
Interview with Executive Leaders International Project Management Association¹

Joop Schefferlie, IPMA President

**Martin Sedlmayer, IPMA Vice President for MarComm &
Events & Awards**

Amin Saidoun, Executive Director



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi
International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Paris, France

International Project Management Association ([IPMA](http://www.ipma.world))

IPMA is the world's first International Project Management Association (1965). It is a member-driven, and volunteer-staffed federation with over 72 Member Associations (M.A.s) spread all around the world. M.A.s develop project management competences in their geographic areas of influence, interacting with thousands of practitioners and developing relationships with corporations, government agencies, universities, and colleges, as well as training organisations and consulting companies. IPMA certification is recognised worldwide. Global corporations benefit from IPMA's international presence and recognition. We enable them to use the same certification for the entire company in all countries. The examination process has no language barriers. Candidates always have the choice of doing the certification in their language or English. IPMA's vision is promoting competence throughout society to enable a world in which all projects succeed. Read more at www.ipma.world.

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Interview with Joop Schefferlie

IPMA President



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

International Correspondent, PM World Journal
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Introduction to the interviewee

Joop Schefferlie is Vice President Certification of IPMA and President-elect. His mandate as president of IPMA starts in January 2021. Joop is director of IPMA Certification B.V. He has over 15 years of experience building and changing complex organisations up to more than 800 workers based on a clear vision and objective. His passion is to develop and improve project management. Joop is a decisive and result-oriented entrepreneur with a focus on the future and possible improvements. Realises complex changes recognise opportunities and is able to steer others in such a way that a translation is made from vision to reality. Strong in starting projects in which the intended purpose of the change, expertise and professional development are central. Communicates honestly and to the point, is independent and has preponderance. He is in his element when structures or procedures need to be put in place, or critical comments need to be made.

Interview

Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. You are the new President of IPMA Global since December 2020. What do you envision for IPMA Global by 2024?

IPMA wants to be the conductor/orchestra leader in promoting project management recognition and engaging stakeholders worldwide in advancing the discipline. We will achieve this by:

- A high performing global reach through a sustainable, equitable and diverse network of mature Member Associations (in 72 countries).
- Value-adding benefits for the profession, economy, society and environment through audience-oriented, integrated and self-sustaining know-how, products and services

Q2: Has covid19 affected IPMA? In what ways?

Covid has affected every human being, company, or organisation all over the world, also IPMA. Unfortunately, many companies stopped temporarily investing in developing and educating Project Management organisations and professionals. From the beginning of the pandemic, IPMA successfully switched all activities via a digital transformation and offered certification, webinars, best practice week, our congress online.

Q3: What roles play the project management associations in society in the world?

Almost 40% of our economic activities (time and money) is spending through projects. And that will be more. Especially when you look at what is happening in the world (pandemic, overpopulation, climate, shortage of food) and developments like Artificial Intelligence, this means that the type of projects in the near future will change, but also the role and importance of competent project managers.

Q4: You have a passion for developing and improving project management. What has changed in project management during the last 5 years? (Skills required, methodologies, techniques, types of projects, environment.)

What really has changed is the way we look at and act as leaders in general and also project management. We're switching from a traditional perspective (direct and control) to a more adaptive way of leadership. I'm delighted with this change; the usefulness of project management and projects depends on competent people. Of course, is knowledge (including methods, technics) an important basis, but without competent people, every project will fail.

Q5: What do IPMA certifications bring to a project manager?

For projects to be successful, a number of elements are needed. A sound methodology or framework is probably the first thing you think of, but there is more. You also need a project professional with the right competencies. These two elements cannot exist without each other: after all, you need someone to carry out the project, and that person needs an approach to accomplish the task. An IPMA Certificate gives you as a project professional the second element: insight in your competences.

An IPMA Certificate is always based on the Individual Competence Baseline (ICB), making it unique. This baseline is recognised internationally, so an IPMA Certificate has the same value in every country (that is affiliated to IPMA). From creating this model, it was already clear that having insight into your competences is one of the prerequisites for a successful project. What makes it such an important precondition?

