

MANAGE South Asia

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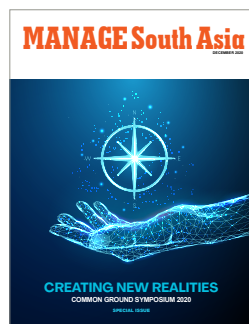


CREATING NEW REALITIES

COMMON GROUND SYMPOSIUM 2020

SPECIAL ISSUE

In this Issue



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Dear Practitioner,

Last month we conducted a first of its kind virtual conference that brought together all 11 chapters from India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. We have been organizing virtual events since the beginning of the pandemic, but the Common Ground Symposium on 21 and 22 November took it to a whole new level. It is an excellent example of collaboration among practitioners across the region, which is a sign of things to come.

Project managers are true change-makers, helping organizations, communities, and countries realize their goals and aspirations. However, they need to keep pace with the fast changing ecosystem and align their capabilities to the new demands.

In addition to their management capabilities, project managers will require what we call “power skills”, or skills such as collaboration, business acumen, leadership, and problem-solving, to successfully lead projects. Many of the leaders who spoke at the conference highlighted the importance of these skills. New challenges and opportunities, the need for re-skilling, and ways in which PMI is helping project managers to stay relevant were the core themes of the opening keynote address by PMI President and CEO Sunil Prashara, and the panel discussion by the PMI regional managing directors. Some of these

new offerings from PMI are Wicked Problem Solving, Disciplined Agile™, and Citizen Development.

As you would know, the updated exam content for the Project Management Professional® certification comes into effect in January. The content is a reflection of the changed business environment. The conference theme, Creating New Realities, provided the right canvas to highlight real-world stories of success, grit, and determination by individuals who have accomplished extraordinary feats despite many constraints. I am sure delegates took away many life lessons from the two days at the conference. I am also grateful for the time the leaders spent in enlightening our delegates on the expectations in the new reality.

My congratulations go to the chapter leaders and volunteers for the commendable feat of successfully organizing this virtual event.

Srini Srinivasan
Managing Director, PMI South Asia



Conference Organizers



Lt. Col. L. Shri Harsha (retd.)
Conference Chair



Girish Kadam
Mentor - PMI Region 11

The Region 11 Common Ground Symposium 2020 (CGS20) was a unique experiment in cross chapter collaboration, and in organizing a multi-disciplinary conference. By many parameters, it was a successful experiment. While the coordination was a challenge, the team managed it with an agile approach, accommodating work slots to suit maximum players. Industry veterans from a wide array of disciplines drafted in by the organizing committee for CGS 2020 ensured that the audience had a great learning experience.

Wide ranging topics covering all the three arms of the talent triangle – strategic and business management, leadership, and technical project management by professionals spanning Gen X, Gen Y and the millennials, made the deliberations thought provoking and interesting. Leveraging the opportunity provided by the pandemic, the organizers invited speakers from all over the globe to virtually deliver their talks, and made the symposium truly global. Best practices from different parts of the world delegates to the delegates on how organizations are managing before project economy, thus enriching the learning experience.

The icing on the cake was the panel discussion, which had representatives from all continents, who gave a truly global perspective to individual development. How individuals, organizations, and governments are focusing on the competency development to sustain growth in the challenges posed by the pandemic got the delegates thinking on innovative methods.

Success stories of professional development initiatives from across the world were an eye opener. Though the virtual mode provided the flexibility of interacting with professionals across continents, the delegates felt that there is no replacement to the physical interaction and the bonding which comes with it. All in all, the CGS 2020 was a great learning experience, which showcased the importance of embracing good project management practices for succeeding in any challenging environment.

Warm regards,

Lt. Col. L. Shri Harsha (retd.)
Conference Chair

Leading Projects in the Changed Reality

Practitioners learn from the experts on the skills and mindsets needed to win in today's disrupted world

Panchalee Thakur

Project leaders are the world's problem solvers and visionaries who look beyond the immediate hurdles, and galvanize their teams to work toward a common goal. The PMI Common Ground Symposium 2020 set out to inspire practitioners to lead their teams, and find opportunities in today's challenging market by upgrading their skills and knowledge.

The theme for the first-of-its-kind virtual event on 21-22 November was "Creating New Realities." It was also the first time that all 11 chapters of PMI Region 11, including chapters from Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, came together to host an event. Over 1,000 delegates attended the two-day conference.

Six keynotes, eight parallel track sessions, and a panel discussion with all eight PMI regional managing directors were held across the two days.

Leaders from PMI and the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) launched the *Playbook for Project Management in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Projects* at the conference. It is based on a collaborative study by PMI and NASSCOM's Center of Excellence for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (DS/AI), and presents a framework to improve the outcomes of DS/AI projects.

While setting the context for the conference agenda, Srini Srinivasan, managing director, PMI South Asia, said, "COVID-19 may have created a great deal of uncertainty and disruption but it has also opened up new opportunities for us. This conference is a great example of the art of the possible – intense collaboration of passionate volunteers has led to this first-ever regional conference. All the leaders on this platform have one agenda – to create a new reality for their organizations, communities, and themselves."

