

## Using Project Management Skills to Provide Safe Water to Villages in Niger<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This article relates the story of a nonprofit founded to provide Niger, West Africa, with the most basic of all needs – uncontaminated water. Written from the perspective of a humanitarian Project Management Professional, it tells a story in which inspiration and professional skills led to the creation of a volunteer-run nonprofit organization which has improved the lives of over 600,000 people. The article will detail how the organization developed. It also discusses the personal benefits that come with volunteering

**Keywords:** Nonprofit, volunteerism, project management, clean water, Africa, Niger

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“Look, ya’ll! A well! A traditional well!” It was off in the distance with about a dozen women and girls in colorful dresses milling around it, each holding a plastic container as she waited for her turn to fill it with the contaminated water from the well. This was my introduction to women and girls in Niger and the start of a journey to give this gift of water to the people of Niger.

### The Beginning

It’s funny how one event can change your life forever. In April 2008, I attended a slide presentation on the book *Water is Key* (Gleick and Garcetti, 2007) and learned how women in Niger, West Africa, walk 4-6 miles each day to get water for their families and carry their heavy water burdens back home on their heads. This concept was not unfamiliar to me, but I never truly understood what it meant until that night.

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I did not even know that night where the country of Niger was located. Bordered by Nigeria, Mali, Chad, Benin, Burkina Faso, Algeria and Libya, Niger is the largest country in Western Africa and the poorest in the world, year after year, according to the UN Developmental Index.



But that night I learned more than its geographical location. I learned that girls can't attend school because their role is to help with water gathering or else care for the younger children while the mothers make the journey for water. It's not unusual for a five-year old to bear the responsibility of caring for the younger children who are too old to be wrapped to the mother's back but and too young to walk the distance.

Like clockwork, mothers arise before daybreak (“before the cock crows”, in their words) and leave for their daily walks, not knowing what may come. Some of them are occasionally raped if found to be walking alone. If they are unfortunate enough to arrive to the well “late”, there may be no more water left that day. They must then walk even farther until another well is found. And this water that women work so hard to get -- it is contaminated, causing disease and even death. The women know it. They call it “bad” water. But it is what they have. Currently, 1 out of 7 babies die before they are five years old because of water caused disease.







Those of us listening that night were overwhelmingly touched by what we learned. Sparked by the presentation, a small group of women decided to take action for the cause. We formed a Task Force and set an initial goal to raise funds for five wells in villages in Niger. And in just a few months, we had funded 10 wells simply by talking with women in our Founder's home and by networking with friends! From the outset, we partnered with World Vision, one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the world, to do our "boots on the ground" work and be our matching donor. We created a Memo of Understanding with them, in which they agreed to match our monetary contributions and to do the drilling for us, charging us only \$5600 to drill a well. Now, almost 12 years later, they have increased that cost by only \$500 to \$6100.

### **Project Manager Needed!**

Our plan was to next create a website to show what we were about and help with our fundraising. But we needed videos and photos since words themselves are not always enough to depict the reality. Knowing I am a project manager (and avid traveler), our Founder / Task Force President asked me to "project manage" a trip to Niger so we could interview women there about the need for safe water and get video material for our website. Reluctant to do actual requests for donations, I knew this was something I could do well. My knowledge of project management and leadership and how to run volunteer programs (thanks to my many years of PMI and other volunteer management experiences) prepared me well for this role and the role I have played with our organization since that trip.

As recommended for all complex projects, we spent much time planning the trip. Early on, World Vision agreed to provide transportation, drivers, translators, and security for us. They helped us plan which villages to visit and make sure we could be there to watch when one of the wells we had funded was completed. We spent six months doing “what if” scenarios to ensure we had covered all our bases. We planned interview questions to ask. Inexperienced with filming and with the limitations facing us in Niger, we sought help. We got advice on what video cameras and still cameras to buy and what film would be best suited for the project. I took courses in videotaping to learn the fundamentals of filming. Videographers we met in the LA film industry gave us tips on “do’s and don’ts”. I agonized over how much film and how many batteries to take so that I would not run out in the middle of the trip. I learned the best methods of backup (Like any risk averse PMP, I insisted on double backups, of course!). We were fortunate to get a couple hours consulting time with a professional videographer who had worked on the Michael Jackson Ethiopia documentary. You just don’t realize how much goes into videotaping interviews until things are pointed out to you. Then, after all that worry and planning, almost at the last minute, a professional videographer agreed to accompany us on the trip in return for her expenses only! That lightened my sense of having sole responsibility for the videotaping significantly! Whew!

