



Digital Transformation

Saudi Arabia's Construction Boom Has a Data Challenge

Introduction

The construction market in Saudi Arabia has emerged as a regional leader, valued at approximately \$ 70.3 billion in 2024 and projected to reach \$ 91.4 billion by 2029.¹ This sustained growth is driven by the Vision 2030 National Development Plan, which highlights the government's commitment to large-scale infrastructure and capital investment.

As projects become larger, faster and more interconnected, the volume of delivery data grows exponentially. Yet data is not the differentiator. The real advantage lies in an organization's ability to structure, govern and convert that data into actionable intelligence. This is where many project organizations continue to struggle. Despite significant investment in systems and reporting tools, fragmented data, disconnected workflows and inconsistent metrics still limit visibility, delay intervention and reduce the quality of executive decision-making.

The challenge is particularly important in Saudi Arabia. Unlike more mature construction markets, Saudi Arabia is scaling projects, delivery organizations, governance models and digital capability at the same time.

This is where project management information systems ("PMIS") powered by AI have the potential to play a vital role. But the potential will only be realized if PMIS is treated as a decision engine, not as a reporting repository.

Data challenges in major capital projects

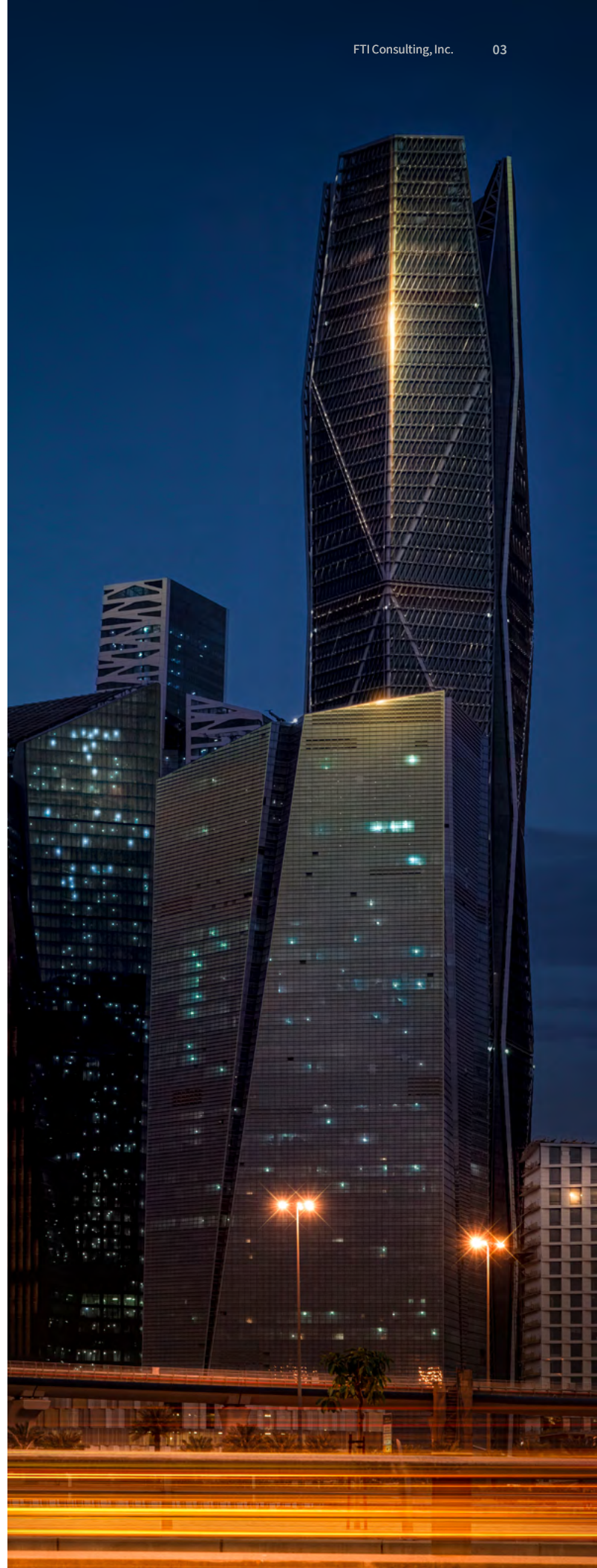
Every major capital project generates data across its delivery lifecycle across functions such as schedule, cost, risk, change, finance, procurement, quality and progress. In principle, this should create better visibility and stronger control. In practice, it often creates the opposite.

In many project environments, data remains distributed across separate systems, departments, consultants and contractors. Each function tends to maintain its own system of record, reporting logic and performance metrics. Schedule information may sit in one platform, cost data in another, change registers in spreadsheets and risk updates in isolated logs. As a result, even basic performance reporting often depends on significant manual effort to collect, reconcile, validate and present information for decision makers.