He threw 'a friendly challenge' at them – to become the architects of the new reality by translating the knowledge they gain in the conference into measurable results at work, their community, and country.

President and CEO of PMI, Sunil Prashara, who delivered the opening keynote, urged project managers to get future-ready by integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and automation at work, adopting new ways of working, and developing 'power skills' such as collaboration, leadership, and business understanding.

In a conversation with Dr. Srinivasan, Kulmeet Bawa, president and managing director, SAP Indian subcontinent, defined the tenets of his



own leadership style, and shared his thoughts on leading teams during disruptive times.

Nitu Kaushal, general manager, Hybrid Infrastructure Compute, IoT and Digital Services, Hewlett Packard Enterprise (UK, IRE, ME, SA), outlined her company's efforts of handling the COVID-19 crisis, and how organizations now need to look at new ways of engaging with employees to keep the organization culture alive.

Sridhar Vembu, co-founder and CEO, Zoho Corporation, spoke about embracing uncertainty in R&D projects, and how project plans need to be flexible to accommodate unexpected changes.

Vinay Piparsania, founder and principal, MillenStrat Advisory & Research, provided an overview of the fast changing automotive industry, and the new opportunities that the industry offers for entrepreneurs and project professionals.

The concluding keynote was by Caroline Das-Monfrais, chief strategy officer, EMEA, FTI Consulting, who spoke about building a 'resilience agenda' to overcome the odds facing one's organization, team, or project.

Day two featured a panel discussion with all eight PMI regional managing directors who fielded questions from the conference hosts and the audience on new opportunities in their region, and the skills that project managers need to develop to seize those opportunities.

The PMI Project of the Year awards were announced during the conference. The winners are Sterlite Power for the large project category, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. for medium project, ITT Corporation India Pvt. Ltd. for small, Rockwell Collins (India) Pvt. Ltd. for micro, Octaware Technologies Ltd. for 'Contribution to Community,' and Amar Seva Sangam for the non-government organization category.



Powering the Project Economy and the Future of Work

SUNIL PRASHARA

president & chief executive officer, PMI

As president and CEO of PMI, Sunil Prashara is the lead advocate for PMI's global organization, serving more than three million professionals working in nearly every country of the world. His primary responsibility is to implement PMI's global strategic plan with a priority on strategic focus, customer centricity, and organizational agility.

In his opening address at the Common Ground Symposium 2020, Sunil Prashara painted a picture of the 'new realities', how organizations and professionals must prepare for the Project Economy, and the programs, certifications, and toolsets that PMI has launched to meet the new demands.

Project managers in the new reality will be integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and automation in projects, adopting different ways of working, and developing 'power skills' such as collaboration, leadership, business understanding, agility, inclusiveness, and an innovative mindset.

Organizations and individuals in this new reality will need to be visionaries who can anticipate society's needs, and deliver projects to make a difference. He called out the young entrepreneurs from India who made it to PMI's Future 50 list of promising talent from around the world — Rajesh Nalla of Techimax IT Services; Vidhya Abhijith, PMP, of Codewave; and Vihari Kanukollu of UrbanKissan.

To illustrate how projects are driving change around the world, Mr. Prashara spoke about some of the projects that are part of PMI's 'most influential projects of 2020.' These include the Nightingale Hospitals in the UK, COVID-19 vaccine projects, and

the Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad that is the largest cricket stadium in the world.

Various factors are impacting the nature of projects and our ways of working, such as AI and other digital technologies, global warming, the decline in oil prices and the rise of renewables, and population increase in certain parts of the world. For instance, Africa is undergoing a 'youthquake' with 75 percent of the population under 25 years of age, which is leading to an increase in the demand for infrastructure.

However, organizations waste 11.4 percent of investment due to poor project performance, and 67 percent of projects fail when organizations undervalue project management. To ensure greater project success, organizations must have reskilling programs to develop core project skills and power skills in its project talent, and become gymnastic organizations with agility and nimbleness.

Among the new initiatives from PMI, he touched upon Wicked Problem Solving, which is a design thinking toolset; Disciplined Agile™, a toolkit that brings together agile, lean and other techniques for agile project delivery; and Citizen Development, which brings together a low-code/ no-code platform for software projects, resources, and certifications.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Culture is the backbone of resilient organizations.
- To stem attrition, organizations must upskill and reskill their workforce and retain talent.
- Do not ignore power skills such as collaboration, business understanding, creative thinking, leadership, and project management skills.
- Combine technical skills and human skills to get work done in the future.
- Build gymnastic organizations that are nimble, responsive and agile, and yet follow structure, form, and governance.



Leadership in the New Reality

KULMEET BAWA

president and managing director, SAP Indian subcontinent

Kulmeet Bawa is the chief architect of SAP's growth and innovation strategies for the Indian subcontinent. He is responsible for delivering bold transformations and exceptional SAP experiences to customers across the ecosystem, as well as guiding businesses in India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to adopt a digital-first mindset.

In a conversation with Srinu Srinivasan, Kulmeet Bawa shared his leadership philosophy, and his learnings and thoughts on how to build an organization culture and motivate people to work toward a vision.

