

12th Annual State of Resource Management



Observations and Trends for 2026

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Methods



Best Practices and Standards

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INSIGHTS



Market Research

Providing actionable market research and benchmarking data to empower organizations to assess performance, identify trends and gaps, and drive continuous improvement.

COLLABORATION



Industry Events

Collaborative events and forums that connect resource and workforce management professionals, foster knowledge exchange, and inspire collective growth.

EDUCATION



RM Training and Certification

Equipping individuals and teams with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead and execute resource and workforce management at the highest level.

ADVICE



RM Advisory Services

Enabling organizations to build their resource management capability or accelerate their journey to a mature RM function in pursuit of RM excellence.

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12th Annual

State of Resource Management



Ryan Childers Managing Director

About the speaker:

Ryan Childers is the Managing Director of the Resource Management Institute (RMI). With specific expertise in Global Resource Management, Ryan was an early adopter and implementer of the Just-in-Time Resourcing® brand of human capital management solutions. His passion for the resource management discipline is central to his role leading this important industry institute.

Ryan holds an MS in Information and Communication Sciences and BS in Management from Ball State University.

12th Annual

State of Resource Management

A Look Back at 2025

01

Labor Shortages and Skills Gaps

Put simply: in 2025, the forces we talked about stopped being external pressures and became operational realities inside resource management.

02

For RM, 2025 wasn't about reacting to change, it was about absorbing it.

03**04****05**

Evolution of Employee Expectations and Work Models

Shifts in employee expectations, including desires for better work-life balance and flexible work arrangements.



Impact on RM

The challenge shifted from hiring enough people to deploying the right skills efficiently across increasingly constrained and misaligned capacity

Macro volatility stopped being an abstract risk and began showing up as day-to-day demand swings, deal slippage, and planning instability

AI moved from promise to pressure, with leaders expecting productivity gains before organizations had fully operationalized them

The risk evolved from workforce shrinkage to concentrated expertise and readiness gaps in critical roles

Flexibility was normalized, and the real tension shifted to balancing utilization, sustainability, and predictable delivery.

Observations, Research, & Leading Practices

1. DATA IS THE NEW OIL

What we observed in 2025: 2025 showed us that having data is not the same as having good quality data.

Key learning:

Data is not reliable if it is not used in a disciplined way.

2025 showed us that intelligence without discipline creates noise and discipline without influence limits impact.

3. BECAUSE

What we observed in 2025: AI did begin to influence RM conversations, but mostly by raising expectations faster than capabilities.

Key learning: AI can elevate RM, but only if the underlying discipline is strong enough to support it.

2. OUR COMMITMENT TO VALUE MUST INCREASE

What we observed in 2025: The value of RM continued to be under pressure. It was hard for many to define and easy for most to challenge.

assured by it enables.

What we observed in 2025: This proved to be an accurate observation. Volatility increased tension and RM leaders spent more time influencing than planning.

Key learning:

As systems get smarter, RM influence becomes more human, not less.

Bring on 2026!



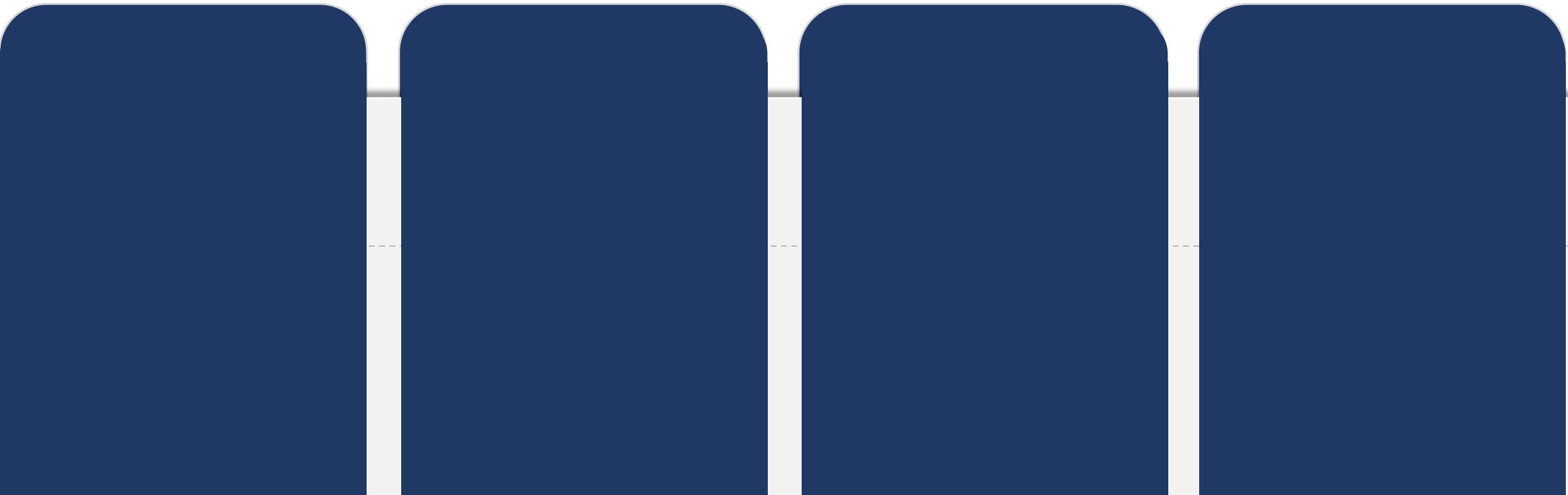
2026 is about having the discipline, data, and judgment to use intelligence responsibly and at scale.

