

PMPOV106 Critical Conversations

0:00:00.4 Kendall Lott: Hello, PMs. Welcome to the new year. This is the first of our 2023 elevating the conversation, and our first of a series of three PM Point of View episode, highlighting some of our speakers at this year's University of Maryland project management symposium. For this 106th episode of PM Point of View, critical conversations, we have a couple of interviews with three speakers. And no, this doesn't replace their presentations, you're gonna still wanna sign up for the symposium. We have Kevin Coleman with Unconscious Bias, recognize and corrected. John Hovell on conversational leadership convening conversations that otherwise wouldn't happen. And Paloma Martin on project and change management with gender perspective. Join PM professionals from all over the US to share project management knowledge and experiences at UMD's annual two-day PM Symposium. It's the 10th anniversary of the symposium at this accredited and PMI-approved University program. It's gonna be held this year on April 20th and 21st. The event features 50 sessions over the two-days in five concurrent tracks. The full two-day program is now available on the symposium website, so be sure to check it out to see the variety of presentation topics at pmsymposium.umd.edu.

0:01:16.0 KL: Since you won't be able to attend every presentation over the two days, they're concurrent after all, all sessions will be recorded so those who have registered will have the opportunity to view any of those you missed and really wanted to see. This year, participants have the flexibility of attending in-person, online or getting the combo plate, a little of both. Besides networking with other PM professionals and earning PDUs, you definitely will learn something new that you can take back to the office and implement right away. Like our episode today, Critical Conversations. Registration is open, and early bird pricing is in effect until February 14th. Again, pmsymposium.umd.edu. And thanks for listening to the show.

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0:02:02.4 Announcer: From the Washington DC chapter of the Project Management Institute, this is PM Point of View, the podcast that looks at project management from all the angles. Here is your host, Kendall Lott.

0:02:13.1 KL: So with that, this is our first in a series of three episodes. Today, co-host Mike Hannon and I are very comfortable that we'll be able to pull off this conversation and that we're elevating it because our guests are John Hovell of STRATactical International who will present conversational leadership at this UMD symposium. And Kevin Coleman of KMC empowerment, who will talk on unconscious bias, and both of these are around how we act, how we talk, and how we learn from each other, so we're looking forward to some good learning in here. Gentlemen. How are you?

0:02:46.4 Kevin Coleman: Doing fantastic, how are you?

0:02:48.3 KL: I'm doing great. That was Kevin. Kevin, where are you calling in from?

0:02:51.1 KC: I am calling in from a place called Dumfries, Virginia.

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0:02:55.4 KL: Oh, that was Dumfries. I think it bubbled on us here a little bit, so Virginia. Kind of like Northern Virginia.

0:03:02.9 KC: Yes, it is, Northern Virginia. It's about 25 minutes south of DC, next to Quantico Marine Base.

0:03:07.6 KL: When there's no traffic.

0:03:08.7 John Hovell: When there's no traffic. Yeah.

0:03:11.0 KC: Absolutely Mike, thank you.

0:03:12.2 KL: 25 minutes to three hours. Yeah, you're in Southern Northern, Virginia. Excellent, excellent. Thank you, Kevin. And John, how are you doing today?

0:03:20.4 JH: Great. Thanks for having me. And if Kevin's in Southern Northern Virginia then I'm in Western, Northern Virginia.

0:03:25.8 KL: And Mike who's in Eastern Northern Virginia often called Bethesda, Maryland. Where are you fixed up where today, Mike?

0:03:31.9 Mike Hannan: I'm In Salt Lake City, we just finished chatting about the Grand Staircase, which I encourage you to look up in southern Utah, Northern Arizona, just take some time there, it was gorgeous.

0:03:40.1 KL: Mountain timing it, and I'm actually calling in from Tuscan today also in Mountain Time, so there we go, project management as we have known, happens all over the place, including across the country and across many different topics. So with that, let's get in to a little bit about who you guys are because you both got selected for the 10th annual increasingly prestigious PM Symposium that UMD has been running for some time now as a certified university academic institution supporting the project management space. John, tell us a little about yourself. What exactly do you do? How did you get there? And how's that tied to what you might wanna speak to?

0:04:17.5 JH: Conversational leadership is an exciting topic these days, there's a few dozen people around the world that are really focused on it in a daily practice kind of way. For me personally, the path I took was slightly unique, I guess. I started in the '90s in decision support systems, so sort of information technology from a people leadership perspective that quickly then morphed or I added in knowledge management and in our prep, I was mentioning trying to be very clear about the difference between knowledge management and information management, where knowledge can never be written down, it only exists in our heads and in our conversations and in our back and forth, whereas information management tends to write it down, which is also great, but I focused on the tacit knowledge management side, loved that, still love that to this day, decades later. Added in organization development along the way, which I'm adding a little bit of detail here to hope it makes sense and maybe even build some excitement 'cause some of these fields are not that well known around the world.

0:05:21.1 JH: And they all work beautifully with project management, but OD Organization Development, unfortunately, is often confused with organization design. Org design is like the re-

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org, firing everybody, moving the deck chairs, all the jokes that come with org design. Org development on the other hand is about group dynamics, why do people behave differently in groups, and what can we do about behavior in groups? That's the org development type work. I then added in diversity, equity and inclusion a few years later, and then I also added in Gestalt, psychotherapy, all of these fields sort of come together to now be under this label, Conversational leadership. And I guess what I might say really quick there, if I haven't already spoken too much, there's three main questions in conversational leadership that we're interested in, if this helps give a quick overview of it, one is what is the conversation that this group needs to be having right now?

0:06:20.5 JH: I think far too often, we're not actually having the conversation we need to be having. Hopefully you especially hear the diversity and inclusion aspect of that question. Second question is, in what way do we need to be having this conversation? Does it need to be emotional? Do we need to be raising our hands, do we need to have documentation and writing things down? Are we all clear on the conversational process that's at play, because as you can imagine, far too often, it's just whoever speaks first and whoever speaks loudest. And then the third question is, in what ways is this conversation right now forming community? Because we've learned the hard way, especially with challenging or I think you're calling them critical conversations today, especially with the challenging side of conversations, but honestly, I would even say in some of the transactional conversations, they harm community or they may form community. So that's probably enough for me.

