

Lessons and Reflections from a Professional Life

Interview with Brigitte Schaden¹

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Chair, Global Alliance for the Project Professions (GAPPS)
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Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

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Introduction to the interviewee

Brigitte Schaden is a Managing Director of BSConsulting, Chief Consultant, Coach and Business Mediator. She is President of Projekt Management Austria, Chair of GAPPS - Global Alliance for the Project Professions, an International Assessor of IPMA, First Assessor of the Certification Body of the Romanian Project Management Association, First Assessor of the Certification Body of the Greek Project Management Association and First Assessor of the Certification Body of Projekt Management Austria. She is an

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IPMA Honorary Fellow, an Honorary Fellow of the Project Management Associations in Australia, Greece and Nepal and a Member of the IPMA Ethic Committee.

Brigitte Schaden studied Insurance Mathematics at the University of Technology in Vienna and Computer Technology at the University of Vienna. She has a Certificate of Proficiency in English of the University of Michigan, a Curriculum in Consulting and Coaching - CONECTA (ÖGGO), was Certified Senior Project Manager (IPMA Level B) and has a Curriculum Business Mediation from the University of Klagenfurt/Falk group.

In her Professional life she spent many years in the field of IT in bank and insurance companies, she was IT-Manager of an international trading company and Manager of the Project Management Competence Center of Libro AG. She spent many years in the field of Quality- and Project Management, Training – Communication and Project Management. She was Manager HR & Organisation & Project Portfoliomanagement of Lion.cc Libro Online AG.

In IPMA she has been a Member of the Certification Validation Board, Vice president (certification), President and Chair. She has delivered presentations and speeches at national and international conferences in many countries (Australia, Brazil, China, Finland, Germany, India, South Korea, Nepal, Panama, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, etc.). She has lectured at the University of Klagenfurt, Donau University and several Universities of Applied Science.

Interview

Q1: First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ. Let us explore the different aspects of your career. You are the president of the Projekt Management Austria. What are the missions and goals of this organization?

Brigitte Schaden (Schaden): Projekt Management Austria (pma) is a platform for trends and innovation in project management and for the further education of project managers. In addition, pma also sees itself as a network for young professionals and experts from all sectors.

The certification and the introduction of measurable standards in project management promote the establishment of the job profile "project manager". pma deals with project and program management, the management of project-oriented companies and management in the project-oriented society.

Q2: What are your activities there?

Schaden: You mean my personal ones? I am responsible for PR & Marketing, new business models and further development of the organization. For example, we have set up a new project in which we are digitizing the entire critical knowledge of the organization. For the first time, we have a system that is easy for any employee to understand and access. For the first time (at least for us), we have processes that are not just filed somewhere, but can really be lived.

Q3: You are also the chair of GAPPS (Global Alliance for the Project Professions). What are its missions?

Schaden: GAPPS is a volunteer driven, non-profit alliance that provides a reliable source for comparison of project-based standards and qualifications. We are also developing frameworks where we have the feeling that there is a “gap” in the profession.

Q4: You were the first woman president of IPMA. Does it represent an important milestone for you?

Schaden: I think it was more an important milestone for IPMA. But it's true, I like to be the first 😊. Unfortunately, I was not only the first female president, but also the only one to date, and of course I think that needs a lot of improvement!

Q5: It was a volunteer role. Why did you take this unpaid role that required time and efforts?

Schaden: Because I really had an impact on the organization. As I am a mathematician, it was important to me to get more structure into the organization; I also wanted to put it on a sound financial footing. In addition, I initiated innovations for the future.

I also love working internationally, and I'm fascinated by the different cultures. But you are right, it was very time consuming; I was working 6,5 days per week. Only Sunday afternoon was free.

Q6: As a woman in science, a woman in project management, did you have to overcome some challenges?

Schaden: For me it was ‘normal’ life. I grew up with boys, always had "male" toys, construction sets, trains, car tracks, no dolls. I played soccer, I didn't experience any restrictions based on my gender. At the technical university at that time there were also mainly men and later in the IT field as well. I was used to having to assert myself. I never accepted too low a salary; I stood up for my rights.

Q7: What changes have you seen in the world of project management for women?

Schaden: I think it is an almost ideal profession. It is possible to work part time with flexible time management. And more and more organizations are realizing that teams with both men and women perform better.

Q8: According to you, what are the obstacles for women in project management?

Schaden: The obstacles for women in project management are the same obstacles women have to face in economy generally: The higher up the hierarchy, the more men hold these positions. Men receive more pay for the same work performance. Men's networks are still better rope teams than women's networks.

Q9: We talk a lot about soft skills, power skills even for technical project managers. You wrote a book called **Social Competence: The Success Factor in Project Management**. What do you mean by Social Competence?

Schaden: Everything you find in the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline 4 under 'people'. So, it's close to what you understand under soft skills. What I mean is that even if you know everything about methods and standards in project management, it's not good enough. It's all about people, to deal with them, to recognize and solve conflicts, to negotiate, to coach, to support, to communicate in a proper way, based on the specific situation.

Q10: If you had one tip to give to project managers to level up their social competence what would it be?

Schaden: Ask the people you are working with for feedback. Reflect this feedback and decide in which field you would like to improve and do it!

Q11: Do you have a last message to PWJ readers, please?

Schaden: Based on my long life experience I can say what always help me most: Humour, humour and humour again and maybe sometimes a Gin and Tonic 😊

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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