

FEATURED INTERVIEW



Karen Tate, PMP

Director-at-Large

Member of Board of Directors

Project Management Institute (PMI®)

*Editor's note: **Karen Tate**, MBA, PMP, is also Founder and President of The Griffin Tate Group, Inc., an Ohio-based project management consulting firm that provides consulting, training, and project facilitation to both the private and public sectors, small and large organizations. Ms. Tate has been working with projects and project teams for more than 20 years. Her areas of expertise include Project Management, Training and Consulting, Team and Executive Level Meeting Facilitation, Technical Creativity & Innovation, and Total Quality Management. She has extensive experience with technical, engineering, high tech, and software development organizations. Karen has managed programs and projects of all types and sizes, in a variety of industries, and has presented, consulted and trained with organizations throughout North America, Europe, South Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Karen is co-author of *The Project Management Memory Jogger, A Pocket Guide for Project Teams*; *The Advanced Project Management Memory Jogger, A Pocket Guide for Experienced Project Professionals Getting Started in Project Management, A Step By Step Approach to Risk Assessment*; and *Triz: An Approach to Systematic Innovation*. A PMI member since 1991, she has been a frequent speaker and presenter at PMI chapter meetings, conferences and SeminarsWorld® programs around the world. She attended Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, has a BS in finance and an MBA from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. She was the chair of the External Relations and Volunteer Involvement Committee (ERV) of the PMI Board of Directors from 2005-2007. This interview was conducted by Managing Editor David Pells in conjunction with her participation in the 1st UTD Project Management Symposium in Texas in early August 2007.*

PMWT: How long have you been a member of the PMI board of directors?

Karen: I am serving the 2nd year of my second 3-year term, so this is my fifth year.

PMWT: Have you any special roles or responsibilities on the board?

Karen: I am currently the Liaison from the PMI Board to the Virtual Communities Project (VCP). The goal of VCP is to develop a new and

improved structural and operational model(s) for SIGs and colleges, as was done for chapters in the first phase of the Community Transformation Project. The revised structure will be better aligned with PMI's strategic objectives, and will relieve challenges faced currently by SIG and college leaders. I have also served as the Chair of the External Relations and Volunteer Involvement Committee (2 years), and as a member of the Governance Committee, and as the liaison to the Board Other Committees Appointee Qualification Process. Last year I was the Board Advisor to the Outreach Coordinator.

PMWT: *What were some of your past PMI volunteer activities before being elected to the PMI board?*

Karen: I was VP of Education for my PMI Chapter, a judge for three years in the Project of the Year award, a member of the GOC Education Advisory Group, a graduate of the 2nd Leadership Institute Masters Class, and Program Director for my Chapter, locating volunteer speakers for dinner meetings.

PMWT: *Has your PMI board experience been positive, or more stressful than expected?*

Karen: Extremely positive and lots of work. I have enjoyed all the activities and working with talented people from around the world who share my passion for project management.

PMWT: *What are some of the highlights for you personally during your time on the PMI board?*



Karen: Working with the volunteer Leaders and meeting PMI members at Congresses and understanding their issues for strategic input.

PMWT: *What countries have you visited?*

Karen: For PMI, Hong Kong, the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), Singapore, Scotland, Spain, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Brazil, Costa Rica, Thailand, and I will visit Uruguay, Peru, Chile, and Argentina for the Cono Sur trip to Latin America at the end of this

month.

PMWT: *What major events have you spoken at on behalf of PMI?*

Karen: There are so many meetings Congresses, Leadership Meetings, Regional meetings and Conferences - Professional Development Days – too many to recount.

PMWT: *What is the role of the board of directors in setting PMI direction and policies?*

Karen: The Board sets strategy for the Institute and has one employee, the CEO, Greg Balestrero. He is given performance objectives each year and is measured by the Board on his performance against those objectives. The Board also approves the Program Plan and Budget, which is how the Institute implements the envisioned goal and the strategic plan.

PMWT: *In your opinion, how is the relationship between the PMI board today and executive staff at PMI Headquarters in Pennsylvania?*

Karen: Outstanding! Greg and his staff are top notch and extremely talented and customer friendly. They are passionate about PMI, like I am.

PMWT: *What are the main issues currently being addressed by the PMI board? Are there any hot, pressing or high priority subjects?*

Karen: Of course, there is the new and improved PMI.org website — a culmination of extensive assessments of member needs that reflect PMI's commitment to serving the global project management community which was released recently. The new PMI.org was built to benefit the most active members of the project management community — PMI members, credential holders and the invaluable volunteers and component leaders

Every month there is a column from The Board in PMI Today. That is the best place to stay abreast of important topics that the board is working on. In the August issue, Philip Diab is covering Leadership and How It Functions.

PMWT: *What are some of the main challenges facing the project management profession around the world?*

Karen: According to the Standish Group, Management Support is a key reason for project failure. From my experience, a lack of understanding of project management and the amount of actual effort required for a

successful project is a partial cause of this lack of support. In defense of "management", the project manager and project team members also have an obligation to speak up when they are over allocated and to discuss the situation with their sponsor or manager.

PMWT: *What were the main experiences in your own career that best prepared you for serving on the PMI board? What skills or knowledge has proven most useful to you as a PMI director?*

Karen: Founding and running a business, having an MBA, my consulting and facilitation skills, and, of course, the experience of being a successful project manager.

PMWT: *If a PMI member sets his or her sights on one day being elected to the PMI board of directors, how would you recommend that person prepare?*

Karen: In my case, I did not have a goal to be on the Board. I was asked if I would consider it and of course, I said yes. My reason for volunteering for PMI was because I enjoyed the professional challenge and the networking with like-minded people. PMI has great volunteers because PMI respects their volunteers and treats them well.

PMWT: *Have you enjoyed your time on the board? What has been the most rewarding?*

Karen: Among the most rewarding experiences I have had is learning about and participating in Scenario Planning as part of the Strategic Planning process.

PMWT: *If you had it to do over, would you have stood for election to the board? (trick question)*

Karen: Yes. Being on the Board has provided me the opportunity for both personal and professional growth, and the satisfaction of volunteering to achieve the envisioned goal that "Worldwide, organizations will utilize, embrace, and value project management and attribute their success to it." The investment of time was greater than I expected, and the rewards have also been much greater than expected.

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