

PROJECT MANAGEMENT READY NEWSLETTER



Image of a historical project: China's only known terracotta army from the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). Xuzhou Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Han Dynasty. Xuzhou, China.

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Dr. Yan Liu

Interview with Dr. Yan Liu Nanjing University, China

Introduction to the interviewee

Dr. Yan Liu is a Research Fellow at the School of Management and Engineering, Nanjing University, China. He is a guest researcher at the section Infrastructure Design and Management, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands. He received his PhD degree from Delft University of Technology.

Dr. Liu's research interests focus on learning within and across large infrastructure projects, inter-organizational collaboration, innovation networks/ecosystems, digital transformation, and organizational project management.

Dr. Liu has published peer-reviewed articles in the International Journal of Project Management, IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, Project Management Journal, etc.

Dr. Liu received IPMA (International Project Management Association) Outstanding Contribution in Young Researcher Award 2021. He was a Contributing Principal of a PMI-sponsored research project entitled "How will the new talents change project management in a data-rich era?"

In June 2023, he co-led the Nanjing University team and won the third prize in the International Project Management Championship (China Region). PMC is an annual world-wide competition targeted at college students studying project-related courses. It is hosted by International Project Management Association (IPMA).

Interview

Evelyn Chao (Chao): *Congratulations to you and your students on winning the third prize in the Project Management Championship in the China region. Thank you for accepting my interview request.*

Dr. Yan Liu (Liu): Thank you for giving me the opportunity of an interview.

Chao: *How did project management come into your life?*

Liu: During high school, I had the ambition of studying management science. After the National College Entrance Examination, I considered my interests, college ranking, the city, etc. Finally, I chose Construction Management as my bachelor's program. The essential of Construction Management is project management because construction is based on projects.

Chao: *How do you define project management?*

Liu: According to PMI, a project is a unique endeavor to pursue a result, a service, or a product. To me, project management is a way to deliver something unique – something that has never existed in this world – with limited resources and a limited schedule. Some project examples include delivering a bridge, building a high-rise building, or creating a software application. But I believe that project management has a broad definition in this society. Project management is for all interests.

Chao: *During our stay in China, I observed that Chinese kids always talked about school or home assignments, but rarely talked about projects. How would you comment on assumptions you know among the Chinese about project management?*

Liu: First of all, many Chinese people tend to equal projects with construction projects, like buildings, roads, and bridges. You have to know that in the last few decades, there were lots of real estate and infrastructure development in China. That is why they have a limited definition of projects. Secondly, you mentioned many Chinese people value the necessity of *guanxi* (networks) in getting any projects done. Networks are important in other cultures as well. I spent almost 7 years in Europe. People in Europe also talk about how important it is to have some senior guys to mentor a project manager in order to get resources. Humans always share some similarities. It is about how to do business in China or in any specific culture or environment.

Chao: *What do you think about the cultural impact on project management?*

Liu: Cultures impact how project managers and teams view and care about the environment --- the government, local residents, nature, etc. One example is that projects are usually defined as temporary endeavors, but Chinese governments and companies like to talk about 5-year or 10-year plans. They tend to look at things from long-term perspectives while paying close attention to government stakeholders.

Chao: *You taught project management in both the Netherlands and China. How do you compare your teaching experiences there?*

Liu: In terms of knowledge areas, project education is almost the same in both cultures. But the way to teach might be different. Because I have much fewer students in the Netherlands than in China, I had closer interaction with individuals in the Netherlands. In China, I had to do more to deal with exams. I hope I can have more time with my students in China.

Chao: *What project management mindsets are particularly useful for young people like high school students?*

Liu: My quick answer is that all the 10 project management knowledge areas are useful for people of all ages to learn and apply in their life – schedule management, cost management, risk management, communication management, stakeholder management, resource management, integration management, etc. If you want to do anything, you should care about your cost and your schedule. You have to collaborate with others and be careful with the risks. Perhaps schedule management is more relevant to high school students.

Chao: *What recommendations do you have for high school students who want to pursue project management in the future?*

Liu: Project management is a combination of engineering and social sciences. I cannot recommend a specific course or book for high school students, but I do think for high school students, it may be better to learn project management by doing projects. Reflect as you are doing, get guidance and feedback from others, and think about how to do things better in the future.

Chao: *Could you please introduce some emerging trends in the project management field?*

Liu: There are many frontiers in the field. For example, how to integrate emerging technologies with traditional project management processes.

One particular trend I want to point out is how to do better stakeholder management to deliver megaprojects. China has completed a lot of megaprojects recently, such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. It lasted over 10 years with lots of international team players. There are megaprojects in other countries. The U.K. has Crossrail a (railway construction project centered around London) and High Speed 2 (a planned high-speed railway line in England).

