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Interview

Global Megatrends Reveal Greatest Challenges for Society & Project Professionals

Interview with Joe Cahill[1]

Chief Customer Officer
Project Management Institute (PMI)

Interviewed by Ipek Sahra Ozguler
International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Istanbul, Turkey

Introduction to the interviewee

Joe Cahill is the Chief Customer Officer (CCO), at PMI and is responsible for their Global Customer Group. He oversees the Global Customer Engagement Team, the Global Customer Experience Team and PMI's eight geographic regions. Joe previously held the positions of COO, Interim CEO and SVP of Finance and Administration in his time with PMI.

Joe has over 20 years of senior leadership experience including digital transformation, strategic planning, enterprise system implementation and new business development. Across technology, manufacturing and energy sectors, he has effectively helped build companies and lead change in large organizations. Joe also serves as a UN Global Compact Network USA board member, representing NGOs, to help drive initiatives that further UNGC's mission and purpose

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Ipek Sahra Ozguler (Ozguler): *First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ about PMI's annual Global Megatrends report. Can you please provide an overview of the report?*

Joe Cahill (Cahill): Thank you for having me. In this report, Project Management Institute (PMI) identified six global megatrends and examined their impact on organizations, project professionals, and changemakers in 2022 and beyond. To be the most effective leader possible, it's imperative to develop an understanding of where the world is headed, what it means for organizations, and how to contribute to the solution. Our annual Global Megatrends 2022 report offers a broad global context, evaluating long-term trends, research, and industry data from around the world, and features firsthand perspectives from project professionals leading change now.

The six trends we identified all have the potential of continued impact on both business and society — from digital disruption to movements for equality that are reshaping every corner of the globe. However, understanding the trends affecting our world is only the first step to overcoming or embracing them. Our community has the greatest impact when we take big ideas and get to work on the grueling task of implementing them. Therefore, it's not enough that we understand the implications of big challenges like the climate crisis or growing economic inequality — it will also be up to this community to help reimagine and drive solutions, inspiring changemakers and organizations worldwide to deliver value. We support project professionals as they continue forging paths forward by offering the courses, certifications, tools, and resources that empower them to enact positive change.

Ozguler: *What are the global Megatrends emerging for 2022 and their impact on organizations, project professionals, and changemakers?*

Cahill: The six global megatrends emerging for 2022 are:

- Digital Disruption
- Climate Crisis
- Demographic Shifts
- Economic Shifts
- Labor Shortages
- Civil, Civic and Equality Movements

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In 2021, we learned there might not be a new normal, but rather the perpetual and accelerating pace of change. Therefore, we actively monitor the technological dynamics, demographic shifts, and complexities of globalization reshaping our world. With COVID-19 and the threat of future pandemics, more will be required of us to meet the challenges of exposed long-standing flaws and inequities, such as unequal vaccine distribution and supply chain turmoil. Even as we strive for balance in our interactions with the many worlds we move in — virtual and physical, personal, and public — we must innovate to make a new and better reality. While we embrace the benefits and acknowledge the risks of the all-encompassing digital era, we also recognize that people remain central as the real drivers of innovation.

Ozguler: _Digital disruption is changing the way organizations operate. Advanced technologies like AI and cloud computing are at the helm of this change. Can you please give more information about the benefits and risks of utilizing advanced technologies? How can organizations and project professionals prepare for the evolution of the digital age?_

Cahill: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation was already underway, with many organizations redefining their core business models to gain a competitive advantage in an unceasingly changing marketplace of products and ideas. Technologies like cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence (AI) were deployed to enhance the customer experience, boost employee efficiency, and improve project outcomes. The pandemic significantly accelerated an expansion of digital technologies, especially tools to enable online collaboration and remote work. The trend toward remote work had been gaining speed, facilitated by digitization and improved connectivity. But any barriers or hesitation about adopting a remote model were swept aside as the ability to work from home became necessary to keep businesses running.

Keeping up with ongoing digital transformation — and ensuring these technologies are used to their full potential while also mitigating risks — will require ongoing training and upskilling from both organizations and individuals. For example, to support meaningful application of AI, organizations will need to invest in acquiring or training IT and data specialists, create a strategy for data governance, and maintain transparency. Organizations that proactively experiment with new technologies while upskilling and reskilling their teams will have a competitive edge in preparing for the evolution of the digital age.

Ozguler: _What are the top digital-age skills for project professionals and changemakers? Why is it important to focus on reskilling and upskilling initiatives?_

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Cahill: Because these new ways of working rely heavily on digital and written, rather than verbal communications, the most crucial skills for both project professionals and changemakers today are interpersonal skills, or "power skills," such as collaborative leadership, problem-solving, and flexibility. These skills are now just as important to organizations as business acumen and ways of working like predictive, agile, or design thinking. Having power skills can help forge deeper connections, easing some of the difficulties of not being in the same physical space, allowing for a more integrated team environment as colleagues work together through technology in this digital age.

