

[中文 \(http://www.pmreview.com.cn/\)](http://www.pmreview.com.cn/) [English \(http://www.pmreview.com.cn/english\)](http://www.pmreview.com.cn/english)



[\(/english/\)](#)

Interview

[Home \(index.html\)](#) > [Interview \(/english/Home/article/index/category/6.html\)](#) > [Brigitte Schaden: PM Is a Living Practical Science](#)

Brigitte Schaden: PM Is a Living Practical Science

[Back \(/english/Home/article/index/category/6.html\)](#)

Journalist: Yu Yanjuan | Source: PMR | Updated:2020.05.20

Introduction to the interviewee:



Brigitte Schaden is acting President of Projekt Management Austria (PMA), Austria's largest project management association and IPMA member association. She also holds the position of Chair of the Board of Directors of GAPPS (Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards), leads through IPMA certifications as International Assessor on a global scale and has given speeches on six continents. She fulfilled various functions within the IPMA, including four years as Vice President for Certification. From 2009 to 2010, she acted as the organisation's first female President.

As Managing Director of BSConsulting, she advises national and international corporations, organisations and individuals on a wide range of topics. She also gives lectures at several universities in Austria and is part of the expert network enable2change. Before being named President of PMA in 2003, Brigitte Schaden successfully built a career in the international quality and project management industry.

She is passionate about helping organizations and business leaders to be more successful in today's VUCA project environment. Her specialties include: business mediation, coaching as a support function in change processes, standards in project management, managing project-oriented companies and social competences and leadership in an international context.

After more than 25 years of developing people, managing projects and consulting project-oriented organizations, she noted that the most important factor in leading projects to success is Social Competence. In her eyes, project management is a living practical science. Let's hear her story and observations.

Interview

Part I Long friendship with PM begins by chance

Q1. I noticed that you majored in science in college. Why did you build your career in project management?

Brigitte Schaden: It was "by chance". I had an IT career and at that time (in the 1980s), I was IT Manager of an international company. The requirements were getting more and more complex and I was searching for tools and methods which could support me. Therefore, I found project management. This was the starting point of a long friendship.

Q2. As an "accidental" project management professional, do you think it's necessary to professionalize the role of project managers? What's your view on PM certification? Is it necessary and vital?

Brigitte Schaden: I think it's necessary to professionalize any role, however you define professionalization. It is always necessary to think about responsibilities, expectations, functions, skills, and competencies to fulfil a specific role.

Project management certifications are crucial for the whole profession as there are no formal requirements for calling yourself a project manager. But being a project manager is a high leadership function with a far-reaching responsibility for the success of the company. So, it is necessary to have really qualified people. Certification assessments are supporting this selection on a very professional basis.

Q3. As a female, what do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of women in the field of project management?

Brigitte Schaden: The strengths are definitely that women are used to organize, which is in their genes. They are trained to be counterbalancing. They are listening to people and are good at stakeholder management. And most of them are focused on the content and not on their own profiling. I think one weakness is that most women are not good at dealing with power struggle. And they spent less time with general business networking.

It's never good to generalize but I have often observed that men are much more self-confident than women. Men are very often convinced about their own skills while

women are much more critical of themselves.

In negotiations, women make little demands and they do not rigidly cling to their actual goal, monetary gain, but pursue the secondary goal of freedom from conflict and creating a pleasant atmosphere for discussion and to strengthen business relationships for the future.

Part II Competencies are more required than a process

Q4. As the Chair of the Board of Directors of GAPPS, in your opinion, how should we measure the success of a project in VUCA era? Any new standards?

Brigitte Schaden: The client determines the success of a project! I think it's more and more difficult to have one method/process which fits all purposes. Life has already changed. It is necessary to be more flexible, faster in decisions, to have shorter planning and working cycles (agile) and more stakeholder involvement. Competencies are more required than a process! Project management competencies are getting more and more important.

Q5. You mentioned the importance of competencies just now. According to your observation, what are the top common qualities of a successful project manager? What are the secrets of high-performing teams?

Brigitte Schaden: Project managers are expected to handle the VUCA situations with confidence and to develop resilience as individuals. Project managers create new things, create opportunities and find their roots. Communication, appreciation, confidence and last but not least humor remain the humus on which new paths are created.

You find all top common qualities in the social competencies of IPMA ICB4.0 (People). These are really the skills needed. Anything else (technical competencies) is much easier to learn.

Regarding high-performing teams, the most important is that they believe in what they are doing. They need good general conditions, good infrastructure, an open-minded atmosphere, skilled people and a project manager supporting them.