0:07:16.0 MH: Maybe I should throw in a tangent here that I think connects in an interesting way. If any of you who are familiar with the Amish, or The Men in red communities and mostly in Eastern Pennsylvania, but far beyond those communities, they kind of froze technology from the modern person's point of view, it appears like they froze technology about 150 years ago or longer, depending. But it's actually not true. And I got to know a bit more about that when I was traveling in Lancaster about a year ago, and I was speaking with one of the leaders of one of the communities, and they said, "It's quite simple, we just look at any new technology any new way of doing anything as whether it will enhance our sense of community or harm it, and if we think it will enhance it, we're fine with it, if we think it'll harm it, we don't want anything to do with it." And we see a lot of evidence with kids on smartphones all the time and the bullying, and so if there's some real ways in which the community is being harmed, and I just never really had that appreciation until I heard it explained that way.

0:08:12.5 KL: It sounds like they're managing their gestalt, it stopped by design. So Kevin, tell us about yourself here and what brought you to UMD and got you selected as a premium speaker at UMD?

0:08:27.1 KC: Thank you for having me. I'm so happy to be here and also be on this panel, because I think it's really important to let people know what the conference will be all about, how impactful it will be for others, and it's really impactful for those around you to understand what the Symposium all about. Why are we here? Because when we talk about project management, we can talk about critical conversations, we can talk about unconscious bias, but it all plays directly with communicating with others, understanding people's point of view, and also it really aligns closely to the triple constraint. Now, as project manager professionals, we all know what the triple constraint is, time, scope and money, but when you look at each one of those factors within a triple constraint, there's a communication component within it, all of it. And when we're talking about unconscious biases, if you not have a great conversation with others, if you don't be able to speak to those around

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you in the way that they are receptive to it, understanding and be able to know that they have some type of free decorum within your organization, that's where you fall into problems. Hello, my name is Kevin M. Coleman of KMC empowerment. I'm an empowerment coach, trainer and speaker. Now, you asked me about my background, my background is, I initially was in the military, I was in the military for a few years.

0:09:41.0 S2: As I left the military, I went to private industry working for an organization called Electronic Data Systems EDS, which is not your Hue Packard, among other things, but then I went into the government for a while. And then the government, I did IT work and things of that nature. But what got me doing what I'm doing now, an empowerment coach trainer and speaker? What got me was about 12 years ago, I went to a conference and I heard this gentleman speak and he's a really popular motivational speaker, his name is Willie Jolley, and I enjoyed his speaking, I enjoyed how he moved the crowd, how he motivated everyone around him, but I still said, "Okay, that's something good. I really like that." But what changed my life was, I heard this gentleman by the name of Jonathan Sprinkles, write his name down if anyone is out there writing. His name was Jonathan Sprinkles.

0:10:45.9 KL: I'm writing, I'm writing. Jonathan Sprinkles.

0:10:47.4 KC: Yes, are you ready? Okay, but Jonathan Sprinkles, when I heard him speak, he was in front of the audience, he was on stage, but what he did that was pivotal was he spoke motivationally, but he came off the stage and he started asking the audience questions, impactful questions, thought-provoking questions. Questions that get them to go deep into what is on their mind. And from the answers that they gave, he asked more questions, and then he got the whole audience to really be involved, engulfed in that whole segment that he was in. And everyone had a very impactful moment from that session. 12 years ago, I looked at that and I said to myself, "I'mma do that one day." I didn't realize he was doing group coaching, I didn't realize that's what he was really doing, getting people to think and stretch themselves. What I'm here to say right now, I am doing exactly what he did, and more. So that what help me become a coach, that what give me that, ignited my fire in order to want to be a coach, trainer and speaker.

0:12:02.0 KC: And now, I'm so happy that I'm able to impact lives and help people reach their full potential by asking them questions that they wouldn't ask themselves. Now, also what I wanted to tell you, going directly to the training that then provided on unconscious bias, this training will be very fundamental for those that are in the PMI community, they will understand the concepts I'm talking about here, but they will leave with three things. The first thing they'll leave with, they'll have acknowledged that they have unconscious bias, 'cause we all do. I don't care who you are, I don't care where you came from, you have unconscious bias, but also in this training, and I think this is the most important, you'll understand what your biases are, 'cause I'm gonna go over some biases, I'm gonna give us scenarios, may even do a virtual role play for those, and whoever is in the room, they'll actually go through an exercise about unconscious bias. And then here's the key. Once they understand unconscious biases and how it could affect them in the workplace as a project manager, they get also self-correct. See, that's the key. When we know something, the key is we need to do something about it.

0:13:25.4 KC: The greatest gap I found with leaders, the ones I've been coaching, from senior executive all the way down to Journeymen employee, is this, the greatest gap, the greatest gap is the gap between knowing what to do and actually doing it. And once you see these two gaps, the only

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way to bridge the gap is have awareness, understanding and take action. Thank you.

0:13:38.2 MH: Well, you triggered lots of questions, Kevin, and of course, your enthusiasm is contagious, so thank you for giving me that gift already today late on a Friday. You said two things that got me curious to ask more, or probe further. One is, we often hear this statement, there's no such thing as a stupid question, and I've always disagreed with that statement. I agree with the intent of it, which is to encourage people to ask questions and not be fearful of somebody thinking it's not the smartest question, but there absolutely are grades of good questions, and like you say, if you're able to ask people just the right question that they would never have thought to ask themselves, you can unlock all sorts of potential. So I'm curious where you come down on the there's no such thing as a stupid question.

0:14:24.1 KC: I agree with you, well, actually, I disagree with you, I'm sorry. Please don't...

