

Leapfrogging in Project Management and Welcome to the October 2016 PMWJ

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Welcome to the November 2016 edition of the **PM World Journal** (PMWJ). This 52nd edition again reflects the international nature of this publication; **29** original articles, papers and other works by **37** different authors in **15** different countries are included this month. News articles about projects and project management around the world are also included. The primary mission of this journal is to support the global sharing of knowledge, so please share this month's edition with others in your network, wherever in the world they may be.

Since August I have been using this opportunity to mention new trends or important issues that I see as journal editor. This month I discuss an issue that I thought I recognized about a year ago; now I think it is a very real trend and perhaps an opportunity for those new to project management and those in developing economies. But it also introduces new risks.

Leapfrogging in Project Management

Leapfrog is a very old children's game whereby a child bends over while another spreads his legs, places hands on the bending child's back and leaps forward over the bending child. Then the one who leaped bends over and the original bending child leaps over the new bending child. I played this game when I was very young and actually do not remember the objective; I think it was to cross a yard or space faster, perhaps in a race.

Leapfrogging as a verb, however, has come to symbolize jumping over something in order to move ahead faster, for example, leapfrogging a generation or older technology. The best example that I have seen in recent years is the leapfrogging of old telecoms technology in Africa whereby countries decided not to invest in networks of landline-based telephones but rather went straight to mobile phones. Rather than spending huge sums and years to implement land lines, these countries promoted and supported cellular mobile phone systems, companies, technologies and networks, thereby "leapfrogging" decades of telecoms technologies and investment. The result can now be seen across the continent where anyone with a mobile phone can connect to the internet and communicate with anyone in the world, often as easily as anyone in a fully developed economy.

I now see signs of the same thing happening in the project management world, most apparently in academia in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Where it has taken decades for major universities in North America and Western Europe to introduce project management into undergraduate and graduate degree programs, universities in many developing countries have recognized the importance of

programs and projects to economic development (and global competition) and have introduced project management courses and degree programs. There may now be more project management degree programs in Nigeria and Pakistan, for example, than in any European country other than the United Kingdom. Project Management degree programs are widespread in South Africa and Turkey, among others, with the same becoming more visible in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Panama, Peru and others. This trend seems to be accelerating.

Academic research in developing countries also seems to be more aggressive, more practice oriented and increasing. The research that I've seen from Kenya and Nigeria, for example, is aimed at solving local problems, improving local industry performance or addressing national/regional issues – all from a project management perspective. ([See Alan Stretton's paper in the October PMWJ](#) for some perspective on this topic.)

More developing countries also seem to be recognizing program/project management as a national competence, with more government bodies embracing enterprise project management, maturity models, centers of excellence and project management offices. It has taken decades for American government agencies to reach this point (many are still not there); organizations in Africa and Latin America are leapfrogging to OPM best practices in one generation. (See my 2009 paper on this topic, republished this month as a Second Edition)

You can also see this among individuals and organizations in many countries with their very visible interest in project management certifications. The number of Project Management Professionals (PMPs) and PRINCE2 certified professionals around the world has exploded in recent years. There are hundreds of certified PM professionals now in countries where the PM profession itself is only a few years old.

Leapfrogging is also happening with P/PM concepts and approaches in Europe and North America. The topic of “agility” for example has captured the attention of executives in many organizations; it's no longer acceptable to take years or even months to implement organizational changes or PM best practices. Executives want improvement faster. Agile methodology is moving from IT project management to organizational change management to mainstream programs and projects; learning and changing must happen faster everywhere. Other examples include resilience, sustainability, reference class forecasting, and value management.

At the highest levels of P/PM research and experience in Europe, I think there is a growing appreciation for the role of human psychology, economics, statistics (think big data) and politics in the success or failure of projects (and project management). Top down approaches to program risk management have led to leapfrogging; I believe the Scandinavian School of project management has this concept at its heart. Such concepts as the Successive Principle ([Lichtenberg 2016](#)) and self-organizing teams will soon move to the forefront of advanced project management.

