

# PM World Journal

Volume VIII - Issue VII – August 2019

Letter to the Editor

---

31 July 2019

## On the Subject of John Schlichter's recent articles

Sir,

In 1999, John Schlichter introduced me to the value and personal satisfaction of volunteering in PMI. I then contributed to his pioneering work on OPM3 for several years. His current series of articles ("Alexander and the Indian King") is clearly based on a powerful vision and a sincere desire to ensure that PMI can continue to cater for the needs of its members and of project management in general, in an ever-changing world. I would therefore like to add a few supporting examples and comments to those articles and the issues that they address.

1) The takeover of international conferences by the corporate organization (after the great success of international conferences organized by the national chapters with support from PMI at the start of the millennium) and the similar disbanding of the volunteer-run SIGs. In each case, much of the enjoyment and spontaneity of the volunteers has been squeezed out in favour of heavy (and somewhat irrelevant and disrespectful) administrative control. PMI volunteers are still involved, but their influence is considerably restricted.

2) On the specific example of conferences, in the last few years, potential speakers have been treated with much less respect than in the past: no justification is provided when a submission is rejected. If the paper is accepted, the presenter is required to spend additional time and effort to provide PMI staff with "story-board" versions of their presentation in a format that is unusable as a presentation. The effort on both sides would be better spent on encouraging each presenter to provide a formal paper on their topic as part of the review process and for subsequent publication on the Web. These proceedings would improve the credibility of the speaker and the congress, as well as providing longer-term value for PMI members.

3) I had considered invoking clause 4.2.1 from the PMI Code of Ethics – that every PMI member and certification-holder has to sign – to ensure that PMI provided this currently missing feedback to all rejected speakers: "as practitioners in the global project management community: We demonstrate transparency in our decision-making process." However, it turns out that PMI staff do not sign the same code of ethics; they have a "code of behaviour"! This dichotomy raises a set of fascinating metaphysical questions and highlights a risk of double standards (the member Code of Ethics vs. the employee Code of Conduct) within a single community and does nothing to encourage effective teamwork.

4) PMI severely limits the reuse of any material published in the PMI standards, despite the fact that all of this material is the result of thousands of hours of unpaid volunteer creative work. These restrictions limit the right of course-developers to reproduce diagrams and figures or to use extracts from the text of the standards. Naturally, these restrictions do not apply to courses that PMI might choose to create and deliver in competition to commercial Registered Education Providers.

The solution to these issues is already available. As the Agile movement has taught us, placing your trust in the team and limiting interference and administrative overheads leads to increased creativity, motivation and commitment. As John Schlichter wrote in his first article in the series: PMI should recast its values in a way that prioritizes “institutionalizing project management by focusing exclusively on delivering only those products and services that PMI alone can furnish in its role as the premiere trade association for project management.” Growth should be used only as an indicator of success and not an end in itself: growth should arise from the value that PMI provides, and not from the power that it wields.

Yours,

Crispin (“Kik”) Piney, PMP, PgMP, PfMP  
South of France

P.S. My critiques have been prompted by my abiding affection for PMI, reaching back over two decades and my aim to save PMI from becoming just yet another commercial organization. As the French say: “qui aime bien châtie bien”. Kik

### *References*

Schlichter, J. (2019). Alexander and the Indian King: Part 3; *PM World Journal*, Vol. VIII, Issue VII, August. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/pmwi84-Aug2019-Schlichter-Alexander-and-the-Indian-King-Part3.pdf>

Schlichter, J. (2019). Alexander and the Indian King: Part 2; *PM World Journal*, Vol. VIII, Issue VI, July. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/pmwi83-Jul2019-Schlichter-Alexander-and-Indian-King-Part2.pdf>

Schlichter, J. (2019). Alexander and the Indian King: Part 1; *PM World Journal*, Vol. VIII, Issue V, June. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/pmwi82-Jun2019-Schlichter-Alexander-and-Indian-King-Part1.pdf>