In this virtual landscape, low-code/no-code platforms can give professionals more autonomy over their projects. The citizen developer movement enables a "hyper-agile" way of working where anyone can become both the user and the creator of software applications. This empowers professionals to take an idea and design, build, test, and deploy it faster and cheaper. Given the rapid pace of digital transformation, people need to leverage technology, including custom apps and software solutions, to help them deliver outcomes more efficiently and effectively.

The rapid adoption of citizen development understandably makes IT departments nervous due to the potential security and management risks involved, but reskilling and upskilling initiatives on best practices can help alleviate those concerns. As leaders continue to invest and hone these skills across organizations to keep pace with digital transformation, it's just as critical to ensure these efforts are deployed safely and in a scalable manner. PMI Citizen Developer™ provides individuals with the methods and standards required to develop customized applications that are still within their organization's infrastructure and governance models. These standards educate professionals on how to properly customize applications and alleviate the cybersecurity concerns from IT teams.

Ozguler: *To overcome the climate crisis, sustainability practices must be built into every project and process. Can you explain these implications for project professionals? What is the role of the project manager to drive sustainability?*

Cahill: World leaders who took the stage at COP26 in Glasgow last fall declared the need for urgent action. The race towards net-zero and the pressure to meet 2030 climate goals in such a short time is accelerating the movement, yet progress in addressing climate change has been elusive, and even with such activities, the situation is getting worse. Sustainability practices will need to be built into every project and process if the world is to arrest the most damaging effects of global warming.

To help turn the tide, organizations must take on more responsibility and recognize the crucial role project managers play in delivering on those commitments. One-fifth of the

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world's largest corporations have set net-zero targets. Many more need to do the same and they 'll need to join forces with government, academia, and other organizations. Increased investment in sustainability projects is imperative, particularly in industries that produce the most emissions, such as energy production and transportation.

According to PMI research, almost 40% of organizations reported major barriers to improving social impact, with just 33% of projects delivering improvements for the environment. This is primarily due to a lack of financial resources and organizational commitment. Project managers must pledge their support and help their organization incorporate sustainability practices into every function, process, and decision across the value chain. This will require effective cross-enterprise collaboration that already comes naturally to project professionals, further cementing their key role in driving sustainability programs forward. Encouraging this mindset and connecting projects with purpose can increase retention and improve productivity, paving the way for real action.

Ozguler: *Demographic shifts is another megatrend. The report states that "the global economy needs 25 million new project management professionals by 2030." What needs to be done to ensure we can close the talent gap and help develop the next generation of project professionals?*

Cahill: As more industries become project-oriented, organizations will need to ensure their employees acquire the skills they need to work smarter. To fill the gap, organizations need to focus on upskilling employees and building a culture that promotes continual learning. Careers will increasingly revolve around a portfolio of projects rather than a bulleted list of static job responsibilities, and employees will be assessed by their ability to deliver outcomes. Continual learning is crucial to ensure project managers and changemakers have the resources, information, and opportunities available to succeed in their careers. Another way leaders can close the talent gap is by being more creative in their hiring processes – for example, considering candidates who live outside of their geographic areas of operation or those who have acquired skills through courses, certifications, and on-the-job training rather than a formal college degree.

To develop talent, organizations need to champion new learning initiatives to equip employees with power skills, business acumen, and new ways of working. From addressing technological needs to ensuring project managers have the skills and knowledge needed to bring projects to life, leaders and professionals can turn to PMI for their various needs. PMI's Organizational Transformation (OT) Series is a series of self-paced virtual courses that help empower leaders and their teams to create a culture that supports transformation, future growth, and success. Certifications like the Project Management Professional (PMP)® and Certified Associate in Project Management

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(CAPM)® are great options for professionals at varying stages of their project management careers.

There are many paths to becoming a project professional for all generations. In a post-pandemic future, project leaders can drive real change, and the time is now to ensure we are filling these gaps and ensuring professionals are prepared for the future.

Ozguler: *In the report, technology strategist Takeshi Hayama, Ph.D., PMP, talks about solving Japan's aging workforce through globalization and using AI and robots to fill talent gaps. Do you think these solutions are viable in other countries with labor shortages, as well? Why or why not?*

Cahill: As digital transformation evolves and organizations continue to capitalize on the enormous benefits of digitization, we will continue to see this rapid adoption of technology to help fill talent gaps and speed up transformation efforts across industries and sectors. But I think what we will see is organizations utilizing these digital technologies to help upskill their workforces to fill these talent gaps quicker and more efficiently.

And not only will we see organizations prioritizing upskilling, but we will also see employees demanding these opportunities. Whether via professional development or through obtaining advanced degrees or certifications, upskilling is a way for workers to evolve their skills and expertise amidst this rapid evolution of technology. In doing so, employees can advance with the tide and gain new skills that will be valuable to them and their organizations down the road.