As a project professional, when you have insight into your competencies, you know what you are good at and where you can still grow. But also what you are not good at. With this insight into yourself as a project professional, you get a picture of the projects that suit you and which do not. So you can know in advance whether you can complete a project successfully or not. The only question you need to ask is: do my competencies fit this project?

Q6: What is the future of project managers?

Project Management is and will be a people business. Stay competent, develop, share, learn.

Q7: Do you have a last message to PM World Journal readers, please?

Adopt the changes in leadership style and be ready for the future with different types of projects in an innovating world. Join the IPMA network to share your knowledge and experiences with other colleagues.

Interview with Martin Sedlmayer

Vice President for MarComm & Events & Awards
International Project Management Association



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Paris, France

Introduction to the interviewee

Martin R. Sedlmayer, IPMA level A program director, MBA in international management, IPMA Vice President MarComm, Events & Awards, Head of Rolling Stock Acquisition programs at SBB Swiss Railways, Volunteer with United Nations and MRCI. Martin is a significant contributor to IPMA standards and publications, such as the current version 4 of IPMA Individual Competence Baseline. Martin is an Expert in Portfolio Management, Programme Management, Project Management, both from an execution side as well as from a consulting side. Industry experience includes wholesales, process manufacturing, retail, insurance, telecom, public transport, aviation.

Interview

Q1: World Congress - please tell us how and when the World Congress was born and the reasons why it was created.

The first edition of the IPMA World Congress took place in Vienna in the fall of 1967. From its founding year in 1965, IPMA focused not on methods and tools only but on

competences. And to tell the world about the benefits of this approach, the importance of having competent project managers, to present and discuss research results and to exchange practical experiences globally, the World Congress was launched.

Our aim has been always to be able to meet in one place in the world so that we could learn about the best practices of our industry in the company of specialists. To meet, get to know and talk. The brand of our World Congress, built throughout more than 30 editions, is based precisely on the opportunity to meet personally with representatives of our, today more than 70, Member Associations. We are an international association, and our M.A.s can benefit from this in many different ways. World Congress is an exceptional example of the event our M.A.s can benefit from as well.

Q2: Does the World Congress take place in a different city each year? Will the future events be hybrid events? Is it once a year?

Indeed. The World Congress is organised by a national member association, together with central IPMA support. That means that a national member association applies if they are interested in organising, and the general assembly decides where the next World Congress(es) shall take place. We try to run it once in Europe, then in Asia, coming back to Europe/Africa, and then organise it in the Americas and so forth.

The general idea at the beginning was to organise it every second year. Still, very soon, the need grew significantly, and for many years, the World Congress was organised yearly. But there were also exceptions, like last year, when we could not run a World Congress due to the pandemic.

Q3: Could you describe what we can expect if we attend an IPMA World Congress

It depends. When you are a Project Manager or alike, you get many new insights, learn from others – in a global context - and create or foster your network with peers from all corners of the world. When you are a HR Manager, you can – besides many new insights – benefits from many interesting contacts and extend your professional network. When you are a Young Professional, you can, in addition to the World Congress, benefit from a global Young Crew workshop that helps develop your career and get in touch with many other young professionals. When you are representing an organisation, you can (through sponsoring) let the world know about your organisation and/or products. When you are an Award Winner, you will get the merit of your outstanding achievements. When you are an IPMA certified individual, you can benefit from CPD's helpful for your re-certification. Etc. etc.

Our event is a meeting of many industry representatives, and I am almost sure that everyone can find something very beneficial here. It is a meeting of specialists of different ages and a meeting of different cultures, of many different approaches, of diverse know-how. It's clear that the exchange of experience here is extremely valuable. That is the absolute and unique advantage of this event.

You see, there is a lot to take home when you participate!

Q4: Tell us what the event best practice week is: birth, purpose, creation

Well, the IPMA Global Best Practice Week was created as a simple necessity. In spring 2020, we all knew that a standard World Congress (it was planned for St. Petersburg with physical presence) was not possible due to the pandemic situation; you may remember that the first wave hit Russia very hard. But we wanted to offer at least the learning part of such an event to the world when we cannot provide a get-together in such a situation.

Consequently, we sat together in a very small team and created the event, with absolutely no experience organising a virtual event. We very early decided to focus on a particular topic around project management – how to manage the great reset (late spring 2020, we thought the pandemic would be over very soon), and resilience as a topic of the second edition.

