

Better use of data in infrastructure project delivery could save £23bn a year

September 27, 2021



Better use of data in infrastructure project delivery could save the sector £23bn a year, according to a new study that looks at how companies can use project data analytics (PDA) to transform their project delivery.

The study was undertaken by the Project Praxis Group, at WMG University of Warwick, led by Professor Naomi Brookes and in partnership with The Oakland Group, a Leeds-based data consultancy.

Professor Naomi Brookes, leader of the Project Praxis Research Group at WMG University of Warwick, said: “PDA involves using data better to support decision-making in project delivery. Feasibility studies indicate that using PDA better could produce savings of over £23bn per annum in the infrastructure sector. Yet, PDA is still not understood or widely adopted. Our investigation explains why this might be the case and what can be done about it.”

The investigation combined the viewpoints of senior practitioners in infrastructure delivery from clients, contractors and professional service organisations. Participants included; Transport for London, Network Rail, Severn Trent and Sellafield.

It provided a unique and invaluable insight into the barriers and enablers of PDA that are being experienced right now in infrastructure project delivery.

Surprisingly technology was not seen as the problem, and neither was a lack of data analysts in the project delivery profession. By far, the greatest concern was the quality of data used in delivering projects. Improving data maturity was seen as the most important enabler for infrastructure organisations to benefit from PDA.

Participants were also very honest about how fear of new technology can inhibit the way in which PDA is used. People in delivery organisations are concerned that PDA will provide another stick with which to beat them. The report contains a full description of all of the barriers encountered by infrastructure project delivery organisations and the enablers to overcome these.

Richard Corderoy, managing director at The Oakland Group, said: “Our work with companies across the construction and utility sectors shows that integrating data insight and decision making into daily operations can be transformational. Organisations are often awash with data and just need help to access it in a way that can drive insight and change.

“Our support of the work with WMG University of Warwick highlights the pressing need to adopt data analytics into project planning and delivery. The savings highlighted in the report are significant and just the tip of the iceberg when you consider the wider economy.”

Photo credit: Shutterstock