-set and paves the way to meet expectations later on." Developing partnerships, trust and shared objectives at the outset better enables flexibility, goal alignment and delivery.



3.3 | Fostering Collaboration Through Common Agile Practices

The dynamic nature of project and product management has led to the adoption of agile practices in these roles to help achieve strategic objectives while fostering collaboration and adaptability. The Pulse of the Profession® 2024 report¹⁷ pointed out that three-quarters of respondents (76%) forecasted an increase in their organization’s use of agile practices, and a majority (56%) already used either agile or hybrid management approaches often or always.

Taghi Paksima, founder of The Uplift Academy, product & leadership agility coach, Agile Alliance, Germany, discusses how professionals recognize the need for agile skills and adoption. “The individuals I work with have been open enough to explore the new skills they need to gain. Some ask, ‘What new skills do I need? I’ve been a product manager for years, what needs to change for me to thrive as a product owner in an agile environment?’”

A shared agile mindset and set of tools offer yet another platform upon which project and product managers can foster collaboration to drive success. By placing customer needs and continuous feedback at the core while working iteratively, agile practices enable teams to rapidly adjust to changing market conditions and evolving customer requirements. The flexibility and emphasis on communication prioritized in agile approaches build strong connections between cross-functional teams while simultaneously

improving project success probabilities by aligning product development with organizational objectives within constantly changing business environments.

Jon Leslie, chair, Agile Product Management Initiative, Agile Alliance, and founder, product & business agility advisor, Broad Cove Insights, USA, doubles down on the connection between agile practices and teamwork: “Agile is all about iterative and incremental value delivery. Cross-functional collaboration is a must for planning, developing, releasing, and learning on a repeating cadence. It’s impossible to quickly adapt to change if organizations remain stuck in discipline-specific departments and decision-making hierarchies.”

Our research found a significant proportion of project and product managers utilize a variety of practices in their work (Figure 10). While product managers are more likely to use customer-focused practices, such as value stream mapping and personas, both roles utilize a wide range of agile, Lean and product-focused practices to deliver results. By working together, teams can utilize a broad range of agile practices and leverage equally common practices such as daily stand-up meetings and sprint planning as a foundation for strong collaboration.

FIGURE 10. Usage of Common Practices by Role

Common Practices	Overall (n = 1370)	Project Managers (n = 751)	Product Managers (n = 619)
Daily coordination meetings	54%	52%	55%
Product testing	52%	33%	76%
Backlog management	51%	47%	55%
Continuous delivery	47%	43%	52%
Sprint planning	44%	43%	46%
Retrospectives	43%	45%	40%
User stories	39%	38%	41%
Value stream mapping	35%	25%	46%
Burndown or burnup charts	34%	30%	37%
Personas	24%	20%	29%
Other agile practices	22%	29%	13%

Q: Do you use any of the following practices in your current role? Please select all that apply.