And we did it, with extraordinary success, in just 6 months. All went smoothly, connecting 700 participants worldwide, with more than 160 sessions in total. Only one session needed to be cancelled due to a tornado in the U.S. which caused a complete power outage over there. In addition, we also organised a virtual awards ceremony broadcasted out of a T.V. studio in Poland.

Q5: Tell us how the best practice need is organised: duration, virtual or not, the frequency

Based on the enormous success of its first edition, we decided to keep this purely virtual format but shift it to spring – not to jeopardise the World Congress, which is organisation always in fall. Again, we just had 6 months to organise.

This second edition was organised like the first edition, but we also took lessons learned into account. We ran it a bit shorter for 3 and ½ days, kept the four parallel streams (resilience for individuals, teams, organisation, and the society), with 90 minutes slots for each presenter, including discussions, keynotes, panel discussions, workshops etc. We also offered direct contact of participants to the Executive Board of IPMA and booths for all 72 IPMA member associations.

Q6: Any other topic you'd like to mention related to IPMA events

Besides the World Congress, IPMA organises many other events too. First and of utmost importance are our member 'associations' many events organised in their specific country, year by year. For more details, check the national body of IPMA in your respective country!

In addition to national events, IPMA organises a yearly Research Conference that focuses on presenting and discussing academic papers. This is of particular interest for IPMA, too, to better understand where the profession of Project Management is developing. This event is attended mainly by academics but also by experienced project and programme managers.

For the younger generation, we the Global PM days, a 2-day online conference on project management twice a year to support young project managers and students by boosting their personal and interpersonal competences, and the Global Young Crew Workshop in the fall of each year. Interactive workshops, compelling keynotes and significant networking events lie the basis for the workshop experience and connect cutting edge trainers with students and young professionals from all areas united in their passion for project management.

As part of our special interest groups (on Artificial Intelligence, Healthcare, Innovation and Change, Megaprojects, Smarter Cities, and Smarter U), we organise shorter, very concise webinars regularly throughout the year.

Q7: How has Covid19 changed the topics presented at the best practice week?

Well, the first edition, as I mentioned before, focused on the time after the pandemic – the World Economic Forum postulated "the great reset". At that time, we thought it would be over soon. But in fact, I believe not the pandemic has changed the topic/content, but more global trends like digitalisation, artificial intelligence, climate change, urbanisation, etc.

Q8: According to you, will project management be required in the future? Why?

This is a brilliant question indeed, but unfortunately, I do not possess a crystal ball that tells me the future. Already today, 1/3 of the GDP in many countries is produced through projects. And this part will increase, also driven by the pandemic (massive amount of money is injected into the economy to recover soon) and the climate challenges ahead. All this generates work to be executed, mainly in the form of projects. Therefore, I am sure that we will need project management, particularly competent (and not just knowledgeable) project managers who can drive and execute change to generate the expected benefits. But if we call it project management by then, I 'don't know.

Q9: A more personal question. 'I've seen you are a volunteer for the U.N. for people in need. How do your project management skills and leadership help you?

It helps a lot. Just let me give you a concrete example. I am currently trying to set up a project in Madagascar, one of the poorest countries in the world. Together with MCRI, the Madagascar Research and Conservation Institute, we try to set up a centre for children with disabilities to offer them proper education and support. In cooperation with U.K., Malagasy, and South African NGO's. All need to be planned and organised, from fundraising to land acquisition, purchasing materials and craftsmen, construction work, appropriate equipment acquisition, to day-to-day operations. Project management competences in short.

Q10: Many people and countries in the world cannot afford a project management association, or certifications. In that case, how project management can be taught?

Project management education must start locally. Therefore, the price inequivalence is not that high, a trainer in Nepal does not cost a Nepalese as much as a consultant in the U.S. The same goes with certification (at least with IPMA). Therefore, basic training locally or an education locally can be a possibility.

Another way is learning on the job, often at no cost. Try to find an experienced project manager where you can learn from. Look what they are doing, why they choose the way they do and reflect the outcome of each task. If you are bright, you can take a lot of experiences and improve your competences significantly.