Core Forces Shaping RM in 2026

At a high level, the forces in play today are not new, but they are now constant, interconnected, and unavoidable.

Defined

What
This
Means
to Us



The question now is how resource management responds.

What 2026 Demands from RM

Strengthen the Discipline

This is where RMOs stay the course in their pursuit of RM excellence, focusing on the core processes, data, and discipline that make resource management effective at scale.

- Standardized, repeatable RM processes
- Trusted, actionable RM data
- Clear RMO governance and decision rights
- Discipline in planning and commitment to continuous improvement

The 2026 Play



Explore the Intelligence

In parallel, RMOs should actively explore emerging intelligence capabilities; building comfort, practical experience, and momentum through hands-on use.

- Progress comes from engagement, not waiting for full maturity before taking action
- Start with personal productivity
- Practical experimentation
- Hands-on skill and capability development

Resource Management Observations, Research & Leading Practices

Observation 01

**RM Value Must Still Be Proven
and Activated**

The Resource Management Value Journey

Every services organization “does RM.” The difference is whether RM is simply happening, formally established, or fully activated and continually proving its value.

RM is Happening

...but its immature or too tactical

Symptoms

- RM is not widely understood
- RM focuses on scheduling and staffing requests
- Decisions are reactive and project-by-project
- RM data exists but isn't trusted or used by leadership

Organizational perception

It's a “Necessary admin” or “A coordination function” or even “Helpful, but not strategic”

RMO Exists

...but its value isn't fully realized

Symptoms

- 70% of organizations have a formal RMO established
- RM is generally understood
- Standard processes, governance, and tools in place
- Still struggles to influence in key places across RM

Organizational perception

It's a “Good control function” and “Supports delivery—but doesn't drive it”

RM Is Mature and Ingrained

...but must continually demonstrate its value

Symptoms

- RM is well understood
- RM embedded in planning, sales, delivery, and talent conversations
- Leadership trusts RM data and values its insights
- RM influences how work is sold, staffed, sequenced, and delivered

Organizational perception

It's a “Strategic enabler” and a “Force multiplier for growth and resilience”

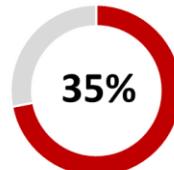
The Play: Prove & Activate the Value of RM

Proven RM Value Means:

- Clear linkage to:
 - Revenue realization
 - Margin protection
 - Delivery predictability
 - Talent utilization and retention
- Trusted data used in leadership discussions
- RM outcomes articulated in business language, not RM metrics alone



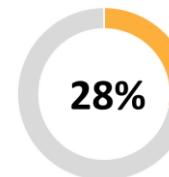
RM Practices are Aligned to Revenue Objectives



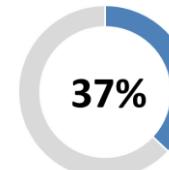
Projects Fail to Meet Expectations of Cost, Timeliness or Quality

Activated RM Value Means:

- RM insights drive:
 - What work is sold or approved
 - When work starts
 - How teams are formed
 - Where investment is made (skills, hiring, AI)
- RM is pulled into decisions early—not consulted late
- The RMO acts as a connector across sales, delivery, finance, and HR



Identify Budget Overruns on Projects



Proactively Monitor Project Profitability

The Play: Prove & Activate the Value of RM

Resource Management will no longer be judged by whether it exists, but by whether its value is visible, trusted, and actively leveraged as a strategic capability.



