

PM World Today Editorial – December, 2006

A Time for Celebration and Reflection: A Look Back at the Year in PM



My favorite coffee cup is a souvenir from NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, with the Apollo 13 mission emblem and motto "Failure is not an option." I consider Apollo 13 to be NASA's greatest accomplishment, when a mission changed in mid-course from a flight to the moon to returning the astronauts safely to Earth, against overwhelming odds. The ultimate success of the project was a tribute to the NASA team, to the experience and brilliance of project team members, and to the almost revolutionary process of applying "lessons learned" on-the-fly in order to solve the immediate life-threatening scope challenges. Needless to say, the celebration when the capsule reached Earth was historic at NASA, and shared by people around the world.

December is a month when many celebrate the end of another year, and gather with family and friends at offices, homes and places of worship. Project management professional associations and chapters often schedule parties or speakers with human interest topics, or conduct awards banquets or other celebrations. This is the season for celebration and remembrance.

This is also a good time to look back at the year, to remember accomplishments, and to document and discuss "lessons learned" from our projects and programs. I think it is also a good time to take a look around the broader world of project management again. Where does the profession stand at the end of 2006? What was accomplished this year? What segments of the marketplace are growing or contracting? Where are the needs and opportunities for growth or improvement in 2007? While there may be organizations and individuals better positioned to make such an assessment, this is my opportunity to look around the world of PM, to note what I can, and to estimate where PMForum.org and PM World Today can make significant contributions. And I thought it would be useful to point out some of the things we might celebrate in the World of PM this year.

First, from the broad perspective, the "world of project management" is now clearly visible. Reflecting globalization trends in the world at large, in terms of economies, communications and technology, we now have much more visibility of project management worldwide. The International Project Management Association (IPMA), the federation of 40+ national PM associations based in Switzerland, is clearly visible, sponsoring PM conferences and congresses, and becoming better known worldwide. The Project Management Institute (PMI®), the world's largest PM association with over 220,000 members, has members, chapters and activities worldwide, sponsors four regional Global Congresses and has regional offices on four continents. PMForum.org is expanding globally with advisors, correspondents, authors and subscribers around the world. We are adding content, news stories and information from professionals and organizations worldwide. Other websites

and organizations are doing the same. While the world of PM is growing rapidly, it is emerging from the shadows, becoming much more visible and becoming more important in the process.

In the area of PM research, there were several significant developments in 2006. As reported on www.pmforum.org, PM research conferences were held in Canada, China, the UK, the USA and elsewhere this year. PMI is now holding PM research workshops in conjunction with its four regional congresses, is sponsoring PM research projects and surveys, and has an active PM research department at its global operations center in Pennsylvania. Universities in Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, England, Finland, France, Japan, Korea, Norway, Russia, the United States and other countries have active PM research programs underway. A number of global consortia and collaborations have been formed to sponsor and share PM research activities and results. These are very positive developments.

In the area of PM education, new developments and trends are even more significant. Based on reports and information that I have seen or heard, PM education in China is now growing more rapidly than anywhere else, as thousands of students, engineers, scientists, government employees and business professionals are enrolling in local, foreign and web-based PM education programs. I met with the head of the graduate program in PM at the University of Sao Paulo in October where PM education is growing rapidly, as it is throughout Brazil. More universities in Europe and North America are offering graduate and undergraduate programs in PM. New universities have been formed in Australia and the USA with a primary focus on PM. PM is being introduced as courses and subjects of executive education in Eastern Europe, India, Latin America and South Africa. PM education is expanding from Kiev, Moscow and St. Petersburg into Eastern Russia, Kazakhstan and other former Soviet states. The PM programs at some universities, for example the University of Management and Technology in the USA and ESC Lille in France, have very robust programs that continue to grow. A National Centre for Project Management has been established at Middlesex University in London. In Ukraine, a PM education program has been established for the Federal Government.

In the commercial sector, the PM education and training business continues to expand rapidly. PMI has registered more than 1,000 organizations in its registered education provider (REP) program. PMI's Seminars World program has been enormously successful. Every PMI chapter that I am familiar with has an active workshops and training program, as do PM societies in countries worldwide. The PM consultants that I know are as busy conducting workshops and training programs as they are with advisory services. For some specialized PM topics, such as earned value or portfolio PM, education and training activities are skyrocketing with more education providers entering the marketplace. It should be noted that PMI's institutional accreditation program is also growing as more universities around the world apply to have their undergraduate or graduate PM programs "accredited" by PMI. Compared to the situation 10 years ago, which I remember clearly and when PM education was such a global need, today's status is really worth celebrating.