Another initiative that IPMA implemented in 2021 is to provide basic project management education through a platform Skillsbuild in co-operation with IBM. The objective is to share project management basics via the online platform to support the implementation of the sustainable development goals 4 (quality education) and 17 (Partnerships for the goals). Project management knowledge is provided to students, job seekers, educators, and organisations with modest revenues.

Q11: Do you have a last message to PM World Journal readers, please?

Good project managers do not only execute what they are tasked with; they have a unique skill set to create benefits through change. Therefore, use these competences wisely to enable a better, more sustainable future.

Interview with Amin Saidoun

Executive Director
International Project Management Association



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Paris, France

Introduction to the interviewee

Amin Saidoun is Executive Director of the International Project Management Association, an international federation of over 72 project management associations worldwide. Amin Saidoun is an economist and graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Sciences. He is a project manager who gained 29 years of experience in international projects both in medium-sized and multinational organisations in auditing, consulting and the logistics domain. As Executive Director of IPMA, he is in charge of Finance and Administration, Business Development of IPMA activities in Africa and the Middle East. He is involved in various internal development projects and governance. He is the author and co-author of different project management and business administration related articles. Among his areas of interest: intercultural project management, leadership, digital transformation and non-for-profit organisations.

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Interview

Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. please tell us how and when IPMA was born and who created it

The First Years, INTERNET

The exchange of experiences in IPMA (formerly INTERNET) has a long tradition. It all began in the year 1964. A European aircraft Project Manager, Pierre Koch of France, invited Dick Vullings from the Netherlands and Roland Gutsch from Germany to discuss the benefits of the Critical Path Method (CPM) as a management approach. CPM showed a way to manage large projects with international sponsors, uncertain results, and complex influences and dependencies from different technical disciplines. This group was chaired by Yves Eugene from AFIRO (Association Française d'Informatique et de Recherche Opérationnelle). Professor Arnold Kaufmann suggested the formation of an **INTERN**ational **NET**work, the **INTERNET**.

In 1965, this group of people founded the **IMSA** (International Management Systems Association), independent from companies and officially located in Switzerland, the most respected and politically neutral country in Western Europe in these days of the "Cold War". Two years later, the Czechoslovak Project Management Science Group issued invitations to join the first "all-state" conference on the "Methods of Network Analysis" in Prague. PhD Vladimira Machova was the host beside the political officials in those days. Then, with the sponsorship of the International Computer Centre in Rome, managed by Professor Claude Berge, the first International World Congress took place in Vienna. From then on INTERNET was the official association name.

In 1967, the two-year-old INTERNET society held its first International European Internet Congress in Vienna.

In 1989, Advanced Courses for advancing competences of experts in project, programme and portfolio management are launched.

The name change to IPMA

In 1996, the 13th World Congress (1996) was held in Paris. INTERNET got a namesake – a new international telecommunication system. The Executive Board (ExBo) renamed INTERNET to International Project Management Association, IPMA (our third and current name), but retained the logo.

In 1998, IPMA starts with certification of individuals and the 1st version of ICB, v.1.0. is being published.

In 2002, IPMA launches the IPMA International Project Excellence Award. In 2012, IPMA started offering organisational assessment and certification through [IPMA Delta](#).

In 2015, IPMA launched new versions of all standards, [IPMA ICB4](#), [IPMA OCB 1.1](#), [IPMA PEB](#)

In **2017** and in **2019**, two World Congress took place outside Europe, one in Kazakhstan (Astana) and one in Mexico (Merida).

Q2: IPMA Global today: tell us the number of countries where IPMA is active, in what countries IPMA is the most "powerful" if you have the information

IPMA is active in 72 countries through its national member associations (one member association per country). Historically, IPMA started in Europe. To this day, this is where IPMA is the strongest in terms of the sales of its products and services and in terms of the number of members, i.e. the number of members of IPMA member associations. These members are students, individuals (practitioners and academic) and corporate members (including large companies such as Alstom, Siemens or Thales). In recent years IPMA developed in Asia and Latin America, where two international world Congresses took place in 2015 and 2019.

