

# Globalization of the Project Management Profession

David H. Curling, B.Eng.(Mech),P.Eng.,p.t.s.c., Certificated Project Manger,Fellow APM, Fellow PMI, CD

## The Context

We are in a “rapidly changing face” of world interaction which has had a profound affect on advancement of the practice of project management. The knowledge age has resulted in dramatic globalization of the project management discipline. There are two parts to the issue of global project management:

- globalization of the profession
- management of global projects.

The management of global projects I will leave to the professional conferences which deal with the trans cultural and trans border management of projects.Also this review of the “globalization of the project management profession” is a personal view.

The project management discipline is an international fact. In the current global project management community there are organizational initiatives whose aim is to embed project management practices in national and regional economies. The 1997 Chicago Global Project Management Forum (GPMF) had 200 “delegates” and 60 countries were “represented”.

The US based Project Management Institute's (PMI) Project Project Management Professional (PMP) Certification Program is a success story with many examination venues and hundreds of candidates. The PMI Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) is free, on Internet download, with hard copies of the PMBOK in world demand. (1)

Current international project management imperatives will have a significant impact on world economic and social development. An understanding of the initiatives driving the globalization of the project management profession is important to career development, company bottom line and national economic programs.

## On Globalization

The Economist magazine declared the “Death of Distance”. where internets of computers have eliminated distance as an impediment to economic development. A World Wide Web Browser with Internet access and you are taken to project management Web Sites around the World. Want to find out about the latest project management happenings , support or software? Click on an Internet Search Engine and you have instant information from a vast array of data bases. The awesome power of our interconnected nature is evident from the impact of a chance remark of a popular American TV talk show host that sent the Chicago futures market into decline and litigious reaction from a powerful industry group.

Financial markets of the world are interconnected in a fashion that boggles the imagination. We are told, in great detail, and in real time, what is happening in world political, social and economic affairs. We witnessed a war in the Middle East where the commanders watched CNN news to find out what was happening on the battlefield.

## **Project Management Standards**

Industry and government are faced with a number of project management standards. Some of these are:

- International Organization for Standards (ISO)
- Association for Project Management Project Management Body of Knowledge (APM BoK)
- Project Management Institute Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (GPMBOK)
- Software Engineering Institute Capability Maturity Model (SEI CMM)
- US Department of Defense Earned Value Management System (EVMS)
- Canadian Government Cost/Schedule Performance Management Standard (C/SPMS)
- CCTA PProjects in a Controlled Environment (PRINCE)

Each standard is applied to particular national and international project management undertakings. A rationalization of these management standards is needed if they are to be used in a coherent and coordinated fashion. [\(2\)](#)

The PMI Global Standards Committee has been reviewing these standards in an attempt to bring coherence to the project management scene. The activity and governance of this PMI working group is posted to the PMI Web Site. [\(1\)](#)

We can look to a global network of Universities for research on project management academic and competency requirements. The International Research Network on Organizing by Projects (IRNOP) is a collegial association of academic institutions that meets each year to consider project management research.

Work is in hand to develop the PMI GPMBOK in a number of directions and to include project management principles. Other project management standards being considered are:

- Competency Standards
- A Maturity Model
- GPMBOK Extensions
- Corporate Practice Standards.

The next revision of the Association for Project Management's Body of Knowledge (APM BoK) has started. The APM BoK is five years old and requires a review of its contents. This work is to be carried out by Professor Peter Morris and the Centre for Research in Project Management Team of the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

This parallel develop of Bodies of Knowledge (BOK's) is a valuable prospect for the

international project management community. Both the APM and PMI BOK's are useful and for different purposes. The APM BOK, with its levels of experience profiles, is a corporate or personal competency check list. The APM BoK identifies 40 key competencies for project management.

The PMI GPMBOK is a guide to the learning of generally accepted project management practices. A training industry has grown up to explain the GPMBOK and each of the eight generally accepted practices, described as knowledge areas.

A 1995 Special Issue of the International Journal of Project Management provided particular viewpoints on the Project Management Bodies of Knowledge. As the Special Issue Editor I wrote " A project--management practitioner of the 1990's cannot ignore the evolving project--management standards of knowledge. Such standards affect accreditation as a professional and impact on all project management undertakings..." (3)

Theo Clarke writes on the Chicago Global Project Management Forum, in the Association for Project Management's February, 1998 issue of Project magazine, -- " There was a clear consensus that global standards are a precursor to global certification and that there is a need for a global accreditation body which identifies equivalence ".

