



AI in the project profession:
Examples of current use and roadmaps to adoption

Gleeds: A deep dive into success

Introduction

Most of us acknowledge the tremendous potential of AI to raise productivity. But, right now, the project profession needs to acquire additional skills to unleash the potential capabilities of AI. Many project leaders are stuck using spreadsheets, cloud storage, CRM software and PowerPoint, all of which have seen minimal advancement over the past decade. Although these tools might have sufficed a decade ago, and should by no means be disregarded, they struggle to keep pace in an environment where projects constantly evolve in an ever more

complex business landscape. Take construction for example. **An influential 2016 report by Mark Farmer** forecast the industry would face an 'inexorable decline' unless it tackled persistent issues, notably its 'lack of innovation'. Indeed, the resounding message was clear: "modernise or die". But, if AI holds the key to innovation, who's actually making it work? How can project and cost managers tap into its potential? And what AI innovations are already proving their worth?

About Gleeds

The international property and construction consultancy Gleeds is among the companies taking a bold leap forward. Gleeds helps businesses and investors achieve the best value from their assets by providing advice that's reassuringly free from conflict of interest. With over 130 years' experience, its impartial intelligence is key to helping clients realise their projects on budget, on time and to an exceptional quality.

Approach

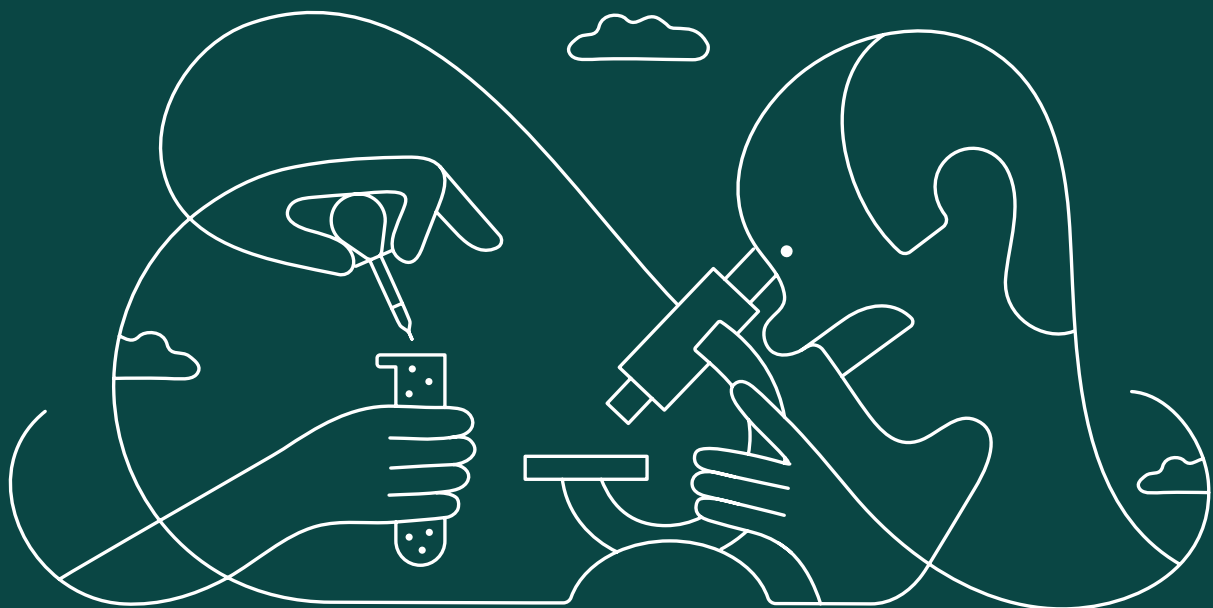
Gleeds has developed a range of digital solutions and intelligence products that leverage AI, machine learning and data analytics.

"Our new suite of solutions are already reshaping both internal operations and external business and will continue to do so."

**Ben Huskisson, Chief Digital Officer,
Gleeds**

Crucially, at Gleeds, the implementation of AI extends beyond a select group of digital experts; the digital team is embedding company-wide adoption of predictive analytics, resource allocation and demonstrating value to clients – all of which has proved to be a game-changer.

"Currently having AI capabilities is a differentiator," said James Garner, Global Head of Data and Intelligence at Gleeds who oversees the digital team and chairs the Project Data Analytics Taskforce. "But we're entering an age when project managers will need to understand how to use AI tools, as much as Word or Excel, and we want to be ahead of the game."



Enhancing efficiency

Despite the talk about AI industry disruption and great leaps forward, Gleeds has focused on getting the small stuff right first. Previously, its employees dedicated hours to navigating labyrinths of historical data, case studies, regulatory and compliance guidelines when crafting proposals and reports – time that certainly could have been better spent elsewhere.

To cut down on this waste, the company developed a personalised AI language model, similar to Chat GPT, trained on all of its historical data. This innovation has enabled its staff to effortlessly explore archived reports and write new ones in a fraction of the time it took previously. Thus enabling Gleeds to focus more on client engagement and the added value they can bring.

For example, employees can request the language model to create a detailed report on the current state of the construction industry in London, or a similar geographic location. In a fraction of the time, a comprehensive, well-written analysis will be generated—a task that previously could have taken days or even weeks.

