

Project Management Update from Turkey¹



By **Ipek Sahra Özgüler**
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Interview with **Nurdan Özdemir**

Executive Coach



Ipek Sahra Özgüler (Özgüler): **Nurdan Özdemir, thank you for accepting the interview invitation of the PMWJ. Please introduce yourself for our readers.**

Nurdan Özdemir (Özdemir): First of all, I want to thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts about Emotional Intelligence for project management.

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I'm electronics engineer with over 25 years of experience in defense sector. I took various roles in electronics production, software development, team leading, project and program management fields. I worked for defense companies like ASELSAN, AYESAS and METEKSAN Savunma during my career. I have 15 years of experience in project management during which I also enjoyed establishing and managing a project management office in addition to managing prominent defense projects. I have ICF approved Professional Coaching and Executive Coaching certificates together with Six Seconds Brain Profiler and Emotional Intelligence Assessor certificates.

My noble goal is to inspire transformation of leadership. Shaping my roadmap and daily activities with this goal I am coaching leaders and managers for emotional intelligence and leadership. I coach business people whose goals are to inspire others, to build relationships based on trust and to shine with success. I organize emotional intelligence workshops for project managers and other business leaders.

Having values of sharing and contribution to the society, I take part in social responsibility projects. In this respect I am coaching entrepreneurial women, university students and young women as well as mentoring young colleagues in PMI's mentoring program. I'm one of the volunteers of Association for Coaching Turkey branch.

Ozguler: You are one of the mentors in PMI's mentoring program and organise emotional intelligence meetings and workshops for project managers. Could you briefly discuss the emotional intelligence (EI)?

Ozdemir: In short, emotional intelligence is being smarter with feelings, as defined by Six Seconds organization. EI is listening both our logic and emotions and use them intelligently to reach our goals in life. It is a set of competencies that allows you to apply thinking and feeling to make optimal decisions. We couldn't use the power of emotions in business world because we taught that we should leave the emotions at the door. It has been quite long that we have realized emotions are essential to effective decision making and motivation. If you use your EI effectively you'll be better able to influence others, to communicate, and to stay focused on the critical path. We see some people who just get along with other, respond carefully even in the face of challenge, and truly connect with people. They are proactive, balanced, operate with integrity, and have great insight into themselves and others. All these come from emotional intelligence skills.

Ozguler: What is the relationship between project management and EI? Why is EI so important in project management?

Ozdemir: When you look at the soft skills a project manager should possess, like relationship development, team building, negotiating, collaborating, influencing, motivating, coaching, one may think of a person with superhero powers. Today's fast changing and VUCA

environment require project managers to be like a LeaderMan. As you may guess LeaderMan is a kind of super hero who is an exceptionally skillful person. This term, LeaderMan, is first used by my dear friend Gülşah Göktekin for business leaders. Project leaders' face even more challenges because they have to manage and motivate people from various departments and disciplines most of whom are not direct reports.

Soft skills expected from project leaders are diverse but all of them share the same foundation: Emotional Intelligence. During my investigation of good project leadership, I saw an excessive list of competencies from being visionary to coaching or from team building to caring others. One can't exhibit these skills without effectively managing his/her or others emotions. So, I say that there is EI at the foundation of leadership skills. Without a good foundation you cannot build the skyscraper of leadership skills expected from project managers.

Ozguler: Karen Davey-Winter tried to answer the question why a project manager needs an understanding of emotional intelligence as well as the ability to track schedules and budgets in her article, titled "Emotional intelligence for project managers - nice to have or necessity?". From your perspective, what do you think about this subject?

Ozdemir: I have read her article a few times, thanks to her for expressing naively EI is a must for project managers. After a brief history of EI she explains why project managers need EI and then presents an EI framework.

She says, in addition to the ability to track schedules and budgets, project managers need to operate in complex matrix environment, build effective teams, manage change, provide leadership, deliver results. Which requires building relationship, understanding people and their needs, understanding effect of change on people, leading all stakeholders of the project, making effective decisions, understanding own emotions and emotions of others.