[chuckle]

0:14:28.7 KC: There is no such thing as a stupid question. Because you have to understand, there's times when people may ask a question and you don't know where they came from, their experiences, their perspective, and where that question came from. One thing I've been talking about in one of my trainings, and it's a DEI type training, but it's more DEI just talking about the diversity, equity and inclusion. And in that training, I start off with perspectives, and that's so true, because when you start looking at your perspectives, you're looking at your knowledge, your background, what formed that perspective, what kind of skills, what type of teaching you came from, what was your learning in your life, all these various different factors you will help bring forth your perspective about things. So if someone asks you a question that may or not seem the smartest question to you, you don't know their perspective.

0:15:19.8 MH: You already helped shift my point of view, so thank you. What my takeaway is meet people where they are, what's behind the budget, but then also we do... It does sound like we have an obligation to find better questions, not all questions are equal. And I think this question comes in...

0:15:39.1 KC: I would have to get John thoughts on this. Can I... I'm not trying to... 'cause I feel like we can talk to each other, and I would love to get John, 'cause I have my own thoughts, but I wanna ask John specifically.

0:15:48.0 MH: Oh, it's fine.

0:15:49.9 KC: When we start, something that you just said that really stands out, Michael, and when we begin to form our questions, we have to really think into it. So I wanna ask you, John, when you talk to your clients, how do you begin to form your questions in order to really get them to speak into the situation in a powerful way?

0:16:10.0 JH: Yeah, it's amazing. Thanks for asking Kevin and Mike and Kendall too. Yeah, I was frantically writing notes, and I think we're only on audio for this podcast, if I'm not mistaken, so just so everybody knows. Kevin, I was violently shaking my head up and down.

[chuckle]

0:16:26.3 JH: Yes, when you said you don't know where they're coming from, that's literally the words I was writing as you were saying them. So in Gestalt, we have this concept called Use of self, or it's known as self as an instrument. And the whole idea is, if you were... I grew up playing the trumpet, and to play the trumpet, you have to learn the physical instrument of the trumpet, the valves, how to clean the valves, how to make it sharp and flat, how to do, alter the mouthpiece, all kinds of... Learn the instrument, right? Well, in the kind of work we do in coaching and project management in Gestalt, whatever kind of people work you're doing, guess what the instrument is, it's your body, and I say body and energy because it's more than your brain. More than your brain, which I think a lot of people get caught up in. If I just have smarter thoughts, smarter questions, I will be more logical, I'll be better, and that's where you're coming from. So to Kevin's point, that's an unconscious bias right there, you're coming from an intelligence perspective, someone else may be coming from an emotional perspective, a very different world view. I'm happy that you're so smart, I can feel your smartness. That's a different place to come from, and your questions are gonna come different.

0:17:43.0 JH: The other thing I would say from OD, Kevin, so use of self, self as an instrument, so critical, so it's such a foundational, never-ending practice for where I'm coming from or where questions can come from is... So then from the OD organization development point of view, I would add intent and impact. So there is no dumb question, but I'm very curious about what was your intent of that question, 'cause Mike, I think the other assumption we can make is there's no stupid question, unless you ask me a question that you already know the answer to, but even then, I still wouldn't say stupid question, I would say, "Hmm, I'm really curious about your intent," are you trying to make me... Are you trying to put blame and shame on me, are you trying to be cynical? Are you trying to be funny? Are you aware of your intent as you ask that question? Because I'm the first to admit, I think that's a big miss, especially Kevin, in unconscious and subconscious bias, it's a real practice to be clear before I speak. What is the intent? And then conversationally, to check in on the impact. As I said, can I ask, how is that landing with you? So, yeah, back to you, Kevin, Mike, and Kendall.

0:18:54.5 KC: That was beautiful. And I love the fact that you said, what was the intent? And you have to understand, when we're talking about unconscious bias or communication in critical conversations, you have to understand, you can use coaching in it. When you ask about the intent, there's ways that you can ask someone about their intent without putting them on guard, even if you thought they did ask the question that they already knew the answer to. And one way is doing it, so let me give you a perfect example 'cause I love to give examples. You may say something, this is a coaching question, help me understand what was your intent when you asked this question. You see, now you're opening up the door, letting them feel that I don't understand. So help me out with this. You have to dig a little deeper in asking and formulating that question or that answer in a way that they can be very descriptive, clear, concise, and to the point. And always remember when we're having these candid conversations or critical conversations and we're talking about unconscious biases, we need to remember to ask open-ended questions. Remove yourself out of the picture, okay? Because I'm gonna talk about this in my training but I'm gonna go a little deeper than this, but I'll talk... You have to ask open-ended questions. What, Beginning with what? When? Where? Who? How? But never ask, "Why?"

0:20:16.0 KC: Now, you may say, "Kevin, why can't I ask why?" You have to understand, when you're having a critical conversation with someone or you're talking about something that may be a

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little sensitive, such as unconscious bias, that "Why?" question make people feel at odds a little bit. You're questioning them personally about something that they may have, possibly you may have felt that they've done wrong. But if you say what, when, where, who, and how? You're just asking an open-ended question and they'll be willing to... And more willing to answer that question directly.

0:20:51.6 MH: Yeah and they didn't like the power of how you phrase it, Kevin. You said, "Help me understand." That's not even a question, right? There's a power of invitation there, that's hard to step away from and it can be very engaging.

0:21:06.2 KC: Very nice.

0:21:08.5 MH: It strikes me as a process... We're discussing a bit the process of engaging in it since, I think, right? That was a command form even so it might be, "How would it make you feel if I were to ask you how you could help me understand what you just asked?" We give into some weirdness in there if we're not careful. But I wanna ask a more fundamental thing for a second, or maybe it's not more fundamental, a different lens perhaps, which is, if it's unconscious and it's... I got two guys here, one talking unconscious bias, the other one talking about group dynamic. If it's unconscious and it's individual, why do I care? In other words, asking it in the challenging form, I understand, but the question is, isn't it when the unconscious has made something manifest that we have an issue or do we? Why does it matter that we think about this as project managers? I'm taking away the role of being flat-out rude so we're not talking about people choosing to be racist, choosing to be mean, the mean girl motif, or the bully motif. Separate from that, on the assumption that we are professionals striving to do our best, to perform work that we've agreed to do, we signed-up with organizations to do things. Well, all of us lead our own organizations now so we may have bailed out on that but all of us are responsive to clients which is even harder. If you're an employee, you ain't lived until you've had to deal directly with the clients, right?

