

## **Project Managers who upskill will thrive!**

### **Interview with Sam Sibley <sup>1</sup>**

Global Head, Emerging Products and Innovation  
Project Management Institute



#### **Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi**

International Correspondent, PM World Journal  
Paris, France

#### **Introduction to the interviewee**

Sam Sibley is an ex professional tennis player turned business leader who has a passion for emerging technology and how it is changing the way the world operates. Sam is the Global Head of Emerging Products & Innovation at the Project Management Institute (PMI). He leads PMI's Emerging Products & Innovation group that includes AI and is based in London, UK.

#### **Interview**

**Q1:** First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. You are a former professional tennis player. How did you move from Tennis Pro to the corporate life?

**Sam Sibley (Sibley):** I realised that I wasn't quite good enough to make it to the top of tennis so I had to make a change. I was also coaching professionally but always had

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a passion for technology and entrepreneurship which is why I moved into corporate life. Playing a professional sport at the highest level is a gift but for those who just come up short (like me), it is a hard industry to make a decent living from. I found my transition from sport to business quite easy to adapt to. I set up a tennis academy where I coached some of the most talented children in the country. This also taught me the basics of how to run a business in a highly competitive market, how to build a good offering that solves a need in the market, how to market to the audiences whom I wanted to engage with, and how to ensure the business had good financial stability. I did this for a few years which gave me a really strong foundation to build on as I moved into business life.

**Q2:** At PMI you are the global head of emerging products. What are your responsibilities?

**Sibley:** I am responsible for some of PMI's new emerging product portfolios, but the main focus is on emerging technology and how areas such as AI are impacting the project management profession. My role is to ensure that we are building strong capabilities to support our global community for the future as the profession continues to evolve.

**Q3:** What do you think AI can bring to project management?

**Sibley:** AI is really creating a shift in mindset. It is focusing us, as humans, to approach our work in fundamentally new ways. The way technology enables us to create more value is changing by the week.

With all the opportunity that AI brings to the world, and to our profession, there are plenty of risks and pitfalls that must be carefully navigated.

AI is and will continue to have a large impact on project management, and I feel it's only just the beginning of the journey. For project professionals, AI is an enabler, an accelerator, a catalyst for creating more value. Automated AI workflows take the mundane tasks off your to do list which allows project leaders to focus on the more complex (human) parts of project management. Humans and AI interlink and work hand in hand.

AI is not replacing project managers (PM) per se. But AI savvy PM's will certainly replace those who fall behind the curve. A lot of the most complex areas of project management are human related such as effective communication and stakeholder management. AI can help augment this but it won't replace the role that a PM plays. As we focus on how we can improve the rates of project success, AI will certainly move the needle by allowing PMs to have more time to be more effective in human decision making.

I also think that PM's can play an important role with managing the risks, especially on defining the right governance of how AI can be embedded safely into project execution.

**Q4:** You volunteered in various organizations and you are still doing that, not only at PMI. Why? What has volunteering brought to your career and to you?

**Sibley:** I volunteer for some early stage tech start ups. It's always good to give back and it certainly feels rewarding for me. I also have good relationships with some local charities where I both volunteer and donate.

**Q5:** Based on your experiences in Tennis and in the corporate life, as an investor, what are the skills needed by project managers to thrive?

**Sibley:** Resilience – business isn't always forgiving. And it's now more competitive than ever so resilience is critical.

Adaptivity – everything is changing so rapidly so PM's need to have the skills to adapt, again and again.

Digital savvyness – In my view, technology is our second greatest asset after people. Understand it and leverage it to your advantage.

Focus on how you best apply Lifelong learning – learning is great but build skills that help you identify how to best action the skills learnt to add more value.

Always ask questions and be curious - this often uncovers far better ways of problem solving, creative thinking and collaboration.

And last, focus on being human. Be nice and fun to work with. I know it sounds obvious but projects are so much more enjoyable to work on and often are more successful when the culture and morale is positive and high.

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

**Sibley:** Stay ahead of the curve. Project Managers who upskill around emerging trends and technologies (such as AI) will thrive and be in high demand...those that don't will plateau and be far less effective and successful. It has never been easier to upskill and acquire knowledge. Be part of the PMIxAI journey <https://www.pmi.org/explore/ai-in-project-management> and join our fast growing AI global community here <https://www.projectmanagement.com/topics/artificial-intelligence/>

## 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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