

David L. Pells, PMI Fellow

May 26, 2003

PMI Board of Directors
c/o Greg Balestrero
Chief Executive Officer
Project Management Institute
Four Campus Boulevard
Newtown Square, PA 19073-3299 USA

Re: **OPEN LETTER TO THE PMI BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Dear Esteemed Friends and Colleagues,

This letter is long overdue and I apologize for that. Since serving on the PMI Board again during the second half of 2002, I have wanted to provide you with some thoughts and feedback on the Institute – my personal observations on what is working well and where I still have concerns. This is my personal report to you. While this is a sort of personal “white paper” with my observations and suggestions, I am transmitting it to you in the form of an open letter, since I feel strongly that there is nothing to hide in the comments below. I think there should be more, not less, openness on the part of PMI leadership. I also think some of the issues below can benefit from open discussion throughout the organization. I hope that you will forgive me, if necessary, where criticism is implied. Please believe me when I say, however, that this letter is offered with the very best intentions. I love PMI, and hope that my comments below can be useful and constructive. That is my single objective.

First, please let me tell you how proud I am of PMI and the progress that the Institute has made in the last five years. I am proud of you, the PMI Board, and proud of the staff at PMI Headquarters for the highly professional manner in which you all have turned PMI into a first-class and world-class organization. I am proud to be a member of PMI and even prouder to have been elected a Fellow of such a great institution. PMI has played a major role in my life for the last fifteen years, has been responsible for much of my professional education and growth, has offered many opportunities to expand my knowledge of the world and to develop a personal network of friends and colleagues on a global basis, and has produced some of my very dearest friendships and memories.

For these things, I will be eternally grateful. And for these very reasons, I felt that I must provide some feedback to you, some personal observations about the Institute that may be different from those offered by others, or that address issues that have not yet risen to the strategic level for your consideration. In any case, the paragraphs below address issues that I feel somewhat strongly about.

***3829 Canot Lane . Addison . Texas . 75001 . USA
Tel: +1-972-241-9317 . Fax: +1-972-488-3669***

1. Board of Directors. The quality of the volunteer leadership within PMI has always been profoundly impressive to me, since I first became familiar with PMI in 1980. The 2002 Board, with whom I served for only six months, was no exception. I can honestly tell you that I was completely impressed by the quality, maturity and effectiveness of the PMI Board last year. I believe that the current Board is equally impressive. My first impression when I joined the Board last summer was that the amount of work and time commitment has grown since my last tenure on the board ended in 1998. The nature of the issues being addressed by the board have also grown, as PMI itself has grown, to include strategic organizational, legal, financial and ethical matters on a global basis. I was both impressed and humbled by the experience, and I want to congratulate Rebecca Winston for her strong leadership as Board Chair. All that being said, here are a couple of issues that I noted in particular:

The important role of Ken Hartley. It was clear to me that Ken Hartley added a very important, perhaps even critical, strength to the PMI Board. The facts that he is a PMI Fellow, has a long history of active leadership within PMI, and is one of our most senior members seemed to provide both a mature and stabilizing influence on the Board. While his active role was appreciated, it was his stabilizing influence that most impressed me. In that regard, I suggest that the Board and Nominating Committee try to have someone of equal maturity and stature within PMI always serve on the Board.

The Need for More Diversity. I believe that diversity is a good thing. It is a healthy thing, and help ensure that new and different ideas and perspectives are brought to board deliberations. While the Board has made a conscious effort to add more geographic diversity to the Board, I believe much more should be done to increase the ethnic and cultural diversity of board membership. When I looked around the board table, there were only Caucasian and American or Western European societies represented (no offense meant to my friends from New Zealand.) It was heartening to me to see Barbara Wong on the Board, PMI's first black board member, and equally disheartening when she resigned at the end of the year. I suggest that the board make a very conscious effort to add board members who can bring African, Arab, Asian, Latin and other cultures, histories and perspectives to the leadership of PMI. Benefits will include stronger growth in more parts of the world, and a more diverse and useful set of products and services. After all, those societies represent a huge percentage of the world's population, and an equally large percentage of future economic activity worldwide.