For the PM profession, 2006 was another year of tremendous growth and expansion. Global memberships in PM professional associations and societies now

exceed 300,000, with growth rates continuing in the 30% range. Attendance at PM conferences and trade shows increased in 2006, with the PMI Global Congress – North America 2006 in Seattle attracting more participants than any other in PMI history. PM associations or PMI chapters spread in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe in 2006 – including Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa with a now active democracy, significant foreign investment, booming economy and thousands of projects (where PMForum.org now has an International Correspondent, by the way). The interest in PM certifications continued to increase, especially in China and the USA which are locked in a global economic competition and where better PM is clearly understood at executive and governmental levels as a competitive advantage.

Significant developments occurred this year in various industries. While it can be argued that important projects have been underway in many industries for decades, now those projects and associated PM are becoming more visible. Global competition is driving the demand for PM in such industries as finance, technology development and consumer goods manufacturing. Global economic development is increasing interest and demand again in oil & gas exploration, energy production, construction, housing, transportation and urban development. The attention this year on economic aid and development in Africa has stimulated more interest in PM among the donor agencies, including the World Bank which this year released a major product, "Managing the Implementation of Development Projects: a Resource Kit on CD-ROM for Instructors and Practitioners." In more mature project-oriented industries, an awareness seems to finally be emerging that large organizations are not immune to maturity assessments and the need for improvement.

As was the case 40 years ago, NASA is leading the way with its internal focus on project leadership and lessons-learned PM education, and through the sponsorship of an annual PM conference for the Aerospace industry. The NASA PM Challenge 2006 conference in Galveston was an enormous success; their conference in February 2007 is expected to draw 1,000 participants and 50+ vendors (including appearances by the NASA Administrator and the CEO of PMI). Similar trends can be seen in IT, construction and Pharmaceuticals, in some cases led by the Specific Interest Groups (SIGs) of professional associations such as PMI and the Association of Project Management (APM) in the UK. Other industries should consider the NASA example, as PM conferences and venues are very useful for stimulating advances in PM applications, experience and capabilities within an industry. In my opinion, these developments are worthy of celebration this year.

In the PM "industry", some interesting developments occurred in 2006. Microsoft has clearly emerged as the leading PM software company in the world. In October, the company announced that it has over 20 million licensed users of Microsoft Project. Microsoft has now announced a new Office Project 2007, which is being introduced across the United States this month and through teaming with First-to-Market partner companies. While Microsoft has long been a major exhibitor at PMI congresses, they were the primary sponsor and most visible company at the PMI global congress in Seattle. But two other trends were also visible in 2006 in this area: (1) the continuing entrée into the market of new smaller PM tools and technologies, especially web-based products and in markets outside of North America; and (2) consolidation at the top, with several major mergers and

acquisitions in the marketplace announced this year. These two trends are significant, in my opinion, because they demonstrate the vitality of the market for PM applications and tools. These trends also demonstrate that the PM industry is being recognized by mainstream analysts, investors and venture capitalists.

So what are some lessons learned, or challenges, that have emerged from these developments this year? I would like to mention the following:

- Like Microsoft, PMI has clearly emerged as the dominant organization in the world of professional project management. While this has provided PMI with the reputation, resources and visibility to create and disseminate tremendous value globally, it has also led to an increased risk of monopolist tendencies (i.e. stifling dissent, crushing competition, etc.). The benefits of global cooperation and diversity remain important factors to be considered by professional leaders. Like Microsoft, PMI should be congratulated for growing the market, setting industry standards and providing high quality products.
- Professional PM has matured and been broadly embraced by industry, especially in high technology organizations, in Australia, Europe, North America and the United Kingdom. This is reflected in both industry and professional organizations. However, PM is still newly introduced or largely unknown in developing economies, especially in Africa and Latin America. This must be corrected and should go hand-in-hand with economic development and the entrée of more countries into the global supply chain.
- The situations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the natural disasters in Indonesia and Louisiana, have revealed the need for better PM (and models for PM) in conflict, disaster recovery, reconstruction and high security environments. It appears that hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted in those situations, through poor contracting, lack of oversight, lack of qualified suppliers or mismanagement. (The need for security in Iraq, for example, has had a negative impact on the quality of PM there, in my opinion.)