After explaining need for EI she shares a good framework which can be used to develop EI. There are quite a lot of good models and frameworks developed by professionals and scientists working in EI field. One of them is the Six Seconds organization's EQ Model which is a simple and concrete model.

Karen explains EISA framework which is based on Reuven Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory. This framework addresses some competencies covered in Six Seconds model. Let's share summary of EISA framework with Karen's explanations and my own comments for our readers.

Most EI models see the ability to express and understand emotions as the ABC of EI. EISA Framework defines this as **Perceiving** skill meaning the ability of an individual to recognize, attend to, and understand emotions in themselves and others. The second skill is **Managing** which is the ability to effectively manage, control and express emotions. Identifying our own moods and the impact of our moods on our behavior. It includes understanding your auto-piloted reactions and results of these behaviors. Another common area in EI models is the **Decision Making**. The EI skill of Decision Making is the ability to appropriately apply emotion to manage and solve problems. Karen says this is something that a Project Manager needs to do on a daily basis. Surely this competency tries to express the need for evaluation of both rational and emotional data of the situation. If you ignore emotional or rational data you

probably miss your goal. **Achieving** skill is related with the ability to generate the necessary emotions to motivate ourselves in the pursuit of realistic and meaningful objectives. Which is inner motivation or our inner energy source as well as desire to take risk. Lastly **Influencing** skill takes part to complement the framework. Influencing is the ability to recognize, manage and evoke emotion in others to promote change. It is the ability to appraise a situation, interpret the emotional tone and understand the impact of this in our ability to build and maintain social relationships. As you may see this skill brings all EI skills together resulting in a strong EI foundation for distinguishing leadership.

After evaluating Karen's article, I want to shortly define Six seconds' EQ model. Six seconds simple model collects EQ competencies in 3 areas: Know Yourself, Choose Yourself and Give Yourself. Know Yourself means being aware of your emotions and your reactions to emotions, Choose Yourself is making conscious choices and Give Yourself is living a purposeful life which provides inner energy and meaning of your life.

Ozguler: We know that you have emotional intelligence assessor certificates. How can emotional intelligence skills of a project manager be assessed and improved?

Ozdemir: Yes, I have Six Seconds Brain Profiler and EQ Assessor Certificates. I was in the group of trainees who took EQ certificate training for the first time in Turkish. It took me 6 months to work on it and get the certificates. Six Seconds is a non-profit organization focused only on emotional intelligence. As I mentioned before Six Seconds EQ model is a simple and concrete model. Its process-based structure makes EQ understandable and allows people to apply easily.

Six Seconds EQ model has 8 competencies grouped in 3 areas:

Know Yourself

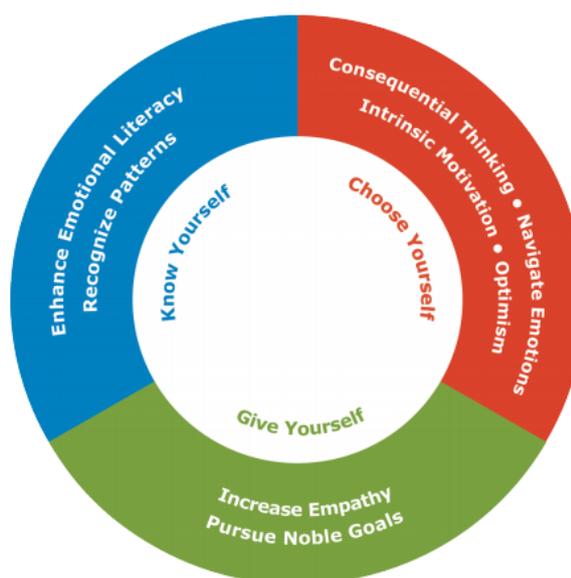
- Enhance Emotional Literacy
- Recognize Patterns

Choose Yourself

- Apply Consequential Thinking
- Navigate Emotions
- Engage Intrinsic Motivation
- Exercise Optimism