The Dangers of Group Think. While I agree that harmony is needed on the Board, that all should remain respectful and friendly, I also believe it is very dangerous if there is no dissent or opposing perspective. If there is no dissenting voice, or votes on the PMI Board, on ANY ISSUE, then I suggest someone ask the question, "what are we missing here?" It might even be useful for the Board to ensure that someone be "devil's advocate" on all strategic issues addressed by the board. Also, while "speaking with one voice" sounds like a good idea, I found a number of board members feeling emasculated by the pressure to "tow the company line".

Board members are a tremendous resource for PMI and should be empowered to speak on behalf of PMI, to represent PMI, and to uncover opportunities for the Institute at every opportunity. As Tom Peters pointed out many years ago, in “excellent” companies everyone is empowered to represent the organization, interact with customers, and assume responsibility for those customer relationships. Maybe it is not so easy to be excellent, but empowerment seems like a healthier approach than worrying about the legal ramifications of actions by renegade or irresponsible board members. I personally have more faith in the individuals serving on the Board.

2. PMI as a Global vs. American Institute. This has been a question and issue for as long as I can remember. It is now clear to me that the PMI Board has answered this question, making the conscious strategic decision to be a “global organization”. The PMI Board has embraced “globalization” as a strategic direction as well as the basis for many other strategic planning and operational matters. While I think a majority of the Board appreciates the importance of this decision, I do not believe that all ramifications have been fully revealed.

Globalization vs. Democracy. PMI has done a great job of appreciating the importance of the trend towards globalization in the worlds of business, communications and technologies that became so apparent in the 1990s. But what about the trend throughout the world of greater democracy, more representation, self-determination? While some will argue that the world of business has never been democratic, I will argue that global businesses do not ignore local politics, social environments or global trends. There are paradoxes here. While PMI chapters and SIGs have become more independent, the PMI Board and leadership have become less representative of the members. This whole issue of democracy becomes a more significant issue for PMI, and a strategic one, with respect to national PM associations.

National Project Management Associations. In my opinion, PMI and the PMI Board have taken exactly the wrong stance with respect to national PM associations around the world. This became clear to me last October as the Board debated issues related to “Licensure”. In that case, I was shocked but also enlightened when the PMI Board decided that licensing is inevitable and that the best course of action for PMI is to prepare and position itself for that eventuality. The argument was that in some countries, local governments will require that project managers be licensed. This exact same argument is true for national PM associations. Not only are national PM associations inevitable for local political reasons, they are inevitable due to the global trends of more self-determination, global competition and the fact that one organization cannot satisfy everyone in the world. And yet PMI’s strategic and operational position vis-à-vis national associations has historically been to view them as competitors. PMI’s goal has been to overpower these smaller PM associations with PMI’s range of products and economic strength, to effectively put them out of business. This is a mistake, in my opinion. As Brian Fletcher used to say, “what is good for the project management profession should be good for PMI!”

National PM associations should be embraced, as resources in local markets and as opportunities for partnering, strategic relationships, and even more sales of PMI products and services. In many cases, various European and Scandinavian associations are good examples but so is Japan, the local associations provide products and services in local languages and from local perspectives. Until recently, PMI has been unable to do so and still has limited capabilities. (for example, monthly PM publications and information in Chinese, Finnish, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, or Ukrainian) The spinout of PMI South Africa (the national association) from the South African chapter of PMI was viewed at the time as a negative event by many PMI leaders in North America, due to the lost memberships and revenues. I saw it as very positive – PMI provided the foundation upon which a national association could be formed! The local national association was a requirement in South Africa in order to gain the recognition and support of the federal government, especially as related to national PM standards in South Africa. This was a very important and very positive development for the project management profession in that country, and one that we should have supported as actively as possible.

There is another reason that national PM associations will increase – economics. As has already been seen in several Asian countries and as occurred last year in Brazil, the currency exchange rates with the US dollar and state of the local economies made the cost of PMI membership too high. PMI Memberships fall as the cost of membership becomes prohibitive in local currencies. This happened in the 1980s in Brazil when the first PMI chapter there was forced to shut down. It happened several years ago in Korea and Indonesia. Local national associations, whose membership dues and other expenses are in local currencies, can weather those storms. PMI chapters have a much more difficult time of it.

