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Interview with Priya Patra
by Yasmina Khelifi
Interview

Women PowerUP in Project Management

Interview with Priya Patra[1]

Founder, Women PoweUP Network
Program Manager, Capgemini
Passionate Volunteer

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

Introduction to the interviewee

Priya is a mother of two, Author, Blogger, Women Empower believer, Dreamer, Creator and a Futuristist, an Agile Evangelist and a Program Manager spearheading digital transformation, digital quality assurance and quality engineering program for a large conglomerate in the Lifesciences domain. She Leads an Agile Community of Practice within the organization of 670 members, across 40 countries evangelizing Agile practices across all levels. She is a speaker for national and International conferences on Digital, Agile and Project Management.

Since Jan 2020, she has been building a women's community – "Women PowerUp Network" (#BeingGoodEnougIsAmazing #WePowerUP) – a virtual community of around 800 women across the globe. When she is not working, she dreams about the future of work, and its impact on projects. Her views are expressed through blogs on projectmanagement.com at
https://www.projectmanagement.com/blogs/570914/The-Future-of-PM-Work
https://www.linkedin.com/in/priyapatra/ and https://twitter.com/priyaPatra

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Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. You created the PMI Chapter Xchange initiative. Why did you create it? What are the aims?

Priya Patra (Patra): Thank you for inviting me for the interview Yasmina.

Let me give you a brief on PMI ChapterXchange

PMI chapter Xchange initiative is about Collaboration - A virtual collaboration platform for chapter leaders and members to connect, collaborate and co-create. Co-creating events to bring diverse perspectives to our chapter members, spurring networking and collaboration opportunities. Our vision is to Evangelize cross chapter collaboration & encourage cultural diversity

As we speak today, we have 24 chapters on this platform and many more supporting chapters.

Q2: How does this PMI Chapter Xchange work?

Patra: On a high level, PMI Chapter Xchange is a virtual collaboration platform for chapters to connect, collaborate and cocreate. We cocreate events, insight Xchange knowledge nuggets every month. Every event is a four-week project, with a collaborative strategy to

a. Select topics that resonate with our members

b. Identify SMEs from diverse domains

c. Drive participation

d. Provide a unique experience to our members

c. Retrospection for continuous improvements

The event and the Insight Xchange nugget are just an outcome of this amazing journey of four weeks of connecting, collaborating and co-creating. It is the journey that made it so special.

Q3: Could you share some data? The frequency of meetings, the number of chapters that take part?

Patra: PMI Chapter Xchange as of now is a global virtual collaboration of 24 PMI Chapters across the globe. We have around 4 chapters from each of the 5 continents Asia, Europe, North America, Africa. 2 chapters from Latin

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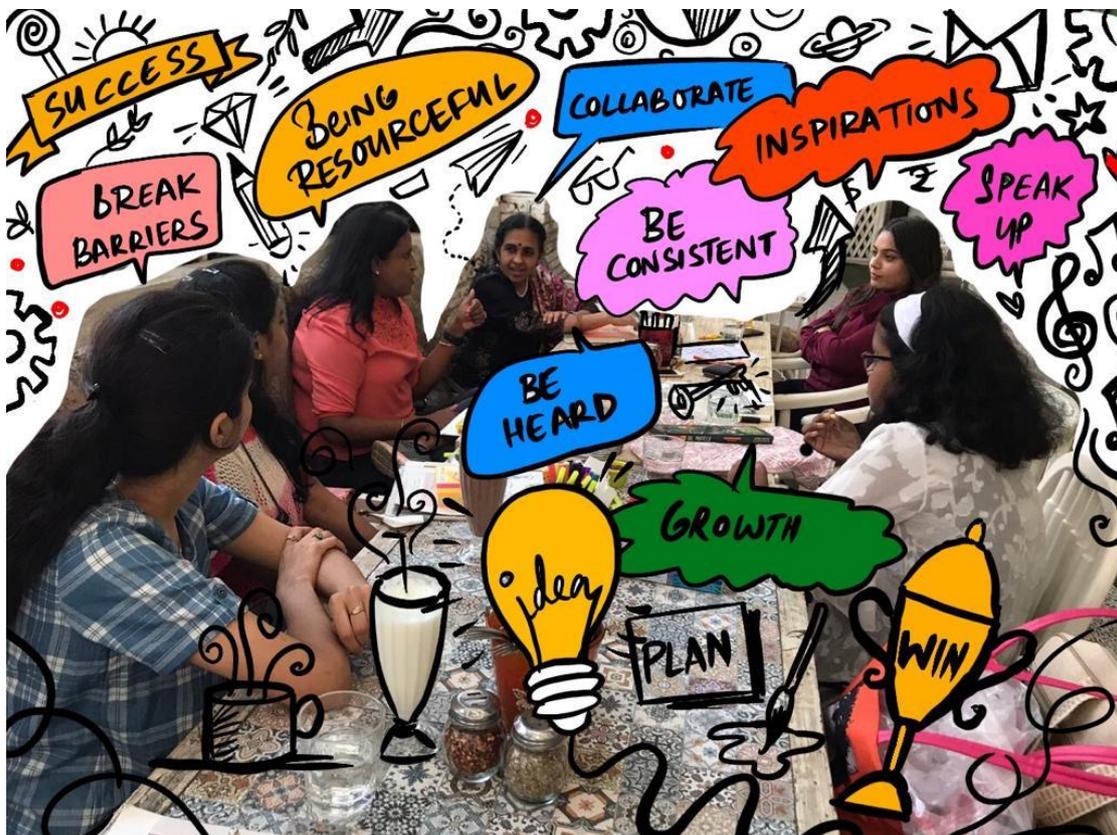*Interview with Priya Patra*
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America. We just onboarded our first middle east chapter – PMI UAE chapter this year as well.

