

Interview with Zeynep Selen ¹

Chair, İstanbul Project Management Association, Turkey



Interviewed by Ömer Berkay Dağlı
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Zeynep Selen is Chair of the İstanbul Project Management Association. She graduated in Computer Science and Engineering from Yıldız Technical University in 1987. During her nearly 30 years of professional career, she worked in the software projects of commercial banks' IT departments that pioneered both the Turkish and European financial sectors. She took part in various software projects from programming to project and portfolio management. Respectively; She worked as a software developer, project analyst, project, program and portfolio manager at the IT departments of İmar Bank, Pamukbank and Yapı Kredi Bank. Between 2015 and 2016, she was in charge of portfolio management roles at Yapı Kredi Corporate and Commercial Banking Department and also managed IT projects of the department.

She became a member of the İstanbul Project Management Association (İPYD) in 2013 and started a Career Coaching program within the association. In 2014, she took part in the İPYD Board of Directors and supported Professional Development and Education Groups. In 2017, she coordinated the Mentoring Program she established within İPYD and in the same year she established a P3O (Project & Program & Portfolio) Interest Group. She is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of İPYD 2018-2020.

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Ömer Berkay Dađlı (Dađlı): *Dear Zeynep, first of all, thank you very much for accepting to make an interview. Please introduce yourself for PM World Journal readers, and firstly how did you get involved with Project Management?*

Zeynep Selen (Zeynep): Hi, I also thank you for your interest. I started my career as a software developer in the finance sector. The bank I was working with in the 2000s was a leading bank that began to look at software developments from a project management perspective. At that time, they founded the first PMO in the sector with this new perspective and appointed a group of experienced software developers as project manager, which I was also appointed. I started project management in this way.

Dađlı: *What has been your most fulfilling experience as a project and program manager?*

Zeynep: As a software developer, I find myself fortunate to have worked as a team leader in one of the projects involved in the transition to the year 2000. However, I enjoyed the participation in the management team of historical projects such as the launch of the EURO currency, six zeros from the Turkish Lira and the transition to the YTL currency.

Dađlı: *Could you tell me more about the Istanbul Project Management Association (IPYD)?*

Zeynep: IPYD is an association that aims to bring together those interested in project management. Considering that the establishment year is 1997, I find it very impressive and important that today, our association is trying to develop and expand the profession and the management of the project management with the belief and perseverance on the first day. Taking part in the management of such a deep-rooted association brings us even greater responsibility. With this responsibility and excitement, we are trying to advance and develop what has been done by knowing the value of the steps taken in previous years. On the other hand, with our activities that are enriched by passing years and activities carried out by our special interest groups, we are trying to support team work within our organization.

Dađlı: *What makes IPYD different from the other PM organizations?*

Zeynep: What makes IPYD different is its being neutral and local. So; is a local professional organization which is equal to all institution and project management methodologies and is open to those who define themselves as project managers or who want to be.

Dađlı: *How did you get involved with the association?*

Zeynep: On the other hand, I became a member of IPYD in 2013. My motivation at that time was to work as a career coach for those who want to be a project manager. With the support of the Board of Directors, we started a specialized career coaching

program. After the activities such as training coordination, activities in interest groups, mentoring program in addition to coaching, I have been started to work as the chairman of the association board of directors.

Dağlı: *As the Chair, what is your role?*

Zeynep: I see the management of the association as a program and all of our activities as a project of this program. As a manager who believes in teamwork, I can compare my role to the conductor. I support my colleagues who are responsible for the continuation of our activities without interruption, I do my best to ensure that the works can continue without interruption. I'm trying to prepare the environment and encourage these ideas for the emergence of new ideas and activities.

Dağlı: *Besides your role, I want to ask you about Dinamikler Congress that your association led to establish for 20 years. Could you tell us more about this event?*

Zeynep: Dinamikler is one of our biggest events, even when it held it was the first project management congress held in Turkey. In the Congress; The participants from different sectors, including telecommunication, construction and contracting, informatics, finance, health, public, academia and non-governmental organizations come together to gather information and experience from project managers and project management profession itself. We are working with more excitement this year as we will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2019. The congress is held in April every year, and in 2019 it will be April 11-12. Our Congress preparation project team has already begun to work. Also, after a few years of congress, we are also organizing the Construction Project Management Summit (April 13, 2019). The increase in the interest shown to this single-day summit every year also makes us happy and encouraged.

Dağlı: *From your perspective, how do you think today's project management and business world face the technological change and digital transformation, and what are the good practices that you can advise?*

Zeynep: In line with changing business and management conditions, project management is changing. Project management will continue to exist if a product is produced by expending a philosophy, as long as it is dealt with as a perspective. In changing conditions, processes change, project management does not disappear, but can change its shape.

Dağlı: *According to achievements of yours, I want to emphasize a bit of your influencer side. How could you encourage people and what are the challenges together with eases?*

Zeynep: I trust people. I believe that every human being is unique and has a incomparable value. As a project manager, we always know our work how to be done but we should also focus each one of the people we communicate with sensitivity. I think that's the hardest part of what we do. One of my former managers said that the

intention was more important than doing technical knowledge to do the job. I always believed that. As long as the person we are willing to do the work will do, it is the creation and preservation of this intention, which is important as a manager and a part of the team.

Dađlı: *Could you describe the future of the project management from your perspective?*

Zeynep: If project management comes to a conclusion by working in an human-effort and in coordination within the team, it should always exist, this is a point of view. Just as thousands of years ago, project management was shown during the construction of large buildings, it will also continue to exist in the future.

Dađlı: *Finally, what do you suggest to current and future project managers?*

Zeynep: I suggest them to believe in project management and to remember that project management is a viable and developing profession.

Dađlı: *Thank you.*

About the Author



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Ömer Berkay Dağlı is currently a Project Manager at Entech & Semar Engineering and Marine Solutions Company in Istanbul. He recently graduated with an MSc Management from Southampton Business School, University of Southampton. Previously, he served as an Officer on Watch for over 30 months on board chemical tankers, based in different routes around the world where he served as Third and Second Officer. He completed his graduation in Marine Transportation Management dual diploma with honours from both Istanbul Technical University, Turkey and State University of New York Maritime College, USA in 2014. His major fields of study are project management, logistics and inter-modal transportation. His research interests include global project management, leadership, uncertainty management, programme and portfolio management, strategic PM, IT Project Management, PM governance, stakeholders, project control and PM in the transportation and logistics industries. Omer served as a [research intern for the PM World Library](#) during January 2018, completing the program in record time. He can be contacted at omerberkaydagli@gmail.com