

Project Management is a Vital Lever for Achieving Strategic Outcomes and Shaping the Future!

Interview with Hanny Alshazly¹

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Introduction to the interviewee

Hanny Alshazly is the Managing Director for the Middle East and North Africa region at the Project Management Institute - PMI. He leads the regional strategy and growth, working with governments, academia, and industry to advance project management and strengthen professional communities across the region. With more than 25 years of global experience in education, he aligns strategy with learning objectives and works with education and government leaders to deliver measurable outcomes. He has led both multi-million-dollar initiatives and projects with national reach that bring together innovation in learning and organizational growth. Hanny's career includes senior leadership roles at leading global education technology firms such as D2L, Blackboard, and Ellucian, where he drove innovation and international business expansion. His

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focus is to combine deep expertise in learning with strategic business leadership to expand the impact of project management across MENA.

Hanny is a regular speaker at international conferences on education, project management, and organizational transformation. He contributes to the wider professional ecosystem through advisory roles and mentorship, including serving on advisory boards and as an External Mentor at Ajman University Innovation Center in the UAE. Hanny has received several international honors, including the Distinguished Alumni Award from Athabasca University in Canada, where he earned a Master of Education and an Advanced Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education and Technology. He also holds a B.Sc. in Computer Science with a focus on Business Administration from Dalhousie University in Canada.

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Interview

Q1: *First, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. As a PMI Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Managing Director, what are your primary responsibilities?*

Alshazly: As Managing Director for PMI in the Middle East and North Africa, I am responsible for leading our regional strategy and growth. My focus is on ensuring that our work across MENA remains aligned with PMI's global mission of building the capabilities of project professionals who play a central role in driving successful outcomes and advancing progress. Together with my team, I work closely with governments, academia, and industry leaders to deliver impactful initiatives and expand PMI's presence and partnerships. A key part of my role is also supporting our chapters and growing a strong community of members, volunteers, and certified professionals who are raising standards, sharing knowledge, and shaping the future of the profession across the region.

Q2: *What is PMI's strategy in MENA in the next 5 years?*

Alshazly: At PMI, we launched M.O.R.E. earlier this year as a call to action for the profession, reflecting the shift in mindset and behaviors needed to thrive and deliver successful outcomes. Alongside this, we introduced eight strategic content and innovation platforms that help professionals broaden their perspective, build communities, and focus on the areas shaping the future of project work. These include

artificial intelligence, agile, PMOs, social impact, sustainability, giga projects, product management, and change management.

In MENA, our focus is on continuing to strengthen partnerships with governments and organizations to support national visions across the region. These visions are designed to diversify economies, build local capabilities, and create sustainable futures, and project management plays a central role in making them a reality.

We are equally committed to the next generation of leaders. Through partnerships with top universities, we are equipping students with the tools, knowledge, and mindset they need to succeed in a changing world. Our goal is to bridge academia and industry so that students not only gain theoretical knowledge but also the practical skills required to innovate, solve problems, and be ready for the workforce. By aligning education with real-world demands, we are enhancing employability and empowering future leaders who will play a vital role in the continued transformation of the region.

At the core of our strategy is our community of chapters, members, and volunteers. They are the ones operating in complex environments and adapting to constant change. Working alongside them, as well as with our Authorized Training Partners and thought leaders, we aim to expand skills, grow knowledge, and deliver greater impact across the region over the next five years and beyond.

Q3: *On social media and for events and conferences, we hear a lot about the UAE and Saudi Arabia. How do you foresee the evolution of project management in the other countries of your MENA portfolio?*

Alshazly: While the UAE and Saudi Arabia often capture the spotlight with their ambitious visions and scale of delivery, I want to commend them for the leadership they have shown. By being first movers, they have paved the way for others, offering not only examples of success but also valuable lessons learned. Their bold investments and commitment to giga projects have advanced their national agendas and set a benchmark for the wider region on how project management can drive transformation at scale.

At the same time, we have been very intentional about highlighting the evolution of project management across the wider MENA region, which is equally dynamic and promising. We do this because visibility matters. It inspires professionals, attracts investment in local talent, and shows that project management is advancing in every corner of the region. On our social media channels and in the media, we showcase our visits and the impactful stories of our community not only from the Gulf but also from North Africa and the Levant, so that progress everywhere is recognized and celebrated.

We are strongly engaged in countries where PMI has established chapters, including Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia, where we support professionals with knowledge, tools, and networks to strengthen their practices and deliver greater impact.

In addition, we play a strategic role in countries where chapters do not yet exist but where there is a growing community of practitioners. Through collaborations with ministries, universities, and organizations, and by participating in industry-specific events in places such as Egypt, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, we are supporting the expansion of project management as both a discipline and a profession.

Looking ahead, the potential is significant. Project management will continue to be a driver of sustainable growth across sectors such as infrastructure, education, digital transformation, and renewable energy. Each country brings its own context and priorities, but the common thread is clear: **project management is increasingly recognized as a vital lever for achieving strategic outcomes and shaping the future of the region.**

Q4: *How would you characterize project management in MENA?*

Alshazly: It is enough to say that seven countries in the MENA region are ranked among the top ten globally for PMI certifications, which speaks to the strength of project management in our part of the world. Saudi Arabia holds the number one global rank for PMI-RMP and PfMP certifications, showing a strong commitment to risk management and portfolio governance. Egypt leads globally in PMO-CP certifications, reflecting its emphasis on program and PMO capabilities. These achievements highlight not only the dedication of individual professionals but also the commitment of governments and organizations to elevating standards and investing in professional development. The prominence of the RMP certification in particular shows how much the region values the ability to anticipate and manage risk in complex projects.