Q6. You've said that the most important factor in leading projects to success is "Social Competence". Would you please further explain it?

Brigitte Schaden: Normally the difficulties and stoppers in projects are not technical issues. The challenge is that people are involved. Project managers with high social competencies can deal with it. They can communicate and negotiate, they are open-minded, they can solve or anticipate conflicts and they are reflective and self-organized.

And this is the real success factor of projects.

Q7. What kind of leadership style works best in an international project context?

Brigitte Schaden: I call it situational leadership style. It depends on the different personalities of the team members and on the specific situation. So, sometimes it has to be authoritarian, laissez faire, democratic or cooperative. The project manager

should know them all and be competent to decide which one to use in different situations.

Part III COVID-19 leads to a virtual world of projects

Q8. How are your life and work affected by COVID-19? In what direction do you think COVID-19 will influence the development of project management?

Brigitte Schaden: My life was totally affected: no theaters, no concerts, no cinemas, no cabarets, no museums, no fitness studio, no soccer, no travels, no coffee houses, no restaurants, no bars, etc. I have spent 7 weeks at home!

My work was also affected, all conferences and face-to-face meetings were cancelled, but it was not so difficult to change into a virtual world. We managed to move all IPMA certification levels to online assessments, which helps us to keep up the business. As I already had a home office, it was easy to work from home with broadband Internet access.

Q9. From your perspective, what are the principles to ensure the high performance of virtual project teams?

Brigitte Schaden: High performance is the ability to work at the highest level of effectiveness for an extended period of time. This means delivering quality products on time, within budget, while satisfying stakeholders. That's difficult enough with face-to-face teams. Working in virtual teams is more challenging because people have to coordinate and communicate across time zones, distance, languages and cultures.

The bad news are there is no cookbook. The virtual team issues must be addressed to adapt to the needs of a specific situation. But you are always on the right side if you are honoring individual cultures while creating a common team culture when working across organizational boundaries.

Part IV PM is a very living, practical science


Q10. You have given speeches on six continents across the globe, so have you noticed any differences in the development of project management among different countries? What is your impression on PM in China?

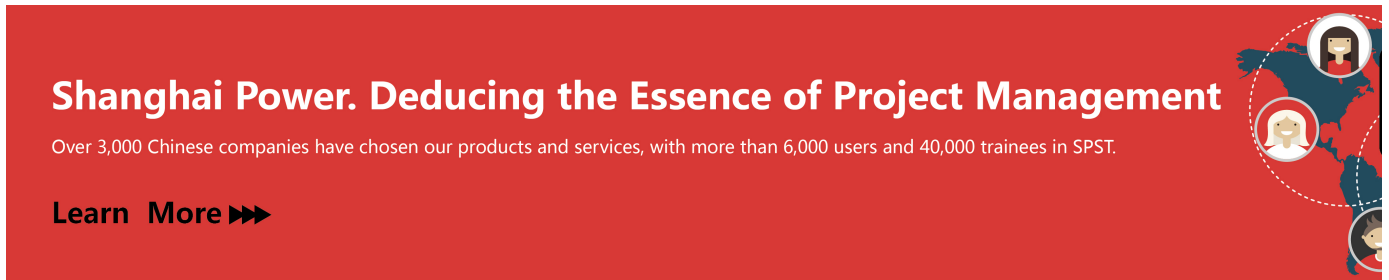
Brigitte Schaden: I think the differences in development of project management are closely linked to the differences in development of economy and globalization. And of course, there are cultural differences. This is also valid for China; projects in the cities are different from projects at the countryside. Most people involved in projects in China are really productive and committed. Chinese people are hard-working people. If somebody confirms a task, you can really rely on it.

Q11. From your perspective, what challenges is project management facing now? And what are your tips on how to deal with those challenges?

Brigitte Schaden: Project management per se always changed and developed further. It started as a network planning technique and developed to a strategic management approach. Life and requirements changed and so changed project management. It is a very living, practical science. The challenges now are how to deal with this more and more unpredictable world. My tips are: invest in your personality, train your skills

in communication, negotiation, flexibility, creativity, resilience, target orientation and last but not least humor.

 To see the printed version, click here (</english/Home/File/download/id/539.html>)



Shanghai Power. Deducing the Essence of Project Management

Over 3,000 Chinese companies have chosen our products and services, with more than 6,000 users and 40,000 trainees in SPST.

Learn More ▶▶▶

(<http://www.powerpms.com/>)

(</english/Home/article/index/category/17.html>)