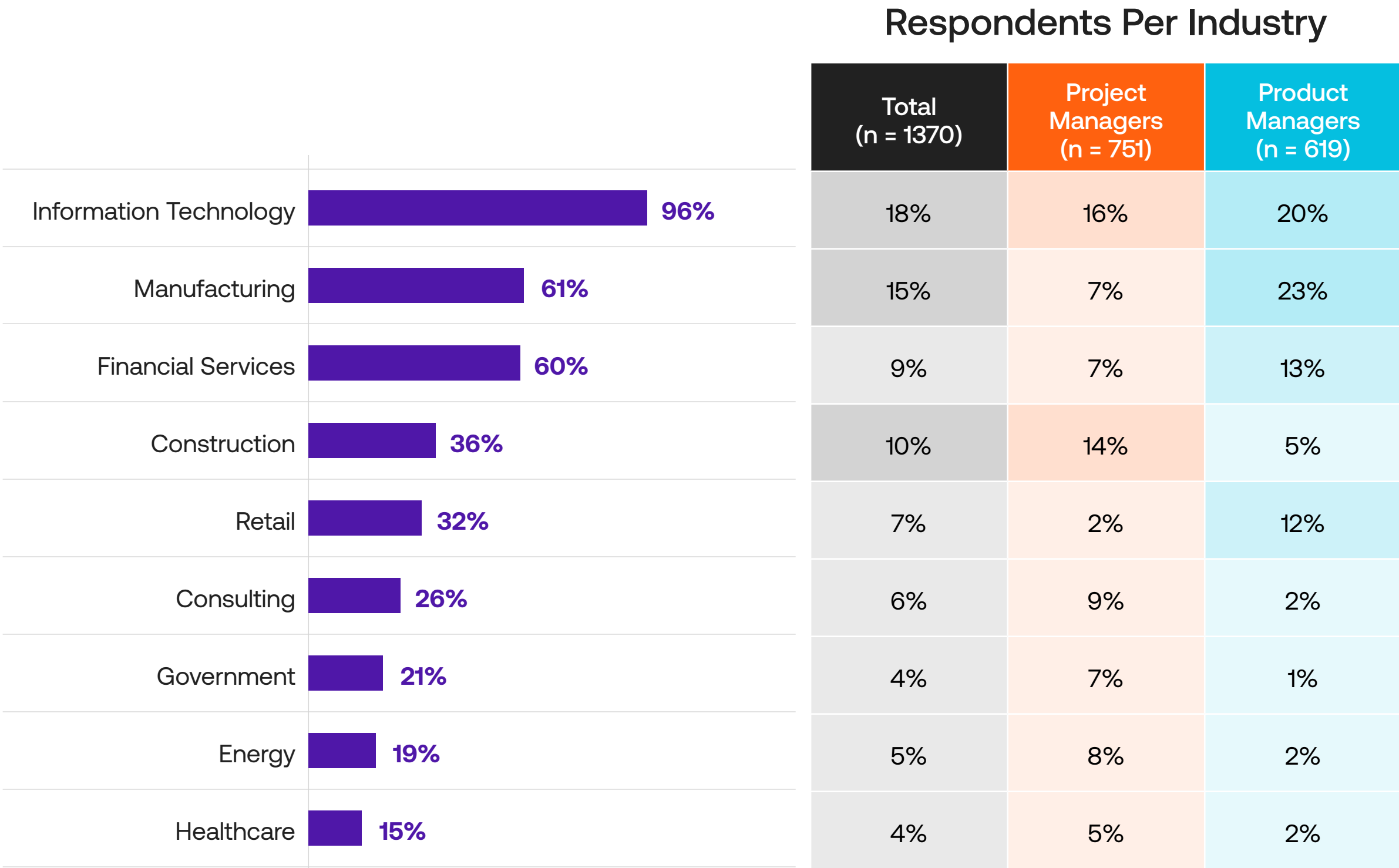
Base size: Project Manager, n = 751; Product Manager, n = 619

Agile practices support open communication across project and product teams to facilitate staying aligned and flexible. Through increased transparency, professionals can address risks and challenges early and adapt quickly. Organizations and customers alike reap the benefits of these strong working practices, because product development focuses on real-time user feedback, which is incorporated through faster delivery cycles and more frequent releases.

When broken out by industry, we found wide gaps in the use of these practices across various sectors (Figure 11). Information technology leads the way with 96% utilizing at least one of these skills, demonstrating the solid foundation of agile in this sector. However, agile practices are common in many other industries as well — from manufacturing (61%) and financial services (60%) to energy (19%) and healthcare (15%).

Dr. Vanita Ahuja, director RICS SBE - Noida and group academic head (Design and Built Environment), Amity University Uttar Pradesh, India, added some nuance to the trends in other sectors. “Agile is a term used more in the tech industry and in the IT sector. But with time, other sectors have also adopted this process. For instance, in the construction industry the term agile is not used, but these practices are adopted. They have a long-term plan, but team also has short-term targets to deliver on.”

FIGURE 11. Share of Practitioners Who Use Common Agile Practices by Industry (Overall)



Q: Please select the category that best reflects the industry focus of your organization; Do you use any of the following practices in your current role? Please select all that apply.

Base size: Project Manager, n = 751; Product Manager, n = 619

In addition to the overall trend toward the adoption of agile practices, project and product managers should determine which practices are most appropriate for their projects, products and goals. Agile has become popular, but it is important to choose the most appropriate approach from a continuum of practices based on project types, industry needs or organizational structures.

Burkhard Meier, finance transformation PMO lead, Deloitte, South Africa, discussed these tailored approaches as well, highlighting how project managers can use agile practices to support product development.