After fifty-four busy years, IPMA is leading the evolution of the Project Management profession and communities worldwide. IPMA is a unique international network that thinks globally, acts regionally and engages locally. Advanced, competence-based certification underpins a comprehensive portfolio of services and products offered through its network of Membership Associations, training providers, publishers, event organisers and the like IPMA continues to recognise, respect and build on its diversity as the foundation of its networks of colleagues, friends and associates with complimentary visions and horizons. Today IPMA remains the developing network set up by the perceptive founders fifty years ago. We can all be proud of the history and achievements of the IPMA family.

Q3: Do you have volunteers? How many?

One of the strengths of IPMA is that it is a volunteer-based organisation. In addition to the permanent staff and contractors contribute to the evolution of the profession and the network worldwide.

The number of volunteers amounts to approx. 8.000 around the world.

Q4: Any other fact 'you' like to raise

In addition to the private sector, research has indicated that more and more project managers are needed in the national and international public sectors. The organisations concerned are public administrations, universities, hospitals, international,

intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. This is why one of our future events will address the need of these organisations in particular and identify the challenges these organisations are facing and how project management can help them address these challenges.

Thank you Mr. Saidoun for the general presentation of IPMA. Now, 'let's move to more detailed questions about IPMA.

Q5: What do the members expect from IPMA Global in the future? (if you have surveys, feedback, etc.)

Considering the diversity of our members, the expectations differ from one group of members to the other. Some members expect support to advocate the profession at a higher level like any other chartered professional organisation, be it at the national governmental level or at international level. This will help them increase their visibility in their markets, increase their customer base and help them to sustain in the longer run. Some organisations simply need support to make it to the next level of maturity to implement and promote all IPMA products and services. Other organisations expect to get technical and organisational support to get recognised in their countries being part of an international network.

Q6: What are the most topics read in the IPMA blogs? How do you explain it?

Most topics read on IPMA blogs are related to project management methodologies. This could be the new methodology released by the E.U. commission, the applicability of lean management techniques to project management, simple tools like RASIC or the 5W 1 H question (What, why, when, where Who and How). This can be explained by the fact that project management is often regarded as a multi-purpose techno-managerial activity. As resources are usually scarce, the work-load is heavy, the time constraint is challenging and the customer is asking for high quality people often like to find out about techniques that help them to comply with the requirements of the iron triangle in their daily work. Another explanation is that as project management is about common sense and as the quantity of information and the level of abstraction of many articles are often high; the reader longs for content that remains practical, easy to read and that helps them to achieve quick wins.

Q7: What are the skills needed by project managers in the new normal?

The needed skills before Covid 19 do not differ so much from after Covid 19, i.e. the new normal. The difference will be that some skills will be more needed, get a stronger emphasis and will have a new opportunity to shine. I would like to mention three examples of skills.

Leadership: are the projects we have in our organisation before Covid19 still as crucial as those after Covid? Do we need to re-prioritise? The answer to this last question is often yes, and we know what it means to have the leadership skills to put all projects in balance to change priorities if needed. This brings me to the next required skill:

Stakeholder management: The means of communication have changed, and both written and oral communication have to adapt. Project managers and the members of the project team that 'can't meet any more F2F are human beings that need have an inter-action and feedback more often than before. Isolation may help introverts to increase their work effectiveness as less disturbed in an office environment. Extroverts, however, need the inter-action with team members to get the drive to perform. Human interpersonal relations, in this case, are a catalyst for performance achievement. The role of the project manager to assure that such a working environment is made possible becomes more critical as it generates confidence and trust and takes away fears. So stakeholder management is a skill that after Covid becomes more and more needed and addressed with the right communications skills.

Lastly, **agility** is needed more than ever to adapt to the speed of changing legal frameworks, regulations, procedures and ways of working. While some organisations are used since many years before Covid to manage teams remotely, to hold general assemblies and make decisions online, some organisations are limited by their by-laws or intergovernmental conventions and procedure and have difficulties adapting to the new normal. They generate inertia, demotivation and frustration among their project managers, which could jeopardise the sustainability of the organisation in which they work. This is why IPMA has developed a reference guide of its competence baseline in an agile world for its existing and potential customers.

Q8: Do you think Covid19 will impact the project management associations?