Similar trends occur with P/PM tools and technologies, with new cloud-based solutions introduced almost monthly in many countries. This has been happening in the United States for many years, really beginning with the introduction of the

personal computer in the 1980s and accelerating with internet-based solutions in recent years. Every project manager wants a better tool; every organization wants to “leapfrog” to the latest and greatest technology.

Leapfrogging in project management carries significant risks however. If organizations embrace the latest tools and concepts without some resident knowledge of fundamental project management topics such as project lifecycles, cost/resource planning, scheduling, risk management, stakeholder engagement and other “PMBOK topics”, there will be project failures. If those planning and managing large projects know nothing about earned value, those projects will most likely fail. If there is no knowledge of project portfolio management, the wrong projects will be financed with time and money wasted.

Discussion of any of the topics above could be vastly expanded. These paragraphs were just to introduce this topic. Those new to project management and those in developing economies should carefully assess current topics, recognize good practices, determine what is most beneficial, and embrace the newest and best. Be aware of the risks, but neither should you nor your organization reinvent the wheel. Leapfrog ahead!

This month in the Journal

Now for this month’s journal which again contains some interesting and outstanding works. Six featured papers are included this month, on some very important topics. Alan Stretton has contributed another good paper, sharing his decades of experience and knowledge about project management. Isaac Abuya and his co-authors have contributed another important paper about conditions on orphan support projects in Kenya, the topic of Isaac’s PhD research at the University of Nairobi. Tororiro Chaza in Zimbabwe has authored a very important paper on how to fight corruption with project governance. Dr. Chima Okereke in UK has authored an important paper on how PPM can be a “silver bullet” for advancing development in emerging economies (including his homeland of Nigeria). David Tain in Canada and professors Abu Dief, Aly Kotb and El Beheiry in Saudi Arabia has contributed papers on strategic alliances and arbitration/claims management for major international construction projects. These are all excellent contributions to the P/PM literature.

Five series articles are again included this month, from our regular authors, along with three advisory articles and one commentary. These articles are all by experienced project management experts and practitioners who share experience, knowledge and experience with our readers on a regular basis. I hope they are useful to many. The three second edition papers included this month include a very good one from the 10th UT Dallas PM Symposium in August, a great 1998 paper by Paul Dinsmore, and a 2009 paper by me. (I hope you do not begrudge this self-indulgence as I think the topic and some of the contents could still be useful to some readers, in the context of my opening paragraphs above).

Interesting regional reports are also included from Jouko Vaskimo in Helsinki, Kamil Mroz in Brussels, Alfonso Bucero in Madrid and Miles Shepherd in Salisbury. Two new book reviews are included. All of the articles, papers, reports and reviews this

month contribute to the global project management body of knowledge. Read those of interest to you, then share them with others. Sharing knowledge multiplies the impact of good ideas, and some of ideas (like projects) can change the world.

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I want to thank the authors who contributed to this edition of the PMWJ. Most have included an email address at the end of her or his author profile. If you find an article or paper useful or interesting, let the author know. Better yet, ask questions, start a discussion, share information and knowledge. We also want to thank our advisors,

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About the Author



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David L. Pells is Managing Editor of the ***PM World Journal*** (www.pmworldjournal.net) and Managing Director of the PM World Library (www.pmworldlibrary.net). David is an internationally recognized leader in the field of professional project management with more than 35 years of experience on a variety of programs and projects, including engineering, construction, energy, defense, transit, technology and nuclear security, and project sizes ranging from thousands to billions of dollars. He has been an active professional leader in the United States since the 1980s, serving on the board of directors of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) twice. He was founder and chair of the Global Project Management Forum (1995-2000), an annual meeting of leaders of PM associations from around the world.

David was awarded PMI's Person of the Year award in 1998 and Fellow Award, PMI's highest honor, in 1999. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Association for Project Management (APM) in the UK; Project Management Associates (PMA - India); and Russian Project Management Association. Since 2010 he is an honorary member of the Project Management Association of Nepal. From June 2006 until March 2012, he was the managing editor of *PM World Today*. He occasionally provides high level advisory services for major programs, global organizations and the U.S. federal government. David has a BA in Business Administration from the University of Washington and a Master's degree in business from Idaho State University in the USA. He has published widely, spoken at conferences and events worldwide, and can be contacted at editor@pmworldjournal.net.