“Many people think about AI as revolutionary,” notes James. “However, a significant part of its impact lies in

automating the manual tasks that you’d be amazed still exist within our industry.”

Gleeds also benefits from a machine learning solution that can accurately forecast timeline, cash flow and project performance. So essentially, very quickly, Gleeds’ employees can obtain an accurate cost estimate, a timeline and a cash flow for any building project – something that previously would have taken a lot longer. This capability allows project managers to diagnose potential risk across a portfolio and take measures to increase the chance of project success from the outset.

As well as the many client benefits, James pointed to numerous case studies showcasing increased productivity throughout Gleeds’ business. “Thanks to this kind of automation, we have case studies and RoI calculations that demonstrate significant efficiencies,” he added.

Upskilling employees

The primary objective of technology is to elevate human capabilities. And when it comes to AI and digital ways of working, Gleeds embraces the idea of empowering its employees to become self-reliant. In line with this philosophy, the company has established what it calls an “Internal Data Academy” which enhances its employees’ proficiency in AI technologies.

The academy’s courses – which are known collectively as “Upskill” – are nothing if not comprehensive. They encompass everything from casual drop-in lunch sessions and one-day data literacy courses, to immersive hackathons, structured A-level programmes, and extensive two-to-three-year training modules for data analyst qualifications. Gleeds asserts that, regardless of expertise level, there’s a course for everyone – a testament to the belief that, when it comes to data, there’s always room for improvement.

James, who heads Upskill, says most would-be “students” view this initiative

as an opportunity to upgrade their skill sets for the 21st century, which they believe will benefit both their careers and themselves in an employment landscape over which AI looms large.

“You get a lot of scared people wondering if AI is going to take their job,” says James Garner. “My view is that if you don’t start understanding these tools, you risk being left behind. But if you understand how they work, then you can use them as a superpower.”

He goes on to say that this is one of the most rewarding aspects of his job. “I love seeing the look on someone’s face when they realise they can now automate a task at the touch of a button that previously took them five hours.”

“We’re informing individuals about the availability of these tools,” he adds. “However, it’s crucial to utilise them safely and provide the team with clear guidelines for use.”



Using AI across projects

Gleeds doesn't just use AI for internal purposes; it extends its application to its clients. An illustration of this is Gleeds' work as a delivery partner for a schools programme.

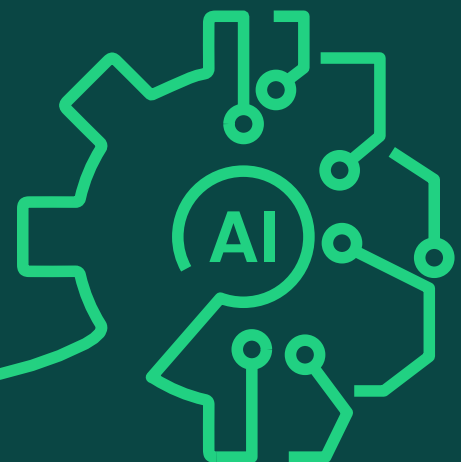
Gleeds deployed a digital solution from their new suite, Visualise which is a cutting-edge digital platform implementing construction site capture technology across all active building sites. This groundbreaking tool allows Gleeds to comprehensively document each building site efficiently using 360 degree cameras. The solution has been developed in partnership with OpenSpace, a global leader in reality capture and AI-driven analytics.

Once uploaded to the cloud, Visualise seamlessly combines captured images and maps them onto approved floorplans, generating a reliable visual record of the site accessible to any project team within minutes. This empowers globally distributed project teams to access nearly real-time construction updates from any device at any time.

"Visualise incorporates elements of machine learning which has helped drive this programme of works towards success. It is essential that we modernise our approach to service delivery by leveraging the latest technologies in order to provide an excellent service and continue to safeguard our clients' interests."

Sheldon Atkinson, Head of Visualise, Gleeds

This distinctive approach and technology is already delivering significant benefits, including Improved efficiency, better data driven analysis and record keeping of progress on site. Indeed, the project recently earned recognition at the APM Project Management Awards in November. Judges highlighted its commitment to "embracing new international standards and ways of working."



Concluding thoughts – no cure-all, but ignore at peril

AI isn't a universal remedy. It clearly serves as a valuable tool to complement human decision-making and boost productivity as demonstrated by Gleeds. However, recognising its strengths, weaknesses and potential dangers is pivotal. Ben Huskisson highlights Gleeds' AI policy, which emphasises the importance of understanding both the potential and risks associated with these tools.

"It's essential to remember that the new digital solutions and tools aren't meant to replace your professional judgment, they are designed to enable data driven decision making and enhanced value proposition for the built environment," said Ben.

Certainly, Gleeds' journey underscores that AI, when harnessed effectively, can elevate productivity while respecting the value of human expertise. As technology advances, the role of data in the construction industry will only continue to grow. Clearly, correctly understanding and using AI tools helps to make better data-driven decisions and reduce inefficiencies. But beyond mere adoption, Gleeds' shows the importance of taking a holistic approach, intertwining predictive analytics, staff empowerment, and client-centricity across the board. In this way, Gleeds not only shows why we should be future-ready, but also how strategic AI utilisation can give a competitive advantage right now.



Because when projects
succeed, society benefits

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