

Knowledge, Networking and Social Impact!

Interview with Ricardo Naciff¹

President of PMI France Chapter
The Project Group, Lyon, France



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi
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Introduction to the interviewee

Ricardo has more than 20-year experience designing and implementing Project, Program & Portfolio Management solutions in South America and Europe for a wide range of industries such as Oil & Gas, Chemical, Non-metallic Mining, Automotive and Aeronautics. Today, Ricardo is part of The Project Group team.

[www.theprojectgroup.com]

In addition, Ricardo teaches Project Management at the IAE International MBA in France and is a staunch evangelizer for PMI on many different levels, serving today as President of PMI France, the largest PMI chapter outside of the US.

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Interview

Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. You have been volunteering at Project Management Institute (PMI) for more than 10 years. How did you discover PMI and come up with the idea of volunteering?

Ricardo Naciff (Naciff): The very first time I heard about PMI was in Argentina, in 2004, when I was working as Purchasing Manager for a project-based company working on the Oil & Gas industry. This is an industry with high requirements and having a standard way of framing and tracking project is critical. The company was implementing a global PMO, so PMI entered the discussion as a global reference.

At that point, I began to think about doing an MBA, but the best intermediary step prior an MBA was to hold a PMP certification. I was more likely to run a project than a company.

Q2: What are two things you have learned through volunteering at PMI?

Naciff: I was born in Argentina, where volunteering can sound very strange. Work for free? Why? This is not too smart, isn't it? Well, actually, it depends. Payback is not about money but experience and networking. So, in order to step into the volunteer world, you must first understand the value of experience and networking. Of course, you can gain experience and networking where you work, but PMI proposes an environment beyond the borders of your own company.

One of the things I have learned is "delegation". I am an engineer (I know, no one is perfect 😊) and as an engineer I like details, I like things done my way. Moving from technical to managerial roles could be tough. When you start managing teams, you need to delegate activities and this fact means that each individual of the team is going to carry out the activities in his own way, with his own level of details, with his own style. It is perfectly normal. So, delegating is accepting that things are going to be done differently from how you would have done them. I had to go through a process to learn that, and I was able to walk that process because PMI proposes a sandbox where volunteers can learn in a secure environment.

Another example is connecting with people. It took me a bit of time to understand the power of networking. Connecting with the right people is maybe the most important thing to do for any professional. Here also PMI proposes a huge critical mass of project manager practitioners around the globe.

PMI is not only the most important project management certification player in the world, but also gives the opportunity to learn by doing thanks its volunteer programs.

Q3: PMI France is among one of the 5 largest chapters in the world. Why did you apply for becoming the President of PMI France Chapter?

Naciff: For sure, it was a mistake! 😊 No, seriously, I have a very strong vision about what is the value proposition a chapter must develop to meet members and volunteers' expectations. After volunteering for more than 15 years within PMI in Argentina and France, I thought it was time to lead the chapter. It is difficult for a chapter to understand the PMI global strategy and try to implement it locally. So, we started the reverse way: starting from the expectations to then define the strategy. We began a number of activities like the "voice of the customer", surveys, interviews, etc to make sure we understand the French Project Management market.

The whole activity of collective intelligence was very interesting! Today, the chapter has a solid strategic plan, owned by the whole volunteer's community. We are proud of the work done, but there is so much still to do.

Q4: This is also a volunteer role. How many hours do you dedicate to this role?

Naciff: This estimate is very hard. As a passionate volunteer, I am all day long juggling between my work and the PMI France initiatives: I support volunteers on their projects, coordinating activities and aligning efforts. So, it is difficult to estimate the number of hours per week. I could say between 5 and 15.

Q5: What outcomes are you most proud of as President of PMI France Chapter?

Naciff: Internally, I understood PMI France had a lack of governance 2 years ago, so I concentrated a lot of energy by creating FOCUS, our portfolio of initiatives to govern the chapter. Today, all those 54 initiatives are aligned with at least one strategic objective. I am very proud of this.

Externally, COVID shocked every human organisation in the world so, for the NGOs this shock was amplified. If your work is in danger, your volunteer activities are the first to stop. I was afraid that PMI France was in trouble regarding the number of volunteers and their commitment. And the answer was incredible: First the French Congress in Avignon in March 2022: almost 500 attendees in a magnificent Palais du Pape, a venue full of history. And later the French Volunteer Meeting in Nice in September 2022: almost 70 volunteers coming all over France to become stronger together. Both were solid signs that PMI France is in excellent health.

Q6: What do you think you could have done better?

Naciff: I guess, there are a lot of things we could have done better but I believe the things we have done where essential to prepare the chapter for the future. On the other hand, I suppose we could have made them faster. But we must keep in mind that this huge chapter is alive thanks its volunteers. No one receives monetized compensation. So, time is the setting variable.

Q7: What is the strategy for PMI France Chapter in the coming years?

Naciff: The strategy is simple, to keep our activities focused on: Knowledge, Networking and Social Impact. Local chapters' value proposition is complementary to the PMI certifications. The notion of community is essential.

In addition, we believe that the chapter should be more attractive to the NextGen. PMPDays is a great initiative to connect students with companies and thanks to it more than 300 students connect their next employers every year. But it is not enough, we need to adapt the project management to their new language. This is a huge challenge.

Behind every single detail at PMI France, assuredly, a team of volunteers is working. Nothing happens without our volunteers. So, a cornerstone of our strategy is focused on them: may the volunteer experience be a pleasure.

Q8: When you finish your mandate as PMI France President, will you still volunteer at PMI?

Naciff: Transitions between presidents were always a sensitive point for us. When I took the role in 2021, I had almost no handover and it took me almost 6 months to discover every single activity on my own. This is obviously bad for the chapter. I am committed to avoid this situation in the future. So, I will spend my last year on the Board of Directors to support the next president.

After that, I will see. PMI France has a very interesting initiative called Next Job Program which takes advantage of the increasing demand for project managers in the French market and targets unemployed to retrain as project managers by getting one of PMI's certifications. I would love to push this initiative forward!

Q9: Do you have a last message to PWJ readers, please?

Naciff: If I have to take stock of my participation in PMI, not only my current role as chapter president, I would say that the best is, without a doubt, the people I have met during all these years.

Religions, races, beliefs, cultures, in short, diversity is part of PMI's DNA and being part of that diversity is reciprocal wealth: for each individual and as a community. I invite PMWJ readers to discover more about PMI and its more than 300 chapters and, if we are lucky, to share the journey together.

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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