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## A Critical Retrospective Over the PMI Romanian Chapter 2008 Performance

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Another year gone with the PMI Romanian Chapter, members and the Board, those who were close to the Project Management and assisted with the Chapter's session are all notified that elections are to be held in January. With the exception of the Chapter's President, the entire Board is due to be re-elected soon and reminders started flying electronically to mobilize the voters as well as to encourage individual initiative to run for one of the 5 eligible positions within the Board's panel of Vice-presidents.

But how was the current panel's performance in 2008 and how well did they serve the PMI's interest and local PM community?

The year's debut in terms of Chapter Administration confirmed **Mrs. Simona Bonghez** as acting and elected President after the elections in January 2008. At the time the Board composition was settled and good auspices and high hopes could have been shown under Mrs. Bonghez' tenure.

Indeed 2008 year had some visible events to which the Romanian Chapter participated as main event sponsor or contributor, and local and foreign personalities were invited either to the Chapter's sessions to deliver their speeches or as keynote speakers partnered with the Romanian Chapter for a joint panel of representation.

Unlike the years before, 2008 made a great turn in opening the Chapter to international exposure and this was definitely a great success attributable to the Board and President.

Everyone knows how difficult it is to find great personalities and the most sought after speakers to make a little room within their agendas but despite all these the Chapter managed to bring to Bucharest people like Jimmy de Piante, Wayne Abba, Alexander Rodrigues, Michel Thierry, Chris Kindermanns and Roland Gareis, to name only a few and most prominent who conferenced in Bucharest over the year.

There is also the positive fact that the Chapter opened for international introspection without drawing walls between professionals, and the level and quality of topics debated were elevated as well. This refined the level of the audience. Regular and now becoming classic events such as PMForum Day or PMCafe have continued attracting both the PM community and equally, people interested by the topics or simply professionals with shallow tangency with the project management issues but driven by curiosity to hear new things about one domain which exploded in the last five years in the global business environment.

From the view of bylaw responsibilities against PMI's global Code of Conduct, as well as judging towards serving the PMI's interest and image, the Chapter did not make a greater turn than expected in the beginning of administration. Simply the things went off as in the years before, but with a major plus when thinking back at the personalities who came across over the year to different events.

But is this enough for considering already past Administration successful?

The current landscape of project management in Romania is far from being considered coherent or playing by the rules set forth by either PMI or IPMA, to name the most active associations being present in the region. Besides the Information Technology industry where things are well advanced and in which PMI and PMBoK are key words in any project, there is a lack of systematical approach in terms of conducting projects in all other parts of the economy.

People are still confused by the sayings "Project Management is indispensable for business results" or "Project Management creates value". These should have been a starting point for the Chapter for streaming its actions towards the society to meet its needs for better business with more tangible results. I have previously advocated in many instances for a more active and, why not, aggressive and constructive attitude by the Chapter when dealing with external organizations. I have truly hoped that PMI could rise in visibility in a moment when the project environment is turning red due to the continuous economical growth that triggered numerous projects in every corner of economy. Marketing of career and education in the field should have been launched to get more people acquainted with project management at its highest global level and the public should have been made aware of the PMI philosophy as well as the benchmark it created over the years all over the world in terms of projects' performance.

Instead, the Chapter elected too often to stay inside the crystal tower, trying to attract members by following the meetings, and trying to get as many as possible certified professionals without strengthening the grounds for such actions. It is refreshing and fine to realize the members' number increased but did anyone in the Board challenge the driven motive for those who joined the Chapter lately?

The fact is, many people and society are interested in having qualified professionals in project management but in the end, who is the entity that sets the bar to match the requirements level to be met and, more important who sets the requirements for qualification?

PMI has the global, comprehensive, continually upgraded and expanding PMBoK while IMPA has its ICB Standard, apart from other hand-on methodologies like Prince2. Did the Chapter move to spread the PMI-ism to society? What was done? Was it is deemed acceptable against the Board's term?

To these questions they will probably provide some answers in their Report at the Term's Closure, but surely some useful suggestions should be welcomed from the people sitting at the opposite corner from the Board's panel desk.

I may suggest two words to set the path for a likely successful effort: lobbying and volunteering.

When your message doesn't get through or doesn't reach the most important stakeholders, PMI has taught you to network and to use that networking in constructive and legal ways to get to the point. The Chapter should spend some time imagining which key individuals are best suited to carry the PMI message across the companies, corporations, and government.

