

Project Managers can gain Experience, Knowledge and Confidence

Interview with Eiji Taoka ¹

Information Systems Project Director
Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games
Toshiba, Tokyo, Japan



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

Introduction to the interviewee

Eiji Taoka is a project and program management professional with more than 30 years managing projects. He began his career at Toshiba as a systems engineer before moving to project management. His last assignment was the project director of the information system of the Tokyo organising committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Throughout his career he developed relationship with partners such as project leader and PMO.

He graduated from Business Break Through University, Graduate school of Business, Tokyo, Japan, Management specialty (March 2017) and Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Technology,, Tokyo, Japan, Machine systems engineering department (March 1990). He holds two Certifications – PMP (Project management professional) and FP3 (Financial planner level 3)

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Interview

Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. You were project director of the information system for The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Could you tell us what your main responsibilities were?

Eiji Taoka (Taoka): I belonged to the technology service division as a project manager for the information system. I was responsible for developing some new systems for the Games. During the Games time, we were operating and monitoring all IT systems at the operations center. If incidents happened, we needed to solve the problem immediately.

Q2: What were the main challenges you faced?

Taoka: Before I joined the Olympic and paralympic organization, I did not use English for business. After I joined this organization, I studied English every day for two years. I could manage the international team though I didn't speak English fluently and sometimes had difficult situations because I didn't understand what the team member mentioned.

Q3: You've been working in project management in Japan for more than 30 years. What are the evolutions you've seen in the project management field?

Taoka: I always used the waterfall style of project management. Recently, the Agile style became a major project management style. I think this is a big change.

Q4: Japan is a country that mixes a strong insightful culture and living traditions with western culture. Does it influence project management?

Taoka: Yes. When a project was composed of almost all Japanese, we didn't need to explain the detail of the design. However, when a project was composed of mixed cultures, we needed to explain it in more detail.

Q5: How is project management perceived in Japan? Do the young graduates move to project management careers? Why?

Taoka: When I worked in the IT industry, there were a lot of project managers. A project manager has perceived as the most important position in our industry. However, young graduates do not become PM immediately because in project management it is important to experience a lot.

Q6: What are the 2 skills every project manager shall have based on your experiences?

Taoka: To find issues and solve problems using soft skills and data.

Q7: Do you have a last message to PWJ readers, please?

Taoka: Though there may be a lot of hard situations, you can have a lot of experience, knowledge, and confidence when a project finishes.

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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