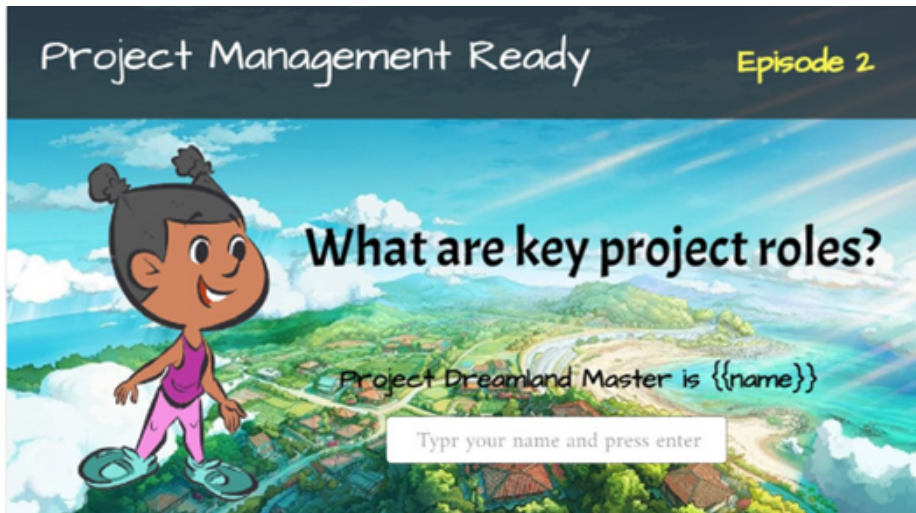
Innovation management is another trend in project management. Now everyone is talking about entrepreneurship. People are thinking about how to come up with more innovative ideas. But how to manage innovations in a structured way is something very challenging.

There are many other challenging areas in project management, like how to collaborate with different generations. Reading project management journals, such as *Project Management Journal* and *International Journal of Project Management* is a great way to understand more emerging trends in the field.

Chao: *What meanings do you see in terms of doing the work of promoting project management education among youth?*

Liu: I know some teenagers your age. They are being trained in piano, dance, football, etc. For me, playing musical instruments is learning hard skills, while learning project management is learning soft skills, transferable skills. You may not use project skills immediately, but they will help you have a holistic view of a project you will do in the future, communicate and engage with different stakeholders, and be more responsive to risks and uncertainties. Project management skills will help you in the long run.

Another thing I want to say is that project management involves how to deal with yourself - your mindset. Project management is life management because life is temporary and so unique. Learning project management can help us have a better attitude toward our life and career.



Project Management Digital Storytelling

Project management learning can be fun and interactive. These 5-minute project management digital stories are designed for younger, aspiring leaders.

[Play the episode - What are key project roles?](#)



Project Story

This summer I had the amazing opportunity to teach English for two weeks to a group of 25 kindergarten kids in Pizhou, China. Pizhou is a small town in Jiangsu Province, China with a population of 1.9 million and GDP per capital per capita \$12,430.23.

My lessons focused on two themes - "I have a dream" and "One more time." I tried to inspire the kids to think creatively and even crazily about their life dream. These kids had little English knowledge previously; they were so excited to see they could learn 26 alphabet letters and 20 profession names in English in just two weeks, as long as they kept trying one more time.

My key takeaways from this memorable summer project include:

1. Project management can be integrated into any subject teaching;
2. Project management learning for young kids starts with building the right mindsets such as dream big and practice intentionally.

I felt grateful for the opportunity to promote UN's Sustainable Development Goal #4 "Quality Education. The Project management mindset - work with others to do great things and create new values - can help develop responsible citizens and employees for tomorrow's world. Project management learning should be accessible for all kids.

What project did you do or are you doing? [Share your project story!](#)



**Join Our
Cause**

PM Ready is for everyone. We would love you to recommend a book for our future events or share your project story to inspire our youth! Please help us grow!

In addition, we would love to work with project professionals, scholars, industry and community leaders, nonprofits, student club leaders to build a learning community! We invite you to -

Deliver your book talk to a diverse audience.

Offer a virtual lecture or workshop to youth to earn free PDUs.

Publicize your youth-facing projects, programs, or internships.

Let us help you train your volunteers on project management.

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[Get Involved Now](#)

UPCOMING Book Talk: Great Meetings Build Great Teams: A Guide for Project Leaders and Agilists



Rich Maltzman

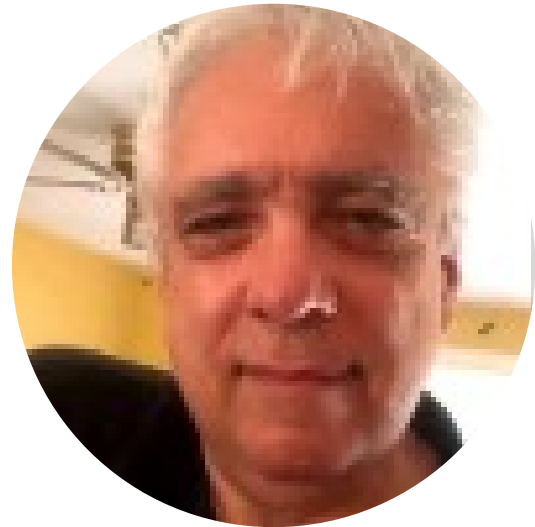
Wednesday
August 23
7-8 p.m. EST
[Register Now](#)



Do you want a happier, more successful project team? Better-run meetings will help get you there. This practical guide to facilitating project meetings will help you build cohesive teams and make your meetings more productive!

Rich Maltzman, PMP®, has co-authored several books on project leadership. He teaches a suite of courses in project leadership, serving as a Master Lecturer at Boston University.

Jim Stewart, PMP®, is an independent project consultant and Agile coach. He advises on best practices, teaches project management, and strategizes and executes on Agile transformations.



Jim Stewart

GREAT MEETINGS BUILD GREAT TEAMS

A GUIDE FOR PROJECT LEADERS AND AGILISTS



RICH MALTZMAN | JIM STEWART