We are a global virtual team, so most of our communications are through virtual collaboration tools. Our team meets every Wednesday 9:30 pm IST to retrospect for continuous improvements.

Q4 2022 marks the second anniversary of Women PowerUP Network Program. How did you come up with this idea?

Patra: I have been a just "good enough" person all through out my life. And I always looked up to experts always hoping to connect with them, learn from them, mentored by then. I always sought a platform where I would get all these. I was fortunate to get connected to some amazing women leaders through social media, who influenced my life tremendously, but I do realize that the same may not be true for many women in this world today.

So in 2020, I met up with 6 other women in a café in Mumbai to brainstorm and visually think how this platform would look. Thus the Women PowerUP Network was conceived.

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Q5: How have you developed this network?

Patra: The Network started as a small community of local women leaders in Mumbai on Jan 26, 2020. But then we all know what happened March 2020 onwards. The entire world went into lockdown. We took advantage of the virtual world to expand our network across geographical boundaries, connecting once a month for our month webinars with inspiring women leaders.

We are constantly in touch sharing job opportunities, skill development avenues through our Facebook, linkedIn and Whatsapp groups. Today we have 800 women from across the world in this network.

Q6: What do you plan for 2022 for this network?

Patra: For 2022, we plan to strengthen our presence in Africa and Europe regions. We plan to continue with our monthly connects on skill development webinars and aligned to our values Power each other up #wepowerUP.

Q7: There are not many women in project management. How do you explain this situation?

Patra: For me the challenge comes from within. We women believe we can do better and wait for perfection, sometimes we don't step up to showcase our capabilities enough in the workplace, thereby losing out on opportunities. I believe the barrier lies within.

Q8: What shall be done to improve the situation?

Patra: I believe we should start early, we women leaders can groom, kindle the passion in young women in colleges or universities through mentoring and guidance.

This is one of our goals in WeMentor – Mentoring initiative of Women PowerUP Network. As of now WeMentor focusses on mentoring women leaders to achieve their goals.

In the workplace we need to ensure we take care of our unconscious bias and provide equal opportunities to all.

Q9: You have created two communities: Why? What do communities bring to leaders nowadays?

Patra: Communities in my opinion are excellent opportunities for peer-peer learning. Communities can connect to real people, working on real projects on the ground and thereby spurring learning opportunities from real

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life experience. And with virtual communities which transcends across boundaries, leaders can improve their cultural intelligence, which is so important nowadays, where our teams have become, global, dispersed and virtual.

Q10: You are a passionate volunteer (pro bono). What does volunteering bring you? Or to leaders?

Patra: Volunteering has changed my life. I am true proponent of the word 'Volunesia'; meaning- a moment when you forget that you're volunteering to help change lives, because it's changing yours.

Volunteering with PMI has helped me to connect with people across the globe and an opportunity to share my expertise and experience with them I love giving back to the community and I truly believe what you give will come back.

I am open to new ideas and diverse perspectives, and I believe volunteering provides opportunity for the same to build innovative solutions

Q10: What do you wish/foresee for 2022 in the project management world?

Patra: Project Management in 2022 and beyond in my opinion can be summarized as "Being Human in a hybrid world"

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About the Interviewer

Yasmina Khelifi

Paris, France

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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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