Align RM with Business Objectives

From RMCP®: Resource Management “needs to be integrated with the overall organizational strategy to ensure effective use of employees and provide better return on investment (ROI).”



Show Measurable Impact

Using data, what impact is RM having on things like utilization (and thus revenue), project performance, customer satisfaction, etc.?



Communicate the Value Effectively

With data in hand, and an understanding of the impact RM is having, can you articulate its value?

In 2026, the question won't be 'Do we have Resource Management?' It will be 'Are we leveraging Resource Management to run the business?'

Process Discipline and RM Data Quality Are Now Inseparable



In Resource Management, data and process are mutually reinforcing, not sequential.

Process discipline is what creates reliable RM data, and reliable RM data is what makes process discipline valuable.

Begin with the End in Mind: Reliable Data

Reliable RM data is moving from a differentiator to a minimum requirement.

The pursuit of smarter insights and faster decision-making (especially through AI) exposes a hard truth: intelligence is only as strong as the data behind it.

The limiting factor won't be tools or ambition, but the quality, consistency, and completeness of the data flowing through RM processes and into our systems.

And most still have data quality and reliability issues to resolve.



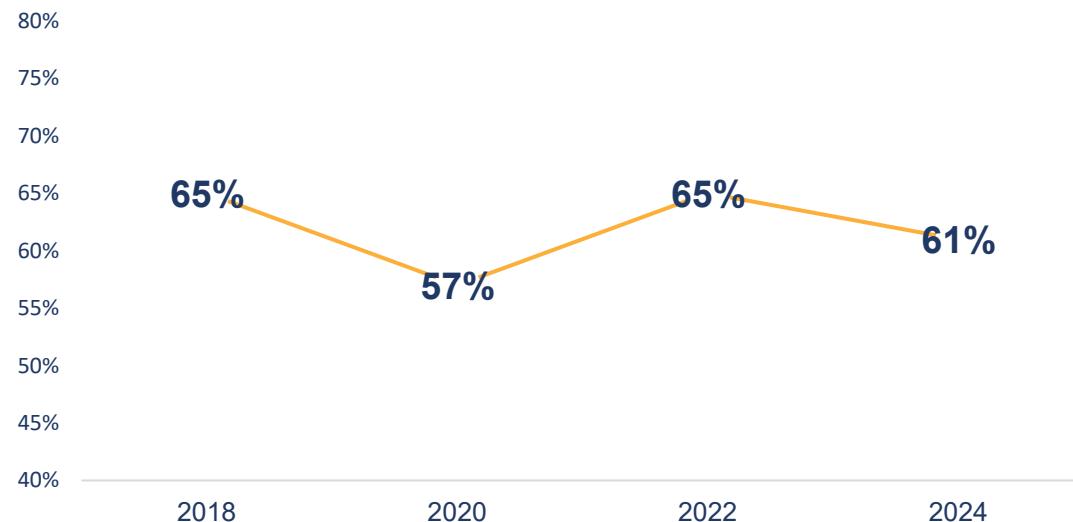
96%

96% report that sources of RM data to support decision-making in their organization have reliability issues and need improvement

RM Process Discipline

RMI data consistently shows that the largest inhibitors to effective resource management aren't tools or talent—they stem from a lack of clear, well-designed, and consistently implemented RM processes.

Inhibitors to Effective RM: Lack of Effective Process Design and/or Implementation



Biggest Process Issue?

Not consistently followed

Where Is Improvement Needed?

**Forecasting
Managing skills inventory
Process governance**

The Play: Strengthen the Discipline



Success Enablers: Process Discipline

- **Standard RM Processes:** adopt standard RM processes and deploy supporting documentation/training.
- **Governance:** institute a governance framework to monitor RM process standards, ensure quality data, and measure RM effectiveness.
- **Continuous Improvement:** commit to treating processes as living systems with regular review and adaptation, not “one and done.”

The Play: Strengthen the Discipline

Capture

Capture the Right RM Data

Clearly identify who owns and is responsible for the data? Is it realistic?

Perfect

Perfect it for Use Without Question

Use your process framework to iterate through the data to get it right.

Automate (and Govern)

Adopt Automation Brought on by Innovation

Then, look to automate it through your RM automation tools. And don't forget to govern it!