“Frameworks like Scrum or Kanban can help project managers adapt to changing priorities and deliver value incrementally. However, it’s important to tailor the approach to the specific needs of the organization and product. Project managers should be prepared to act as facilitators, removing obstacles and enabling the team to deliver value efficiently.”

Shauna Mensah, PMP, PMI-ACP, manager of operations, Thought Leadership, Project Management Institute, United States, also discussed how project managers can leverage agile practices in a collaborative environment. “In my experience, some key things that have led to success, especially in fast-paced, deadline-driven environments, are feedback cycles and a willingness to keep improving. At the heart of any effective approach is the ability to communicate and collaborate well with others.”



Agile Practices in Aerospace Product Development

Natalia Silveira, director of programs, Commercial Aviation; Marco Infantozzi, eVTOL program manager; and Lucio Miura Turco, program manager, use agile practices to strengthen their work at Embraer, a leading aerospace manufacturer based in Brazil. Agility is particularly valuable when it comes to collaborating across teams to ensure product competitiveness and successful launch.

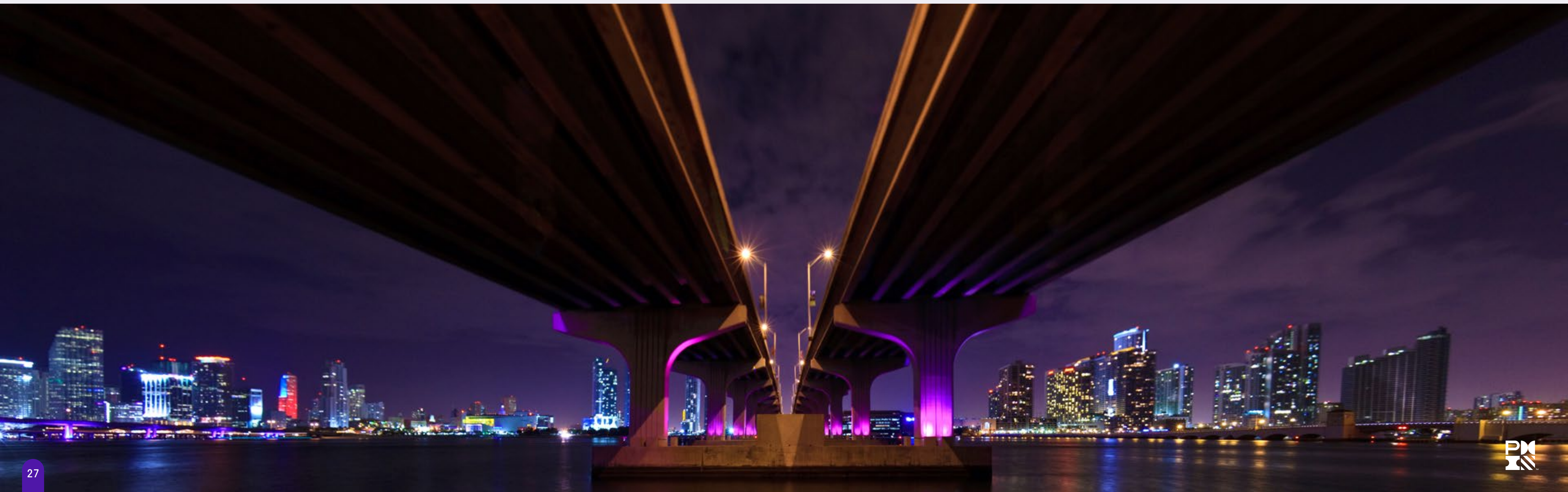
“It’s always key to be agile,” explains Lucio Miura Turco. “Some processes require a lot of alignments across teams and key stakeholders, so everyone has to communicate.”

The team discussed a recent case where agile enabled them to relentlessly reassess parameters in the midst of the development of a new product. Ongoing market research revealed that developments in the field impacted the competitiveness of a new aircraft design. Through agile practices and mindset, they were able to modify the wings of the aircraft to improve its performance.

Marco Infantozzi elaborates on Embraer’s process. “In terms of the competitiveness of our products, we did just that. We made product modifications that impacted the business plan due to an increase in the cost of goods sold, but we realized this was the best solution for the overall project, as it delivers more value to customers. We had some tough decisions to make regarding different technologies and aspects we could maximize but, ultimately, we arrived at the best solution.”