Now I would like to suggest that PMI South Africa provides a model that can and should be emulated in other countries. I believe that as the project management profession grows and spreads around the world, it is inevitable that national PM associations will be formed in many more countries. Think of how beneficial to PMI it will be if those national associations are based on PMI chapters, PMI standards and PMI products and services. While PMI membership may be affected in the short run, PMI's revenues and influence could actually increase. This is the future model for PMI around the world, in my opinion. A network of chapters, SIGs, colleges AND national associations. This will also increase the diversity of PMI's components, leading to more positive influences on PMI's products and services. I suggest that the PMI Board and PMI HQ immediately begin to factor national PM associations into PMI's global organizational models and plans. Brazil could be the first test case.

PMI as a Global, not a US National Association. This has been a concern to me for a number of years. During the late 1990s, I tried to argue that PMI could be both an American and a Global institution. It was, and still is, a real issue in the context of dealing with the US government, those huge US government agencies that spend billions of dollars on programs and projects and that have a huge influence on thousands of project management practitioners in this country.

PMI is, by legal definition, a US organization, incorporated in Pennsylvania and recognized by US governmental agencies as a US nonprofit educational and professional association. In addition, I believe that PMI is still viewed by a majority of our stakeholders around the world as a US organization. But that is now changing rapidly. The growth rate of PMI membership and components outside of North America is accelerating, PMI is establishing regional offices and activities, the Institute is publishing the PMBOK Guide in multiple languages and conducting the PMP exam all over the place. Most importantly, the PMI Board has made the strategic decision to become a truly global organization, with globalization now underlying most strategic planning and decision-making by the Board. While this is a very positive process, it has (unbelievably!) left a vacuum in the United States.

American Project Management Forum. The series of American Project Management Forums that PMI sponsored in Washington DC during 1996 – 1998 was a very important initiative for project management in this country. For the first time, representatives from all agencies of the US government (DoD, DOE, NASA, FDA, Corps of Engineers, FBI, etc.) were invited to come together to discuss project management and public sector projects in this country. For some bizarre reason, PMI completely dropped this initiative in 1999, apparently leaving it to the Washington DC chapter and College of Performance Management to pick up the pieces.

Other PMI initiatives aimed specifically at US government agencies seem to have also lost support because they are not “global” enough. The almost unbelievable truth seems to be that as the USA has emerged as the only global superpower, both militarily and economically, PMI leadership has lost interest in American government stakeholders. The entire focus has been on “globalization.” It seems that PMI’s interests in Washington DC, where billions of project dollars and hundreds of thousands of project management practitioners are influenced, are no further progressed than they were five years ago. This is unfortunate. As a PMI member and leader, I understand how and why this has happened. As an American citizen and taxpayer, I am quite upset about it.

American Society for the Advancement of Project Management. Based on the circumstances described above, it was inevitable that a US national PM association would emerge to address UN national interests. ASAPM, founded by very experienced former PMI leaders and now supported by several PMI Fellows, has been formed to address the vacuum in the USA. Better project management is still needed at the federal, state and local governments in the United States. In some cases, PMI components have addressed some of those needs for governmental organizations in some states and cities. There has been no concerted effort at the national level, however, to promote and coordinate better PM throughout the country or based on US national interests. It seems to me that PMI is no longer in a position to address this last issue, US national interests, where there could be a perception of PMI favoritism towards the USA. While PMI components can interface with various US government agencies, no PMI component is positioned to address US national interests across all government agencies.

I have joined ASAPM to try to help them do just that. This does not mean that I have turned away from PMI. Just the contrary. I have also volunteered to ASAPM leadership to help bring PMI into this discussion and into collaboration with ASAPM in Washington DC. ASAPM provides a mechanism for PMI to be more actively involved in promoting and furthering better and more widespread project management practices throughout the US government. Just as PMI teamed up with NCMA and PMA on the APMFs several years ago, PMI can team up with and support ASAPM activities and events in Washington DC. Now ASAPM is sponsoring its first ever project management conference on September 11, 2003, at GWU in Washington DC.