0:22:21.9 MH: So, in that context, why does it matter? Unconscious bias. So, Kevin, why does that matter? And then John, why does that matter, but... When he answers, from a group dynamic perspective?

0:22:32.3 KC: One thing I've learned from one of my mentors, bring the unconscious to conscious. That's when you really see changes, that's when you really see milestones reached. And we're talking about professionals in a PMI category. You have to understand that you need to check those biases at the door. And let me just walk you through a quick scenario as to why it's so critically important to make the unconscious conscious. You see, when you have unconscious biases, you go through various stages of it. The first stage is stereotype, because you have certain feelings, you've seen things on TV. We've all been there. You've seen things on TV that you didn't like and you start forming ideas, stereotypes about individuals or groups. And then once you start forming these feelings, it turns into implicit or unconscious biases about those individuals. And then when you keep on holding these feelings or holding these attitudes and thoughts, you start going to phase number three, is pre-judging. You start pre-judging the individuals or groups before the fact.

0:23:42.3 KC: We've all suffered from that. People always think it's a black and white issue, it's not. It's a people issue. And then, once you start pre-judging before the fact, you go on to the next phase, phase number four, which is your behavior. Not only have you pre-judged, not only should have you had stereotypes, not only had implicit bias, but now your behavior has changed according

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to things that you have thought about. And last but not least, now, this isn't PMI or any other organization, it leads to discrimination. Those are the five phases: Stereotype, implicit or unconscious bias, pre-judging, behavior. And then you start having discriminatory behavior towards others.

0:24:26.3 KL: So, it changes how we end up acting. You know, you just reminded me of a tool that I learned a while ago, the ladder of imprints where you don't even realize you've escalated to an assumption about why that person did what they just did, that they're not even in the conversations and that's a different topic. But what you just described reminds me of that, where we don't even... And it happens within... It's actually apparently a fraction of a second. But anyway, John, what'd you hear there that you thought was interesting in the context of where you're coming from?

0:24:53.0 JH: Yeah, I'm enjoying this. It's amazing and thanks for the question, Kendall, and well said, Kevin. I was listening and kinda jotting down notes at the same time so maybe I'll do a little bit of both. When you first asked the question, what popped up into mind for me was the old line maybe all of us have heard, so just a reminder, "Everyone you meet today is struggling with something you know nothing about." And so, if you've got stuff going on in your life and they've got stuff going on in their life, would you speak to them differently if you knew more about it? And so we've all got these lived experiences that I think, unfortunately, there's very little awareness and probably even less empathy, towards what's going on for all of us. So, I wrote in there also next to it, "Complexity and systems thinking." So, in the complexity and systems thinking, if I stand on top of... If we draw the number six on the ground and I stand on one side, it looks like a six, and if you stand on the other side, it looks like a nine. We're both correct, we're both accurate but it looks completely different. And oh, by the way, in complexity, it's changing and shifting and moving around all the time, so what's the old line there?

0:26:09.5 JH: I love these little catchy quotes that stick with me. "No person steps in the same river twice. The person changes and the river changes." That kind of complexity. I think when Kevin's talking about this unconscious, implicit bias, constant shifts and it goes back to what we actually said a question or two ago. I think when you've done this work well and you've done this practice and you're... Each day, I still have my own, as Kevin was saying, implicit, unconscious, subconscious biases, I hope that I'm coming from a different place now. I hope when I speak, when I listen, when I offer, I have additional... You talked about ladder of inference, I have different conclusions, beliefs, actions that I take, higher-up on the ladder of inference. I'm gonna bring to mind that a person of a different race, a different age, a different color is very likely to have had some different lived experiences. I want to take into account they may or may not have different experiences for me, and I want to speak from that centered, grounded, relational place as opposed to, dare I say if I wanna be a little edgy here, an immature ego point of view as opposed to a mature ego point of view. So then, yeah, just to repeat, why does it matter? I think it's shifts where you're coming from, which I think shifts group dynamics.

0:27:38.9 KL: I'm still intrigued by this. There's also something implicit in the stages you talked about to me, Kevin, that I think you're referring to as well, John, which is that there's causality here, causation, which is itself an arguably fundamentally Western viewpoint. But if we're concerned about the behavior of discrimination as we work in management organizations, why aren't we just addressing the behavior directly? What is the need that seems to be so strong for us to dig deep? Now, I think as project managers, we literally think it's root cause. So I get that everyone's going like, "Kendall, why are you asking a rhetorical question?" Except I am concerned, and I'm inviting

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you guys to tell me why I'm wrong, it's a lot of work to go so deep in the unconscious bias when the problem is, is I need better behavior in meetings, I need better behavior in non-meeting time that I'm expecting someone to be able to work or that they're expecting something from me or needing something from me. So it's almost like I get the idea that we're trying to live better lives through going backwards to the stages, to the source, but what becomes practical for us as we work together in complex systems? And I invite all of you to respond how you need to. Thanks.

0:28:53.1 KC: Let me ask you a question, if you don't mind. And I just want people just to hear this. When I say experience is the best what? What is it?

0:29:05.1 KL: Teacher.

0:29:07.1 KC: Teacher.

0:29:07.8 KL: Teacher.

0:29:08.5 KC: Experience is the best teacher. That's what I've heard all my life, all my days. However, evaluated experiences is the greatest teacher of all. So when we begin asking the question about why is this important? You either begin thinking about experiences that you've gone through, begin correlating those experiences with the outcomes that you see within your workplace, within your project. And then when you begin to connect those dots, that's when you see the importance of addressing unconscious biases.

0:29:45.2 KL: Oh Kevin, you just took us home, it's about outcomes. Sorry, go ahead. That was brilliant. Let me just pop this right into like, is that what it is, results in an organization? John's not buying it. John's not buying it.

