

Project management is ultimately about people!

Interview with Kimia Penton ¹

Author, Musician, Recording Artist
Transformative Corporate, Community & Professional Leader
President, PMI Dallas Chapter
Dallas, Texas, USA



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

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Paris, France

Introduction to the interviewee

Kimia Penton is a transformation leader, organizational psychology professional, bestselling author, recording artist, and speaker whose work sits at the intersection of people, strategy, and creativity. With extensive experience leading organizational and technology transformation, she helps leaders and organizations navigate complex change while building cultures rooted in trust, authenticity, and meaningful connection. Kimia is the author of *Power, on Purpose: Where Authenticity Becomes Radical Leadership*, which explores how leaders can move beyond performative success toward values-driven impact. A lifelong violinist, songwriter, and recording artist, she brings creativity and storytelling into her leadership work as powerful tools for connection and transformation. She also teaches at UT Dallas and serves as the elected President of the PMI Dallas Chapter. Across her corporate, community, academic, and creative work, Kimia is passionate about helping people lead authentically, build stronger relationships, and create sustainable change.

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You can learn more about Kimia at www.kimiapenton.com, LinkedIn: Kimia Penton and IG: @kimiapenton;

Interview

Q1: How did you come to work in project management?

Kimia Penton (Kimia) My background in organizational psychology naturally led me into project management during my early consulting career. I discovered that my combination of analytical and creative thinking helped me quickly assess client challenges, define practical solutions, and bring people together around a path forward. Project management became a natural extension of those strengths, turning ideas into action while building the relationships, trust, and alignment needed to deliver meaningful results.

Q2: What are your roles today at work and as a volunteer in project management?

Kimia: Professionally, I lead large-scale transformation and strategic programs, bringing together people, technology, processes, and organizational change. In the community, I serve as President of the PMI Dallas Chapter, where I focus on strengthening member engagement, developing future leaders, and building meaningful partnerships. I also teach project management at UT Dallas, helping students connect project management principles with real-world consulting and leadership experiences.

Q3: What challenges do you foresee in project management?

Kimia: AI and rapid technological change are transforming how projects are planned and delivered. The challenge, and opportunity is ensuring we don't become so focused on tools that we underestimate the human side of transformation. Project leaders will increasingly need to combine technological fluency with adaptability, emotional intelligence, communication, and change leadership. The strongest project managers will be those who can help people navigate uncertainty while keeping teams aligned around meaningful outcomes.

Q4: You are part of different communities. How can communities help hone leadership skills?

Kimia: Community gives us a place to practice leadership in ways a job title cannot always provide. Volunteering allows people to lead initiatives, navigate different personalities, build relationships, influence without authority, and learn through

experience. It also exposes us to perspectives outside our own organizations. Some of my most valuable leadership lessons have come from bringing diverse people together around a shared purpose and learning how to create belonging, trust, and momentum.

Q5: As President of PMI Dallas Chapter, what do you envision for the Dallas community?

Kimia: My vision is for PMI Dallas to be a community where project professionals at every career stage can learn, belong, contribute, and grow. I want us to build a strong leadership pipeline, deepen partnerships with employers and universities, and create meaningful opportunities for members to develop both technical and human-centered leadership skills. Ultimately, I want involvement in our chapter to create relationships and experiences that positively shape people's careers and our broader community.

Q6: How has music helped you in your project management career?

Kimia: Music has always been both a creative outlet and a way for me to recharge. It helps me step away from analytical thinking, access a different part of myself, and return to challenges with renewed energy and perspective. It has also taught me the power of listening, improvisation, collaboration, and connection. Perhaps most importantly, music builds community; it reminds me that people do their best work when they feel connected to something larger than themselves.

Q7: What advice can you give to women project leaders?

Kimia: Don't confuse adaptability with making yourself smaller. Learn the environment, understand your stakeholders, and build strong relationships; but don't lose your voice in the process. Advocate for yourself, communicate your value, establish healthy boundaries, and allow your leadership style to be authentically yours. You don't need to imitate someone else's version of leadership to be effective. Your perspective, experiences, and way of connecting with people are part of the value you bring.

Q8: Do you have a last message?

Kimia: Project management is ultimately about people. Plans, technology, methodologies, and tools matter, but sustainable transformation happens when people trust one another and believe in where they are going. Stay curious, invest in relationships, and don't underestimate the value of authenticity. Our greatest impact often comes not simply from what we accomplish, but from how we help people feel, grow, and contribute along the way.

See special offer below for readers in north Texas.

Note: Kimia Penton is also the Founder of the Alive Career Conference®, a unique program designed to support career breakthroughs and meaningful networking through a series of keynotes, panels and workshops with industry experts and C-Suite executives. The next conference is October 3rd, 2026 at The Sound at Cypress Waters in Coppell, Texas. Kimia has offered PMWJ readers 8 complimentary tickets, first come first serve. Register at the following link using the code **PMWJ**.
<https://alivecareerconference.eventbrite.com/> or on the conference site
www.alivecareerconference.com

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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