In Saudi Arabia's major capital projects, this challenge is amplified by the complexity of delivery models, joint ventures, international supply chains and fast-moving development timelines. At this scale, fragmented data becomes a structural risk to project controls.

The consequences are significant. Inconsistent data leads to conflicting narratives on project performance. Manual reporting slows management response. Delayed updates force leaders into reactive rather than proactive decision making.

The construction industry has become highly effective at producing project data, but far less consistent in turning it into actionable intelligence that can enable organizations to increase their capability predict and prevent performance delivery challenges.



Project Management Information Systems (“PMIS”)

However, the construction industry's experience with PMIS has often been mixed. Not always because systems have failed technically but that they have been implemented primarily as tools for compliance, workflow administration and document management, rather than as platforms that materially improve decision-making.

A PMIS that simply centralizes records may improve control over documentation, but it does not necessarily improve management action. If the underlying data remains incomplete, inconsistently defined or disconnected from operational decisions, then even a well-configured platform can become a little more than a digital filing system.

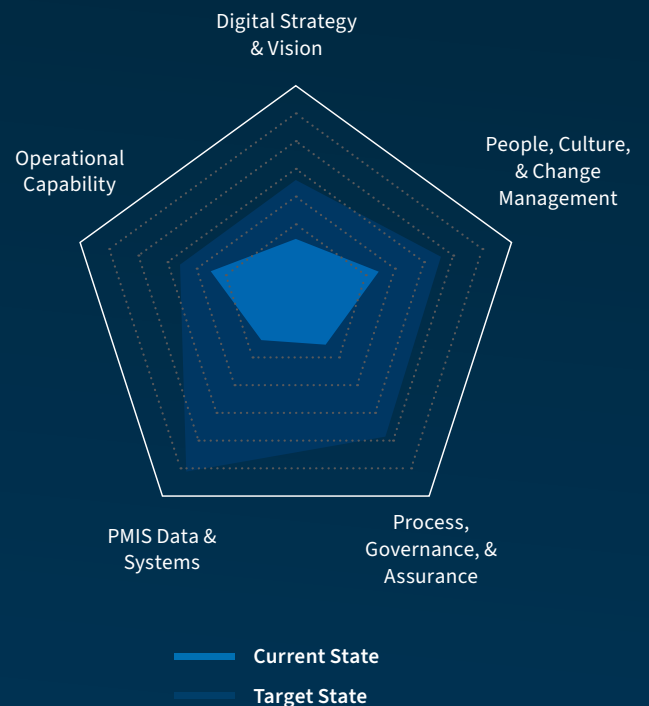
For Saudi Arabia's capital project environment, this is no longer enough. The market now requires PMIS environments that do more than capture activity. They must enable integrated visibility, earlier warning signals, stronger accountability and better decision across portfolios and programs.

Rather than treating PMIS as a standalone technology deployment, PMIS implementations must follow an approach that integrates capability diagnosis, governance, solution design and implementation. This ensures that organizations first understand their current maturity and gaps, then establish the right data and governance foundations and finally implement and operationalize the system throughout structured change management and knowledge transfer.

Figure 1:
PMIS Solution Functions



Figure 2:
Current State Digital Assessment



Structured PMIS data

When PMIS environments are designed and governed effectively, they fundamentally improve the quality and structure of project data. Information is no longer captured through disconnected templates, informal workarounds or isolated reporting routines. Instead, data is entered through controlled workflows, governed by standard fields, definitions and approval logic.

Structured data allows project information from different functions, systems and delivery to be consolidated into a consistent model. That model can then serve as the single source of truth for operational reporting, portfolio oversight and executive visibility.

At the tactical level, functional dashboards provide detailed visibility into schedule, cost, risk, change, progress and finance, ensuring project teams have timely and accurate data to guide execution. At the portfolio level, consolidated reporting supports cross-project benchmarking and performance comparison.

For executives, high level dashboards summarize strategic KPIs, offering clear line of sight from project performance to organizations outcomes.

The objective is not to simply produce cleaner dashboards. It is to strengthen the organization's ability to anticipate risks earlier, understand performance more consistently and make decisions with greater confidence.

Over time, the value of structured data grows even further. Historical project data allows for trend analysis, continuous improvement and lessons learned. This allows organizations to move beyond isolated project reporting toward a broader institutional intelligence capability, where each project contributes not only to current delivery, but to the improvement of future planning, governance and execution.

