

PM Summit 2021 MENA¹



By Reinhard Wagner

Munich, Germany

This year's Project Managers Summit (www.pmsummit.org) took place on April 2/3/4, 2021. According to its own information, with 500 project managers and 50 mentors the largest PM summit in the Middle-East & North Africa (MENA) region. Due to the pandemic this year as a purely virtual event, which had the following formats to offer: Panel discussions, Talks, Crash Workshops, Round Tables, Case Studies, Advising Sessions, Assessments and "1 on 1" Coaching Sessions. In terms of content, the following was addressed: New practices or Hands-on experience, Different Business Domains, Applications & Project Management Information Systems, Actual challenges facing PMs, Case Studies, Mental wellbeing, Life as a project manager and Day-to-Day activities.

As the International Project Management Association (IPMA) was well represented as a strategic partner with its President, a Vice President and the Executive Director, the topic of project management competences was well covered. In addition, there was also a lot of talk about Agile methods and approaches, with the initiatives of "Scrum.org" and "Scaled Agile" being set as other, strategic partners.

As a panelist, I was able to take part in an exciting discussion on the topic of "Project Sponsorship & Steering Committees". It quickly became clear that sponsors of a manufacturing company are primarily internally oriented and have to deal with the interplay of organizational strategy, business case and a product portfolio, which are to be realized as efficiently as possible in R&D and production through projects. In contrast, the situation is different for public projects in MENA, where consultants often take on the complex tasks on behalf of the public sector. The role is also positioned differently in oil and gas megaprojects. Nonetheless, panelists agreed that the sponsor's roles are primarily to clarify the project objectives and charter, to staff the project manager and key team functions, and to provide advice and support during project implementation.

However, the tasks and responsibilities of a sponsor do not end with the completion of the project but go well beyond that. In this respect, a sponsor also bridges the worlds of temporary projects and permanent line organization. Of course, a sponsor is not alone, but supported by a steering committee. This committee should have the necessary

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expertise for decision-making, otherwise the project can quickly become troubled. Project managers should always inform the sponsor in a timely and comprehensive manner about the status of their project, closely involve them in stakeholder communication, both formally and informally. There is certainly still a lot of need for clarification here, both for managers who are taking on the role of sponsor or who are members of a steering committee, as well as for project managers who have had little to do with sponsors to date.

The one-on-one discussion with a project management consultant from the construction sector was also fascinating. On the one hand, it was about current trends and learning areas in project management that need to be taken into account, e.g. approaches from lean construction or agile management for the construction sector, the possibilities of further training beyond the technical specialization in construction management into areas of business administration, soft skills and strategic aspects, as well as the possibilities of obtaining advice in the daily work routine, especially when you are remote on the construction site and far away from your personal network.

While we are certainly all used to and have come to appreciate the face-to-face events, an entirely virtual conference like the PM Summit offers almost the same, if not more, opportunities for networking and sharing. The participants, often spread around the world, can join in as it suits their time, it's all very flexible. The connection quality was also stable via the platform of "eventtus" and the features intuitive to handle. The feedback on the platform as well as on social media was very positive, so that we can expect the PM Summit to take place again next year, virtually or in person, that will certainly be seen then.

About the Author



Reinhard Wagner

Germany



Reinhard Wagner has been active for more than 35 years in the field of project-related leadership, in such diverse sectors as Automotive, Engineering, and Consultancy, as well as various not-for-profit organizations. As Managing Director of Tiba Managementberatung GmbH, a leading PM Consultancy in Munich/Germany, he supports executives of industrial clients in transforming their companies towards a project-oriented, adaptive and sustainably successful organization. Reinhard Wagner has published 36 books as well as several hundred articles and blogposts in the field of project, program and project portfolio management. In more than 20 years of voluntary engagement he served the German Project Management Association (GPM) as well as the International Project Management Association (IPMA) in a range of leadership roles (including President and Chairman) and was granted for his international commitment with the Honorary Fellowship of several IPMA Member Associations. He was named an IPMA Honorary Fellow in 2021.

Reinhard is Senior Lecturer at the Alma Mater Europaea and is currently finishing his doctoral thesis on the topic of Project Society. He can be contacted via reinhard.wagner@tiba.de.