I realize that there will be a natural tendency by both ASAPM and PMI to compete with one another. I highly recommend collaboration rather than competition. I believe in PMI and fully support the PMP and other PMI products and services. But some US government agencies need more and different products, different certifications and guidelines. The US government needs the full attention and support of a PM association, not the degree of attention that PMI has provided over the last five years. I know that Greg has had recent meetings with US government officials in Washington DC. I also believe that the PMI Board, with half of its members being non-US citizens, will naturally be reluctant to increasing attention and activities in Washington DC. So teaming up with ASAPM is an opportunity, just as collaboration with other organizations can be in other countries.

3. The PMI Fellows. The PMI Fellows represent a tremendous pool of resources for PMI, mostly under-utilized and increasingly unrecognized. Here are some concerns that I believe are shared by other Fellows:

The Fellow Selection Process is Broken. While it is the Board's current duty and responsibility to elect PMI Fellows (in accordance with current PMI governance documents), there is a widespread feeling that the selection of Fellows is in fact highly subjective and political. In addition, there is a feeling among some Fellows that the Board is not the most qualified to elect the Fellows. Rather the Fellows should decide. The Fellows includes all of the founders of PMI, along with some of our most senior members and former leaders. Such Fellows as Jim Snyder, Eric Jenett, David Cleland and Russ Archibald command the respect of literally everyone in our profession worldwide. And yet Fellow nominations that have been sponsored or supported by them have been rejected by recent Boards. The Fellows have been highly disappointed. I suggest that the Fellow selection process be changed to see Fellows elected by the "Circle of Fellows", followed by ratification by the Board. Boards of Directors come and go. Once elected a Fellow, PMI Fellows remain associated with PMI for life. I believe the Fellows are best suited for electing their peers.

Too Few Fellows. On top of the above issue, the number of PMI Fellows has been falling in recent years while PMI's membership has been growing rapidly. Now there are over 100,000 members but only 32 Fellows. Due to the passing of several Fellows in recent years, the number of PMI Fellows has actually declined. Rather than looking for reasons to exclude well-deserving PMI leaders from the Fellow Award, I implore the Board to look for reasons to make the award.

While I do not wish to diminish the importance or value of this prestigious honor, I believe there are many PMI leaders who have devoted many many years to PMI and have made enough significant contributions to warrant the recognition. Please elect more Fellows, so more people can be justly rewarded, and this pool of resources can be replenished and secured for future Boards to draw upon.

Too Few Fellows from outside North America. While I recognize that PMI's presence in many regions of the world is new, the reason we have any presence at all in some countries is due to the commitment and leadership of PMI leaders there. Recognition of some of those leaders in other countries will go a long way in supporting PMI's globalization initiatives. And while some of our long-time members in other countries have been active in other PM associations, I can personally attest to their leadership roles in the project management profession in their own countries and regions. For example, Hiroshi Tanaka in Japan, Gilles Caupin in France, Adesh Jain in India, Bruce Rodrigues in South Africa, Marcio Prieto in Brazil and others around the world are as deserving of the PMI Fellow Award as I am, in my opinion, and have had a profoundly positive impact on both the PM profession and PMI in their respective countries. They have been PMI members for decades and are recognized throughout the world of project management as experts and leaders in the profession. Why not recognize more of these individuals as PMI Fellows, which would support PMI's globalization process and cement those leaders to PMI forever.

The Fellows as a PMI Resource. Perhaps not for all issues, but the PMI Fellows can provide PMI leaders with a tremendous resource, especially for interacting with outside organizations. Many PMI Fellows retired from senior positions in large project-oriented companies. Others have been or are well-respected project management consultants, with experience and clients in many countries. Most are specialists in certain industries, with decades of project and project management experience. In fact, I am absolutely humbled when I am in the presence of David Cleland, Eric Jenett, Russ Archibald, Max Wideman, Bob Kimmons, Paul Dinsmore and other Fellows. They are giants of the project management profession, in my opinion. Yet recent PMI Boards seem to pay them no mind. The attention provided to the PMI Fellows in San Antonio was upsetting; the Fellows' lunch in a cold little conference room was demeaning. No wonder few Fellows attended. While I don't expect, nor do the Fellows want, a lot of visibility or attention. We do, however, hope for respect from PMI leadership. Maybe I don't deserve so much, but the vast majority of the other Fellows certainly do. I hope PMI can find a better way to honor and utilize the PMI Fellows, a group of project management experts who now seem to be nothing but an afterthought by the Board.

