

REGIONAL REPORT – UAE – OCTOBER 2007



Report on Project Management in the UAE

By Mounir Ajam

In the October Report from the UAE we highlight two inter-related stories

1. A Project Management Event that was opened to the general project management community, and
2. The forming of a project and process management association in the UAE

Project Management Event

This project management event/seminar was open to the community on a complimentary/no cost basis. The event took place on 1 September 2007 and was sponsored in partnership between SUKAD FZ-LLC ([SUKAD](http://www.sukad.com)) (www.sukad.com), a leading project management training and consultancy provider based in the UAE and providing services across the Middle East, and Dubai Knowledge Village (DKV) (www.kv.ae), the world's only Free Zone totally dedicated and focused on human resource development.

This event was quite successful and well organized. During the 4 hours event, that combined learning with networking and an opportunity to discuss the new association that is being formed, see next article. During this event, three PMI® Leaders (graduate of the Leadership Institute Masters Class – LIMC), each led a presentation on a topic of interest. It happens that three speakers are also known to PMForum and PM World Today readers, since the three are international correspondents from Greece, Switzerland, and the UAE and these are Theofanis Giotis, Alexander Matthey, and Mounir Ajam, respectively.



Figure 0: Mr. Theofanis Giotis

Mr. Giotis (a co-founder/CEO of [ITEC](http://www.itec.edu) (www.itec.edu), President of PMI Greece Chapter) presentation dealt with "***Delivering Successful IT Projects Using Microsoft Solutions Framework (MSF)***".

“Microsoft Solutions Framework (MSF) is indispensable for delivering IT solutions faster, with fewer people, less risk and higher quality. MSF Process Model (5 phases) and MSF Team Model (6 roles or hats) focuses on managing the “people and processes” as well as the technology elements that most projects encounter.

MSF is Microsoft® Solutions Framework (MSF) is a deliberate and disciplined approach to technology projects based on a defined set of principles, models



Figure 0: Mr. Alexander Matthey

(Team & Process models), disciplines (Project, Risk, and Readiness Management disciplines), concepts, guidelines, and proven practices. This presentation introduces MSF and provides an overview of MSF’s foundational principles, core models, and essential disciplines, focusing on how their application contributes to the increase of success of technology projects

Mr. Matthey (a founder and Managing Director of 3PM Experts ([3PM](http://www.3pmexperts.com)) (www.3pmexperts.com), VP of PMI Switzerland Chapter) presentation dealt with “**How to Build a Project Based Organization**”.

Although project management is definitely needed, the steps to transform an organization from functional to projectized takes a long time. It cannot happen magically overnight. Lately, Program/Project Management Offices (PMOs) have become increasingly popular organizational structures.

But is a PMO enough? Is there anything beyond PMO? Experience shows that sometimes the PMO is a major milestone to an organizational transformation towards building a Project Based Organization (PBO). Project Based Organizations treat everything as “PROJECTS”. Managing by projects in project oriented organization gives strategic advantages to organizations.

Mr. Ajam (a co-founder/CEO of SUKAD FZ-LLC ([SUKAD](http://www.sukad.com)) (www.sukad.com), Volunteer Leader to the new association in the UAE) presentation dealt with “**Knowledge and Actions**”.

“**Knowledge is Power**” is a global concept but is it true. What are the negative and positive connotations of this short phrase? How about “**Knowledge Acted-Upon is Power**” is this better phrase? Or are we talking about the knowledge of the individuals or community knowledge? Would **Knowledge is Power** = Individual Knowledge and **Knowledge Acted-Upon is Power** = Group, Community or Society Collective Knowledge? If there is a difference than how can we: (a) share the knowledge to increase the individual and collective knowledge and (b) how to close the gap



Figure 0: Mr. Mounir Ajam

between knowledge and action so we have the power of the “acted-upon knowledge” rather than just intellectual knowledge that might be limited in its usefulness to our community.

Mr. Hasan Makansi, Manager Partners Development of DKV facilitated and hosted the event. Mr. Makansi has been instrumental in helping organize this event and also in the formation of the new association.

