

PM WORLD TODAY – FEATURED INTERVIEW – NOVEMBER 2009

Interview with Brigitte Schaden

President

International Project Management Association



Brigitte Schaden is currently President of the International Project Management Association (IPMA), a global federation of national project management societies and the world's first project management professional association.

She is also the chairman of the Austrian Project Management Association (pma) and working as an international assessor for IPMA's 4 Level Certification System.

She is First Assessor of the Certification Body of Project Management Romania and Greece.

She gives international lectures and seminars (conferences, congresses, MBAs)

She is Managing Director, Chief Consultant and Coach of BSConsulting.

Editor's note: Brigitte Schaden was elected president of IPMA by the IPMA Council of Delegates in 2008, the first woman elected IPMA president in the organization's 40+ year history. Her term is for 2009 – 2010, after which she will become the Chair of the IPMA Executive Board. We are happy to offer this exclusive interview with Brigitte Schaden.

PM World Today (PMWT): Congratulations again on assuming the leadership of IPMA this year. Now that you have been the IPMA President for 8 months, and IPMA's first woman president, perhaps you might answer a few questions about the organization and your personal story. What were your main personal objectives for the organization when you assumed the Presidency in January?

Brigitte Schaden: My main objectives are to increase IPMA's visibility, the marketing brand, to increase membership, to improve the internal procedures and to strengthen the influence in the main parts of the world.

PMWT: What were the biggest challenges facing IPMA, and you as President, this year?

Schaden: We are growing so fast, that it is really a challenge to maintain good governance. We have to develop our services with the same speed.

PMWT: What are your goals for your presidency, both for 2009 and 2010?

Schaden: Everything what I just mentioned, but maybe to make it more clear, I am looking for alliances, new members in strategic important areas, new services and everything together will promote our brand.

PMWT: Earlier this year, Veikko Valila was named Secretary General for IPMA, as you have established a larger Administrative Effort to grow the organization. When was the decision made to hire a Secretary General, and has this change proceeded smoothly?

Schaden: The idea is several years old, but regarding our growth, it was really necessary to do it now. As former president and vice president Veikko Valila knows IPMA very well, so the change could not been smoother.

PMWT: What can be accomplished with this new organization structure?

Schaden: We hope to improve our internal governance, and maintenance and development of our membership services. We have now more capacity to negotiate with new potential members associations and to instruct our existing members.

PMWT: How is IPMA leadership now structured? How many vice presidents, what are their responsibilities, who are they?

Schaden: I'm the President which in our organization means that I'm the chairwoman of the Executive Board. We have 6 vice presidents: Prof. Qian Fupei from China responsible for research & development, Prof. Nino Grau from Germany responsible for standards and Young Crew, Prof. Mladen Radujkovic from Croatia responsible for education & training, Ruud Bolsius from the Netherlands responsible for marketing, Alexander Tovb from Russia responsible for certification, Roberto Mori from Italy responsible for membership and awards.

PMWT: With Veikko having resigned from the position of Chairman of the Council of Delegates in order to assume the Secretary General position, the Chair position was vacant for awhile until Miles Shepherd was nominated to assume the CoD Chair again. Did this cause any additional stress, and how did you manage that transition? How are you and Miles working together now to make up for any lost time?

Schaden: The transition went very smoothly. Veikko chaired one Council meeting before taking up the position of Secretary General. Thereafter the next Council meeting was chaired now here in Dublin by Miles. There was no time lost. Cooperation with Miles goes smoothly as he is a former President and has been formerly a chairman of the Council as well.

(Photo: Miles Shepherd and Brigitte Schaden in Dublin, Ireland, in September 2009)



PMWT: The global economic downturn late last year and continuing in 2009 has clearly affected most organizations and industries? What has been the impact, if any, on IPMA?

Schaden: Up until now it didn't really have an impact on our association. We realize that there is a significant amount of organizations which invest in training and certification especially in difficult times.

PMWT: Is IPMA still growing, in terms of membership? What new member societies have joined this year? Are there more pending in other countries?

Schaden: Yes, we are steadily growing. This year Canada, Kosovo, Lithuania, Nepal and Australia joined the association. And we have 10 more members pending.

PMWT: What is IPMA's position when there is more than one professional organization in a country? How do you determine which one should represent the country in IPMA?

Schaden: Normally we are looking for the largest independent project management association in the area.

PMWT: Was the recent IPMA World Congress in Helsinki as successful as the one in Rome last year? I attended both and they were both great! What was your experience?

Schaden: Both of them were very successful. But in spite of the financial crisis the attendance was extremely good in Helsinki, which was a surprise for me.

PMWT: Is IPMA planning to launch more activities, events or services in the future that you might like to announce?

Schaden: Yes, we already started with a registration service for training and education programs, we extended our award program and IPMA will offer more categories under one umbrella.

The young crew initiated a program to support projects or project managers in developing countries and we make research more visible, for example we redesigned our world congress structure and bundled all research presentations under one stream.

In addition there are some developments regarding certification but it's a little bit too early to talk about it concretely.

PMWT: Have there been any big new developments recently for IPMA?

Schaden: Regarding membership definitely Australia, we had a long relationship with AIPM, but now as they are members we both have much stronger possibilities to develop things together.

And internally we have more and more people working together in the different management boards and task forces. The amount of people who are permanently involved has almost doubled during the last two years. In addition we apply proper portfolio management to our internal projects.

PMWT: In some countries and even on a global basis, IPMA and PMI are perceived as competing organizations, with competing memberships, certification programs, and activities. Is this your perception? How can more cooperation be promoted, both at the local level and at your level?

