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AACEi joins GAPPS – Why & What it means!

By Paul Giammalvo

The Association for the Advancement of Cost Engineering International (AACEi) www.aacei.org has joined the Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards (GAPPS) www.globalpmstandards.org. Why is this significant?

As the use of project management as a delivery system continues to mature, leading owner companies such as Motorola, Shell and Nokia are starting to realize the folly of relying primarily on knowledge based credentials to ensure better project management. They are now moving towards the next level in the evolution of professional project management- independently evaluated, competency based credentialing.

Ivor Blumenthal, CEO Services Sector Education & Training Authority – South Africa explained in his presentation during last July's Project Management Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, "the ideal system is one which is global in breadth and is independent of any particular methodology, organization or approach." Mr. Blumenthal went on to explain that what is needed is a "standard against which to baseline all credentials- one which will ensure reciprocity and comparability- an independent baseline for ALL organizations to use".

During the late 1960's, I graduated with a degree in Construction Project Management. For over 15 years, I have taught a wide variety of project management courses using PMI's PMBOK Guide as well as AACE's Skills and Knowledge of Cost Engineering. At the same time, as a practitioner, I have watched those holding knowledge based credentials implementing what they supposedly learned through the certification process in the field, with a growing sense of concern and frustration.

After so many years of claims that project management is a profession, it has become apparent that knowledge based credentials simply aren't producing better project managers. Despite the implied marketing claims by some organizations, having a critical mass of certified practitioners is no guarantee of better project management. This is born out not only by research by Standish and Gartner, but even construction, which is generally perceived to be a more mature user of project management as a delivery system. Despite over 50 years of professionalization, construction project management has been incapable of consistently "delivering projects on time and within budget while substantially meeting the technical requirements any better than 30% of the time". (Based on research by FMI Corporation, www.fmi.com) This poor performance is not helping the professional image of practitioners of project management.

Recognizing the need to move beyond mere knowledge based credentials, the leadership of AACE started to investigate the options available to move their already highly regarded credentials to the next level. Several criteria were identified by the leadership, including:

- 1) Independence from any particular methodology or philosophy;
- 2) Global Transferability and Recognition;
- 3) Founded on Solid Academic Research;

- 4) Relatively Inexpensive;
- 5) Flexibility to adapt/adopt to the existing AACE Body of Applied Skills and Knowledge;
- 6) Based more or less on the US Professional Engineer/Canadian P. Eng. licensing process and/or the globally recognized Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

So what is the solution? Since around 2000, leading global practitioners, led by Dr. Lynn Crawford and Bill Duncan, have been collaborating on the creation of an independent, truly not-for-profit organization, dedicated to researching, establishing and advocating for and on behalf of competency based portfolio, program and project management performance standards.

On 21 November, 2006, the Global Alliance For Project Performance Standards (GAPPS) was officially launched. What makes GAPPS so unique is the standards themselves are being made available to the consuming public under "copyleft" or "gnu licensing agreements". While often associated with software development, taking an "open source" approach to the creation of standards marks an important watershed event for those concerned with the over-commercialization of project management, especially from those organizations that require contributors to sign restrictive copyright assignments.

The innovative leadership demonstrated by GAPPS in making these standards available through Copyleft Licensing opens a whole new vista in the creation and sharing of project management knowledge, skills and standards. Not only does this approach enable practitioners to share their knowledge without having to give up their intellectual rights to produce derivative works, but adopting an "open source" approach is consistent with the Millennium Development Goals, by making these standards available at no cost to anyone, encouraging adoption by the developing nations

After careful review of the options available, and working under copyleft agreement, the GAPPS were immediately adopted by AACE (www.aacei.org) as the next evolutionary step to bring their already well known and highly respected Certified Cost Consultant/Cost Engineer knowledge based credential to the next level by adopting the GAPPS competency standards and upgrading the existing credential to include a competency based element. In making this bold move, Jim Zack, President of AACE International stated that "in adopting the GAPPS Competency standards, we are confident we can raise the perception of Certified Cost Consultant (CCC) and Certified Cost Engineer (CCE) holders to be on equal professional standing with that enjoyed by the Professional Engineers and the already highly regarded Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) credentials."

Robert E. McCoy CCC, AACE's Vice President of Technical/Education/Certification stated, "For more than 50 years AACE has quietly played an integral and substantive role in the program, and project management field. It is time that AACE synthesizes our experience into a professional certification program to help pass along the knowledge gained during the last half century. With our established experience of providing technical competence based certifications, this will satisfy a tremendous need within our practice to provide quantifiable technical competency at the high standard which only AACE can produce."

AACE's new competency based credential will be known as the "Certified Portfolio, Program and Project Management" and will start accepting applicants during late 1st Quarter of 2007. To learn more, contact AACE's Executive Director, Mr. Jim Baxter jbaxter@aacei.org or Director of Marketing, Ms. Jennie Amos, jamos@aacei.org.

GAPPS next meeting is scheduled for Hong Kong in February of 2007. For those wishing to learn more about the GAPPS program, suggest you email the GAPPS Secretariat, secretariat@globalpmstandards.org or visit the website, www.globalpmstandards.org.



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