Key Takeaways

- Strong collaboration between project and product managers can be supported by clear role definition, proactive resource planning and deliberate conflict management.
- Early alignment and shared understanding across these roles are critical for avoiding obstacles to collaboration and ensuring projects and products not only meet business objectives but also create meaningful outcomes for stakeholders.
- Through the proper alignment of agile practices, both project and product managers can improve efficiency and adaptability along with customer-focused value delivery.



A Shared Path Forward

FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Build Collaboration Through Cross-Functional Learning

- ▶ Offer team-building activities where both roles can try out collaboration in a safe environment.
- ▶ Create learning programs to give product managers a basic project management education and vice versa.
- ▶ Include cross-functional alignment in onboarding and training to set clear expectations and build cohesive teams.

Establish Clear Communication Channels and Workflow Visualizations

- ▶ Establish clear guidelines for roles and responsibilities and define clear escalation paths for effective communication and decision-making.
- ▶ Leverage collaborative digital tools that facilitate transparency and task visualization.
- ▶ Communicate consistently and continuously throughout the length of the initiative.

Test and Scale Collaboration with Pilots

- ▶ Perform small-scale collaborative pilots so teams can try solutions and obtain real-world data, which they can use to iterate and scale best practices.
- ▶ Establish agile feedback loops — such as retrospectives — to continuously learn and improve teamwork.

In a world where many organizations are moving toward product-led approaches, project professionals can expect to work closely with product managers and should champion effective collaboration practices.

Our research shows that the overlap between these roles is considerable and can act as a common foundation professionals should leverage throughout project and product lifecycles.

The insights from our analysis reveal several recommendations for both organizations and professionals looking to strengthen collaboration between project and product managers.

FOR INDIVIDUALS

Build Cross-Disciplinary Awareness

- ▶ Attend training sessions, read books/articles and take online courses on project or product management.
- ▶ Product managers can pursue certifications, such as the Project Management Professional (PMP)[®] or the PMI Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP)[®], whereas project managers can benefit from product-focused certifications like the Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO).[®]

Communicate Clearly and With Purpose

- ▶ Use available communication and collaboration tools to clearly communicate status and priorities to everyone on the team.
- ▶ Have regular sync meetings to integrate information, keep priorities aligned, identify potential blockers early and maintain team awareness.
- ▶ Ensure project and product managers understand each other clearly and have established a shared lexicon of key terms to avoid misconceptions.

Focus on Solutions, Not Roles

- ▶ View conflicts as opportunities to solve problems together rather than seek to place blame.
- ▶ Highlight with teams that project and product managers work toward a common purpose; they are not competitors.



The future of work

is cross-functional, and the intersection of project management and product development is a clear opportunity. Both functions can contribute to the success of not just specific projects but to the long-term growth and competitiveness of their organizations when they collaborate to deliver value.

Acknowledgments

To provide context and real-world examples, PMI conducted in-depth interviews with 37 subject matter experts in project management and product management roles around the world between June 2024 and February 2025. These leaders represented diverse industries and organizations, offering insights into the connection between and opportunities for the project management and product management professions. Those who chose to be acknowledged are listed here.