He spoke about leading a team with a 'shared vision,' which is to envision a future for the organization and create an image of what is possible. Leaders can then use that vision or dream to galvanize teams and inspire them to work toward that common purpose. With this approach, teams will find a deeper meaning in their work, and realize that their work is much more than the sum total of mundane tasks. Instead, they are part of something larger than life, and contributing to the organization's success.

He believes that to keep that vision alive, leaders must add the 'why' behind it to provide people the context. The 'why' may not even have a material angle to it but may be something that touches an emotional chord in a person. It is the same way in which a soldier lays down his life

for the country, motivated by something much larger than life, which is patriotism for the country or his battalion.

A thought that he carries with him always is that the past has nothing to do with who someone is in the present. The future you are heading toward is what truly determines who you are today.

It's also critical to build trust and transparency in an organization. Only when people feel valued and appreciated will magic happen. Shared vision comes alive when leaders get into the world of people they work with, and look at things from their lens.

Mr. Bawa, who joined the new role at SAP in the midst of a lockdown, also spoke from his experience of leading teams in these unusual times. He said it is more important now to build relationships to keep team bonds alive, create trust while doing business across the screen, and engage with people and generate empathy in one-way dialogues in virtual events.

He focused on the need to stay emotionally connected even at a time of social distancing.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Lead people with a shared vision.
- Revisit and rebuild people-centric leadership.
- Bring out the leader in you and make a difference.
- Communicate often and with clarity so that the message gets reinforced.
- Be transparent and authentic with your team.
- Show compassion and empathy, for your reality may be different from your colleague's.
- Make integrity and discipline the bedrock of what you do.
- Play for failure so you learn from your mistakes.
- Utilize this time to think big and create new opportunities for you and your organization.



Embrace Uncertainty: Managing R&D Projects

SRIDHAR VEMBU

co-founder and CEO, Zoho Corp

Sridhar Vembu started Zoho Corp. in 1996 in a Chennai suburb. Today, all three divisions under the Zoho Corp. brand — WebNMS, ManageEngine, and Zoho.com — continue to be privately-held and profitable. Mr. Vembu is known for his unconventional choices. Instead of opening new offices in metros, he prefers smaller towns or suburbs.

Sridhar Vembu, best known for his unusual management style, spoke about embracing uncertainty while managing R&D projects. No one had a plan for a pandemic, and yet all of us have managed to cope with this new reality and make the most of it.

Using the analogy of a train, he said that a train that ran on time did so because nothing untoward occurred. This, however, is not how R&D projects run. For R&D projects, a better analogy, in his opinion, is that of laying a track through unknown terrain — through a swamp or a jungle. 'Experiencing certainty' is a great slogan for trains that can run on time, but for R&D projects, the new slogan should be to 'embrace uncertainty'.

Drawing from his personal experience, Mr. Vembu stated that plans, for the most part, do not survive their first contact with reality. However, even if plans do not materialize, one must continue to draw up plans. More important is the ability to modify plans when something unexpected comes up.

Mr. Vembu offered new perspectives for project managers. He suggested that they move away from fixed deadlines, and instead work toward achieving periodic milestones. This way, they can assess if they are making sufficient progress. They need to use individual judgment to determine 'sufficient progress' and at times they could get it wrong. In order to implement this strategy, project leaders must first accept that human judgment is necessarily fallible.

He asked project managers to accept that R&D cannot be de-risked, and any attempt to create fail-safe systems for R&D are likely to fail. The best attitude is to leave any trace of prestige or ego. Ego, he believes, destroys the will to endure.

He asked project managers to not take failures personally, and resolve to not be demoralized by setbacks. Instead they must think of course correction and learn from mistakes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Move from 'experiencing certainty' to 'embracing uncertainty'.
- Shift from fixed deadlines to periodic milestones.
- Assess 'sufficient progress' by exercising judgment, which is fallible.
- Accept there is no 'fail-safe' system for R&D, and don't take failures personally.
- Move away from fixed deadlines. Work towards achieving periodic milestones.



The Rapidly Transforming e-mobility World

VINAY PIPARSANIA

founder and principal, MillenStrat Advisory & Research

Vinay Piparsania specializes in developing business and communication strategies for millennial and Gen-Z customers and employees in his current role. He is an automotive industry veteran, with 30 years of operational experience in leadership positions across Asia. He was associated with Ford Motor Company for nearly 20 years in international marketing, sales and service responsibilities.

Transformation in the automotive industry has touched the lives of most people on this planet – whether you are part of the industry, a car owner, or a user of public transport.

In an educative session, Vinay Piparsania took the audience through the big changes that the automotive industry has seen in recent years, and the new developments that are reshaping people's perceptions of mobility.

Some of the top shifts in the industry are the increasing maturity of technologies powering autonomous vehicles, and the rising popularity of electric vehicles and ride-sharing.

He said that all major automobile companies have ambitious plans to develop autonomous vehicles. Auto makers and suppliers are working together, along with ride hailing and software technology companies, to share development costs and accelerate development. Governments are formulating policies to ensure passenger safety remains top priority and that public roads allow the testing of driverless vehicles.

