

Interview with Victoria S. Kumar¹

Member, Board of Directors
Project Management Institute



*Interviewed by [Petek Kabakci](#), PMP, PCC
PMI Turkey Chapter*

Victoria Kumar, MMath, PMP is a member of the 2015 board of directors for the Project Management Institute (PMI®). She is past president of the PMI North Carolina Chapter, serving in various board member positions from 2003 to 2007 and was a member of the PMI Leadership Institute Advisory Group in 2010 and 2011.

Ms. Kumar's professional career includes project development management with IBM Canada Laboratory, and PMO program management for organizations in both the private and public sectors.

Ms. Kumar has served the North Carolina State Government for several years as Project Management Office (PMO) Program Manager / Senior Project Manager with the North Carolina Office of the State Controller and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, managing large-scale government information technology programs and projects and participating with the state's Enterprise PMO in the IT governance process.

She has travelled worldwide, presenting in seminars and conferences. Her recent engagements include seminars on "Program and Project Managers as Creative and Innovative Leaders" and "Delivering Successful Projects ...Every Time." Ms. Kumar published several conference papers as part of PMI global congress proceedings. She offered several project management and leadership development seminars, including "Effective Requirements Management" and "Successful Implementation of a PMO" for PMI SeminarsWorld® for more than a decade.

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Ms. Kumar holds master's degrees in pure mathematics and in computer science from University of Waterloo (Canada), where she has also earned PhD credits in management science. She has a master's certificate in IT Project Management from George Washington University, is a graduate of the PMI Leadership Institute Master Class, and a certified Project Management Professional (PMP)®.

This interview was conducted by [Petek Kabakci](#), PMP, PCC on behalf of the PMI Turkey Chapter for their bi-monthly Newsletter.

Petek Kabakci (Kabakci): As an experienced Project Management Office (PMO) Manager, Program Manager and Senior Project Manager, what have you found to be the essential steps in building an “Agile PMO”?

Victoria Kumar (Kumar): Agility in the PMO is more than a toolset...it is a mindset. So the first and most important step in making the transition to agile is to adopt an organization-wide agile culture that encompasses the agile enterprise PMO, agile IT and development environments, and agile project practices. In the past, the traditional function of the PMO was in large part monitoring and reporting. In the agile enterprise, instead, the PMO’s primary role now also focuses on the facilitation and support of project implementation.

Kabakci: What are the main differences between private and public sector PMO structures?

Kumar: While public and private PMOs share many of the same attributes, they can differ in reporting structure. Government entities, for example, may have several agency-level project offices that report to an umbrella EPMO, which in turn, reports to a legislative body or executive branch. From a regulatory standpoint, public and private PMOs can also serve different functions within their organizations; a government PMO might be tasked with regulatory development, monitoring and oversight, while its private-sector counterpart focuses on compliance.

Kabakci: Stakeholder management skills and requirements differ depending on the managerial position. How does stakeholder management vary at the levels of portfolio, program and project management?

Kumar: Stakeholder classes differ greatly at the project, program, and portfolio levels. As a result, stakeholder communications, actions and expectations will differ between these classes. For example, the portfolio manager will be more likely to interact with C-level stakeholders that influence long-term outcomes without necessarily touching on the day-to-day implementation that the project manager does for individual initiatives.

Today's project managers, however, are now among the first of a new generation who are being required to be strategists as well as tacticians. The role continues to evolve from years ago when their primary expectation was to focus on the details of individual

projects, their associated budgets and delivering them with maximum return on investment (ROI). With limited resources available today for many projects regardless of size or sector, organizations cannot afford the ramifications of poor management and planning, which is why project management now incorporates both strategy and tactics.

Kabakci: You are known for a group of unique seminars, such as “Delivering Successful Projects ...Every Time”. What are the most important project management skills for delivering successful projects every time?

Kumar: As a starting point, project management practitioners should focus on developing skills from the PMI Talent Triangle: technical project management skills, strategic and business management skills, and leadership skills. They should also emphasize and apply principles from *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK® Guide). However, not all processes can be applied to every project at every organization. The successful project manager recognizes the need to adapt practices from the PMBOK Guide to individual initiatives within their own organization's process and culture. By capitalizing on the major contributors to project success and avoiding the leading causes of project failure, project success should be a predictable and repeatable event, instead of a hit-and-miss occurrence.

PMI's *Pulse* Research identifies a number of key factors affecting project outcomes. For example, 47% of unsuccessful projects fail to meet goals due to poor requirements management. To address this, it's critical for organizations to implement standardized requirements management processes in collaboration with stakeholders. There is also the need to develop a formal project management methodology, implement standardized tools and infrastructure through a Program Management Office (PMO), and ensure executive management support for projects. PMI's *Pulse* research also shows that having an actively engaged executive sponsors is the top driver of project success.

Kabakci: You are presenting a very exciting seminar called “Program and Project Managers as Creative and Innovative Leaders.” How can program and project managers be creative and innovative leaders?

Kumar: Innovation at the program and project level evolves from a forward-thinking company culture. To foster creativity and nurture new ideas, organizations should define a framework for project management that integrates innovation processes with project development/management processes that are already being utilized internally. In my seminar, I outline an innovation framework for project management that provides a structured approach for project managers to use in starting and delivering innovation projects. The framework encompasses 6 innovation processes: discovery, open innovation, innovation partnerships, idea management, knowledge brokering, and opportunity management.



PMI Turkey works as a non-profit association with support of volunteers. PMI Turkey is focusing on increasing of awareness of project management, supplying project management in every disciplines that accepts it as a profession, spreading out and improving project management practices and theories, encouraging total quality and professionalism in project management, protecting and encouraging standards, ethics and accreditations conditions in project management in Turkey.

PMI Turkey is a reference point for project management knowledge exchange. Thus it completed works on translating PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) and PMP certification exam set into Turkish in order for project managers in Turkey to improve their competency. PMI Turkey has more than 600 members from various sectors in particular Information Technologies (IT/IS), Finance, Telecommunication, defense and public sectors. For more information, visit <http://www.pmi.org.tr/>

PMI Turkey is a chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI^R), the world largest professional member association serving the project management profession. For more about PMI, go to <http://www.pmi.org/>

The PMI Turkey Chapter newsletter in which Jim Snyder's interview first appeared can be found at <http://pmiturkey.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/PMI-Turkiye-E-Dergi-15-08.pdf>