

PM World Today Viewpoints Article - December 2006

The PM Profession Needs to Avoid the "Siloing" Affect

By Eric Jenett, a PMI Founder

Project Management (PM) organizations like the Project Management Institute (PMI®) need to remain collegial in nature and persistent in avoiding, not encouraging, and rooting out the "siloing" effect of individual or group interests that have developed in organizations serving many other professions. In my opinion, these are damaging to the cross-fertilization and "test of exposure" needed to truly serve the domain of project management.

Equally, I passionately believe that professional organizations like PMI SHOULD NOT become a home for re-inventors of wheels or defenders of NIMBY (not in my back yard). Both attitudes are inimical to both effective and efficient uses of talent, effort, time and resources. In addition those attitudes invite and almost assure a fertile field for the growth of dissension, squabbling, irritation and eventually isolation.

Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the, typically creeping, siloing is inhibiting the initiation, development, production (fleshing out) and use of concepts - thoughtful analysis, then making available in the appropriate form the distillate of that/those processes. Siloing is often identified in its initiation and persistence by phrases such as: "NIMBY" (not in my back yard) or "Oh, but we're different and it just doesn't apply to our problem."

Organizations like PMI should be dedicated to and operated to hunt down and eradicate the mindset that produces people and projects that become victims of "applying yesterday's solutions to today's problems/challenges tomorrow".

(See Author's bio next page)



Eric Jenett



Eric Jenett has spent over 55 years working in project environments with increasing levels of responsibility, including technical design through chief process engineer, engineering vice president, corporate vice president, project manager and project director. After receiving his Masters Degree in Chemical Engineering from Columbia University, Eric spent a majority of his career with Brown & Root Corporation in Houston, Texas, USA retiring in 1989 as Corporate Vice President. During his career, Eric had experience working on a wide variety of project types in the USA and abroad. He is particularly proud of having started, executed and closed out every project on which he had project management responsibilities. Eric was one of the founders of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) in 1969 (he is PMI member #3), and served as PMI President in 1971, Chairman of the PMI Board of Directors in 1972, and PMI Secretary during 1975-76. He was instrumental in founding the Houston PMI Chapter (the first PMI Chapter chartered) and served as Houston Chapter President and Chair. He also helped organize PMI's first regional seminar in 1976, which evolved into the annual Seminars/Symposium and now Global Congresses. His PMI recognitions include Distinguished Contribution (1975) and PMI Fellow (1982); he also carries the distinction of PMP #1 (ret.). PMI's "Eric Jenett Project Management Excellence Award" is named in his honor. Eric was also an early member of the American Association of Cost Engineers International (AACEi), having attended their formation meeting in 1956. He has been a member of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) for over 40 years and was a registered engineer in Texas until his retirement. Eric has written and lectured on both technical and project management topics and authored over 20 professional papers and handbook contributions, including several for PMI publications and for the Houston PMI Chapter. Only partially in jest he describes his lifetime goal and guiding principle as being: to hunt down and eradicate the existence, acceptance and practice of the project management paradigm that in effect says: the project manager operates to solve the problems of today by tomorrow applying the techniques of yesterday.