- ▶ Asma Khanam, Payroll Product Leader, Amazon, United Kingdom
- ▶ Burkhard Meier, Finance Transformation PMO Lead, Deloitte, South Africa
- ▶ Devyani Rathee, Project Manager, ADNEC Group, United Arab Emirates
- ▶ Enrico Marongiu, Software Product Manager, Eurotech, Italy
- ▶ Francisco Chagas, Mentor and Consultant in Portfolio Management Governance and PMO, GFB Holding & Mentor, Brazil
- ▶ Jack Hsieh, President, Maestro Project Management Consultants, Taiwan
- ▶ John Johnson, Professional Programs Manager, Project Management Center for Excellence at the University of Maryland, United States
- ▶ Jon Leslie, chair, Agile Product Management Initiative, Agile Alliance, and founder, product & business agility advisor, Broad Cove Insights, USA
- ▶ Jon Ward, Transformation Lead, Beneficial Consulting, United Kingdom
- ▶ Kashif Khan, Agile COE Manager, Project Management Institute, United States
- ▶ Ketevan Nozadze, Digital Advisory Manager, BDO Digital Georgia, Georgia
- ▶ Lucio Miura Turco, Program Manager, Embraer, Brazil
- ▶ Marco Infantozzi, eVTOL Program Manager, Embraer, Brazil
- ▶ Michael O'Connor, Senior Research Program Director, Medtronic, United States
- ▶ Ming Yeung, Compliance Manager and Acting COO and CCO, Blockchain Venture Capital Inc, Canada
- ▶ Natalia Silveira, Director of Programs Commercial Aviation, Embraer, Brazil
- ▶ Patricia Roettger, Manager of Product Marketing, WorldatWork, United States
- ▶ Rachel Domba, Owner, Domba & Company, United States
- ▶ Rashmi Samant, Agile Coach, Project Management Institute, United States
- ▶ Sean Daniels, Senior Product Manager, Glacier Bancorp, United States
- ▶ Shauna Mensah, PMP, PMI-ACP, Manager of Operations, Thought Leadership, Project Management Institute, United States
- ▶ Simon Walkerden, Programme PMO Manager, Ocado Group, United Kingdom
- ▶ Taghi Paksima, Founder of The Uplift Academy, Product & Leadership Agility Coach, Agile Alliance, Germany
- ▶ Tyson Browning, Professor of Operations Management, Neeley School of Business, Texas Christian University (TCU), United States
- ▶ Dr. Vanita Ahuja, Director RICS SBE - Noida and Group Academic Head (Design and Built Environment), Amity University Uttar Pradesh, India

Appendices

Appendix A: Demographics

Appendix B: LinkedIn Talent Insights Data Analysis

Appendix C: Geographic Trends



This appendix contains additional supporting data on the intersections of project management and product management from recent PMI research.