National interests will make it unlikely that an International Project Management Body of Knowledge (IPMBOK) will be accepted. I see national organizations continuing to develop particular standards, call them BOK or whatever, that can be used as a basis for national project management certification.

### **The Profession [ Discipline ]**

Once called the "accidental profession" project management is emerging as a distinct management discipline. Increasingly, government and private companies are turning to project management approaches to encourage innovation, improve efficiency, solve problems and manage scarce resources.

Lew Ireland, the PMI President, has written that the "project management professional certification continues to be one of PMI's major services to individuals". He has asked that concept of professionalism be examined and "light shed on how PMP Certification" can truly epitomize professionalism.

Project management is a sub set of general management. Some believe that it is the unrecognized engine of economic improvement! But is it a profession? It is not clear that project management is a profession, when judged against accepted "professions".

The noun "professional" is defined in the sense of a professional person as -- ( a person engaged in one of the learned professions). Used as an adjective -- in a professional sense -- (engaged in by members of a profession; "professional occupations include medicine and the law and teaching"). We can become quickly bogged down if we search for a clear and present project management profession. Is project management simply a way to conduct business or is it something higher in the service a social good? The answer is not clear, nor will it be for some time. The issue is one of definition.

There are two definitions of “what is a profession”. One, espoused by many, that a profession is extant if people practice the precepts of a particular body of knowledge and code of ethics. The other is that a profession requires certification both in knowledge, competency to a body of knowledge and a licensing body that is legally responsible to public welfare, not a lobby for a particular skill or discipline.

Currently we have people lumping the PMI's Project Management Professional [PMP] certification with that of doctors, lawyers, engineers and accountants. This is nonsense and will do no good in the long run. The project management discipline has a long way to go before it can be judged a “profession” within any national legal and social framework.

A “professions” certification must embrace both knowledge, ethics, competency and law. But how to bell the cat and measure competency? Certification must ensure that a candidate has been examined for knowledge, competency and practices within an ethical and legal framework. A legal structure must be present that sees the purpose of any credentialing authority as protecting the interests of the general public.

A professional body of practitioners , no matter what the profession is made of three bodies, each a separate and sovereign entity focused on a different “craft” responsibility.

These are :

- License to Practice
- Discipline Advocacy
- Commercial Support

There first requires a separate , usually State sponsored, accrediting authority which ensures that the profession is conducted for the public good. The problem is one of “quis cusodiat” that is who polices the police? This authority is usually provided through National legislation and a Licensing Authority

The second is Discipline Advocacy. This is the role currently filled by National Project Management “Professional” entities of Association for Project Management, International Project Management Association , Project Management Institute and other National sovereign organizations in Europe, Australia and South Africa. The Chapters or Branches of these National entities provide advocacy of the project management discipline in full measure.

The third is the Commercial Support entity, which is separate but inextricably bound up with the parent Discipline Advocacy organization. This Entity provides a commercial arm that permits the separation of product marketing from disciple development. Only the Association for Project Management has furthered this separation.

Much more can be said on each of these divisions of a professional body. What is clear is that organizational confusion is present in any National project management professional body of practitioners that fail to clearly delineate these and set out mandates for each .

## **Project Management Certification**

National project management certifications are driven by cultural and legal frameworks. For example, the Australian approach is to certify Qualified Project Practitioners, Registered Project Manager and Master Project Director. To receive a Registered Project Manager one is required to pass a knowledge examination and an on the job evaluation of competency.

The International Project Management Association (IPMA) "Certificated Project Manager"(CPM) accreditation is reached through a competency based process. Extensive hands on experience is required in the management of projects. A 5- 8000 word Project Report, equivalent to a Master's thesis, is the next milestone. If the Project Report satisfies an Evaluation Board then there is a personal appearance and interrogation by an accrediting Evaluation Board. (4)

The IPMA has a career profile of four levels including certification of project managers. Certification of project managers has two senior levels, dependent on experience and competency, of Certificated Project Manager, and Certificated International Project Manager. APM entrance certification of practice is an Associate Project Management Professional (APMP). "Work on devising a mid-level award, between APMP and CPM continues "according to D.L. Heath in the February 1998 Project magazine.

In Canada "professions" certification is a provincial legal matter. Canadian project management practitioners are moving to a realization of the very strict legal and social requirements for a "Canadian Project Management Professional" .

