

Interview with Kevin Ciccotti

Project Leadership Coach
International Coach Federation



Interviewed by İpek Sahra Özgüler
Istanbul, Turkey

After spending 25+ years working for a \$2.5b company (with 16+ years in management) where he worked on hundreds of technology-related projects, Kevin decided it was time for a change, and became certified as a professional coach through the International Coach Federation. He brings all of his project and leadership experience, as well as a decade of training in coaching skills and competencies, the neuroscience of human behavior, emotional intelligence, and human needs psychology to the Project Managers and organizations he serves. Kevin has proven skills that can help organizations to empower their project leaders and teams to take more initiative in their work, support each other in achieving objectives, and create a culture that drives project success.

He has created groundbreaking soft skills and leadership training that is specifically geared toward the world of Project Managers, and he leads training workshops at multiple organizations and also teaches in the Project Management Certificate Program at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Kevin Ciccotti has spoken at multiple PMI events, including two PMI Global Congresses (Vancouver and Phoenix), multiple Professional Development and Leadership Conferences, Regional events, local chapter events, and PMI global webinar presentations. His work has been praised as being on the cutting edge of personal and professional development.

Note: this interview was conducted after Mr. Harbath's presentation at the 2017 PMI Turkey Chapter's PM Summit conference in Ankara.

Ipek Sahra Özgüler (Özgüler): *Good morning Kevin. Overall, how was the PM Summit for you this year?*

Kevin Ciccotti (Ciccotti): The PMI Ankara Summit was amazing. I was so impressed with the program that the organizers put together this year. There were incredible speakers from around the world, and the theme of “Human” was more relevant than ever in these turbulent times. It was a great reminder that we need to place our focus and energy more on the people who actually make our projects successful. I have spoken at many PMI events around the world, and this one certainly is one of the best I’ve attended. Well done!

Ozguler: *What were the highlights in the PM summit?*

Ciccotti: There are so many things that come to mind. I think one of the highlights for me was hearing Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez speaking about the future of project management and the need for more qualified PM’s to drive this profession forward. It certainly would seem that there is a bright future ahead. My personal highlight was having the opportunity to present the closing keynote on Day 1 of the summit. Standing on that stage, seeing all of the incredible people in the audience, and having the opportunity to share my life’s work with them was beyond my expectations. I have believed for a long time that my work crosses geographical and cultural boundaries and speaks directly to the intrinsic nature of humanity and our deeply held needs and desires. This was truly a moment of confirmation of that belief and it inspired me to work even harder to support the PM profession through my work. Finally, the outpouring of support from the Turkish people was more than I had ever expected. To hear about Turkish hospitality is one thing, but to experience it firsthand is beyond description!

Ozguler: *What is your main topic in your speech? Please give detail information.*

Ciccotti: The title of my talk was “The Human Factor in Project Management.” It is my signature keynote as well as my signature training program for Project Managers. It provides PM’s with the understanding they need to become more effective leaders of projects and people. The main premise is that once we understand how human beings are designed to operate, we can then use that information to design organizations that function the way we function. The tools and strategies I speak about are on the cutting edge of human needs, peak performance, and emotional intelligence, and they can help any project manager to become a better leader.

Ozguler: *As you know, the main topic of PM Summit is “Human Factors in Project Management”. What is the relationship between human factors and project management?*

Ciccotti: I have believed – and have built my entire business on the idea – that if leaders focus on people over task, and work to understand and meet their peoples' needs, they can become extraordinarily successful project leaders. No project can ever be successful without the engagement and commitment of the people who work on it. The most important factor in any project is the human factor. I think in the past, we were taught to focus more on task and process than on the people. I think today we're seeing that shift, and the human factors are becoming more important than ever.

Ozguler: *What do you see for the future in terms of that? Why human factors so important in project management?*

Ciccotti: I truly believe that in the future we are going to have to be more aware of human factors in leading successful projects. We are more than simply logical beings who do a job and go home. We work to fulfill some of our most fundamental needs – growth, finding meaning and purpose, and becoming our best self. When organizations focus on providing an environment that supports their people in becoming their best, then teams will be more committed, more engaged, and more successful in reaching project goals, even in the face of challenges and setbacks. The human factor is critical to creating long-term success.

Ozguler: *In the future, robots are expected to place humans in almost every field of work. How will the project management be affected from this transformation?*

Ciccotti: I recognize that for many repetitive tasks robots are becoming more and more prominent in the working environment. However, when it comes to the skills required to make critical decisions, to inspire people to work together, and to gain commitment from team members, only the human factor can do this effectively. I do see some places where robots can be utilized, but only for the most repetitive and predictable tasks. People are unpredictable by nature. We need project managers who are skilled in understanding this and responding more effectively to their teams so that the desired outcomes can be achieved. Personally, I do not see robots being able to perform this function because of the subtleties of human behavior, and the responses required to engage people more effectively.

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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