By 2025, the world will see many more electric vehicles on the road. They will become more mainstream as they become more affordable and offer higher range of use.

The world may have hit the pause button on ride-sharing because of the fear of infections due to COVID-19, but that will not put an end to shared mobility. Mr. Piparsania said shared mobility will continue to be a big factor impacting the industry, and become popular again once the COVID-19 vaccine is out.

Transformation of the industry has led to larger collaborations with other industries such as electronics and software development. In the days ahead, the global auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) will work more collaboratively than competitively to tap one another's capabilities.

He urged practitioners and entrepreneurs to watch out for new opportunities in the automotive industry.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- By 2030, electric vehicles will constitute 10-15 percent of new vehicles, and autonomous vehicles will constitute 15 percent of new vehicles.
- By 2030, one out of five cars in the world will be a shared vehicle.
- Popularity of shared mobility will resume after the COVID-19 vaccine is out.
- Global auto OEMs will work more collaboratively than competitively.
- Watch this industry for new business and job opportunities.



Resilience: Protecting Value and Creating Opportunities in a Disrupted World

CAROLINE DAS-MONFRAIS

chief strategy officer, EMEA, FTI Consulting

Caroline Das-Monfrais is a member of the EMEA executive leadership team at FTI Consulting. Her focus is to drive multiple market strategies, including future scenarios and client service innovation. She leads the global FTI Resilience Barometer™, a methodology to help C-suite executives and boards think differently about their ecosystems and emerging threats in a digital, connected world.

Caroline Das-Monfrais presented insights on how business models have fundamentally changed in order to get things done in a disrupted world.

The pandemic has shaken global commerce, with 40 percent of businesses surveyed in G20 countries saying that they will survive less than a year if no vaccine is developed. A lot is changing – from business models, consumer preferences, organizational structure, go-to-market strategies, and the way we interact with our consumers and teams.

Crises are often unavoidable, and new risks will emerge. What we can influence, however, is our preparedness in the face of these risks – our resilience. Resilience is agile and evidence-led. As new business norms emerge, resilience must be rebuilt to protect businesses from new threats, adapt to new circumstances, and compete in the new landscape. Alongside we need to focus on personal resilience as well, especially at a time when about 90 percent of business leaders are concerned about the mental health of the workforce.

Ms. Das-Monfrais presented seven layers of a 'resilience agenda' that applies to organizations, the leadership team, and project managers.

One, build digital trust and enhance cybersecurity. Two, build operational and financial resilience. Three, workforce transformation due to the pandemic and increased digitization. Four, an increased focus on economic impact and sustainability. Five, government and stakeholder relationships will come under more scrutiny. Six, a sharp rise in litigation and contract disputes are likely. And seven, the need for crisis management plans.

Ms. Das-Monfrais recommended that a resilience agenda is embedded at all levels in organizations. The agile use of data will underpin resilience in the next normal. It will be up to the leaders within an organization to decide what their new normal will look like.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Be prepared to protect, adapt and compete to rebuild business.
- Think of developing economic, organizational, and personal resilience.
- A resilience agenda must include digital trust, operational & financial strength, workforce transformation, economic impact & sustainability, conducive business climate, and crisis management.
- Make evidence-led decisions to build resilient and agile businesses.



From the Present to the Future of Work

NITU KAUSHAL

general manager, Hybrid Infrastructure Compute, IoT and Digital Services, Hewlett Packard Enterprise (UK, IRE, ME, SA)

Nitu Kaushal is a strategic business development leader at Hewlett Packard Enterprise. With over 20 years of global telecom and technology company experience across IoT, edge computing, big data, AI, unified communications, connectivity and managed services, Ms. Kaushal has addressed the needs of both the private and public sectors within the enterprise.

When COVID-19 swept through the world, businesses made swift changes to their work practices to continue their operations. Nitu Kaushal spoke from her experience of managing the crisis to outline how organizations have coped.

The first stage was at the onset of the pandemic, when companies looked to support and help employees as they tried to manage work along with their family obligations. Communicating with clarity, leaders took on a more directive style to update work policies, allow flexible work hours, and offer new safety procedures.

Next, there was increased attention on helping employees with their well-being. Companies encouraged employees to pursue healthy activities, and provided food and dietary recommendations.

The third stage saw the shift to hybrid models that encouraged collaboration with improved tooling. The challenge that many organizations faced was to collaborate while ensuring that people stayed safe in their homes. The big question facing businesses was how to maintain organization culture when employees

were unable to meet one another. Virtual team events gained popularity, keeping corporate culture afloat.

The fourth stage saw many leaders adapt their leadership style from being directive to coaching, with most business heads becoming more empathetic with employee needs. Being confined to their homes and working longer hours, many employees are having to cope with mental health issues, an area that companies are actively addressing.

Then came the 'edge to cloud' office. This new hybrid model does not define where an employee works. The edge office could be anywhere – from a home office to a coffee shop.

Lastly, organizations are constantly looking at ways to increase productivity for high performing teams by making it easier for employees to collaborate internally and with partners.

