

Let's Direct our Potential for Creating Something Good and Useful!

Interview with Lenka Pincot, PMP ¹

Chief of Staff to the CEO
Project Management Institute
Born in the Czech Republic, currently residing in Paris, France



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi
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Introduction to the interviewee

As PMI's Chief of Staff to the CEO, Lenka Pincot supports the CEO and the Executive Team in enterprise initiative planning and execution. She heads the Executive Communications, Culture & Change, and Thought Leadership & Content teams. She also leads the Enterprise Project Management Office and Brightline Initiative.

Lenka brings extensive international experience and a proven track record in setting and executing strategic vision, digital transformation leadership, culture shifts, and enhancing organizational agility. She is highly accomplished in the practices of stakeholder and customer relationship management, leadership by influencing and facilitation, problem-solving, and building high-performing teams.

Prior to joining PMI, Lenka held leadership roles focusing on organizational transformation, Agile leadership, and relationship management. Most recently, Lenka served as the Head of Agile Transformation at the leading European bank, where she defined the organization's transformation vision and strategy, built a high-performing

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transformation team, and executed the roadmap while onboarding business and IT talent. Lenka promoted customer centricity, implemented Citizen Development practices, and contributed to their digital leadership in the market.

Lenka holds a Master of Science in Computer Sciences from Charles University. She has earned a Digital Excellence Diploma from the IMD Business School of Switzerland and completed the European Women in Boards C-Level Program. She holds international certifications in project management, agile practices, and business analysis, including the following PMI Credentials: PMP, PMI-PBA, and PMI-ACP. Prior to joining the PMI organization in her current capacity, Lenka has supported PMI in multiple volunteering roles, most recently serving as the President of the Czech Republic Chapter.

Interview

Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. Let us explore the different aspects of your career. How did you come to project management?

Lenka Pincot (Lenka): The first time I learned about project management was in the year 2001. I was at the beginning of my career, working as an analyst for an international management and strategy consultancy company, and I was assigned to a project for one of our biggest customers in the Czech market. We had a great start, but we suddenly had to regroup because the senior leader of the project had to leave the assignment, and it took two-three months to source another leader. I remember the moment when I was looking around myself and thinking that there must be a way, some anchoring concept, that we can lean on given the unexpected circumstances.

And there was – project management! I was intrigued by the risk management approaches and stakeholder management tools and was totally amazed by the fact that there are indeed procedures and practices available to stay calm, collected, and structured. It was 2001, I had not yet even graduated from college at that time, so everything about project management was brand new for me.

Later on, I invested my time to understand project management better. I became a junior trainer of project management for our clients and actively sought opportunities to manage larger and more strategic projects. I also pursued professional certifications to formalize my commitment and enhance my knowledge, ultimately achieving the prestigious [Project Management Professional \(PMP\)®](#) certification from [Project Management Institute](#) (PMI).

Project management was always a crucial part of my jobs, a skill I applied to accomplish my challenging assignments and a steppingstone towards my true passion – leading enterprise-wide transformations.

Q2: How did you come into the role of Chief of Staff to PMI CEO?

Lenka: I believe that any career move is a combination of recognizing the opportunity and at the same time, being ready to step up.

Prior to joining PMI in the role of Chief of Staff to the CEO, I was an executive transformation leader in the financial industry, working with other leaders and our board of directors to enhance our organizational agility, customer focus, and digital capabilities. During this time, I also volunteered as President of the PMI Czech Republic Chapter. Therefore, I followed the development of PMI very closely, I was part of the European chapter President community, and I participated in other global PMI volunteering initiatives, such as being part of the PMI Strategic Panel.

PMI has always been very important to me because of its purpose, mission, and dedication to the global community of project professionals and the advancement of the profession itself. PMI certification helped me to get my first enterprise-wide transformation leadership role. Through volunteering I discovered a whole new meaning of the sense of belonging and realized how much we can all achieve once we share our experience and knowledge for the greater good. So, when PMI welcomed its new CEO, Pierre Le Manh, I felt this was an excellent opportunity to support the PMI organization at a higher level than I could as a volunteer.

I met with Pierre and showed my interest in supporting the PMI organization with my transformation skills. The interview process was rigorous, but the effort paid off, and I couldn't be happier or prouder to join the PMI Executive team.

Q3: What are your activities as a Chief of Staff to the CEO?

Lenka: The purpose of the Chief of Staff role is to support the CEO in overseeing the entire operation and partner with other executives to ensure the smooth execution of enterprise-wide change initiatives and the overall successful execution of our strategy.

My responsibilities go hand-in-hand with our current priorities. I focus on the matters that require the direct involvement of our CEO, attend regular meetings with our Board of Directors to ensure follow-up on agreed actions and decisions, and support relationship development with our key partners. I spend a significant portion of my days prioritizing, coordinating, communicating, and keeping myself up to date with all the important developments, whether caused by the external environment or a result of our internal decisions and the progress of enterprise initiatives.

