

Interview with Paolo Pulcini

Microsoft Area Solution Sales Lead –
Modern Workplace, Middle East and Africa



Interviewed by İpek Sahra Özgüler

Istanbul, Turkey

After graduating in 1988 from the University of Miami in Computer Information Systems, and completing his MBA in Finance, Mr. Pulcini started his career at Ryder System, Inc in a number of roles including HR, Financial Planning and Pricing. He then moved to the UK as Commercial Manager and then headed up an acquisitions team at Ryder. He then joined Dell Computers as EMEA pricing manager and subsequently was asked to head up Dell Italy Sales (medium companies) in Milan. After leaving Dell, he continued his career in a variety of roles and companies including Purchasing, Logistics, Sales Management, and Partner Management. In 2007, when Microsoft acquired Fast Search and Transfer where he was Alliance Director for Europe, he started his career at Microsoft. His Microsoft career includes such roles as Sharepoint sales for Middle East and Africa, Parallel Data Warehouse EMEA Time zone lead and Western Europe Azure manager. Currently, he is the Middle East and Africa Modern Workplace lead. Paolo is an Italian national who grew up in Italy, England and Germany and has lived for extended periods of time in the United States, Malta and Yemen. He is currently living in Dubai.

İpek Sahra Özgüler (Özgüler): Could you introduce yourself for the PM World Journal readers please?

Paolo Pulcini (Pulcini): I am the Modern Workplace Lead for Middle East and Africa at Microsoft. My role, in a few words, is to ensure that we as Microsoft, are bringing the full value of our productivity and mobility solutions to our customers.

Özgüler: I know, last month PMI TR Chapter organized PM Summit event and you explained "Modern Workplace in Digital Age". Could you evaluate the event and give detail information about Modern Workplace in Digital age?

Pulcini: In one word, impressive. Aside from the organization and venue, which were both outstanding, I was impressed by the content and attendance. The experience, combined with the drive to innovate among the attendees and the speakers was overwhelming and contagious.

Özgüler: How did you find the project community in Turkey?

Pulcini: As said above, impressive. Turkey is a technologically sophisticated and advanced society, yet I was still impressed by the drive to innovate and redefine, rather than simply improve, their processes. The Digital Transformation motion is in full effect with professionals avidly looking for areas to improve and reinvent the way they work. This is only my second time in Turkey at such an event, but I am often meeting customers and professionals and I am stimulated by the learning and energy I gain from all my meetings.

Özgüler: How do you see the future of project management profession?

Pulcini: As companies have realized the significance of digital transformation and hundreds of projects are initiated as an output of digital transformation initiatives, the project management profession is becoming more and more strategic in the organizations. The shift occurring from support to business enabler is apparent.

When you compare the Fortune 500 list of 1960's and the current Fortune 500 list, you see that only 60 of the companies have remained in the list. The other 440 companies were either bankrupt, or were acquired by another company or fell down to a much worse position compared to 50 years ago. This is because they couldn't transform and they couldn't adapt to change. So digital transformation is crucial for a company's survival and that's why CEO's are now the owners of this transformation, not the CIO's.

Another fact is that more than 80% of the digital transformation projects are failing, mostly due to lack of collaboration, lack of communication or because they're not being managed well. This fact alone puts a lot of significance to project management profession. This is why we as Microsoft have been investing a lot on our Project and Portfolio solutions in recent years.

Özgüler: What are some of the biggest risks and challenges facing project managers?

Pulcini: With the transformation wave, the requirements of project management itself is changing as well towards being more agile and more demanding. Time to market has become a significant differentiator in competition. So the project managers should

transform themselves to act more agile, to anticipate the end users expectations better, to get feedbacks more frequently and react to the feedbacks immediately and to collaborate and communicate with all of the stakeholders instantly. This requires a mindset shift and the project managers that can adapt to this will get stronger and survive in the upcoming years, the ones that can't adapt will be pushed out of the market just as the Darwin's Evolution Theory states.

Özgüler: What do you think about the correlation between project management and organization's productivity?

Pulcini: Project management focuses on resource and budget optimization for a defined scope of work, which is directly related to productivity. That's why we as Microsoft position our PPM solution within our Productivity Solution Family. Also, in this age of Digital Transformation, it is vital that projects be agile, allowing all task owners to collaborate in real time. Once again, project management is central not only as a productivity tool and enabler, but also as a prime beneficiary of the move towards cloud and mobility.

About the Interviewer



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İpek Sahra Özgüler graduated from the Istanbul University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering and from Middle East Technical University with an MSc degree in Software Management. As a project manager, she has more than 10 years' experience in various areas such as portfolio management, program management, project management, software management, business analysis. She became a certified PMP in January, 2012 and a certified SCRUM Master in 2014.

She has managed a variety of projects across manufacturing, defence, FMCG (Cola Cola), insurance (Euler Hermes), audit (Deloitte), telecommunication, ICT and aviation sectors and gained broader insights. In addition, she has worked as international correspondent for the *PM World Journal* since 2014.

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