At PMForum.org, we also have some reasons to celebrate, and lessons to reflect upon. During 2006, I can mention the following significant developments at PM World Today and www.pmforum.org:

- The formation of a Global Advisory Panel in August. Since then, the following well-known and highly respected leaders from the PM world have become global advisors: **Russ Archibald**, PMI Fellow & Member no.6 (Mexico); **Gilles Caupin**, IPMA Fellow & former Chair (France); **Eric Jenett**, PMI Founder, Fellow & Former Chair (USA); **Brian Kooyman**, AIPM Fellow & former Chair (Australia); **Marcio Prieto**, Founder of PMI Brazil & PMI Sao Paulo chapters (Brazil); **Hiroshi Tanaka**, PMAJ Founder & President (Japan); **Vladimir Voropajev**, SOVNET Founder, Fellow & Chair (Russia); **Max Wideman**, PMI Fellow & former Chair (Canada); and **Rebecca Winston**, PMI Fellow and former Chair (USA).
- The formation of a Global Correspondents Network, and the addition of passionate and experienced PM correspondents to represent us in Argentina

(**Ana Maria Rodriguez**, Rosario), Australia (**Robert Posener**, Sydney), Brazil (**Alcides Santopietro**, Sao Paulo), Germany (**Manfred Rieck**, Frankfurt), Nigeria (**Chima Okereke**, Port Harcourt), Romania (**Florin Gheorghiu**, Bucharest), Spain (**Alfonso Bucero**, Madrid), the UK (**Miles Shepherd**, London) and the USA (**Saralee Newell**, Florida).

- The growth of our "**Breaking News**" program, with daily postings of breaking news from around the world of PM. We are posting news and press releases daily on www.pmforum.org, which will continue to position us as the world's leading source of news and information around the world of PM.
- Redesign, reorganization and expansion of **PM World Today** – we have added content with more Viewpoints, Featured Papers, Case Studies and Tips Articles than ever before, all on a monthly basis.
- The expansion of our **PMF Book Review Program** through a collaboration with the **University of Texas at Dallas** (UTD). Announced in September, this collaborative program supplies PM books provided to PMForum.org to UTD graduate students (enrolled in UTD's MBA in PM program), who then provide serious "book reviews" for publication in PM World Today. The first of these are reflected in the four book reviews contained in this issue.

Challenges have included the need for more financial resources (for both survival and growth) and the need for more time and technical resources to accomplish the exciting changes and additional developments now planned.

This editorial has been an attempt to consider what has been accomplished this year in the world of PM, and at PMForum.org. The need to determine status, of course, is a well established function of PM on individual projects. But how often do you seriously consider lessons learned (is it a section of your monthly report)? How often do you celebrate the completion of deliverables, milestones or projects? These can be powerful educational and motivational activities on any project.

So it is December again. Let us all celebrate our successes of 2006, and consider the lessons learned, challenges remaining and opportunities ahead. I believe the PM world will continue to grow at a rapid rate worldwide (as I explained in my keynote presentation in Sao Paulo in October). I believe that PMI and Microsoft should assume leadership responsibilities to help the entire world of PM grow and prosper. I believe that the importance of PM is increasing as more human needs, business activities and technological developments are occurring as clearly defined and more visible programs and projects. This is all very exciting!

So as the space shuttle Discovery lifts off again on December 7, let us congratulate NASA and recognize the launch as a symbol of the rise, opportunities and potential for project management and project managers everywhere. Let us Celebrate PM!

Best regards for a happy and successful December and year end.

Respectfully,
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*David L. Pellis, is the Managing Editor of **PM World Today** and www.pmforum.org. He is also the President and CEO of iWorld Projects & Systems, Inc., the parent company of [pmforum.org](http://www.pmforum.org). David is an internationally recognized leader in the field of professional project management, with over thirty years' experience in project management related activities and positions. His professional experience includes a wide variety of programs and projects, including engineering, construction, transit, defense and high technology, and project sizes ranging from several thousand to ten billion dollars. He is a former member of the board of directors of the Project Management Institute (PMI®), and was awarded PMI's person of the year award in 1998 and Fellow Award in 1999.*

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