Q4: You're also responsible for Thought Leadership & Content and the Brightline Initiative. Could you explain to us what is the goal of Thought Leadership & Content? What are the topics of the next reports?

Lenka: As the Head of the Office of the CEO, I oversee five teams that must work closely with our CEO because of their strategic significance. Two of these teams develop thought leadership content. They aim to use global research, partner with academia, and

engage SMEs from the PMI global community to produce data-driven thought leadership content that drives the advancement of the project management profession.

PMI's Thought Leadership function operates on three distinct layers. The first layer focuses on providing actionable insight for professionals to help them lead successful projects. The second layer monitors key trends impacting the profession and provides insight into future challenges. The third layer explores new topics that impact the profession and pairs project management with other disciplines that have the potential to innovate the profession by complementing our research.

PMI's global [Thought Leadership](#) team provides insight for project professionals and PMO leaders, while [Brightline Initiative](#) is specifically focused on the audience of C-level executives. As such, Brightline explores the success drivers for enterprise-wide organizational transformations and strategy execution.

Most recently, we released a report, [Building Resilience Through Strategic Risk Management](#), and paper, [The Path to Project Success: Essential Project Skills for Young Professionals](#). In the future, you might expect to read about the role of Artificial Intelligence in project management, how to use System Thinking to approach highly complex projects, or dive into the 2nd edition of the Digital Transformation Playbook produced by Brightline and Thinkers50.

Q5: What will Brightline Initiative focus on the future?

Lenka: The Brightline team is currently exploring the topic of sustainable innovation. We collaborate with the leading experts in this field to inspire aspirational project professionals to tackle challenges that are typically presented to CEOs – for example, how to innovate to support business growth while driving sustainability, and how to apply innovation strategies to make sustainability-focused initiatives successful.

Q6: You were also an active PMI volunteer. I now have a personal question: How has volunteering helped your career?

Lenka: Thank you for this question. The truth is that volunteering helped me in my career a lot! I entered a network of similar-minded professionals, engaged in meaningful discussions that broadened my perspectives, improved my communication and leadership skills, challenged myself to move out of my comfort zone, and learned new skills.

Beyond these benefits that helped me achieve my career objectives, I discovered something much more important. I experienced what it means to be part of a purpose-driven organization and, frankly, it changed me. I realized that we have the power to decide how much we want to use our energy to create an impact and contribute to a sustainable future. And it is our choice, our decision, to direct our potential for creating something good and useful.

Q7: What are the 3 skills needed by a project manager to thrive in the future?

Lenka: We all see the increased speed of change, are flooded with information with unclear value, and routinely face multiple situations simultaneously with a high sense of urgency. Today's workforce requires quick decision-making while dealing with a high level of uncertainty, and that can be quite overwhelming.

Project managers who continuously work on refreshing and developing their skills across all three dimensions of the [PMI Talent Triangle](#) (ways of working, business acumen and power skills) are already well-equipped to handle these challenges. The key is to stay up to date with current trends and utilize the collective wisdom of the project management community, which is based on a wealth of shared practical experience and validated best practices.

To set yourself up for success and thrive in the evolving landscape, I propose focusing on three essential skills to stay open-minded and agile:

1. **Ability to see the big picture:** Fully understanding a project's content and strategic relevance is a crucial element in decision-making and maximizing the value delivered by a project.
2. **Ability to apply structure to new situations:** Our environment changes so frequently that we must nurture our personal agility to stay resilient. However, agility is not synonymous with unplanned chaos. In fact, agility requires efficient structures that allow for fast feedback and course corrections while avoiding unnecessary rework and team frustration caused by a lack of direction.
3. **Ability to learn and apply new knowledge:** The importance of lifelong learning is well understood but cannot be emphasized enough. Investment in learning becomes more meaningful when we can translate that knowledge into tangible improvements in project success.

Q8: Do you have a last message to PWJ readers, please?

Lenka: Never stop learning and being curious. Progress is impossible without challenging the status quo, so go for it!

Lifelong learning is essential, and professional certifications affirm your commitment to continuous improvement and your areas of expertise. For those wondering where to start, PMI's [website](#) offers an abundance of valuable information and resources to kickstart (or revive) your learning process.

Those who are just starting their certification journeys should consider PMI's [Certified Associate in Project Management \(CAPM\)®](#) certification. This certification was recently updated to place greater emphasis on enhancing on-the-job effectiveness and equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge required to excel in real-world project environments. The beauty of this credential is that it doesn't require previous project

experience, and there is a wealth of learning resources at your disposal. It offers a structured pathway designed to equip you with the foundational knowledge you need.

In addition to broader certifications like the PMP and CAPM, organizations like PMI also offer more niche certifications for specific industries and project management frameworks – so there is truly something for everyone. For the ambitious individuals seeking to enter or advance within the world of project management, remember to harness the knowledge of your community and seek out certifications and other learning opportunities to become a capable and confident project professional – and empower yourself to create something positive and meaningful, too.

About the Interviewer



Yasmina Khelifi

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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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