

Follow Your Passion!

Interview with Connie Beck¹

Chair of the Board of Directors, Fellow
Australian Institute of Project Management
Graduate, Australian Institute of Company Directors
Member of the Executive Group, Urbis
Melbourne, Australia



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Paris, France

Introduction to the interviewee

Connie Beck has worked globally in the Information Technology industry for 25+ years across Consulting, Managed Services, M&A, Digital Transformations and Project/Portfolio Management.

She is a highly motivated strategic thinker, passionate about digital efficiency and embracing diversity and inclusion. She has extensive experience in managing large scale complex programs of work in digital transformation and driving innovation for stakeholders in C-suite roles across a plethora of industries in Government, Banking, Retail, FMCG, Manufacturing, Insurance, Utilities, Explosives, Agriculture, Fertiliser and Mining Industries.

Connie enjoys maintaining relevance in the industry as an active professional and is a

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registered Project Manager (RegPM), Certified Practising Portfolio Director (CPPD), and Fellow of the Australian Institute of Project Management as well as a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD). Currently the Chair of the Board for the Australian Institute of Project Management.

Connie is an accomplished digital, transformation and project management executive who specialises in equipping businesses with the capabilities needed to achieve their strategic objectives.

With her expertise centered around transforming technology as well as mining, and leveraging data that already exists within a company, Connie draws on her 20 years' experience consulting to public and private organisations to drive growth through innovation.

An inclusive leader, she is adamant that digitisation should create efficiencies for clients as well as the business. She believes that real transformation only happens with both internal and external uplift, such as the streamlining of business operations and an unmatched client experience to transform the way we work in a smarter and more collaboratively way.

Based in Melbourne, Connie is a member of the Executive Group at Urbis where she manages the Technology, Transformation & Digital teams.

Interview

Q1: First, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. Congratulations for being the AIPM Chair of the Board of Directors and let's dig deep. What are your ambitions for AIPM during your tenure?

Connie Beck (Beck): The AIPM has been an iconic part of our Australian project management community for a long time. Just reflecting back, our organisation was founded in 1976 as the Project Manager's Forum. We started with just 250 members; today we have over 8,000 members.

My vision as Chair of the Board is to reinvigorate our strategy to expand and refresh where we are heading. To provide value to our members and our corporate sponsors, to develop our members in their professional expertise, to continue our unique competency-based certifications that assist many companies to hire capability for their organisations. I also believe that post pandemic, there is a newfound importance and significance for the purpose of project management profession and the key role that PMs play.

Q2: What evolutions do you foresee in the project management ecosystem in Australia?

Beck: It feels to me like we are experiencing the same rapid development of the fourth industrial revolution that was had in the 1950's when project management tools were introduced with technology. Generative AI will play a significant efficiency role for project managers in the future due to its ability to process large datasets and patterns expeditiously. This can help project managers focus on more critical activities and assist with decision making. We all need to keep an open mind right now, however, there are still dark corners with generative AI so keeping this top of mind is key.

Q3: What do you think of the collaboration with other project management associations in Australia? And is it the case already?

Beck: There is some great collaboration already taking place, in fact we met the Chair of PMI who came to our National Conference last year and our CEO, Darius Danesh is liaising with other project management associations.

Q4: What challenges will project managers face in the future? How can they adapt?

Beck: Each industry will differ. In Information Technology it is a need for speed to implement projects with strong ROI - everything moves so fast now the latest greatest will be out of date and you will not receive a return. In construction, delays in rising costs, engineers face the same as well as the sustainability pressures in design and products used. All industries will face challenges that in turn put pressure on the overarching plans, budgets, scope and resources – welcome to the purpose of project management and ensuring that all these areas are managed.

Q5: Let's move to some personal questions. How did you first learn about project management?

Beck: I started in the legal industry and took a career turn many years ago. An opportunity came up to join a new part of the firm called "ICT"... this was in the mid-90s when technology was starting up – ccmil and shared PCs – a big experiment of collaboration – look at us now! I was assigned a few projects and then more, they got bigger, and I found my rhythm and study commenced. I have never looked back. Now I mentor regularly; we are about to start a Women in Project Management Network at AIPM, Women in Technology here at Urbis where I have hired 14 women in Technology – very proud of this growing group but still a way to go to get to 50/50. I am also very passionate about growing our next gen PMs.

Q6: How did you come to volunteer for AIPM?

Beck: After I got my RegPM and CPPD, I can recall my children were school age and I wanted to lift my profile, so started to attend communities of practice meetings, getting more involved in local chapter events. Many women will relate to this, so much of your life is juggling children and your career, there is no time left for anything else. It was nice to do something more for me and give back to the community. I participated as a judge for National Awards, Mentor Program for our Members, joined the Victorian

Chapter as a Councillor, ran as President then was approached to join the Board as a Director. It has been a fabulous journey. I feel so privileged and honoured to be Chair of the Board as we head into the next generation of our reinvigorated strategy coming soon.

Q7: What were some of your memorable experiences in project management, as both a team member and leader?

Beck: Great question ... Y2K project! The project where nothing happened! One could argue that it was my brilliant project management that resulted in this result, however, it was a long anticipated project and enormous investment. Another would be the mentor program and watching mentees grow and excel in their career, makes me proud... whenever I see some of them pop up on LinkedIn I just smile.

Q8 What are some of your most important personal lessons learned working on projects?

Beck: Planning and Stakeholder management! Both of equal importance, you must plan up front and include your key stakeholders. In my experience if you skip both of these you are not set up for success. This is why I joined AIPM as a member many years ago; our competency-based training assists our members to gain a qualification that is repeatedly updated and tested. I see many graduates join the world of project management and only have theory, there is no real in-depth experience.

Q10: Do you have a last message to PWJ readers, please?

Beck: Follow your passion as part of your profession. There is a great saying "find something you are passionate about and keep tremendously interested in it... I am still doing that today. And, if you have not already, find out who you are and do it on purpose, this way life is very enjoyable!

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 SA](#) (the large French multinational telecommunications corporation), she sharpened her global leadership skills, delivering projects with significant 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.

Yasmina can be contacted at <https://yasminakhelifi.com/> or LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/yasminakhelifi-pmp-telecom/>

Visit her correspondent profile at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/yasmina-khelifi/>