She said in the midst of these changes it is important to keep the organization culture as top priority, as businesses move from the present to the future of work.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Help employees with families, and focus on employee well-being.
- Build hybrid models where possible, encourage collaboration.
- Adapt your leadership style.
- Create new realities with an 'edge to cloud' office.
- The 'edge to cloud' office concept is the future of work.

PMI Leaders Shed Light on New Challenges and Opportunities Across Regions



For the first time in the history of PMI, the Common Ground Symposium brought all the eight regional managing directors of PMI together for a dialogue. It was a lively discussion, hosted by Region 11 mentor Girish Kadam (extreme left) and conference chair Lt. Col L. Shri Harsha (retd).

PANEL DISCUSSION BY PMI LEADERSHIP TEAM



Ashwini Bakshi
Managing Director,
Europe



Ben Breen
Managing Director,
Asia Pacific and Head of
Global Construction



Bob Chen
Managing Director,
China



Brantlee Underhill
Managing Director,
North America



Grace Najjar
Managing Director,
MENA



Otema Yirenkyi
VP, Global Engagement,
Sub-Saharan Africa



Ricardo Triana
Managing Director,
Latin America



Dr. Srini Srinivasan
Managing Director,
South Asia



Here is an excerpt of the discussion

How are challenges of growth and development being managed in your region?

Otema Yirenyi: 'Youthquake' is a phenomenon that is taking place in Africa, which means the median age in African countries is 17. Our biggest opportunity lies in youth. Bite-sized knowledge and micro certifications are very attractive to that population. It enables them to quickly build capabilities, and become market-ready. We are doubling down on this as this is a gateway for the youth to build their project capabilities.

How is organization agility helping businesses in China during these challenging times?

Bob (Yong Tao) Chen: Businesses in China have found ways to adapt with agility. Look at Shanghai Fashion Week; it was changed to an online format in partnership with Alibaba to have their designs on sale immediately on the e-commerce platform.

There are new ways of learning today – bite-sized, on-demand, or 'my ways' of learning. How are these methods being leveraged in Europe to enhance competencies?

Ashwini Bakshi: We are in dialogue with a number of organizations in Europe which are grappling with this question. With the pandemic, the whole domain of higher education is transforming. Many individuals will not be able to go to college for a degree. Organizations will be turning to functional and goal-oriented education. It means companies and individuals need to look at alternative methods. Low-code/ no-code and micro certifications are great examples. Individuals will need to invest in their own learning.

The Middle East has generally been insulated from global turbulences. Do good project management practices have a role in maintaining stability?

Grace Najjar: Countries in the Middle East have been a part of the Project Economy since 1960, delivering successful projects with captivating speed. Human capabilities, building transformation leaders, and technology enablement are the assets of the future. COVID-19 has accelerated digital transformation. In the UAE, since the country's leadership has invested in smart learning programs, they could move 1.2 million schoolchildren online in a day.

Your region is a prominent hub of technological advances. Will it make human resources

redundant? Or will individual competencies continue to be in demand?

Ben Breen: Individual competencies are even more important now, and people need to gain new skills to remain relevant. PMI's Pulse of the Profession survey this year showed that organizations that have pivoted well have three key skills – 'ability is agility', 'technology rules but people influence,' and 'it's a project leaders' world.' Organizations need people with what PMI calls 'power skills', and the right mindset. And PMI is helping them acquire those skills.

Organization agility has become a mantra now. What is its importance in North America and what are your top three things suggestions for organizations?

Brantlee Underhill: Organization agility is necessary, and 2020 has forced companies to move quickly toward it. Business leaders know that agility is impacted by executive sponsorship, organization culture, and understanding the impact of change. Three tips for organizations to build agility are: define your 'why' – the strategic vision, purpose and values; invest in career development for your employees – focus on your technology quotient; and create your own wellness meter - for yourself and your employees.

Organizational agility is helping companies recover fast. How is it working in Latin America?

Ricardo Triana: Agility is not just about implementing agile. It goes beyond frameworks; it needs a change in the organizational culture. It means you need to reskill your people. There is an opportunity for us to pick those organizations, and share those experiences. We also have an opportunity to show how organizational agility works – the ways of working, power skills, and business acumen. We need to convey these messages to show how project management is so important now.

How do the insights from other regions pan out in the Indian context? Any insights that will help manage the new reality more efficiently?

Dr. Srinivasan: Region 11 has recognized the value and importance of micro-certifications in order to develop individual competency. Upskilling and reskilling, youth outreach, organizational agility through Disciplined Agile™, and physical and emotional well-being of employees are some of the key areas of focus.



Sri Lanka Vs COVID-19: The Importance of Winning an Early Battle

DR. ANIL JAISINGHE

Secretary, Ministry of
Environment, Sri Lanka

Prior to taking over the current role in the ministry of environment, Anil Jasinghe, MD, held the post of director general of health services. Dr. Jasinghe's remarkable leadership in the successful control and management of the COVID-19 outbreak made him a household name in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Anil Jasinghe spoke about Sri Lanka's experience in managing the COVID-19 outbreak, and how anticipating the crisis and planning ahead greatly helped in containing the crisis.