The recent dramatic changes in the PMI PMP Certification process allows for the accreditation of more than one level of project management practice. The imperative for this is the intense pressure from American Industry and Government. The reorientation of the certification examination to the project life cycle recognizes one of the flaws in the current PMP learning. The reengineering of the PMP Program is seen as a move towards accreditation of project management career levels.(5)

However worthwhile the PMI Project Management Professional Certification , and it is an international marketing success, it does not meet the needs of national professional accreditation [ legal ] bodies. Bill Duncan, the PMI Director of Standards, writes in a thread in the PMI Internet mailing list, "Is the PMP really a certification? Of course it is, but it is certification as a project management professional, not as a project manager, Certification as a PMP should not be used to imply or warrant that your PM's actually know what they are doing". He goes on to say PMP Certification can be used to "demonstrate commitment to the profession and evidence of a certain level of knowledge."

I have participated in the development of the PMI PMBOK, providing original text for Chapter 12 Project Procurement Management (Exposure Draft 8--94). However, I continue to have some difficulty in accepting a first year College level examination of eight (8) "generally accepted project management practices" as more than a basic level of knowledge qualification.

## **Project Management Organizations Initiatives**

International initiatives by professional organizations provide a framework for

discussion of global project management issues. Some of these are the:

- Global Project Management Forum
- The International Performance Management Council
- International Project Management Association World Congress
- Project Management Institute Annual Seminar
- Regional Project Management Forums

Each of these has contributed to exchange of information on standards, certification, communications, cooperation, organizational issues and the search for an International Project Management Body of Knowledge (IPMBOK). This is a shot gun approach to the issues and while useful, if somewhat chaotic and lacking continuity cries out for an international coordinating body.

The international meeting that carries the imprimatur of a global project management profession is that of the Global Project Management Forum (GPMF). Six have been held. The first was in New Orleans (1995), then Paris (1996) Boston (1996) Chicago (1997), Australia (1997) and Slovenia (1998). The GPMF is a “meeting of project management leaders and experts, representing professional project management organizations around the world”. It is the closest the project management community has come to an international meeting place. At the moment it is the single truly “international forum” for the discussion of common interests of:

- Research
- Standards
- Careers and Competency Models
- Organizational Models for Global Cooperation.

The GPMF is an “open to all occasion” and an opportunity for project management practitioners to be exposed to what national and regional organizations are doing to meet cultural and legal infrastructure requirements.

The International Performance Management Council has four Nations promoting the use of Earned Value Management Systems (EVMS). These are the Defence Departments of Australia, Canada, Sweden and United States. The EVMS requires the integrated structural approach of project management. The current economic and military strength of the West owes much to the successful use of such defense and aerospace project management tools.

Peter Morris, Chairman of the Association for Project Management (UK) pointed out in a presentation to the 1995 New Orleans Global Project Management Forum “Project Management : An International Profession” , that in the project management formation that took place, between 1955 and 1970, virtually all project management techniques were invented. Nearly all were developed by the US defense-aerospace community (DoD and NASA).

Two major project management, “happenings” are the International Project Management Association's World Congress and the Project Management Institute's Annual Seminar. The IPMA World Congress has a decided European academic outlook

while the PMI U.S.A. has a North American marketing flavor. Both are significant international meeting places for exchange of know how and collegial cooperation.

PMI'98 Annual Symposium has a Global Project Management Track dedicated to international project management know how. This is a paper presentation Track that deals with the cooperation, collaboration, economic factors, trans cultural management required for projects which span national and international and multi--corporate undertakings.

### **National Initiatives**

“Buy Canadian” is a distant memory in the face of deregulation, free trade and the global marketplace. Canada has mature industries and a Federal Government that has had long experience in the management of international projects. Although institutionalized project management has been practiced in Canadian Government and Industry for over 35 years there is no formal movement towards integration of professional project management organizations into Canadian Society.

Current Canadian initiatives are:

- Agreements to Cooperate with Canadian Universities
- Incorporation of PMI Canada
- Canadian Government Project Management Forum
- PMP Certification Program
- Canadian PM Professional Certification Project

that illustrates an integration with Canadian Society on a broad, but uncoordinated front.

Other international project management organizations have fully developed Certification Programs. Canada has not and will not until PMI Canada is firmly established as a national and sovereign Canadian entity. Much work is outstanding before PMI Canada has a certification program that represents a Canadian viewpoint, unfettered by policies and legal framework of a foreign country.