Observation 03

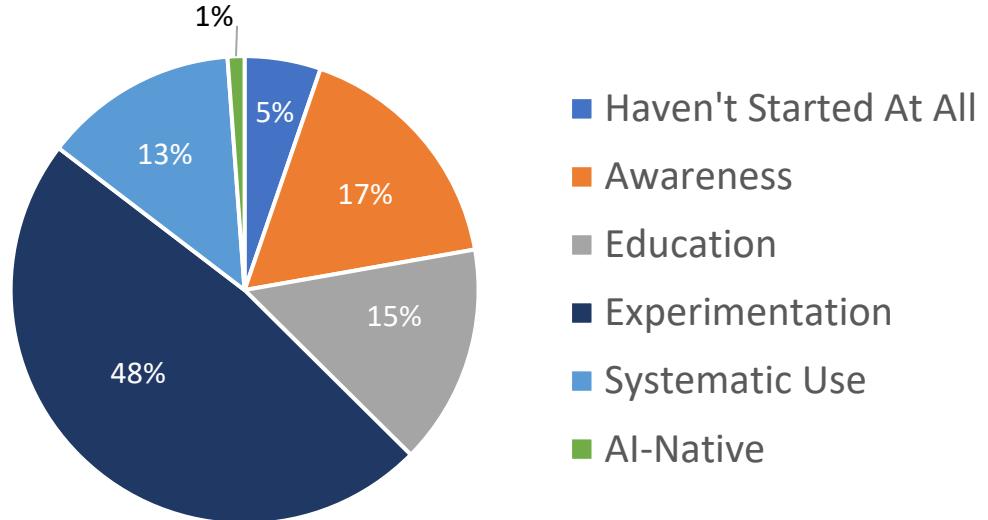
**AI is Moving from “Experiment” to
“Expectation”**

The State of AI in RM

1

Where is your organization along the AI adoption curve?

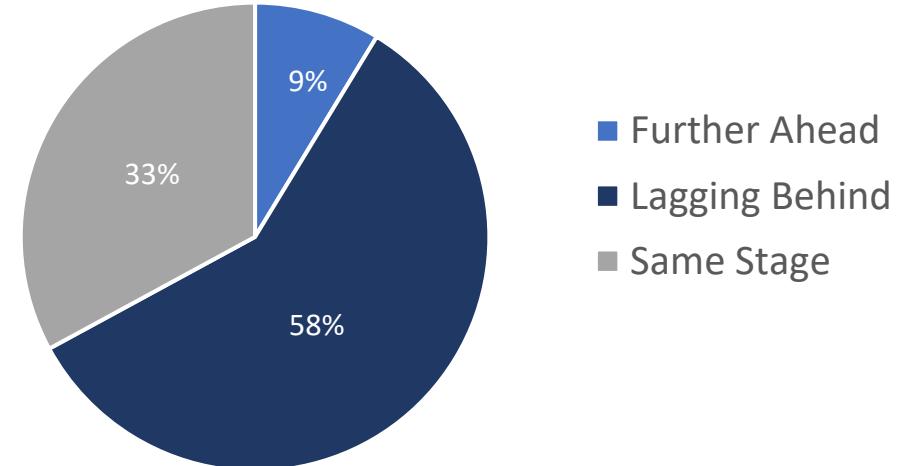
Nearly half of organizations are experimenting, but only 14% are using AI systematically.



2

Where does your RM function sit on that same adoption curve?

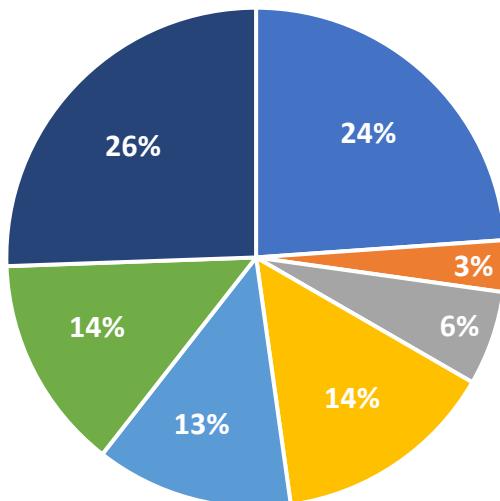
RM is not keeping pace with organizational AI movement.



What's Getting in the Way?

3

What is the biggest barrier to AI adoption in your RMO?



"Waiting" is the predominant posture at 50%, another 10% are struggling with documentation with 1/4 waiting on their vendor and 1/4 are embarking, not resistance. waiting on internal cleanup.