As a follow up to the event, an online questionnaire was sent to the participants to obtain their feedback on the event. The feedback was outstanding; below are

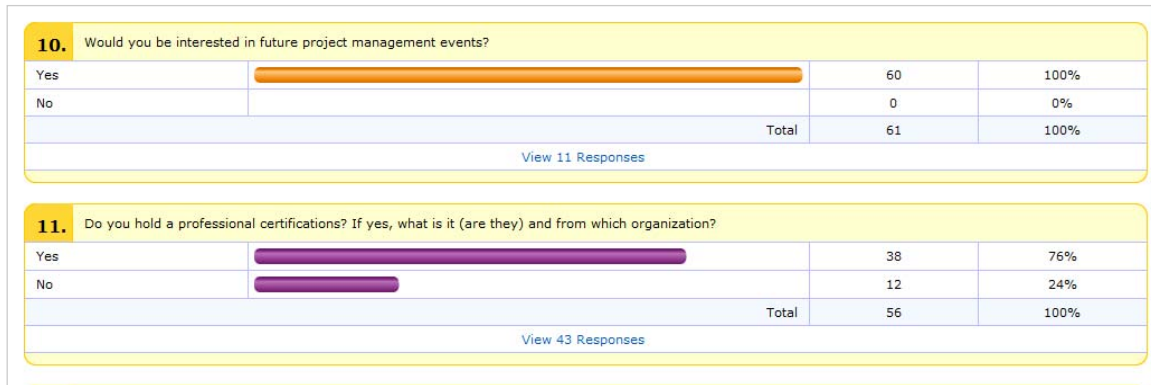


Figure 0: Two Questions from the Questionnaire

extracts from the survey representing the view of the attendees; many are certified professionals. In general, most believe the event was very well organized and hosted, the presentations all received high ranking and everyone (with no exception) wanted more of these events.

Further comments from the questionnaire:

1. In response to: “*The Organizers did a good job in bringing such valuable event to Dubai*”: 93% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
2. In response to how effective the presenters were the average of all three presenters was 79%.
3. In response to: “*The announcement about the association was valuable*”: 87% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
4. As it is clear from the above figure, 100% of the respondents wanted more events on project management.

Association for Project & Process Management

The author has reported in the past about the formation of a new association for project management that would be based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. This association is finally taking form. Dr. Ayoub Kazim of Dubai Knowledge Village announced this association during the event mentioned above.



Figure 0: Dr. Ayoub Kazim

The importance of this initiative is that “Project Management is the key to meeting a wide range of strategic objectives,” says Dr. Ayoub Kazim, Executive Director of Dubai Knowledge Village. “The importance of project management comes from its focus on achieving objectives that might be overlooked in the carrying out of routine ongoing operational tasks of any organization. It is important also because it better ensures the achievement of set objectives. We see Project Management practices as a strategic competency and mandatory for companies to succeed and that’s why we welcome to the Knowledge Village community this association which promotes professional project management.”

DKV has the Mandate from the government of Dubai to license companies and organizations in the Technology and Media Free Zone that is based in Dubai and consists of Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City, Dubai Knowledge Village, among other “clusters”. The mandate for this free zone from His Highness Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President/Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, is to promote and help Dubai converts into a knowledge economy.

Hasan Makansi, Partner Development Manager, Dubai Knowledge Village, said “Project management is becoming more important in Dubai and the region especially with all the innovative, unique and large projects taking place. Since project management practices are emerging rapidly in this region, we feel the necessity of supporting body to develop and promote the project management industry and professionals.”



Figure 0: Mr. Hasan Makansi

At the end of the announcement, the participants were given about an hour to ask questions about the association. The discussion was enriching, open, and clear. It is was obvious from the discussion and the responses to the event questionnaire later that the forming of the new association is a welcome initiative and definitely needed in the dynamic world in our Region, not only the UAE and due to the absence of any major project management related activities by professional associations. It was agreed that the new association will fill the vacuum and it is crucial for the continuous development of the profession in the Region. It was also noted that the association scope will expand beyond project management and includes Process Management.

Where are we now? We are in the forming stage of the association and we expect that within days we should have finalized the legal registration process.



Figure 0: The Speakers and Organizers at the Association Announcement;
Left to Right: Mounir Ajam (SUKAD), Dr. Kazim Ayoub (DKV), Alexander Matthey (3PM Experts), Hasan Makansi (DKV), and Theofanis Giotis (ITEC)

over the operation of the association.

For more information about the association or if you like to volunteer (even remotely is good) we would like to hear from you. Please contact the author of this article, Mounir Ajam (Mounir.ajam@sukad.com).

In the mean time, the team of about 15 active volunteers has agreed to the Bylaws and to the general framework of how the association will operate. The initial team of volunteers will lead the association during the formation period as we finalize our organization, policies, guidelines and strategic plan. Once that is done, and after a membership drive, an election will be held and the elected team will take



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