While technological solutions will always be important in helping to solve labor shortages, PMI recognizes that people are at the forefront of addressing these shortages, and we offer an array of certifications that can help in upskilling initiatives like our flagship PMP certification and the newly released Construction Professional in Built Environment Projects (CPBEP)™ suite of online courses and micro-credentials. Knowing your organizational needs for today and the future, coupled with consideration for your employees' career goals and passion points, will allow you to address talent shortages thoughtfully and with a future-focused mindset for your people, your organization, and your industry.

Ozguler: *With the right strategies in place, businesses can mitigate global supply chain risks and facilitate cross-border collaboration to meet the demands of globalization. What are some strategies that can help collaboration efforts to meet these demands?*

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Cahill: The pandemic caused us to reexamine all aspects of the global supply chain — everything from the availability of critical goods to the environmental impacts of sourcing raw materials and the working conditions of those involved. In this moment of reset, we're presented with the opportunity to work together to create a more ethical and responsible supply chain. As with all sustainability initiatives, this will require the commitment and coordination of many different stakeholders working together in pursuit of a shared goal.

As with any project, we must start by asking the following questions: where are we starting, where do we want to be by the end, and what are the steps and processes along the way? To reestablish a thriving global economy, it's imperative that we view these processes as everyone's business, especially when it comes to issues related to sustainability and social impact.

When done right — for example, by considering the ESG performance of suppliers — companies set themselves up for successfully integrating sustainability-related goals across organizations and within the global supply chain. Not focusing on ESG imperatives is the greatest risk to the global supply chain. So, an essential strategy for businesses around the world starts with knowing who is involved within the supply chain — both at the organizational and national levels. By paying attention to the details at every stage of the process, you are ensuring these risks are minimal, and if they do arise, you have a plan in place for addressing them.

Ozguler: *Could you please share how organizations can overcome the labor shortages during the Great Resignation?*

Cahill: As workers have grappled with the ripple effects of the pandemic and gravitated to organizations whose values align with their own, organizational leadership has been forced to take a hard look at not only where they want to go, but what talent is required to ensure they get there. PMI recently conducted a survey of 1,000 office workers who looked for a job in the prior six months, and the data revealed that workers have a desire to learn new skills. For example, 46% of office workers are interested in learning technical skills (46%), while about one-third (35%) are interested in learning project management skills.

And equally important, workers want to hone power skills — those interpersonal skills that allow people to connect with and understand one another. Our survey found that problem-solving (59%) and communication (54%) are the top two interpersonal skills job seekers are highlighting on their resumes, proving that these skills are just as imperative as technical skills in the workplace.

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So, what does this mean for organizational leadership? It means leaders need to provide upskilling, reskilling, and learning and development programs for their people — and most importantly, opportunities and programs that align with their workers' interests. That starts with having open and honest conversations with your employees about their passions and career goals and then acting on those conversations by delivering where there is a need.

Furthermore, this must be a priority across the organization, including the C-suite. As mentioned in our recent Narrowing the Talent Gap research, making talent management a C-suite priority ensures that workers feel seen, valued, and heard. By elevating their organizations' learning and development programs, leaders can foster meaningful opportunities for their people using new, innovative, and diverse methods and demonstrate investment in their professional development and career goals.

Ozguler: *The last trend is Civil, Civic, and Equality Movements. Why is it important for organizational leaders to embed DE&I efforts into every function, process and decision throughout their enterprises?*

Cahill: It's no longer a question of whether DE&I should be a priority within organizations; it's an imperative. Embedding DE&I into your organization (and at all points of the business) ensures that you are giving everyone the same chance to contribute, grow, and thrive. Similarly, a culture that embraces different perspectives will enable creative thinking and adaptability, resulting in improved business outcomes. This is, in fact, the topic we are addressing at our June Virtual Experience Series event – how you can build resilient organizations through DEI and what true inclusion really looks like.

When people are exposed to perspectives and experiences that differ from their own, they are given the chance to grow and contribute in new ways that likely wouldn't have been possible without those different points of view. At the individual and organizational level, everyone wins. When everyone feels valued and heard, you'll experience a cultural shift — a shift that results in better business and people outcomes as you attract and retain talent.

Ozguler: Thank you for giving detail information.

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About the Interviewer

Ipek Sahra Ozguler

Istanbul, Turkey

Ipek Sahra Ozguler graduated from the Istanbul University, Turkey with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering and from Middle East Technical University, Turkey with an MSc degree in Software Management. As a project manager, she has more than 13 years of experience in various areas such as portfolio management, program management, project management, software management, business analysis. She became a certified PMP in 2012 and a certified SCRUM Master in 2014.

She has gained broader insights in a variety of projects across manufacturing, defence, FMCG (Cola Cola), insurance (Euler Hermes), audit (Deloitte), telecommunication, aviation and finance sectors. In addition, she has been working as an international correspondent for the PM World Journal since 2014.

Ipek is the creator and editor of the highly acclaimed book, The Perspective of Women Project Management Professionals, interviews with leading female PM experts and professionals around the world. The book was published in March 2020 and is available here.

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