Sri Lanka set up a technical committee headed by the director general of health services. The committee drew up strategies, including an emergency mechanism for restricting public movement, ensuring non-essential workers stayed home, establishing mechanisms to maintain essential services, and imposing restrictions on air travel from high risk countries. Early actions such as thermal screening at ports of entry, suspension of visa on arrival, and the establishment of a quarantine center were in place by the end of January.

Sri Lanka was one of the first countries in South Asia to develop the capacity to diagnose COVID-19. The country's strategy worked because of a historically robust healthcare system, able political leadership, evidence-based disease control strategies, targeted PCR testing, support from the army for quarantine and contact tracing, and the effective use of media to spread awareness.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Attributes of success: strong healthcare systems, evidence-based disease control, targeted PCR testing.
- Created a safety culture to conduct successful general elections.
- Committed discipline from all stakeholders.
- Anticipated the crisis, and planned strategies and timely implementation of public health activities ensured disease control.



Next Gen: Transforming Opportunities into New Realities

GEETHA GOPAL

Senior infrastructure project
manager, Panasonic Singapore

Geetha Gopal is a senior program and project management professional with 14 years of experience leading large, strategic investments including AI, IT infrastructure, data centers, digital transformation and product ownership for two multinationals. She specializes in blank sheet assignments, and regional, cross-functional IT management initiatives.

PMI Future 50 honoree Geetha Gopal shared her thoughts on what the new reality holds for next-gen leaders like her. COVID-19 has shown young professionals that even in the midst of a crisis, there could be opportunities such as increased investments in technologies creating demand for digital skills.

Project managers need to get comfortable with data, collaboration, and technology to succeed. She recommended that project managers assess their skills, and align them to the new market requirements.

Some of the other considerations for next-gen project managers include the ability to connect projects to the organization's purpose. Meeting project goals is not sufficient; a project manager must consider a project's impact to the organization's business. They must also be cognizant of today's multi-generational workforce, and know how to work with people from different generations and backgrounds. She urged young professionals to look at their seniors as mentors, and develop relationships 'sideways, upwards, outwards, and downwards.'

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Be cross-functional.
- Know the bigger organization purpose.
- Bridge the knowing-doing gap.
- Be willing to take up the unknown and the untried.
- Be curious, take feedback well.
- Look for mentors.



Life Crafting - Creating New Realities

NEERAJA GANESH

Director - Relationships,
National Education Society of
Karnataka

Besides her responsibility at the National Education Society of Karnataka, Neeraja Ganesh is a freelance consultant who conducts training programs and workshops on leadership and behaviors. She has 25 years of experience in the IT industry, managing large teams, IT projects, operational excellence, and customer delight for large banking captives.

Drawing from her personal experiences, Neeraja Ganesh gave the audience an insight into her journey, with the intent of helping them learn from her life lessons.

After being compelled to quit her corporate role to look after her ailing mother, Ms. Ganesh decided to realign her priorities and focus on her family. She spent her free time meeting people and starting exploratory conversations to see what path she would like to pursue. During this time, Ms. Ganesh was actively looking to collaborate with like-minded people. These meetings led her to connect with a few entrepreneurs and eventually led her to a new role in the area of gender diversity.

Working in the start-up world after being in a corporate environment meant a lot of unlearning and relearning to pick up new skills. According to her, ego is the one thing that impedes learning, and hence, must be dropped.

In her session, she emphasized the importance of creating new opportunities for oneself, the need to create a network, build one's personal brand, and follow one's passion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Be clear when you set your priorities.
- Have no ego, it will hamper your learning.
- Do not underestimate the power of networking.
- Work on your personal brand.



Crossroads in Project Management: Exposed to New Realities

MD. ABDULLAH AL MAMOON, PMP

Deputy managing director and
COO, United Commercial Bank,
Bangladesh

Md. Abdullah Al Mamoon, PMP, has more than 27 years of experiences in diversified management domains. He holds a Green Belt in Six Sigma from the Benchmark Six Sigma, India. His experience includes organizational transformation, change management, project and program management, business-technology strategy formulation and implementation, digital financial services, business-operations strategy, process development and re-engineering, and risk management.

Md Abdullah Al Mamoon shared his learnings while deploying a core banking solution, and how the project needed to change course to accommodate 'new realities' that emerged during implementation.

It was a project of strategic importance to the bank, for which it had engaged a multinational company to design the software. When Mr. Mamoon joined the bank, the project was already in its planning phase. But while the software was being deployed, the executives observed that the end-users of the solution, who are bank employees, did not even know how to use a computer. It showed inadequate stakeholder analysis. The project documents made no reference to the end-users' level of computer skills.

When this reality came to light, Mr. Mamoon decided to engage a training company to provide the relevant skills to around 2,000 users. The on-boarding was included as a sub-project. It was leading to a project delay of around three months. However, the team fast-tracked some parts of the implementation to ensure the delay was cut short.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Conduct feasibility study and stakeholder analysis before starting a project.
- If end-user adoption is critical for project success, include them in the feasibility study.
- Record all important details in project documents.