Give Yourself

- Increase Empathy
- Pursue Noble Goals



We use SEI (Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Assessment), a process framework to measure EQ competencies and help people put EQ into action. We apply a psychometric test, which

takes 15-20 minutes to complete, to get various types of profiles and reports. Naming some of them, Brain Brief Profile, Brain Discovery Profile, Brain Talent Profile and Leadership Report. Profiles show how the emotional (feeling) and cognitive (thinking) parts of your brain are working together. Leadership Report provides an executive summary followed by a full profile of the full model (8 EQ competencies) including interpretations of each score in the context of an organizational leadership position. The LR provides general information on increasing EQ competence and a “snapshot” of leadership performance tied to each score on each competency. We work with test takers and perform coaching sessions to understand current situation. Test takers or leaders use these reports to deeply understand their strengths and weaknesses in EQ model and have chance to work on a roadmap to enhance and improve their emotional intelligence.

In short, I use Six Seconds test and reports to help business leaders and project managers be aware of their brain working styles and EQ competencies. I coach them through SEI reports to take action and improve their EQ.

Ozguler: **How could project managers use emotional intelligence to improve project performance?**

Ozdemir: Thank you for this good question. Before answering this from project performance view I'd like to give an analysis result about relation of life success with EQ. Six seconds performed an analysis on data covering sample of 75,000 people to identify the correlation between emotional intelligence and success scores. The analysis showed a strong and substantial relationship between EQ and outcomes scores. Stepwise regression analysis revealed that SEI predicts 55% of overall performance where “performance” is a combination of the reported success factors.

How does EQ of project managers effect the project performance? I can make a large list of improvement points but I'd like to explain performance results in a group of three areas. Relations, Decision Making and Influencing-Motivation.

Relations: Project managers relations are obviously improved when he or she started to understand and manage own and others' emotions. Developing empathy and navigating emotions result in good understanding of team members, customers, end users and all other stakeholders. Being smarter with feelings ignites the ability of negotiation and conflict resolution. EQ drives open and honest communication. All of these contribute to a trusted project environment and improved relations. Project team becomes a highly performing team within this nourishing environment which obviously adds value to project performance.

Decision Making: Being aware of emotions and autopilot reactions open the window of making conscious choices. Adding emotional data to the rational data and evaluating them together end up with a decision which is for the benefit of all parties involved. When project managers improve Apply Consequential Thinking competency, they enlarge their point of view and start to be creative in problem solving. In their daily life project managers make dozens of decisions, improving decision making results in better relations and better business outputs.

Influencing-Motivation: EQ competencies Engage Intrinsic Motivation, Exercise Optimism and Pursue Noble goals are mainly related with motivation, source of energy and meaning.

As a leader when you attend to your meaning and inner motivation you inherently influence people around you. Supported with good relations and proactive optimism you both provide required energy and motivation to yourself and to the project team members. You become role model for people. Elevated self-motivation and inspiration cultivates a supportive environment in the project. Engaged and motivated team boost the project performance.

I want to conclude with another study. We know that EQ skills affect climate – and climate affects performance; in one study, Ozcelik, Langton, and Aldrich (2008) assessed 229 entrepreneurs and small business owners in Canada to see if they used emotionally intelligent behaviors in shaping the organizational climate. They followed up 18 months later, and leaders who created more positive climate had more revenue as well as increased growth.

About the Author



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Ipek Sahra Ozguler graduated from the Istanbul University with the Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering and from Middle East Technical University with an MSc degree in Software Management. She became a certified PMP in January, 2012 and a certified SCRUM Master in 2014. She works as international correspondent at PMWJ. Before joining PMWJ, she worked for global multinational companies and leading local companies such as Coca Cola, Deloitte, Turkcell Superonline, Havelsan and TAV IT. Over the years, she has gained extensive experience in managing various medium and large scale projects, programs and portfolios.

Her article named “When I Decided to Develop Multi Processing Project Manager’s System” was published in the book “*A Day in the Life of a Project Manager*”. She has published several articles in the *PM World Journal* and one in PMI’s *PM Network* magazine. Ipek is actively involved in sailing, writing and discovering new cultures. She can be contacted at ipeksahra@gmail.com.

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