What should they say to those out here in the end? For a project to be considered a success, the first condition is to get the right project manager empowered with sufficient knowledge and ability to run the project in a complex environment. They should also tell anyone that the benchmark is already in place in terms of knowledge, is it called the PMBoK. The surety and assurance that one is hiring the best professional to run the project is granted by getting PMP, CAPM, PMI-SP, PgPM, as the case might call for one of those highly trained individuals. Is there any assurance for the companies that truly "Project Management creates value" and in the end it will be paying off for those spending resources? The recent case studies and history about successful projects leave no room for doubt that only trained and educated project managers could secure the figure of 25 % of successful worldwide projects. The high rate of failures are granted to those entities which still consider the project manager and project management as an accidental job and not a sound and growing stand alone profession.

Volunteering is another attitude and concept widely accepted by PMI, but it remains widely unexplored. In a world that highly prices the material values of any success, the volunteer is perceived as either a beginner who wants to make his way in or as one dealing with social and human care services. While understanding the need for being reimbursed for utilizing the knowledge, expertise and knowledge they gained through years of hard study, it is still hard to accept the difference between the interest to get some money after PMP exam preparation courses and the wider view of PMI Chapter's local national representation.

Interest can be served as a local volunteer in conducting project management research or running a locally important project for a small community as well. It would be fine if the demand

for the PMP certification be so high that local PMPs' and REPs' to hardly handle the solicitations. In fact, it is the opposite situation: very few exam preparation courses solicited and disputed by a number of trainers. Wouldn't it be great if the PMI Chapter would create the market demand to make people want be certified? This is the outline of marketing aligned with the PMI philosophy and it should be exercised by the next Board. This can ensure a relative success of the project management profession advocated by PMI and to keep the public and target professional's interest alive.

The path taken so far is no longer sufficient under today's circumstances!

As the national economy entered the recession stage, growth turned into negative figures, and whole industries are close to collapse, simple statements such as "Project Management is indispensable for business results" or "Project Management creates value" might be viewed as frivolous if not backed up by concrete actions and sound demonstrations or successful stories.

Among the bad news from the financial markets, laying off announcements, closing down of facilities, or shrinkage of activities it can presumably intuit that project management will not come to its end. The economy will recover by means of projects, efficient and well administered. There will be no room for badly run projects anymore since the stake is higher than ever. What other best chance and opportunity ever existed during the Chapter's existence to convince the project sponsors or clients that there is only a single way for spending the funds efficiently and effectively than this time offers.

The Chapter should seek for opportunity in every possible way to raise their voices and message even in a time of economic crisis when everyone's mind is on survival rather than on re-launching by means of successful projects.

But what the spirit and general atmosphere are now when we are approaching the PMI Chapter Election Day?

Individual initiative to run for a term as Vice-President for various portfolio is almost nil, no one stood up so far to express any interest for the Chapter's duties in the next year. It appears that all those eligible or with initiative towards project management business reflected by PMI in Romania are hesitating to affirm the interest for getting elected. This may be due to the current situation in the economy with direct consequences to their jobs as well and the forecasts which often accredited the worsening of overall situation. Under these circumstances, it is hard to think that the Chapter's life will be as it was so far since no interest for being voted as Vice-President has apparently been received. The stakes are higher than ever and we will probably play a big card if project management can continue being promoted through all these months of recession.

It might be hoped that the acting President might post a message to the Board and Chapter in which to explain why we should not give up our PMI-ism and how real and veritable project management can support the economy under shrinkage by promoting and implementing those 25% of largely accepted successful projects. Both private and government sectors lack of coherent and logical framework approach postulated by PMI through PMBoK and all in the

Chapter know that. To convince stakeholders that applying this knowledge is the best action one entity running projects could do is the kernel of the PMI Chapter's main tasks.

So far it was done scarcely and the Board should have spent more time to promote better PM and its knowledge. But this is the past already.

Now they have to come down from the tower and start selling and make the stakeholders buy-in or the project management will surely fade away with the years.

While everyone's attention is fiercely focused on economical survival, Project Management could provide the survival kit. We only need trainers and sellers to explain how our tools work best for them.

That's the place where the PMI Romanian Chapter should enter the game and from now they cannot afford being just a referee. The Chapter must be an active player on the ground. If not in this way then unfortunately in a few years the game will be over.

## About the Author



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