Weaving Dreams with Special Concrete

DR. V. RAMCHANDRA

PhD, joint president & head (tech services), UltraTech Cement Ltd. (Aditya Birla Group)

Prior to his current role, Dr. V. Ramachandra, PhD, was the zonal head – south (tech) at UltraTech Cements. Over the years, he has participated in multiple technology and product centric projects. He began his career as a faculty member at the Siddaganga Institute of Technology, Tumkur.

With increasing emphasis on faster and eco-friendly construction, and mass housing projects, there is a growing need for newer methods of preparing concrete. Dr. Ramachandra showcased some of the important value-added concretes that are being used in the housing and infrastructure sector today.

Precast concrete construction is ideal for mass housing projects. It is built in a factory and transported to the site, to be laid like matchboxes on pre-cast foundation. Foam concretes are lightweight, good for thermal conduction, flowable and pumpable, allowing for rapid construction. Aluminium formwork is convenient as it requires no plastering.

He highlighted some of the innovations in high strength concrete for infrastructure projects, such as high rise pumping concrete, pavement quality concrete for roads, early strength concrete that comes up in a matter of days, and concrete that can be used in inaccessible locations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Innovative solutions help achieve fast construction, without compromising on strength
- The future of pavements is precast, prestressed concrete pavements.
- Concrete is a time-tested, versatile material
- Newer concretes are a result of faster, eco-friendly construction, and mass housing projects.



Harnessing AI/ML: From Frenzy to Vibrant Vitality

RUMA MUKHERJEE

Chief Architect, Unisys India

Ruma Mukherjee is the technology leader for emerging technologies at Unisys, India. She is passionate about data analytics and has expertise in a wide range of qualitative and quantitative techniques. A data geek, innovator, and team builder, she has around 18 years of work experience in successfully building products from concept to production.

Ruma Mukherjee spoke about some of the most common challenges that organizations face in analytics projects. The insights are based on her experience of setting up an artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) center of excellence in her organization.

Quoting Gartner, she said that more than 50 percent of analytics projects in the world fail. One of the major reasons for failure is the way project teams measure output. The success metrics of such a project must not be the analytics output but the business metrics, and the reason behind this gap is a lack of alignment between technical capability and business needs.

To move from 'chaos to harmony', she recommends that project teams define the problem that they are trying to solve and not their assumptions of it; use structured thinking to break down the problem statement and determine the analytics methodology to be adopted; encourage out-of-the-box thinking; and identify the actions, actions, and artefacts for the project.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Use structured learning methods to define the problem.
- Craft a problem statement that is SMART – specific, measurable, action-oriented, relevant, time-bound.
- Share actions taken by different 'actors', and project progress with the client to win their confidence.
- Quality in data analytics projects depends a lot on the data and how the algorithm self-learns.



Navigating Clients Digitally in a VUCA World

SANDEEP KUMAR

Senior industry principal, and head – Digital Consulting Services, India Business, Infosys

Sandeep Kumar is a subject matter expert in manufacturing, consumer products, retail, pharma, and logistics sectors. He has over 20 years of experience in finance, supply chain business & operations consulting, BPR, business intelligence, analytics, automation and IT strategy and execution experience across the globe and in India.

Sandeep Kumar defined the path that organizations must take for digital transformation so as to align its processes and systems to today's highly complex and dynamic customer journey.

Digital transformation needs a three-phase approach – creating a digital strategy, finalizing a solution, and design and implementation.

The first step before setting out to implement a digital strategy is an assessment of the current stage of digital maturity. Mr. Kumar also stressed on the need to define the end stage and the value proposition.

The next stage would be to integrate the systems across the organization, including external parties in the ecosystem. In the following stages, the project team must identify areas that will benefit from automation and predictive analytics capabilities to anticipate demand early on.

He recommended four areas of assessment to ensure that a digital transformation project is successful. These are processes across the value chain, analytics-based decision-making, the technology ecosystem, and organization factors such as key results areas and responsibilities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Define the vision and mission of digital transformation.
- Create positive employee satisfaction.
- Focus on features that enforce brand promise.
- Define KPIs to assess customer experience.
- Measure ROI and business impact.



Changing Requirement & Shrinking Timelines – An Automotive Industry Trend

SHRIRAM PATKI, PMP

Engineering manager (PMO), Nexteer Automotive Inc, USA

Shriram Patki, PMP, has over 18 years of experience in leading and managing complex multi-million dollar automotive programs with global cross-functional and cross-cultural teams. His professional experience lies in product development and manufacturing in the IT and automotive industries in India and the USA.

Shriram Patki highlighted the challenges faced by the automotive industry, as it grapples with product and software complexity, new and emerging technologies, more stringent safety and regulatory compliance, increased competition from technology companies, and develop new skills. With competition growing, there is also a need for faster time-to-market. However, rapidly changing technology has made the skill requirement within the sector unclear, as there is a need for extreme and diverse competencies that are constantly evolving.