FIGURE 12A. Survey Demographics

Project Managers

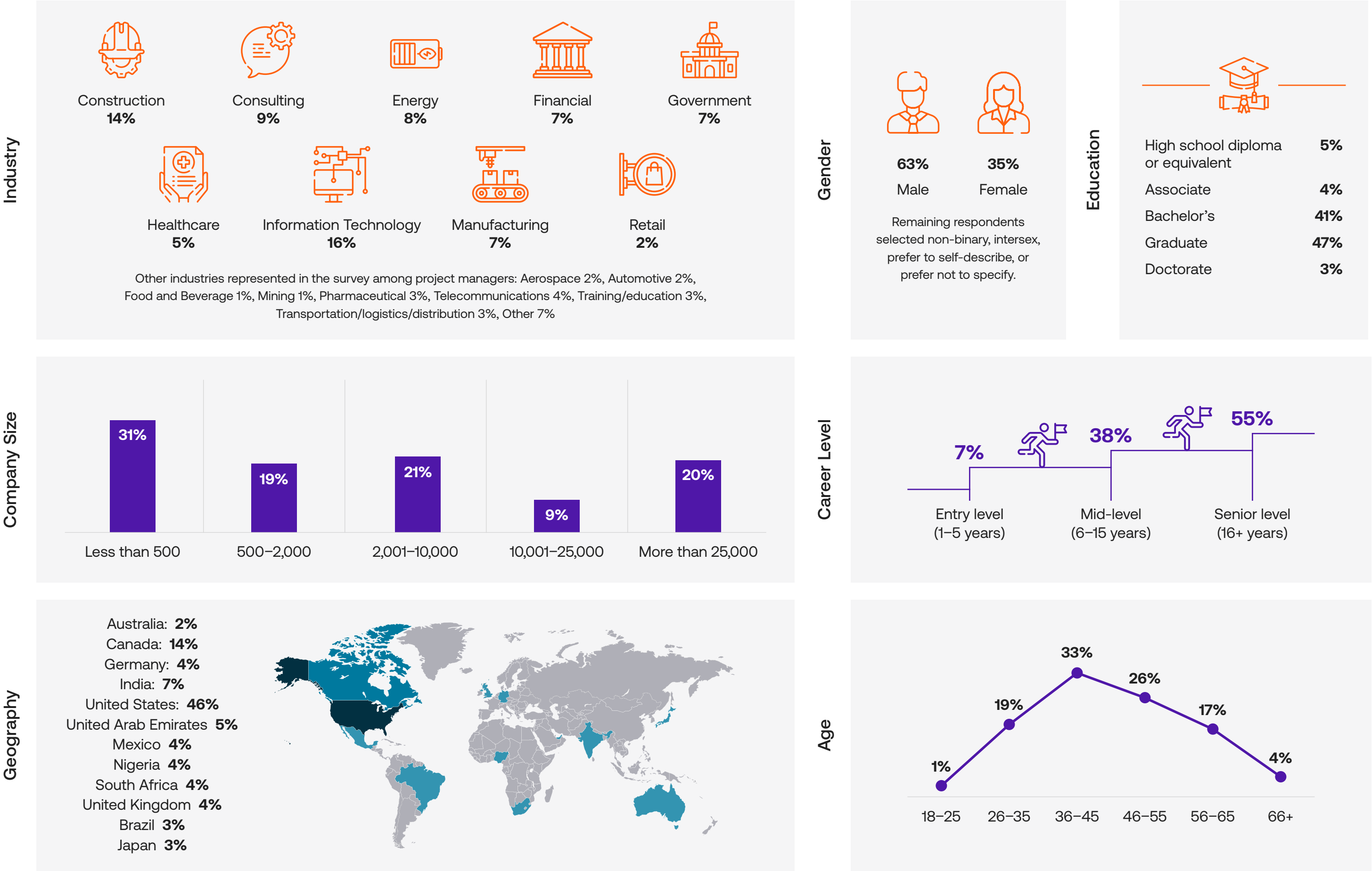


FIGURE 12B. Survey Demographics

Product Managers

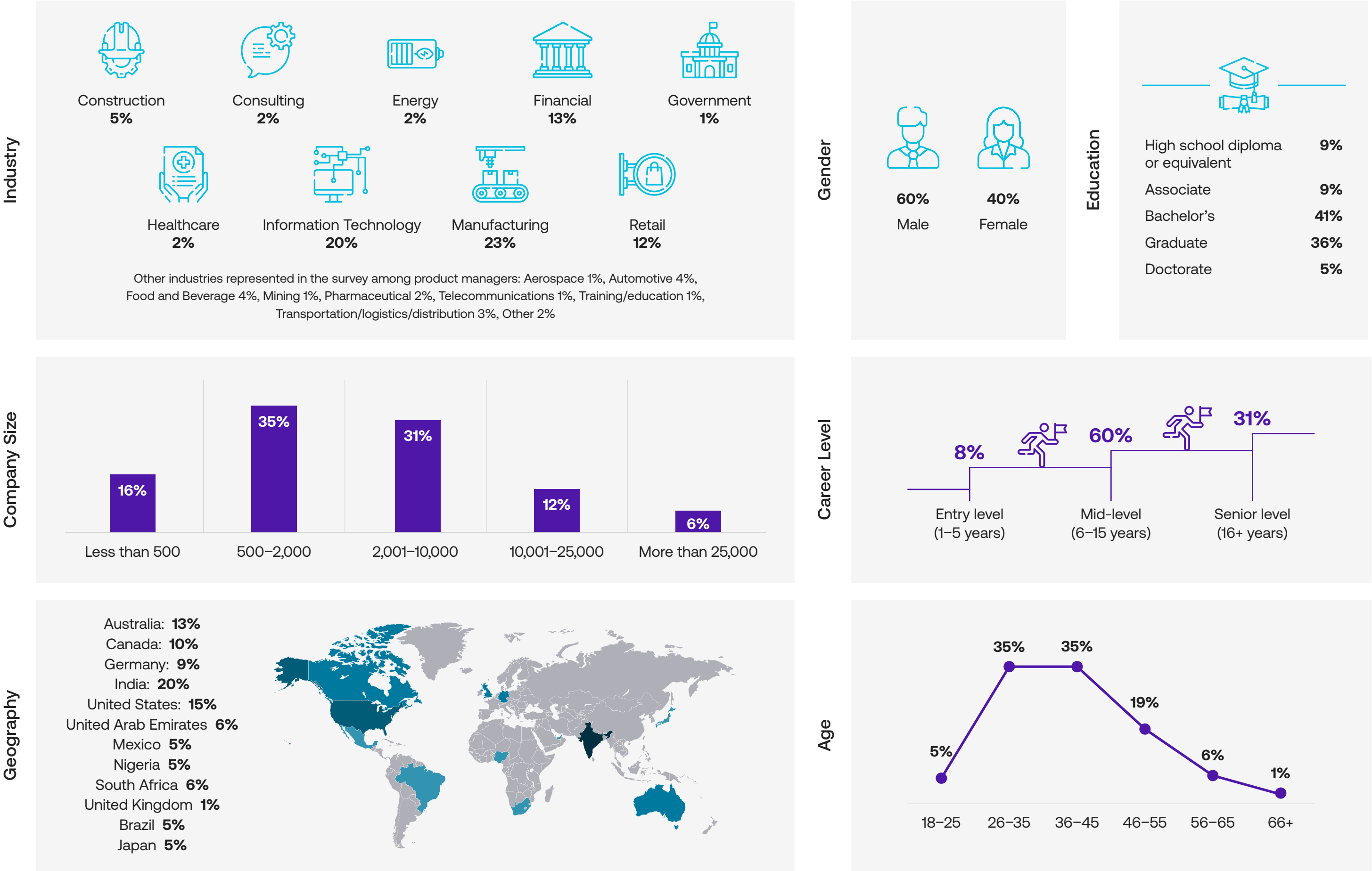


FIGURE 13. LinkedIn Talent Insights Data by Role (LinkedIn Talent Insights data is derived by aggregating profile data voluntarily submitted by LinkedIn members. As such, LinkedIn cannot guarantee the accuracy of LinkedIn Talent Insights data.)