0:30:00.3 MH: First, I'm buying it. Let me jump in here. To say that being so intentional, deliberately empathetic, better at listening, better understanding myself, better understanding that I don't have a monopoly on the knowledge in the room and that other people bring some pretty interesting experiences, that as a leader, it's my job to tap into, right, so that we might have better outcomes, sure. But I think there's a human element to this, that, yeah, sure, it feels great to win as a team, and that's the outcome we want. And we're all hopefully rolling together and trying to figure out how to achieve this shared objective. But sometimes the journey is where it's at. Whether we win or lose, this process we're going through to be the best group we can be and promote the best group performance that we're all trying to promote, that has its own benefits. Though did that bridge the gap between the disagreement or not, outcome versus not outcome?

0:31:00.1 JH: I can jump in. I think we're just now starting a back channel for chat too. One of the things I struggle with... And I hope we have enough time left here to chat about it. One of the things I sort of struggle with in traditional coaching is that the first question, not always, but it tends to be, "Tell me why you're here today. What does success for this meeting look like?" Whereas in OD, organization development, we would say, "Welcome, what's present for you?" Do you see this fundamentally different ask in the question? We're not looking to solve anything, we're not looking to bias a problem solution point of view. We're looking to come in and say, "We're with you. What's going on?" Kurt Lewin founded organization development, and this is a bit sensitive, but here we are. The reason he founded, my understanding, in 1947, when he started organization development, he was a Jew from Germany. He moved to the United States, or dare I say, escaped to the United

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States, and he couldn't understand why some of his best friends were killing some of his other best friends. Why do people behave differently in groups than when I talk to them?

0:32:08.5 JH: And to Kendall, to your question about what are the outcomes or what do we want in meetings, like take me to the meetings, why is it that pre-pandemic, I think it's all shifted a little bit during the pandemic, why is it that we could sit in a meeting and have our suits and ties or whatever your regalia was, and then after the meeting, have the real conversation? What is that?

0:32:28.2 KC: Yeah, Yeah.

0:32:31.0 JH: What is that group dynamic? Something is going on and has been going on for a long time.

0:32:36.1 KL: It's so clear that we actually planned meetings to allow that time to do it. I can speak from my association work. I have short meetings because I know the real meeting is the one that's not in there. And they're like, "Oh, we only have an hour in meeting." I'm like, "No, it's still three hours. It's just we're only doing the formal part for an hour."

0:32:52.0 JH: For an hour because we're really gonna talk afterward. That's this conversational shift that OD, that Gestalt, that there's a whole study of why do we fall into these subconscious, unconscious implicit biases and processes? In OD, we call them covert processes. There is a covert process that you can even talk about it, and you still can't shift. So then what? That's what I think we're trying to say on this call and trying to say at this conference and with these project managers is what a gift and a skill it is to raise your awareness of implicit bias, subconscious bias, unconscious bias, covert processes. Boldly speak it, put it into the room verbally, in documentation. Dr. Patricia Shaw has a definition of leadership where she says, "Leadership is..." We can talk about the difference between leadership and community-ship, a whole another thing to talk about. Leadership is convening conversations that otherwise wouldn't have happened. Bring that hallway conversation into the meeting. Can you do that?

0:33:55.2 KL: Yeah, I think Brené Brown calls that rumbling. It's a rumble. [chuckle]

0:33:58.8 KC: Yeah, yeah.

0:34:00.8 KL: I once talked with someone who had that conversation with me, and then they said, "So now, let's go have the meeting." I said, "I think we just did." Kevin?

0:34:07.2 KC: At this point, I've noticed that even in some of my trainings, to your point, John, I even added in the training that we need to begin having a meeting before the meeting and a meeting after the meeting, and the importance of both. One of those things where... So we talk to time management, I'll coach on time management sometimes. Change your meetings to a half hour. Keep it as an hour slate, but that first 15 minutes, you show up early. You have those conversations if anyone wanna show up early. And then you have your core meeting, hitting the objectives, being very clear and concise on what you want to accomplish. And then that second, then a latter part of meeting, you take care of your notes or you have that conversation after the meeting. But it's so important that we need to be more transparent in what we say and it starts with trust. If you don't have the trust of your organization, people don't have faith in you as a leader. I don't talk about project management or whatever leadership acumen you have. That's when you can start

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influencing others. One of my favorite quotes is from my favorite mentor by the name of John C. Maxwell. Anybody heard of John Maxwell out there? One of his favorite quotes is this, "Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less."

0:35:26.8 KC: So if we want to begin to influence others, whether it's at communication, unconscious biases trainings, things of that nature, we need to begin to meet with them emotionally. I'm not talking about emotional intelligence now, everyone. We need to start talking about how is your self-awareness? How are your social skills? What is your self-regulation, your empathy, your motivation? What are those five core areas of emotional intelligence are you impactful and with your people? If you want people to begin to serve you at a high level, you need to point them at a high level. It all starts with who?

0:36:12.5 MH: Man in the mirror.

0:36:14.1 KL: I've heard some of this before, but I really like how you're putting your finger on it to make it how we can uncover... How we could dig out the parts that don't work. And here work may not be the outcomes, is what I'm hearing here. It may be about how we feel about what we can get to. There's some level of that in there. John, I wanted to ask you then around this, 'cause you caught me on something really big there though, is the covert process, not just the covert thinking or a different outcome. When you say the covert process in the example of the meetings, is it the meeting we really have later or was it that the meeting we thought we were having is actually hijacking the real meeting? In other words, the covert process is the meeting. 'Cause there's something, I don't know. What did you reflect on when you meant covert process in that context?

0:37:03.1 JH: Bob Marshak is the person that writes and researches and does all the work around covert processes. I think one of the books is literally titled "Covert Processes." It's almost an infinite feel. Like right now, the four of us on this call, there's a covert process going on. Are we trying to sell books? Are we trying to sell seats? We might know it. We might not know it. I don't know what it is. I'm just saying, right? In every conversation, there's something going on. And it's also a process, right? It's shifting. It's moving. There's a step and then a step. So yes, it could be the meeting happening after the meeting or the meeting before the meeting. There could also be, to Kevin's points, a covert process of all the people of one gender are gonna speak first, and then a different gender can speak later. Right? Covert process. We may or may not be aware of it. It may or may not be intentional. We may or may not be happy with it. That's the covert process to be directly compared with the overt process, which is what everybody knows and is documented and we're aware. There's a shared awareness of the overt process at play. It's all the covert processes that are so rarely spoken to.