He recommended conducting gap analysis on a regular basis. By doing this as a continuous learning process, companies can identify the required skills and deploy resources with the right skills. Rapid changes in technology and faster time-to-market require automotive companies to develop agility as a skill. Companies should also look to maximize reuse through a robust architecture to accommodate complexity. He spoke about a scaled agile framework that can leverage agile methodologies across the industry, and well thought out models and processes to help organizations develop agility faster.

Mr. Patki called on automotive companies to develop agility, flexibility, and adaptability to thrive in the years ahead.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Deliver faster by managing skills.
- Use intelligent tools to perform skills management.
- Developmental agility helps faster turnaround.
- Agility, flexibility, and adaptability are essential.

PMI India Awards

The annual PMI India Project of the Year awards were given out across two days this year. Here is a snapshot of the winners and runners-up of 2020.



Project:
Northern Region
Strengthening Scheme –
XXIX

Organization
Sterlite Power

Highlights

- The project objective was to enhance the power generation in Jammu & Kashmir that suffers severe power shortage.
- A transmission line that passes 11 districts of J&K, impacting over 12.5 million lives.
- Enables over 1,000 megawatt of power exchange between J&K and the Northern Grid, increasing capacity by more than 70 percent.
- Reduced the region's dependence on expensive fuels.
- Project covered by National Geographic Channel under its 'extreme engineering series'.



Project
Neelam Redevelopment and
B173 AC project

Organization
L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering Ltd.



Highlights

- Tight project schedule of around 25 months, including the handover of facilities.
- For the first time in its history, the company managed offshore installation work inhouse, engaging its captive facility.
- Completed the project 10 days ahead of schedule.



Project

Installation of a gasoline hydrotreatment unit to produce 100 percent BS-VI motor spirit

Organization

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd



Highlights

- Setting up a brownfield project in a space-constrained refinery in the heart of Mumbai.
- Project was completed six months ahead of schedule and within the approved project cost.



Project

Sewage effluent treatment of 200 million liters a day for reuse by potential customers in Nagpur

Organization

Vishvaraj Environment Pvt. Ltd.



Highlights

- Addressed the issue of water security, and achieved economies of wastewater reuse.
- Curbed the nuisance of untreated water polluting natural water resources.
- Generated income for the local municipal corporation by way of royalty from the supply of treated water.



Project
Manufacture of BB pumps

Organization
ITT Corporation India Pvt. Ltd.



Highlights

- Manufacturing of 41 pump packages and delivery as part of an export contract.
- Despite technical issues, the products were delivered to the customer ahead of schedule.
- Achieved the cost target and additional savings.
- Established a new benchmark in manufacturing large-sized (BB) pumps in the organization.



Project
UST Global

Organization
HealthCare Intelligent
Customer Services Assist

Highlights

- Developed a 'Google like' search engine for customer service representatives to answer benefit-related queries.
- Over-achieved the success criteria and achieved 40 percent operation efficiency.
- \$37 million savings generated due to cost reduction.



Project
Engine indication and crew alert system

Organization
Rockwell Collins (India) Pvt Ltd



Highlights

- Developed a new functionality called Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) autonomy to help bring down cost and schedule overruns.
- The system can help reduce the time taken to enter the market and cost when an OEM wants to make a change in the application software.



Project
Indo-US Cancer Aid - 2020

Organization
Octaware Technologies Limited

Highlights

- Has helped create awareness about breast cancer among women living in slums in 25 locations in Mumbai.
- Used project management tools and techniques to execute the project.
- Used social media for creating awareness and building the database of prospective patients, and applied data analytics and artificial intelligence.





Project

Leveraging technology to improve the development of children with disabilities and empower their caregivers

Organization

Amar Seva Sangam



Highlights

- Over 100,000 children in the age group of 0-6 years with developmental delays require early intervention services.
- About 67 percent live in rural and semi-urban areas where no such services are available.
- Amar Seva Sangam provides mobile phone-based services to this section of the population.



Project

Providing primary education to school dropouts and those not enrolled in school among the tribal population in Keonjhar, Odisha

Organization

Rural Reconstruction Organization



Highlights

- Reintegration of dropouts/ irregulars from 57 villages to help them continue their education.
- Early childhood education and care to 3,153 children.
- More teachers assigned to 31 schools that did not have sufficient teachers earlier.

Thank you, Volunteers and Sponsors

Organizing Team

PMI Common Ground Symposium 2020

Core Conference Team

Lt. Col. L. Shri Harsha (retd.) - Conference Chair

Girish Kadam - Conference Co-Chair and PMI Region 11 Mentor

Dr. Krishna Kumar - Conference Director and President PMI Kerala Chapter

Shantilal Fernando - Conference Co-Director and President PMI Colombo Chapter

MC Team

Anna Jones Koshy – PMI Kerala Chapter

Kruthika Mehar – PMI Pearl City Chapter, Hyderabad Chapter

Rakesh Jain – PMI Bangalore India Chapter

Vijayanand Narayanan – PMI Chennai Chapter

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Sindhya Sudheendran – PMI Kerala Chapter

Aswathy Vishnu – PMI Kerala Chapter

Sangeetha Babu – PMI Kerala Chapter

Region 11 Social Media Task Force Team

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