PMI Canada has been represented at the last three Global Project Management Forums. Country Reports, submitted by National representatives, have been collated and published each year as “The Global Status of the Project Management Profession”. The 1996 Canada Country Report emphasized that Canada has been practicing formal project management for some time and is a repository for project management practice in the Federal Government, Aerospace, Shipbuilding, Construction and Telecommunications Industries. GPMF Canada Country Reports have been posted to the Global Project Management Web Site.[\(6\)](#)

The goal of the PMI Canada Certification Project is “ a Canadian professional certification process that encompasses the broad universe of project management... that is governed and administered by a Canadian national authority in concert with provincial authorities... and is widely acknowledged by industry, government and academe and the general public as a professional certification process.”

## **Global Union**

There is a need for an international organization for handling the business of the globalization of the project management profession.

The GPMF Country Reports advocate the need for an international project management organization. The “Country Reports” see a need for a body operating at the international level to calibrate and coordinate the professional standards of different and national project management societies. Perhaps a formalization of the GPMF to provide opportunities “to meet, learn, expand and understand different needs”.

There are two existing models for an international project management organization. These are:

- The European -based IPMA and
- The PMI National Organization Unit (NOU)

The IPMA is an association of equal National Organizations. It is not in the business of recruiting individual members. PMI exists primarily as a professional society for its members. The UK Association for Project Management and other IPMA national societies do the same.

PMI comprises both regional chapters and national societies. IPMA is not like PMI. IPMA comprises national project management societies. Its mission is to promote project management through collaboration and coordination of the national association's activities. The PMI National Organization Unit is a collection of “off shore” PMI Chapters into an National entity but remaining subject to the policies of PMI and “the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States of America” ( a direct quote from the PMI Constitution).

The window of opportunity for global union is open but national societies should strive to be the voice of project management at the level at which national societies really belong, the national level. We must keep the distinction between an international project management coordinating body and national awarding bodies.

Where national organizations do not exist then every effort should be made to support and ensure the development of a national and sovereign project management organization. This is the best route to a long term development of the project management discipline. We must avoid the development of national organizations subject to foreign country laws and policy.

## **Dispatch From the Future**

Three issues face the international project management community. They are an International Project Management Body of Knowledge, an International Project Management Organization and Professional Certification.

In the face of different political, economic, cultural and legal frameworks I have reservations that an International Professional Certification is in the near future. The

current National certification processes need much maturing. There may be some identification of equivalence. The task looks formidable given that the recognized “professions” do not have an international certification.

I have serious doubts that an International Project Management Body of Knowledge will be prepared, that will satisfy all. Although PMI will come close, developing a useful generic PM Standard, possibly using the PMI BOK structure.

I believe that we will soon have levels of certification and project management certification authorities that recognize the reality of experience and competency credentials. The European based IPMA has adopted a career progression program. In the near future we can look to a similar model to be developed in North America. The pressure of industry and government demands will require such a program.

The PMI PMP Certification Program will continue to be a best seller. The entrance requirements are basic and it is a “relatively” easy approach to becoming certified as a “professional”. Increasingly North American corporations will demand the PMP qualification on job profiles. It will become imperative for North American project management practitioners to qualify for a PMP and “punch their PM ticket” to accompany technical knowledge.

I believe that an international project management organization is immediately at hand. This is dependent on full collegial cooperation between the professional project management organizations. World wide initiatives for the advancement of the project management discipline are increasing in intensity and will lead to the advancement of a global project management profession.

## References

- (1) Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge -- <http://www.pmi.org/>
- (2) Project Management Standards Web Sites -- <http://www.pmforum.org/prof/standard.htm>
- (3) Special Issue on the PMBOK - International Journal of Project Management.
- (4) On Certification -- A Personal Journey -- <http://www.pmforum.org/docs/journeyc.pdf>
- (5) PMI Certification -- A White Paper -- <http://www.pmi.org/cert/>
- (6) GPMF Canada Country Report - <http://www.pmicanada.org/>

David H. Curling P.Eng.,p.t.s.c.,CPM, FellowAPM, Fellow PMI, CD  
Principal Consultant LODAY Systems Ltd.  
1786 Devlin Crescent  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1H 5T6  
Canada  
Email: [curlingd@loday.com](mailto:curlingd@loday.com)  
Web Site: <http://www.pmforum.org/>

## Abstract

The presentation is a personal view of the international initiatives for the advancement of

a global project management profession. David provides, in a brief review, some insight into professional certification processes, standards, world wide professional organizations and some thoughts on the challenge, opportunities and impediments to a global project management profession.

David Curling, Principal Consultant LODAY Systems Ltd. is a Member of the Steering Committee of the Global Project Management Forum, PMI'98 Chair of the Global Project Management Track, WWW Project Management Forum Webmaster, Fellow of the Association for Project Management, Fellow of the Project Management Institute and a Certificated Project Manager.

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