4. The Global PM Forum – an Opportunity Lost by PMI. I was very disappointed when PMI dropped its support of the Global PM Forums in 2000, opting rather to create its own version for the Sundays at PMI's annual seminars/symposia. While PMI's Global Assemblies have been interesting and have provided additional learning experiences for conference attendees, they have not been consistent with the objectives previously embraced by professional leaders from around the world.

While some of my disappointment can be attributed to my own personal role in the planning and hosting of the Global PM Forums by PMI, I have heard other former participants complain as well. First of all, the Global PM Forum (GPMF) was based on the knowledge that PMI is not the only PM association in the world, and that a forum was needed to bring leaders of all PM associations together to discuss the “world of project management”. Secondly, the GPMF was based on treating everyone as equals, even though everyone recognized that PMI was by far the largest and most influential PM association in the world. These two assumptions were abandoned by PMI with the Global Assemblies.

Hosting of the five GPMFs from 1995-1999 provided PMI with the opportunity to show leadership through humility and diplomacy, by commitment to a “higher purpose”. By all accounts, we were very successful. Since that time, the GPMFs have continued under the leadership and direction of Gilles Caupin and IPMA in Europe. The fact that IPMA has embraced and continued the GPMFs at their own conferences with virtually the same objectives and formats as was started by PMI speaks volumes about how valid those objectives were. I have been gratified recently to see Becky Winston, Ken Hartley and other current PMI Board members reaching out to IPMA and participating in recent GPMFs in Europe. I hope that PMI will actively participate in future GPMFs, name a representative to the GPMF steering committee, and host a GPMF in North America in the near future.

5. Global Responsiveness. I believe that a hallmark of successful enterprises of this century will be flexibility and responsiveness to market changes. Maybe this is something that few of you have thought much about but it is of particular interest to me. It occurred to me in 1998, when considering how PMI might have responded to the financial meltdown in Asia, that global organizations need some kind of decision-making model to enable more rapid and effective responses to both opportunities and threats in various parts of the globe. My interest and research resulted in a paper presented at PMI’98 in Long Beach entitled “Global Tides of Change: Significant Recent Events and Trends Affecting the Globalization of the Project Management Profession.” That paper was included in PMI’s 1999 publication entitled “The Future of Project Management.” Updated versions of that paper were presented at PMI’99 in Philadelphia and PMI South Africa’s regional conference in Johannesburg in November 1999.

In my opinion, PMI has historically not been very responsive to changes in the marketplace. The separation of operations from governance has improved things considerably, but the organization still seems somewhat hampered by the bureaucracy of policies, procedures and the decision-making hierarchy. To a certain extent and in some instances, PMI’s Bylaws may also be a roadblock. PMI, and any global organization, should ask itself, “How should we respond?” whenever there is a significant event that directly affects its stakeholders in a significant way. In my 1998 model, I suggest systematic assessments of significant political, economic, social, industrial or technological events and trends that have a direct impact on customers, products, activities or plans of the organization. The alternative is to risk losing opportunities or even existing customers and revenues.

Two major elements are needed to implement a global responsiveness model: (a) a “Business Intelligence” (BI) gathering process; and (b) a decision-making model to provide a range of alternative responses to significant events. Business intelligence gathering is now a well-established strategic discipline among forward thinking enterprises. A globally responsive decision-making model, however, is also needed to provide a basis for executive decisions, ultimately bridging the gap between BI and business planning (both operational and strategic). An example might be PMI’s response to the attacks on the World Trade Center towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. How did PMI respond? How was it prepared to respond? How is it responding to the global trends that have resulted from those attacks on the USA, the recent breakdown in relations between the USA and France (and Canada, for that matter), or the war in Iraq? How is the outbreak of SARS affecting PMI? I suggest that in these cases, and whenever such similar events or trends occur, PMI executives ask the following questions, among others: What PMI stakeholders are affected and how? How are PMI products, services and activities affected? How should PMI respond?

I recommend that Greg Balestrero consider immediately establishing a BI program and responsiveness model at PMI-HQ to begin the process of monitoring global events and trends more effectively and to provide a basis for responding. I would be happy to assist, if necessary, or just share ideas.

