

PM WORLD TODAY – VIEWPOINT – NOVEMBER 2009

The Crisis Manager

By Getachew Teklemariam Alemu

It is hard to find someone who has not felt the global economic downturn just a little bit. The global economic crisis has become the headache of all people living on the planet, from an American CEO to a Chinese manufacturer, from a Saudi investor to an African farmer, from a Brazilian Hotel owner to an Australian University Dean.

Unilaterally, countries have been taking different policy measures to rebound investor confidence, and reassure consumers. At global level, this crisis has resulted in progressive shifts in international cooperation and institutional structures; a shift from inane protectionism to a more open trade, from G-8 to G-20, from pro-western IMF to a more inclusive IMF, and what have you.



For a keen observer, the variety of national stimulus packages and other policy measures would boil down to three categories of interventions. The interventions, nurturing new industries, renovating dysfunctional business processes (and infrastructures) and adopting to change, could only be achieved if the eyes of policy makers, bureaucrats, shareholders and consumers could get away from functional operation to a more projectized delivery.

The new industries coming to the fore, as a blessing from the timing of the crisis, are green technologies, fuel-efficient cars, eco-friendly construction, nuclear technology, bio-technology, etc.

Both proponents and deniers of climate change do agree on one thing; the current way of living is not sustainable. What make them go their separate way is a disagreement on the causes, impacts and solutions of the change. With the proponents growing more vocal in the political circle, the abovementioned industries have appeared to be the lucrative sectors of the upcoming decades. Thus, project managers, in the upcoming decades, will in one way or another, get involved in these sectors. What needs more attention, though, is the fact that the performance of the then project manager will be measured by how green his/her project deliverables are and how much pollution quota he/she has saved for the company. Thus, a fourth critical element will be added on the triad of cost, time and quality i.e. Greenness. The good news, most PMOs will be re-

painted green, company logos will have green background and project managers will frequent green ties. Maybe, that is what is prophesied to be Greenpeace!

The other intervention, renovating dysfunctional business processes (and infrastructure), has taken the bulk of the global economic stimulus package. Policy makers are working relentlessly on how to regulate faulty financial institutions, while looking forward to minimize the rising unemployment through long-term investment on infrastructures. Guess who is at the center of this intervention? *Project Managers*. The task of the project manager in this case will focus on cost effectiveness and employment creation. For this, providing due attention for cost management and adopting labour intensive strategies will be the hotspots. The bad news, oversight from higher management and shareholders is growing more stringent, which might sometime affect the technical freedom of project teams.

The last thing, adopting to change, is rather a wake up call for all those who have been denying that the earth is growing more flat. With countries like china, India, Brazil, Mexico, and many others coming to the global scene with their own strength, the rule of the game will not be the same. Rather, the rule of the game has to be changed to a more inclusive one. Consequently, the players have to adjust themselves to the new rule. Project managers, being the key players in change management, will be expected to lead the overall process. For that, project managers will need an eagle-eyed view to the overall dynamics. The good news, many decision making aids are getting available on the table of project managers enhancing the precision of their analysis while minimizing uncertainty.

In all the three interventions, project managers are being the centers of the solution, and actually the new global economic order. Hence, paradoxically, they might be called “crisis managers”. Is there any one with a price tag for normalcy? If so, bet it with project managers.

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