

REGIONAL REPORT – UNITED KINGDOM – JUNE 2009



UK Project Management Round Up

*By Miles Shepherd
International Correspondent for PMForum & PM World Today
Salisbury, England, UK*

Are You a Wise Project Manager?

This has been an interesting month and an uncomfortable one too. Against a background of unedifying behaviour at the highest level the British Standard Institute (BSI) has just finished hosting the new Work Group on Governance of IT. WG6, as it is known, is a special group that reports to the Joint Technical Committee of the International Standards Organisation (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). In an alphabet soup of initials, the working group is JTC1/WG6 – for short!

Among other things, WG6 is responsible for maintaining ISO 38,500 Corporate Governance of Information Technology. This is a new standard, fast tracked from early work carried out in Australia and New Zealand building on some work carried out by the Association for Project Management where a Special Interest Group developed a set of guidelines for the governance of projects. The result is one of the first attempts worldwide to address the issues of governance that afflict us all, in any management role.

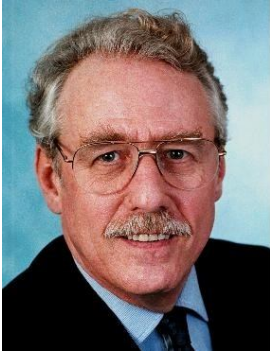
Governance is a slippery subject to grasp and many people claim that rules are not needed. However, we all can point to cases where a lack of governance has led to corporate melt down. Sadly, in this country we have been having our collective noses rubbed in this mess for the past month and it shown little indication of ending any time soon. Governance is slippery because it has to pick up on a number of difficult areas such as Company strategy, legal aspects of reporting and compliance and by no means least, on culture.

Culture is an important, and oft neglected, aspect of governance because it deals with several levels of the unspoken rules that direct our behaviour. Clearly, culture is recognisable at the national level – and we all have our images of the typical Englishman, Scot, Frenchman, etc – but it is also important at the company level because it defines *'the way we do things round here'* and it is this that governance needs to address. It is only a few years since the Enron scandal and last year Satyam hit the headlines for similar reasons, and there are many other examples around the world. So there seems to be a need for 'rules'.

Now the problem with rules is that they can be interpreted in a number of ways, and some interpretations can be quite unexpected. This reminds me of the old adage:

Rules are for the blind obedience of idiots and the guidance of the wise

There are some specialists in interpreting rules, and they tend to be lawyers. But some are project managers – so are you a wise PM?

About the Author:***Miles Shepherd***

*Global Advisor
International Correspondent - UK
Based in Salisbury*



Miles Shepherd is a global advisor and International Correspondent for PMForum in the United Kingdom. He is also managing director for MS Projects Ltd, a consulting company supporting various UK Government agencies, nuclear industry organisations and other businesses. Miles has over 30 years' experience on a variety of projects in UK, Eastern Europe and Russia. His PM experience includes defence, major IT projects, decommissioning of nuclear reactors, nuclear security, rail and business projects for the UK Government and EU. Past Chair and Fellow of the Association for Project Management (APM), Miles is also past president and chair of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). He was recently named Chair of the ISO committee that is developing the new ISO 21500 Guidelines for Project Management. He was also involved in leading APM's recently published guidelines for project management oversight and governance. Additional information about Mr. Shepherd can be found at

<http://www.pmforum.org/ambassadors/ambassadors.htm#Shepherd>.

Miles Shepherd is based near London and can be reached at miles.shepherd@msp-ltd.co.uk.