

# PM FEST 25 | IPMA<sup>®</sup> ROMANIA



**21 November 2025 (Online)**

**Title:** *Project Leadership in the Digital Era: A Human-Centric Approach*





# Case Study: GIANT

“Smart City Transformation — A Human-centric Approach”



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**GIANT**  
INNOVATION CAMPUS

| Dr. Amin Saidoun, Former member of the GIANT  
Steering Committee

- Part 1: The Digital Era: Disruption & New Demands on Leaders
- Part 2: The Human-Centric Core: Leading with Emotional Intelligence & Purpose
- Part 3 : The Future: Integrating Technology & Humanity in Project Leadership



# One Project leadership definition

**Project leadership** can be characterised as **the integrative application of leaders' strengths, competences, and situational behaviours** that align with **the complex, temporary context**. It also involves **outstanding horizontal leaders** through interaction among **formal leaders and team members (LMX)**, and **among formal leaders and other formal leaders**, such **sponsors** or other project managers (**LLX**)\*.

*Zheng, J., Gu, Y., Li, P. et al. (2023), "Research evolution and thematic breakthroughs in project leadership: A bibliometric analysis"*

*\*Chen and Lin (2017): "Goal orientations, leader-leader exchange, trust, and the outcomes of project performance." International Journal of Project Management 36 (5):716-729.*



# The digital Area: Disruption and New demands:

-McKinsey reports that **70 per cent of digital transformation initiatives fail to meet their objectives** (*Financial Times*, 2025)

-A Gartner survey found that only **48 per cent meet or exceed their targets** (Gartner CIO survey, October 21, 2024)

-Globally, failed transformation efforts cost businesses an estimated **\$2.3 trillion a year globally**.

(<https://newsroom.taylorandfrancisgroup.com/costly-business-overhauls-are-not-needed-to-embrace-new-digital-technologies-according-to-specialist/> )

- Projects are faster, tech-driven, globally connected
- Yet human alignment lags behind
- Leadership must evolve beyond process



# New Pressures on Project Leaders

## Project chaos



- Missing or bad communication
- Misaligned expectations
- Low engagement
- Resistance to change
- Lack of psychological safety
- Leadership that is too technical and not relational enough

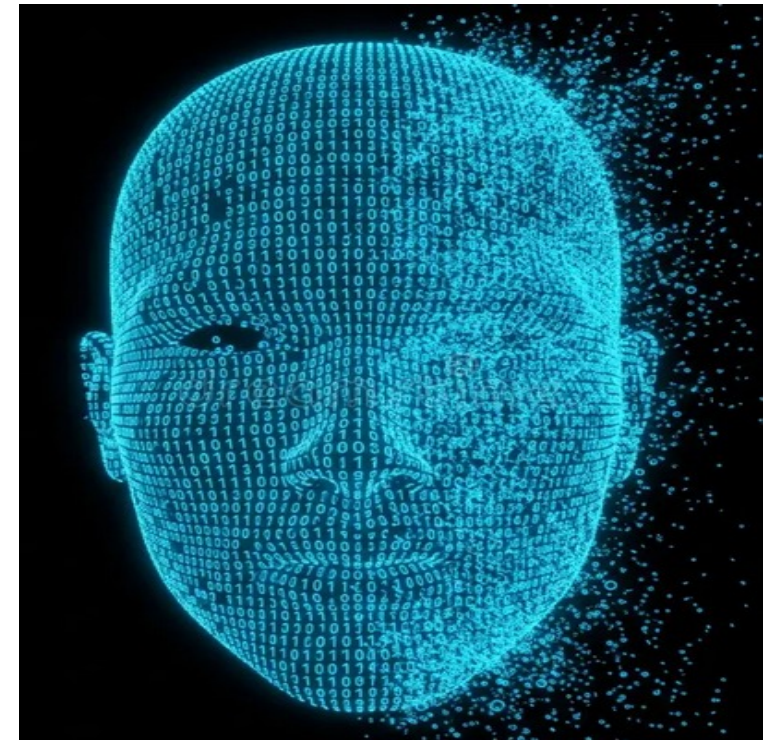
- Part 1: The Digital Era: Disruption & New Demands on Leaders (10 minutes) /10 minutes
- Part 2: The Human-Centric Core: Leading with Emotional Intelligence & Purpose (15 minutes)
- Part 3 : The Future: Integrating Technology & Humanity in Project Leadership (10 minutes)

# The Human Centric Core in Digital Area

Traditional task leadership	Human centric leadership in Digital Era
Command-and-control	Empowerment and autonomy
Do what I say	Let's build together
Scope	Teams want Purpose
Hierarchy	Networks that value each other



# Striving for a Human-Centric Leadership



# Practical Tools, Behaviors and Take Aways

## Human-Centered Project Kickoffs

Connection Rituals

Leading Hybrid Teams

Leadership Micro-Behaviors



## We can remember:

Human-centric leadership is not soft.

It is strategic.

It is powerful.

**And in the digital era—it is essential !**

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# The Future: Integrating Technology & Humanity

Using Digital Tools to Empower Humans

The leader as a cultural Architect

A simple Model for Human Tech  
Integration





# The Future: Integrating Technology & Humanity

## 4 Immediate actions

Start every meeting with purpose and context

Use digital tools to simplify, not complicate

Prioritise relationships over tasks

Regularly check the “emotional temperature” of the team



**Be prepared for Server 2.0 !**



GIANT is strong **human centered** project to serve society



**GIANT International Internship Programme**



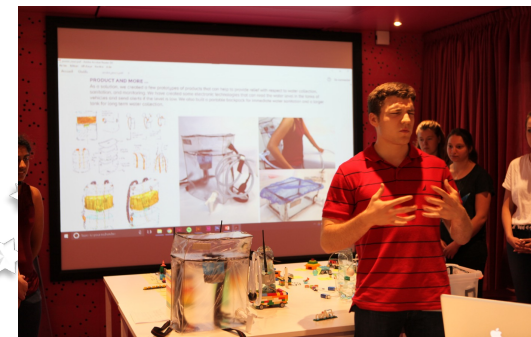
**Science Festival**



**EKIDEN : GIANT Marathon**



**GIANT@school**



**GIANT innovation week**



## Conclusion

**Technology, i.e. the application of conceptual knowledge to achieve practical goals, especially in a reproducible way, drives speed.**

**People drive success.**

**The most advanced technology in your project is still the human being.**

”We should think of AI as the intellectual equivalent of a backhoe. It will be much better than us very soon. »

*Geoffrey Hinton*



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