0:38:11.9 KL: That sounded like cultural behavior. It sounded like culture at that point what you're talking about...

0:38:17.5 JH: Maybe I'm just giving you cultural examples, but...

0:38:18.8 MH: Yeah. Okay.

0:38:20.1 JH: Yeah.

0:38:20.7 MH: Well, I'll throw one out that you make me think of from my own personal

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experience, which is, I'm one of seven kids, and I had two older sisters. And I learned being one of many that if you wanted to get your parents attention or, "Hey, can I please have seconds for dinner," or whatever it is you want your attention for, you have to compete. And my siblings and I, we've always gotten along wonderfully. I don't really know too many families that can say that. So it wasn't competing because we're trying to one up each other or win at the expense of my sibling losing or something like that. It was just, "I want my turn, right? And equal turn." But what I learned was because I had two older sisters, they had already mastered the skills of how to get heard before I did. And so I learned how to interrupt in order to get heard. And then of course, in the workplace or just almost anywhere in life, even probably from the time of being 12 years old or older, I learned that a lot of people don't like it when the guy shows up and interrupts, especially if he's interrupting women.

0:39:26.0 MH: And of course, I had my reasons, but nobody cares. I had to learn a completely different way to understand what I was bringing to that and what I'm responsible for changing to be more effective and why those other perspectives on me or where those were coming from? How to understand, "Oh, there goes the White guy interrupting the woman again." Well, there's a reason there's a sensitivity there, [chuckle] as you said. So all of that in my mind, this whole session so far has just been wonderful to raise awareness, not just for PMs, but I think especially for PMs, because you're constantly in new teams with new individuals, diverse perspectives. You don't know where they're coming from. You don't know if they're one of seven kids that had to learn how to interrupt. You don't know [chuckle] what you said, John. Everyone here is struggling with something we're not aware about, we're not aware of. All that kind of empathy training, I think, goes so far in project management.

0:40:23.2 KC: Michael, you are hitting it on the head, and you have to realize when we talk about... I love what John was saying in regards to overt and covert, because I'm not gonna talk about this in my training on the unconscious bias, however, I have another training where I talk about micro aggressions and macro-aggressions, micro-assaults. And when you talk about these type of things with individuals, micro-aggressions, that's covert. You don't know you're doing it sometimes. You may not know it. But it's overt as well, when you talk about micro-assaults. You know what you're doing, you know you're hurting people, you know you're being prejudiced. So when we look at that in the frame of things as far as project management, some things you may do that you may not understand, but by having these trainings on communication, critical conversations, unconscious bias, that's bringing it to your attention now, and now you can self-correct, you can make the right choices, you can be that full individual you want to be within your organization, because now you know, it's not eluding you any longer.

0:41:35.4 KL: That gives me a question, Kevin. In the sense, the way you describe it, you talked about outcomes before as one example, better performance, better outcome, talked about not doing bad things like the behavior of discrimination. You just talked about bringing your full self... What did you just say?

0:41:50.3 KC: You are bringing your full self to work. You are showing up, and that's something that John was talking about earlier about being present like you when you... I love the way you started your session with your clients. Sometimes when I start sessions with clients, I may not ask a question at all, I'm looking at you as an individual. How are you showing up?

0:42:11.3 KL: Yes, you may just...

0:42:11.5 KC: And then, I may just sit there while you go through a breathing exercise or something like that, just so you can be completely present before I ask you any question.

0:42:23.3 KL: So I think I understand a sense of why you would like to coach the way you do, what the outcome of that is, is being that... I think you said something about your full self, your right self. So John, in the pace that you're talking about as we uncover these things like the covert processes, as we look at ourselves as instruments, what is the goal of the kind of approach that you're looking to help people achieve, to get to or to be about? Because they start the session in one way, they start listening to you in one way, we start as project managers not having gone to your presentation yet in one way, and then when we learn we're some way else. What is the state that you're hoping for us to understand, is it just more awareness and we're done, is it... Where does it go?

0:43:06.8 JH: I think it's almost limitless awareness and range of options.

0:43:11.7 KL: Range.

0:43:13.0 JH: Those are two that yes, I'm always very excited about. I've written three things here that I can put out pretty quickly. I think most direct to your question now, in Gestalt psychotherapy, they talk about the cycle of experience, and it goes something like this. One of Kurt Lewin's first action research is, he took himself and Blenda Rumosuganik, was her name. And they went and they did research inside restaurants. And it was the simplest little thing, but it became a very powerful technique. It was as simple as they asked waiters and waitresses, "Hey, can you tell me all of your open orders? Can you tell me what you've been serving or whatever?" Long story short, and way over simplified, what they found through their research was if someone had paid their bill, the waiters and waitresses couldn't remember it anymore, it was cleaned out of their memory. If they hadn't paid their bill yet, it was still open, and dare I say, it was still weighing on them. That's where I'm heading with you, that everybody is struggling with something, they may not even realize themselves that it's deeper down, it could even be ancestral that they're dealing with.

0:44:25.9 JH: So the cycle of experience, I can't say it's the goal, but I would say it's something to be aware of. Are you opening new material, are you transitioning and struggling with material, are you closing material or are you in what Gestalt calls the fertile void? What Kevin was just talking about. Are you grounded? Are you centered? Are you present? Are you fully here? Because if not, there's maybe something, there's likely something for us to work on. The other two that I wanna throw out to you real quick; Heidi Helfand, H-E-L-F-A-N-D. She's modernized the old Tuckman model, forming, storming, norming, performing. I think a lot of people know that one. She's basically said, "Actually, let's rename it dynamic re-teaming." She calls them, I think it's seven moves that every project team, I can't say always go through, but there's seven classic moves. People join, people leave, people get in arguments, and so there's ways to... Again, range and awareness and options on how to work with seeing those moves, those very common patterns as they happen, so dynamic re-teaming.