Figure 3:

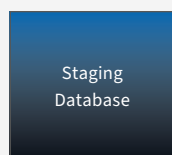
Simplified Target State System Landscape

01 Data Collection – Standardized Data Capture



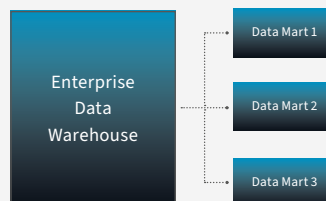
02 Data Staging – ETL Data Integration

Data is selected, extracted, cleansed, validated and loaded.



03 Data Storage – Warehouse Data Integration & Storage

Contains files checked and approved, ready to be processed for reporting.



04 Data Analysis – Reporting & Analytics

Each step refines the data quality, format and consistency for analysis.



Business Intelligence – Digital Reporting

AI in PMIS

As PMIS environments become more structured and integrated, they create the conditions for AI to generate real value. AI and machine learning can help detect patterns, identify anomalies, forecast potential issues and automate repetitive tasks that would otherwise depend on manual intervention.

AI can support the transition from descriptive reporting to predictive and prescriptive insight. For example, it can analyse live progress against baseline schedule to flag potential slippage in critical work packages, identify unusual cost movements before they fully materialize.

AI agents embedded within PMIS environments may also act as intelligent copilots for project teams. Rather than waiting for formal reporting cycles, project leaders can receive real-time signals on emerging issues, supported by prompts for corrective action. In more advanced environments, these tools can recommend responses such as resequencing activities, reallocating resources or escalating governance actions based on defined thresholds.

However, AI should not be misunderstood as the starting point of the transformation. It is not a substitute for structured data, governance or operational discipline.

This is especially important in Saudi Arabia, where enthusiasm around AI is growing quickly across sectors. In capital projects, the real risk is that organizations focus too early on AI-enabled functionality without first resolving the underlying quality, consistency and ownership of data itself. If the data environment is fragmented or poorly governed, AI will not create clarity it will cause ambiguity.

The most successful organizations will therefore be those that sequence this correctly. First, they will establish strong data foundations, clear governance and integrated project environments. Then they will use AI to amplify those strengths, moving from reactive reporting to earlier intervention, stronger forecasting and more intelligent delivery management.

Change management: People, process and technology

Technology alone does not transform project delivery. PMIS can provide the platform, but value is only realized when people, process and governance evolve alongside it.

This is often where implementation efforts succeed or fail. Many organizations deploy systems successfully, yet continue to operate through fragmented reporting lines, inconsistent data ownership and siloed decision-making. In these cases, the technology may be in place, but the underlying behaviours remain unchanged. The result is limited adoption, weak trust in the data and little improvement in how management take decisions.

Effective change management must therefore go beyond system training. It must establish clear accountability for data, reinforce common ways of working, align governance forums around a shared source of truth and ensure the project teams understand how the system should change day-to-day decision-making. In practice, this means embedding PMIS into how performance is reviewed how issues are escalated, and how interventions are triggered across the project environment.

For Saudi Arabia's capital projects, this point is especially important. The challenge is not simply digitizing delivery, but building the institutional discipline required to manage increasingly complex programs in a more integrated, transparent and insight-led way. True transformation occurs when technology is matched by stronger process control, clearer ownership and a culture that uses data not just to report performance but to improve it.

Digital-driven construction

Saudia Arabia's construction industry is entering a defining phase. The scale of ambition under Vision 2030 is creating not only more projects, but a more demanding environment for how those projects are led, governed and delivered. In this context, the real challenge is not whether organizations have access to project systems, but whether those systems can generate the intelligence required to manage capital delivery at the speed and complexity the market now demands.

Integrated PMIS platforms, supported by AI, represent an important part of that future. But their value lies not in digitization alone. Their value lies in helping organizations build a more mature model of project data ownership, structured reporting and informed decision-making. That is what will separate organizations that merely collect information from those who can act on it.

The next few years will likely mark an important shift. Having a PMIS will no longer be a differentiator in its own. The differentiator will be whether an organization has built the governance, data discipline and operating maturity required to turn project information into actionable insights. Those that do will be better positioned to predict issues earlier, respond more effectively and scale delivery capability with greater confidence. Those that do not may continue to invest in systems, but without gaining the control those systems were meant to deliver.

Saudi Arabia's construction boom does not simply need more data. It needs better decision intelligence. This may prove to be one of the most important enablers to deliver the successful outcomes for Vision 2030.



Authors



Adrian Predoi

Managing Director
Construction Projects & Assets – Head of
Advisory & Transformation, Middle East, KSA
Adrian.Predoi@fticonsulting.com



Mohamad Ramadan

Director
Construction Projects & Assets –
Advisory & Transformation, KSA
Mohamad.Ramadan@fticonsulting.com

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