Covid has definitively impacted project management associations, and the fact that the focus of support of IPMA Global is now put more strongly on its existing members instead of searching for new members is a clear sign of that impact. It is more important than ever to hold together and to support each other also at regional level to make sure that co-creation and mutual encouragement lead to quick wins and the implementation of smart objectives.

Covid19 has also shown that many activities and internal projects can be run at lower costs than before, and the reduction of travel and accommodation in projects has proved possible. Also, reducing the carbon balance of project management associations and their members, staff and volunteers have proven to be possible without jeopardising projects and operations. This is a big lesson learned that will change the way we work together in the future. Finally, Covid 19 has accelerated the digital transformation of the organisation that was initiated before Covid 19.

Q9: You are also responsible for the business development of new project associations in Middle East and Africa (MEA). Is project management different in MEA? In what ways?

Project management in MEA and other parts of the world does not differ so much in theory as project managers who undergo the IPMA certification scheme need to prove that their knowledge and experience concerning the skills described in the international

competence baseline have been reached to a certain extent. However, as also described in my article published on "Successful project management in North Africa with intercultural competence"

(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042816308680>), a project is implemented in an environment that might differ from the usual environment the project manager might have worked in the past. The economic sector, the 'country's traditions and beliefs, education and many other cultural factors influence how a project is managed. People are often more relationship-oriented than task and result oriented in the MEA region. This understanding is essential to adapt to the local behaviour in a project environment to build trust and get recognised and accepted among project stakeholders.

Q10: If non-MEA project managers want to work in MEA, do they need to develop specific skills? Which ones?

One of the skills to be developed based on my experience is leadership in projects. This means adopting a specific leadership style as mentioned in the article mentioned in the previous response R4, a self-assured style of leadership combined with self-confident "understatement" and emphasised modesty help project managers to gain authority in a local hierarchy. This authority and recognition are emphasised through technical competence. These, in turn, are helpful for constructive cooperation with all stakeholders in the project environment.

Q11: You advocate the profession and IPMA through different types of events and publications: what are the priorities of IPMA in terms of events, publications to develop in the new normal?

In many areas of society, project management is unfortunately either not known or consisting of the use of software tools like Primavera or MS-Project to run projects. Our objective is to bring both awareness and understanding of project management to a more strategic level. Through events, publications, advocacy and partnerships, it is critical for decision-makers to understand that project management is a game-changer, the clue between vision, missions, strategic and the implementation of tangible strategic objectives, which is even more critical in the new normal. One example is mentioned to enhance this awareness among public administrations and international organisations, and NGOs. Another example is to promote this awareness among large multinational organisations, as we recently did with IBM. With this regard, it is worth mentioning that companies like Thales, Siemens, Alstom and Infineon are working with IPMA since many years to certify their project managers around the world with 'IPMA's international network of professional certification bodies.

Q12: do you have a last message to PM World Journal readers, please?

The competence-based project management of IPMA is not only helping project managers in their professional life in getting things done according to the requirements of their customers. It also helps them move forward with their projects on a private basis, helping to maintain a balance in a Covid/Post Covid period. This is essential considering

the mass of anxiogenic information received in general from the media daily. Lastly, it is good to recall Abraham Lincoln with his words: "Almost any man can face adversity; but if you want to test someone's ability, empower them". This also applies to project managers.

About the Interviewer



Yasmina Khelifi

Paris, France



Yasmina Khelifi, PMP, PMI- ACP, PMI-PBA is an experienced project manager in the telecom industry. Along with her 20-year career at [Orange S.A.](#) (the large French multinational telecommunications corporation), she sharpened her global leadership skills, delivering projects with major manufacturers and SIM makers. Yasmina strives for building collaborative bridges between people to make international projects successful. She relies on three pillars: project management skills, the languages she speaks, and a passion for sharing knowledge.

She is a PMP certification holder since 2013, a PMI- ACP and PMI-PBA certification holder since 2020. She is an active volunteer member at PMI France and PMI UAE, and a member of PMI Germany Chapter. French-native, she can speak German, English, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and she is learning Arabic. Yasmina loves sharing her knowledge and experiences at work, in her 'volunteers' activities at PMI, and in projectmanagement.com as a regular blogger. She is also the host and co-founder of the podcast [Global Leaders Talk with Yasmina Khelifi](#) to help people in becoming better international leaders.

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