6. PMI’s Real Resources. As PMI continues to grow and evolve, its resources and strengths also change. In my opinion, volunteers are no longer the most important resource within PMI. Nor is the Board. Below are my thoughts on PMI’s most significant resources, listed in order of importance.

Financial Resources (Money). In my opinion, money is now PMI’s greatest resource. With \$20 million in cash in the bank, PMI can now do just about anything. The Institute can consider things that were impossible five years ago, including the opening of regional offices, publishing more documents in multiple languages, hiring consultants, acquiring business ventures. If competition emerges in a market, buy them. PMI is the Microsoft of project management. PMI can collaborate and co-host PM events, sometimes only contributing money. The Board should recognize the opportunities that a cash-rich organization has, using PMI’s resources as global opportunities now arise.

HQ Staff & Infrastructure. The experience, capabilities and professionalism of PMI’s headquarters staff have continued to grow and mature. Under Virgil Carter, the team at PMI-HQ became very efficient. Under Greg Balestrero, the HQ team will continue to grow even more productive. I am very proud of our HQ staff, who have always impressed me with their professionalism, technical skills and devotion to PMI. These people are a tremendous resource; they are the ones who interface with new members and customers; they will determine the success of PMI in the years ahead much more than we volunteers will. They should be recognized, respected and rewarded appropriately.

High Quality Products & Services. PMI has grown rapidly, to a large part because of the *Guide to the PMBOK* and PMP Certification program. PMI's bookstore, publication of books and periodicals, and support of researchers and authors have also grown. PMI's annual seminars/symposium have been tremendously successful, and now PMI will begin to conduct regional PM congresses. I believe that PMI should continue to expand its family of PM-related products and services as the primary base for increasing revenues. These products and services have played a large role in establishing PMI's reputation as the world's leading PM association. The addition of more standards will increase that reputation. Of course, our products and services have needed financial resources and an effective HQ staff to be as successful as they have. PMI can and should continue this trend, tap into new technologies, and continue to strengthen and broaden its products and services.

Global Network. PMI's global network of members and components is now a tremendous resource, providing a basis for further growth, expansion and influence. Any one of PMI's chapters around the world can host PMI activities and events, provide a base for marketing or launch of new services, and offer PMI a local network for achieving local objectives. While this global network has evolved more or less naturally, PMI should now recognize this network as a resource that can be used to support and accelerate PMI's globalization strategies. It is a tremendous resource that few organization have today.

Reputation in Business World. PMI and its PMP certification have been embraced by some of the world's largest corporations and business enterprises, not just in the USA but worldwide. PMI enjoys a positive reputation as the world's leading professional society for project management. The significance of PMI's reputation, and the support of global organizations such as Bechtel, Ericsson, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft and Siemens (among many others), cannot be downplayed. PMI's corporate relations open doors, provide leverage and magnify PMI's visibility and reputation. These should also be considered important corporate resources, to be protected and utilized in the pursuit of global strategies and objectives.

Local Chapters & SIGs. Until now, PMI components have been one of the most important aspects of the Institute, providing immediate opportunities for members to interact with PMI, to learn about project management, and to receive a direct impact on his or her career. As an example, the Dallas chapter of PMI (which has grown to over 2,500 members) offers monthly meetings, educational seminars, PMP preparation and support activities, an annual vendor exhibition, and various publications.

PMI has recognized the importance of its components for many years and that should continue. The components, however, need PMI's superior products, services, reputation and relationship with corporations in order to grow and succeed. For example, in Dallas approximately 80% of the members are employed by a few companies. In growing markets and industries, components will continue to be an important PMI resource. In some areas, however, the importance of components may begin to decline.

Volunteer Leaders in PMI Components. PMI's volunteer leaders are the ones who drive the components, interface with new members, launch and manage local initiatives and really represent PMI to the world of individual PM practitioners and organizations. PMI has generally done a good job in recognizing its volunteer leaders, primarily at leadership meetings. However, I don't think the PMI Awards program is sufficient. The Institute should do more, not less, to recognize and reward volunteer leaders. PMI's individual awards program should be expanded in order to motivate more individuals and to increase PMI's visibility and reputation. Awards are a tremendous marketing tool which has always been underutilized by PMI.