Beyond certifications, both governments and private organizations are making significant investments in building project management capabilities across their teams. This aligns with their national visions and their goals to strengthen local talent. Project Management Offices are being established and recognized as essential for governance, resource management, and delivering projects effectively, particularly in infrastructure, construction, and government services.

We also see growing interest from universities to partner with PMI and help prepare the next generation with the skills to future-proof their careers. The region is on the cusp of historic transformation, powered by ambitious national agendas, economic diversification, and giga projects. Today there are 1.3 million project professionals in MENA, and 1.8 million will be needed by 2035 according to PMI's latest Talent Gap report. These numbers make me reflect on the responsibility we hold as PMI to support our community and work closely with stakeholders to meet this growing demand.

In summary, project management in MENA is advancing rapidly. Some countries are leading with their human capital and national agendas, while others are still building their capabilities. But across the board, the recognition of project management as a strategic driver for growth and transformation is stronger than ever.

Q5: What are the big projects and main events in the 5 coming years in MENA PMI will contribute?

Alshazly: The only certainty in MENA is how fast things are moving, yet with solid steps. Five years ago, PMI's Construction Professional certification did not even exist, yet today not only is there strong demand for such a credential, but it has also become one of the fastest growing in the region, driven by governments, companies, and professionals who see the value of raising standards in construction project delivery.

What is clear is that PMI will continue to play an active role in shaping the region's priorities. We see strong momentum in large-scale construction, sustainable infrastructure, green energy, smart technologies, and artificial intelligence. Agility will remain essential, and sustainability has become one of our newest areas of focus, where we are working to provide guidance and frameworks.

Key events such as the Dubai International Project Management Forum (DIPMF) in the UAE and the Global Project Management Forum (GPMF) in Saudi Arabia will also continue to bring together tens of thousands of professionals, thought leaders, and policymakers. These platforms are essential for sharing lessons, highlighting innovation, and strengthening the profession across MENA.

PMI's contribution will be through our global standards, practical frameworks, and thought leadership, while equipping project professionals with the skills and networks they need. In this way, we can help organizations achieve their strategic goals and contribute to the region's continued growth and transformation.

Q6: What would you recommend to project managers in North Africa to be successful? In the Middle East?

Alshazly: The world is accelerating into an era of economic uncertainty, disruption, and digital transformation. This makes project professionals more essential than ever. Whether you are already in the profession or aspiring to join, this is the moment to take your career to the next level, stay on top of emerging trends, embrace areas like AI and sustainability, and connect with global project management networks to stay competitive.

The latest PMI Talent Gap report shows that today the MENA region has around 1.3 million project professionals, but by 2035 the demand will rise to as many as 1.8 million. That means half a million new professionals will be needed in the next decade. These numbers highlight both the opportunities and the responsibility we share to prepare talent in the region.

To succeed, project managers need to adopt agile practices and work across functions to navigate complexity. Clear documentation, goal setting, and communication are critical to avoid delays and mistakes. In giga projects especially, the ability to balance

time, cost, and scope while still maintaining quality is what sets apart successful professionals.

It is also important to engage with the broader trends shaping the future of our work. Sustainability, ESG practices, and AI are no longer optional—they must be embedded into how projects are designed and delivered. This region is home to some of the most ambitious projects in the world, and that demands leaders who can manage complexity, work with a wide range of stakeholders, and speak the language of outcomes and impact, not just tasks and milestones.

My advice to project managers in both North Africa and the Middle East is to view themselves as strategic partners in transformation. PMI's M.O.R.E. framework is one example of how professionals can take ownership of project success, ensuring they contribute not just to delivery, but to long-term growth and resilience in the region.

Q7: On the personal side, what are your goals in project management?

Alshazly: I would like to see project management recognized as the number one factor in creating project success. For me, that begins with introducing it earlier in education so that the younger generation understands its value from the start and making it part of continuous learning and development across all sectors.

My goal is to continue to raise awareness of the strategic role project managers play. It is not only about managing tasks but about becoming leaders who can guide teams, influence stakeholders, and deliver complex projects. I want to see more project professionals move into senior positions, expand into new areas of expertise, and most importantly, be recognized for the broader value they create — not only in achieving project milestones but in advancing long-term goals, supporting sustainability, and ensuring lasting impact on organizations and communities.

Project management is also one of the few disciplines that provides a common language across borders. In MENA, we sit at the intersection of East and West, and this gives us a unique opportunity. By bringing global standards into our local contexts, we can raise the quality of delivery while still respecting the cultural and economic realities of the region. This is how I see project professionals in MENA strengthening their role, by combining international best practices with local insight to drive real transformation.

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

Alshazly: I'm a believer that project management has never been just about completing tasks. At its core, it is about building trust, shaping the future, and creating a legacy that lasts. Every project we deliver leaves a mark on people, on communities, and on the world around us.

Looking ahead, the challenge and the opportunity are clear. By 2035, the world will need up to 30 million project professionals. This is not just a statistic. It reflects opportunities that will be lost if we do not act.

My message to readers is this: see yourselves not only as managers of projects, but as catalysts of progress. Lead with purpose, with courage, and with a sense of responsibility for the impact you create. The future will be shaped by those who can turn ideas into reality through successful projects, and our world urgently needs more of them.

About the Reviewer



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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 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.

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