Schaden: We welcome all PMI members and PMI chapters to join IPMA! And for many professional people it can make sense to be a member of both organizations.

Regarding certification we think that for PMI certified people our 4-L-C system is a very good opportunity to proceed further in their project business life.

PMWT: Now, what about you personally? Where are you from? Were you born and raised in Austria?

Schaden: Yes, I am born and raised in Vienna in Austria.

PMWT: What is your academic background? Which university and major field of study?

Schaden: I am a mathematician; I studied Actuarial Mathematics at the Technical University in Vienna and then as I got more and more involved in IT issues, I continued with my second study: Business Computer Technology. But one more major field was sociology which was always my favorite. Later on I went through a Curriculum in Consulting and Coaching and not to forget I am a Certified Senior Project Manager (IPMA Level B)



PMWT: What path did your professional career take – what types of organizations and positions?

Schaden: I spent many years in the field of IT in bank and assurance companies, and then I was the IT-Manager of an international trading company. There I also started to work on projects and focused more and more on project management. I left IT and developed and improved the project management process in an international assurance company. Further on I build up and managed the Project Management Competence Center of an international media company and ended up as the Manager of HR & Organisation & Project Portfolio Management in an international “new economy” organisation.

In most of these functions I was involved in Quality Management and in the Training Business (Project Management, Communication, and Coaching). Now I am working as a coach and consultant.

PMWT: When did you first learn about project management, per se, and how did you get more involved professionally?

Schaden: I think that was quite similar to a lot of people. I was the IT manager of a company and I was running projects, but I had no idea that these temporary often really complex tasks I got were projects. But then I found an IT seminar and they explained “IT projects”. That was my starting point. After some more years I left IT and focused on project management.

PMWT: What about your involvement with the Austrian Project Management Association? Were you actively involved in the national society? If so, in what roles and how was that experience?

Schaden: My involvement with the Austrian Project Management Association started in 1994 when I participated in the annual conference. Then I supported the association as controller, as general manager and as a board member. Since 2003 I am the chairwoman of pma.

PMWT: Do you want to mention any of your mentors or friends from those years?

Schaden: Roland Gareis inspired me to join pma and to be really deeply involved in all project management fields. Morten Fangel motivated me to work also for the international association.

PMWT: From your experience, and from your current perspective, how can local IPMA member associations play a bigger role in local national economies and society? What is the primary role of local national IPMA member associations?

Schaden: I see the primary role in representing the profession on all levels. IPMA member associations should set the standards in their countries, influence the whole education and training system, offer platforms for project managers to exchange ideas, information and innovations, organize conferences and provide certifications. They should participate in a dialogue with the government and the industry. They really should act as the official representative of the branche.



*Brigitte Schaden, IPMA President
Opening Ceremony
23rd IPMA World Congress – Helsinki, Finland
June 2009*

PMWT: How is IPMA at the global level supporting those efforts?

Schaden: Our 4-level certification system is important for both the developing and more developed world. Our network of professional people supports the development of local national associations in all parts of the world.

PMWT: Ultimately, how large do you think IPMA will become? Will it become sort of a United Nations for project management? With 50 member associations now, it seems to almost be there already?

Schaden: Yes, it will become a sort of United Nations for project management. I think we will be there in the next 2 years.

PMWT: How large are Council of Delegates meetings now? Can you ever see IPMA moving towards a regional approach?

Schaden: We have 1-2 representatives from each member association, so we are almost 100 people in this meeting.

We already have a regional approach, we have Nordnet in Nordic countries, Mednet

for Mediterranean countries, DACH for German speaking countries and some more coming up.

PMWT: How is IPMA responding to the tremendous increased demand for project management knowledge, qualifications and education in China and the Asia Pacific area?

Schaden: We are continuously strengthening our position in China: with new alliances, more members and more certifications.

Together with AIPM we will strengthen our services in the Asian Pacific area.

PMWT: Congratulations on the recently signed agreement with the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM), whereby they have agreed to join IPMA as the national society representing Australia. I think this scenario has been discussed for many years. How was it finally successful and what does this mean for IPMA growth and representation in that part of the world?



*Brigitte Schaden (center)
Ian Baxter, Executive Director of AIPM (left)
Bill Young, AIPM President (right)
IPMA Council of Delegates Meeting – Dublin, Ireland
27 September 2009*

Schaden: We have a long standing relationship with AIPM. However the final decisive discussions were held this year in connection with the Helsinki World Congress. Naturally one precondition was that there was right chemistry between the management groups. You could say that there were the right people on both sides, people who wanted to make progress.

This means that many new countries will join IPMA in South-East Asia.

PMWT: Finally, are you having fun yet? It seems to me that the IPMA presidency has become a big job – and responsibility. How do you relax and what do you enjoy the most?

Schaden: I am having fun because I like people; I like different cultures; I like different approaches. But it's true, it has become a big job, I spent most of my time with and for IPMA.

Privately I relax sitting together with friends and have a glass of red wine or visiting theaters, concerts; you know I am based in Vienna, the town is full of culture.





*PM World Today editor David Pells and Brigitte Schaden
23rd IPMA World Congress – Helsinki, Finland
June 2009*

Editor's note: *We want to thank Mrs. Schaden for taking the time from her busy schedule to answer these questions, and for sharing some personal story, thoughts and opinions with PM World Today. This interview is based on meetings in Helsinki and Dublin in 2009, and Ms. Schaden's responses to questions posed by email.*

To learn more about IPMA, visit <http://www.ipma.ch>.