- AI capabilities aren't embedded in your current PSA/PPM/RPM tool yet
- Lack of guidelines or governance
- Lack of organizational AI strategy and/or funding
- Limited bandwidth — no time to experiment
- RM workflows cross multiple systems
- Unclear use cases (not sure where to start)
- Your RMO has process or data quality issues to address first

What Does This Mean?

- AI has certainly entered the conversation.
- Leaders are talking about it, promoting it, and starting to encourage or apply pressure across teams to “start using AI.”
- While adoption within RM lags broader organizational ambition, RM teams are actively experimenting, even if it’s outside formal systems and workflows.
- What we’re seeing most commonly:
 - Some nascent use within PSA / PPM / RPM tools that proactively matches skilled supply with well-defined demand.
 - RM teams extracting data from PSA / PPM / RPM tools, working with it in spreadsheets, and using generative AI tools to explore patterns, insights, or scenarios.
 - RM professionals using generative AI to boost personal productivity (i.e. summarizing meetings, drafting communications, and supporting ad hoc analysis).
- This marks a shift: AI is no longer novel or something that’s “coming soon.” It’s assumed to be part of how work gets done, even if informally.

Start thinking of AI as an assistive capability and experiment (safely)

The Play: Explore the Intelligence

Practical AI in RM is about leverage. You can use it to respond to emails, produce summaries and reports, and interpret PSA/PPM/RPM data for trends, risks, and variances.

It can simplify and streamline the busywork and amplify the insight.



Improve Your Personal Productivity

AI can boost productivity by quickly drafting emails, summarizing conversations, creating slides, and generating baseline reports or executive summaries – removing routine busywork so RMs can focus on higher-value decisions.



Analyze and Synthesize Data

AI can help you make sense of operational data by interpreting PSA/PPM/RPM exports, identifying trends, detecting risks, explaining forecast variances, and clustering related skills – turning raw information into fast, actionable insight.



RM Operational Optimization

AI will elevate RM operations by enabling predictive staffing, dynamic skills matching, automated supply–demand analysis, real-time staffing recommendations, scenario modeling, and fully automated RM reporting – driving faster, smarter, and more proactive resourcing decisions.

In 2026, the question isn't whether RM will use AI, it's how responsibly and intentionally that use evolves from individual experimentation into organizational capability.

The reality in 2026 is this: tools alone haven't solved resource management, the need for intelligence is arriving faster than trust, and RM value still has to be earned.

That's why the winning move in 2026 is to strengthen the discipline WHILE exploring the intelligence: deliberately, responsibly, and at the pace your organization can sustain.



RMI 2026: A Look Ahead



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2026 RMI Events and Research



Quarterly Power Up Webinars

- Our next Power Up will be Wednesday, March 11th. The focus is on the "Resource Management Excellence"
- Additional 2026 Power Up topics: Getting Demand Data Right, Evolution of the RM Skillset, and AI and Resource Management



Quarterly Market Research

- Our Q1 survey: Inhibitors to Effective RM
- Additional 2026 research topics: Economic Impact and Value of Effective Resource Management, Emergence of AI in Resource Management, RM Governance and Measurement



RMI Connect:

- Virtual event scheduled for September 22 and 24, 2026



The Resource Management Institute (RMI) brings the knowledge, tools, and hands-on experience to help you optimize your Resource Management strategy, processes, and enabling technologies.

Whether you're just starting out or looking to mature your RM capabilities, the RMI is your partner to help you more consistently and predictably manage your most strategic asset—your people.

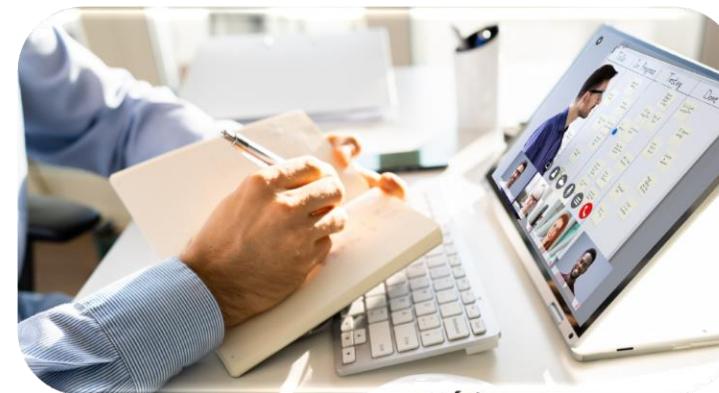
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