0:45:34.5 JH: And the last one I wanna mention that's been flowing for me in this conversation is a White heterosexual, able-bodied male, English-speaking friend of mine had a real unconscious bias moment that maybe it's not appropriate for me to share for him, but it helped me to... An apology for the piano lessons in the background. It's the amygdala hijack. It's the micro-aggressions that

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Kevin was just talking about. Your lived experiences, you're receiving microaggressions every minute of every day, your biology changes, you're interacting in the world in a different way. Major moment for certain race, certain gender, certain people to say, to realize where other people... How they're living and where you're coming from in that relationship, in those conversations. So again, is that the goal, is that what we're aiming for? I'm not sure, but these are the kinds of tools and then awarenesses that help me speak and operate from a different place, in relationship, on project teams.

0:46:40.4 KL: To be able to do what, be what, or just to be a better person?

0:46:45.7 JH: To be present and to be clean.

0:46:48.1 KL: And that alone has its value, to be present and to be clean.

0:46:51.4 JH: I think the world is unclean and in trauma. And I think if there were more cleanliness, more awareness, more closure, I think things would be different.

0:47:01.8 KL: Well, I think we're there gentlemen. Last thoughts?

0:47:07.5 KC: Yeah, I just wanted to point, first of all, I appreciate the time with you Kendall as well as you Michael and John. I wanna just close with a couple of things. When we talk about unconscious biases or communication, there's a couple of books I would like to refer to you in regards to both, one of which is Radical Candor by Kim Scott because that's the way when we talk about project management professionals and you want to have these hard-hitting conversations, you need to build that infrastructure of trust as I was alluding to earlier. The second one is, I know everyone heard of this book, they may have read this book. It's called The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey. In that book, habit number five is the most critical habit that's seek first to understand before being understood. And I also wanna leave you with this. When we talk about project management and we talk about communication, one thing we do at KMC Empowerment, the organization that I lead, we help empower leaders to empower those they lead.

0:48:17.3 KC: If each and every one of you in a project management profession, you're a leader. You influence those around you. So if you want to be empowered, if you want to be that person that people go to, that person to help pour into others, build others up to be the best they can be for your organization and your projects, seek to be that leader you want to be.

0:48:40.1 JH: Beautiful close guys. Love it. I know I've got a lot out of today's session. I've gotta go write some of this down before I lose it. I'm really intrigued to hear you guys speak at Symposium now, too. [chuckle] So take this home, Kendall.

0:48:55.2 KL: Well, the very good news, I can't even begin to overstep all of those, see, but that the good news is we have it recorded. It will be an episode, and there will be a transcript. So we have it written down. [chuckle] That's the part I can contribute to today's community, is to make sure it got written down, so that's where we'll be. Guys, thank you for taking time on a Friday to spend time with us here in January before you even get into your April. Can you believe it, the next time we all talk, it will be spring time, and there will be rain and flowers. [chuckle] I look forward to that time. And thanks for everybody being on today. If you have any questions, you can always follow up with me later, and I'll see you at Symposium.

0:49:33.7 KC: Thank you so much.

0:49:34.3 JH: See you soon. Thank you.

0:49:35.9 KL: Another part of Critical Conversations for our management and our project teams is understanding the perspective of gender and gender diversity among our teams. UMD has found a fantastic presenter on the topic, Paloma Martin, a Fullbright scholar, completing her second, yes, that's number two, Master's degree, a Master of Public Management at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland. This is interesting to me because she is a guest who is not coming out of construction, engineering or IT. Instead, she's coming from a place that has a warm spot in my heart, public policy and public administration. Hello, Paloma, how are you?

0:50:13.0 Paloma Martin: Hi Kendall. Nice to be with you today.

0:50:15.8 KL: Nice to meet you, and thank you for telling me about yourself. So a special note, listeners, you can read her bio when you go to the Symposium and go to the web page. But Paloma established the first PMO at a national legislature, the National Chamber of Deputies in Argentina, and she focuses on empowering women by training in project management. So it's training, change and empowering women. We are a profession of change, development and equity, right? So that's not our topic tonight. But I gotta tell you, I am totally fascinated by that whole legislative thing because if only our Congress was run like a PM, and they had to actually report to stakeholders like the voters and who would hold them accountable, that'd be lovely. So I like the project approach in the national legislature, but again, not what we're talking about tonight. So your bio notes that you approach this topic through budget elaboration and analysis with a gender perspective, and you told me about it being a project management approach, or rather using gender perspective in a project management approach. Tell me what that means.

0:51:20.2 PM: Well, Kendall, this is very important because we should know or we should be aware that projects are not neutral. That means that there are inequalities among the members of the team and the beneficiaries of the project, and if we do not do anything to reduce these inequalities, these inequalities will increase. So we should incorporate gender perspective, but it's not another component of the project. We do it in a cross-cutting process throughout all the project life cycle. So this will make possible to respond to the different needs of the different members of the project and the people that will be impacted by the project.

0:52:00.0 KL: I'm very interested in that because when I saw your initial title there, I was thinking, "Okay, this will be about communications, making sure that we have proper or better communications." There's been a lot of talk about this, definitely in the last three decades for sure. But you're really hitting that it's all of the project space, not just how we communicate. But you're saying, when we consider scheduling, risk analysis. Tell me more about that because that really caught me off guard.

0:52:25.0 PM: Yeah, so when this cross-cutting perspective incorporates all the processes of the project management book of knowledge. That means that, for example, if we have in the planning processes, when we are planning stakeholders, we should ask, "Do they recognize the interest and capacities of men, women or people of other minorities? Are these people aware they have different necessities? What is their position in relation to equity and inclusion? What is the position of the group being impacted by the project and people who are part of the team of the project? Do they

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resist." For example, you talked about the scheduling. Maybe the activities and the timeline, when we calculate the duration of the activities, are we considering the same duration for men and women to do the same activity? Or, for example, if one of the activities of our project has to do with training, are we considering that people who have children or take care of children, usually women? Are we considering that they find difficulties to exit at certain hours or they are too long. This activity may be too long. Well, these are things that should be taken into consideration.