Board of Directors. In my opinion, PMI's Board is now at the bottom of the list. While the PMI Board has tried hard to restructure, to focus on strategic issues, and to become more effective, I believe the Board has become less and less important to the organization. The new governance model made the Board less representative and more distant from the membership. The separation of operations from Board governance implemented under Virgil Carter separated the Board from operations. The Board's focus on strategies and long-range goals has further separated PMI from the products, services, activities and events of PMI. While these changes have been planned and expected, an unintended consequence, in my opinion, is that the PMI Board has become less relevant to the ongoing existence and success of the Institute. Only by recognizing Board Members as a resource, and through empowering individual directors, will this begin to change. Board outreach, where various board members attend and speak at events around the world, is an important step in that direction.

Of course, PMI has many other resources that can be mentioned. I have not mentioned the importance of individual members, products, events or other aspects of the organization, all of which are and should continue to be important to PMI.

7. An Alternative Future for PMI. If I haven't shocked or irritated everyone enough, now I want to suggest an alternative future for PMI. What if PMI were not a "member based" organization? As PMI became a more "business like" organization in the late 1990s, it began to focus on "customers" rather than "members". Now it is clear to me that such a focus will continue, with the organization evolving in response to customer and market needs. I believe that PMI will become more and more product and service oriented, with members becoming less and less important (critical) to overall success.

Member retention has always been a concern, and a problem in a member-based organization. But what if it did not matter? In fact, I think it matters only to PMI component leaders, only in certain parts of the world, and only as long as overall membership continues to grow. Then the bottom line is not hurt too badly. I believe PMI's membership will continue to grow on a global basis but will level off in certain areas. I believe PMI should consider slashing its membership fees, uncouple products from membership, and focus on becoming a more product-oriented enterprise. By products, I mean standards, certifications, research, publications, seminars and conferences.

David Pells, PMI Fellow
Open Letter to PMI Board
May 26, 2003
Page 12 of 12

Leading the world of project management will mean setting the standards, providing educational products and services, credentialing other education providers, certifying project managers and professionals, and influencing global organizations. I believe that membership will become a less and less important aspect of PMI in 5-10 years. And maybe that's not all bad.

One more alternative future: How about merging with IPMA? The surviving entity could be called IPMI. You could recognize each other's products, even certifications. National IPMA members could become IPMI components. The surviving entity (IPMI) could exert enormous influence on international governmental and industrial organizations. Then globalization of PMI and the PM profession could really take off. HQ could still be in Philadelphia. Why not? PMI has the money, power and global reach to make this happen. I think it's worth considering. But it might require some attitude adjustments.

Summary. I hope you all will forgive any arrogance or insolence that may be reflected in the above comments. That was not intended. I want to help PMI become a stronger, more successful organization. In that regard, a summary of the above might be as follows:

- The PMI Board needs more diversity, in both membership and perspective.
- PMI's Globalization strategy is tremendously positive and powerful, but leaves vacuums at the national level; PMI should embrace national PM associations and incorporate them into its global planning and organizational model.
- PMI should collaborate with ASAPM to resurrect the APMFs.
- The process of selecting PMI Fellows is broken and should be turned over to the Fellows.
- PMI should re-embrace the Global PM Forum and re-assume a leadership role therein.
- Greg Balestrero should implement a Global Responsiveness Decision Support Model.
- PMI leadership should clearly recognize its own resources, which continue to evolve as PMI grows, expands and matures. Specifically, what can be achieved with the money and superior team at PMI-HQ?
- PMI may have an alternative future that is not based on members, but rather other success metrics, including global size, power and influence.

I want to continue my association with PMI until I die (Is that being too blunt? I hope it is for another 30-40 years.). I don't know that I will ever serve on the PMI Board again though, and I don't know if I will ever again have this opportunity to provide direct feedback or input to you. So I took this opportunity to get some things off my chest. And I feel relieved. Maybe I'm full of crap. If you think so, please ignore this letter. But as Charles Barkley, the retired American basketball player, said last year on the publication of his book of opinions, "Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't think so!" Thank you for your attention and for your contributions to PMI.

Sincerely,

David L. Pells
PMI Fellow
Member # 11259

3829 Canot Lane . Addison . Texas . 75001 . USA
Tel: +1-972-241-9317 . Fax: +1-972-488-3669