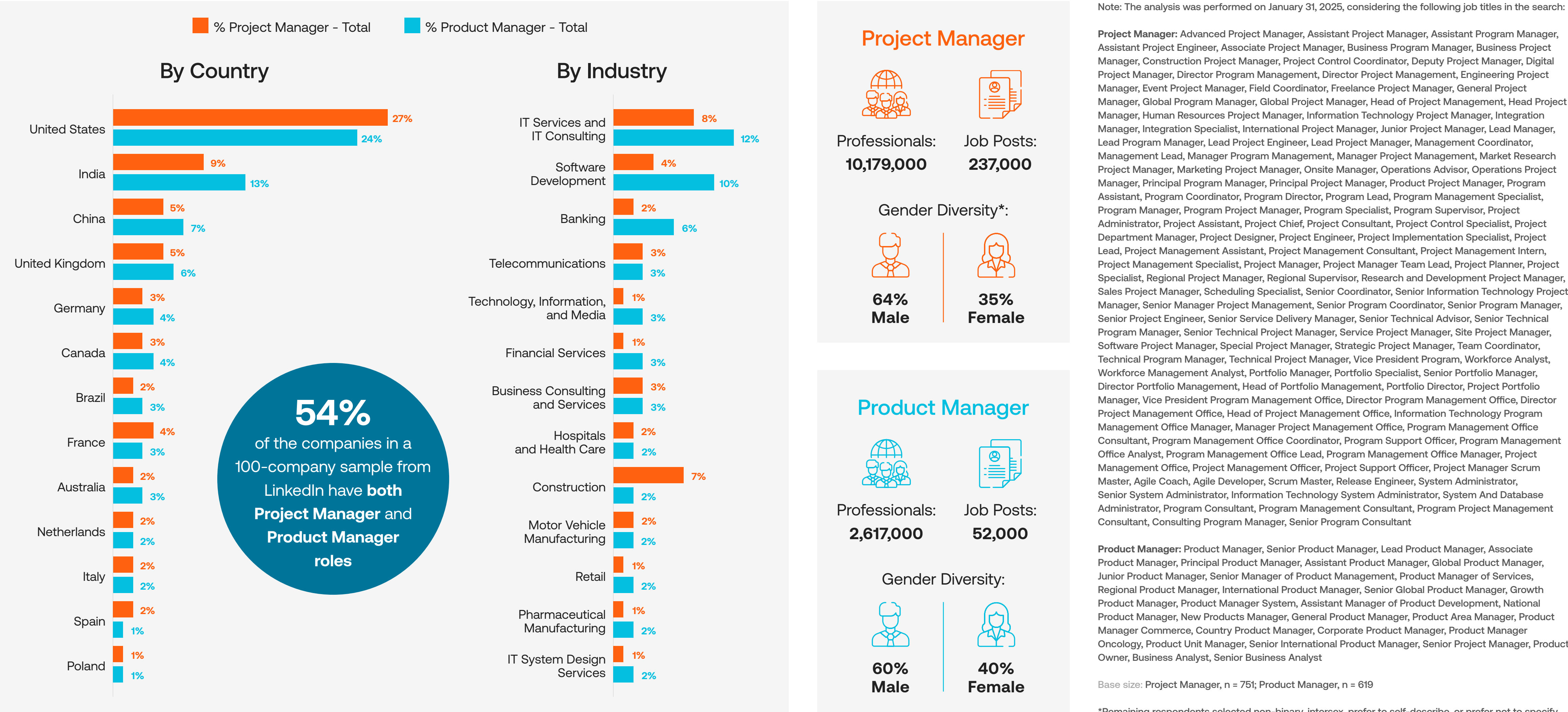
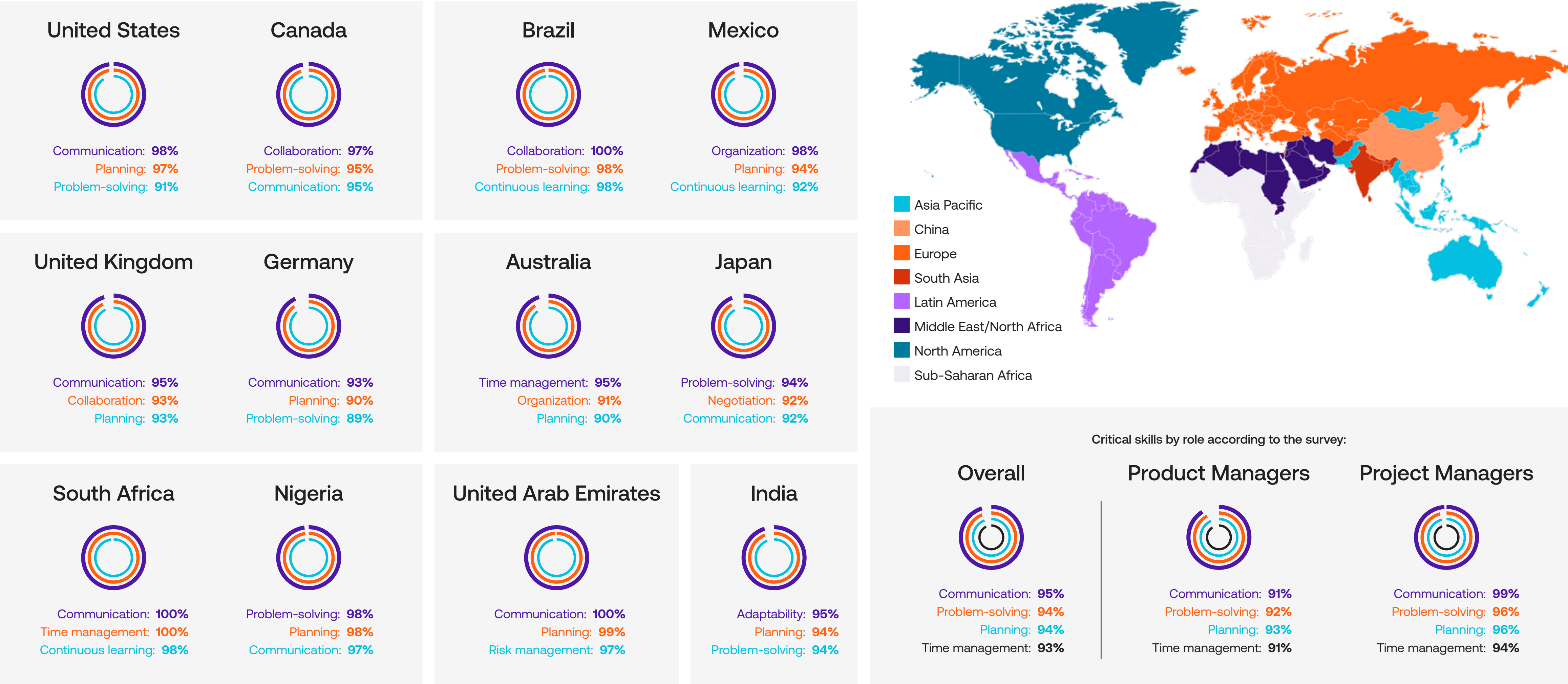


FIGURE 14. Top Skills by Geographic Region



Endnotes

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