0:53:30.6 PM: Also, for example, when we are trying to connect the requirements, when we are trying to define the scope of the project, we should ask, are there differences in the requisites between men, women, and people of other groups? For example, if we're building an auditorium in a county, for example, we may have transgender person or people that may have specific requirements related to the changing rooms, to the toilets. What can happen with this? So it's having this lens, gender all throughout the project.

0:54:02.4 KL: I'm reminded that in the later pin box and definitely in the body of knowledge, or the guided body of knowledge for number seven, is the emphasis on stakeholder management and stakeholders. And that goes across the whole set of processes. So this is really, in my mind, a way to put this piece of thought in and make sure it's everywhere. It's about your stakeholders. The fact is the stakeholders may not look like the person who is the project manager, and I don't mean just look like, but in the same kind of shared experience and shared needs. And that there's just a lot of diversity in a stakeholder group and that will affect everything you're doing and should, I think what you're saying, should affect what we're doing in all the processes.

0:54:46.1 PM: Yeah, this should affect indeed. It could be interesting. There are a lot of projects that, for example, when they, in the process of developing the project charter, they introduce specific objectives to consider this all throughout the project. This is a specific objective to be measured. So you can measure in some way, you can define if your project is incorporating gender perspective. So you can elaborate, for example, a specific checklist for that project, and so in which way this project will address gender in the different processes, for example. So you can put it as a specific... Also as a specific goal and project it.

0:55:22.9 KL: Yeah, I heard checklist. That makes me think I know where your presentation may be going. So everybody stay tuned, you might want to go find that a checklist or something like it in our presentation. You said something interesting a second ago to me around, you made a passing comment about resistance, handling resistance. And that, I know this may be a little unfair, or too common almost, but when I hear resistance, I start thinking the concept in the industry of change management. How do you see the role of the gender perspective and change management? Or do you?

0:55:51.2 PM: Project studying incorporate gender perspective are projects that had to do with performing or trying to modify in some way, culture. And projects that affect culture need more change management than other projects. So if we are not only introducing a project that will generate a change, but also in this same project, we are going to incorporate a different perspective, an inclusive perspective, we should stress the fact that these change management tools would be important. Such as, for example, I used to work with different areas of change management. For example, when we work in stakeholders, when we work on the different processes that will be the project would affect, when we work with communication and training, there's four areas of change management turning to be very important when we are trying to change culture. When we are trying

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to incorporate a different perspective and trying to break biases, try to modify ideas, identities, and so on. So, it's much more important.

0:56:54.1 KL: How did that work out for you from an experiential perspective, when working with the national legislature that you did?

0:57:00.8 PM: Well, the nation of the legislature is, I would say that, for example, we found that most people that had held leadership roles were men. The power was carried almost by men. So when we trying to introduce projects... Not only, when we chose women to lead these projects, that that was also very disruptive, because we were giving leadership to a lot of women that were leading strategic projects for the organization, and they were sitting in the same table with the rest of the authorities or the leadership that was very innovative for the organization. And also when we implemented specific gender projects, we tried to do it with these change management tools, because we knew that most of the people at the first time will resist. But fortunately, we would have their support from the leadership, from the administrative secretariat, that she was also a woman, and this was very important. We know that leadership is very important. The support of leadership for change management, it's very important. And also, we tried to show with wins in our projects and show them these things were giving benefits for the organization in the short term.

0:58:13.0 KL: So Paloma, when you're giving your presentation as people are thinking about attending the Symposium, what will be the theses that most create the tension, the challenge for them that they wanna come and understand in your presentation?

0:58:26.0 PM: I believe that the theses that projects are non-neutral, it's the poor theses because it is difficult to show that when you are not doing anything to reduce inequalities, you're increasing inequalities in some way. And so, sometimes people find difficulty to identify that this exists because we are used to manage projects and we are used to focus on results, but we are maybe not used to look at the fact that if we are not doing anything, we are still increasing the differences and increasing the inequalities. So the value added that this tool gives to project management, I believe that it's the most difficult thing to transmit or to show sometimes when you are not having specific facts or studies showing the impact. So that is a real challenge for people who like me that are trying to introduce this way of thinking on projects that it's a new way of thinking management in a broader sense, it's a new way of thinking about product policy, and it's part of the big umbrella of introducing gender and giving visualization to gender.

0:59:40.6 KL: Well, I'm gonna thank you for your comments here tonight because I think one of the reasons participants wanna go to the Symposium is because they need to be challenged and find something new that they can take back to their offices the next day. So we're gonna look forward to the thinking. I think at a minimum, they can start with their stakeholder analysis, they can start thinking of their stakeholders in a broader context. Is there anything else that you're gonna suspect they could take back the next day? What allows this to become practical for them quickly?

1:00:08.0 PM: I believe that we are very used to talk about inequities, to talk about gender, but this is very practical, as you said, they can start doing an analysis of stakeholders as a stepping stone. But also, for example, I believe that the collection of requirements of these stakeholders, when they come and see their necessities or their interest and their positional respects to gender would be very useful, because we have specific tools, specific frameworks that can be useful for these that they will... They can take it from my presentation. So I invite you to come and hear me. I don't know if

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it's in person or virtually, and I hope it's also... You continue talking in your podcast about the importance of incorporating gender in project management.

1:00:54.9 KL: Well, there you go. It was a challenge for me as I move forward to my own next decade of podcasting. What was it? I appreciate your time tonight, Paloma, thank you very much.

1:01:03.6 PM: No, thank to you Kendall.

1:01:06.1 KL: If you have listened to this whole conversation, collect the PDU by going to PMI's PDU Reporting Center and select "online or digital media" and manually inter-provider code number 4634 and select "M Powered Strategies". The name of this episode is "PMPOV0106 Critical Conversations", and select "How are skills in the new talent triangle?" I am your critical conversationalist host, Kendall Lott, inviting you to register for a limited in-person seats at the 2023 UMD Project Management Symposium. And until I see you there, keep it in scope and get it done.

1:01:45.1 Announcer: This has been a Final Milestone Production sponsored by M Powered Strategies.