## **Lessons Learned**

We did make some mistakes on that first trip in February 2009, of course. Friends who heard about the trip were eager to participate in our project, and they deluged us with kid’s books, pens, markers, crayons, and coloring books. Unfortunately, the books were a waste because most people speak Hausa and those with education learn French, not English. And the straw huts that serve as classrooms don’t have desks or tables on which to put coloring books. Markers dry up quickly in the sub-Saharan climate. We ended up with five huge duffle bags of donations, which we then had to pay to ship to Africa and spend time distributing in the villages we visited. The villagers were grateful for the gifts, but the items should have been items they could use.

Another mistake was the team makeup on that first visit. We learned that for future trips, we needed to select persons who are team players and who are healthy, experienced travelers able to deal with daily long, bumpy rides, relentless heat, and dust. And each person must go on the trip with a specific job to accomplish. We came home to LA with a long list of “Lessons Learned” which we have implemented on our later trips to Niger.

## **Niger! The Project Begins!**

After much planning, seven of us women traveled to Niger in January 2009, to interview women firsthand about how the distance of the wells and the contaminated water has affected them and their children and how a well drilled inside their village would help. The trip was not a pleasure trip, by any means. It was TOUGH! A half dozen World Vision staff met us at the little airport

in Niamey, Niger, and delivered us to our hotel, where the World Vision security director gave us a strict briefing. That first night, our professional videographer and her roommate plugged in both their laptops to do the first backup, immediately shutting off electricity for the entire hotel. Fortunately, the hotel had a backup generator and the outage was for only a short time. We quickly learned not to overload the circuits, even in the largest hotel in the capital, and especially not in the much smaller hotel in Maradi, which would be our base of operations for the following week.

After a few days visiting an NGO fistula ward at a local hospital and meeting with our partner World Vision, we formed a convoy with our four vehicles and set off for the Maradi region. The seven of us with our two translators, two drivers and our World Vision liaison squeezed into two vehicles. The remaining World Vision staff filled the other two vehicles. All the staff were friendly and helpful to us, and we all quickly became friends. One of our most memorable drivers had the nickname “Cowboy” because he wore a cowboy hat a previous visitor had shipped to him after sharing their enjoyment of John Wayne movies.

We drove 11 ½ hours from the capital of Niamey to Maradi. Along the way, we stopped at the only gas station we ever saw, and which had a filthy latrine (squat toilet). For toilet breaks on the remainder of the trip, we just walked off into the desert and squatted behind bushes, taking our soiled toilet paper back to the trucks in sealed plastic baggies. Along the way, we saw no towns or villages, but occasionally there would be a few small huts made of sticks and sometimes we’d see a mud hut nearby which we learned was used to store food. Sometimes we would see teenage boys standing by the roadside selling gasoline stored in soda bottles. Occasionally, 2-3 camels would cross in front of us. We never saw any herds of goats or other livestock. The trip was long, bumpy and dusty. To pass the time, we shared our personal stories with the translators and drivers and each other. We ate lots of penny candy we had brought with us and sprawled on top of each other in the crowded vehicles to sleep and pass the time as best we could.

Eventually, we arrived at the Maradi Guest House, a spartan but generally clean hotel where we each had our own room with toilet. We even had plenty of hot water - or most of us did (One of us had none for two days). We ate all our breakfasts and dinners at the hotel, and the hotel cook packed tasteless ham and cheese sandwiches for our lunches. On the second day, we gave him huge cans of tuna and mayo we had brought and asked him to instead make tuna sandwiches for us. The menu for dinner was limited but edible. Usually we had scrawny chicken, French Fries, and canned green beans. The best food any of us had during the trip was the bush rat (in gravy sauce) I bravely ordered one night. All of us got some version of diarrhea during the trip.

Early the next morning, we headed out to see our first village. A thin, stooped old man (probably much younger than any of us!) stopped me as I was getting into the van and tried to show me 2-3 necklaces he wanted to sell. (I’m a magnet for this kind of attention because I smile at everyone!). “Maybe later” I said. That night, when we returned about 8:00 pm, he was there with the necklaces, waiting for us on the steps. I bought one, of course. The next night, he was there again,



with a few more items. The next night, he was there again, this time with a blanket spread out on the ground displaying even more items. Every night it was the same. Most items looked old and used -- items such as beatup looking knives with animal skin wrapped handles, masks, bowls, jewelry, etc. The other women started calling the old man my “personal shopper”, and they bought from him, too. This was the only place where we ever saw anything for sale other than at a few small stores in the village which sold basics.

We drove about two hours into the bush that first day, heading for our first village. The roads were narrow and quite rough and bumpy (when we were on actual roads). Scenery was flat, treeless except for shrub bushes or an occasional lone baobab tree. Sometimes, we saw women off in the distance walking with jerry cans filled with water on their heads.

### **A Traditional Well**

After miles of driving, we saw our first traditional well, and I yelled “Look, ya’ll! A well! A well! A traditional well!” And there it was, way off in the distance, with seven or eight colorfully dressed women and a number of dusty kids milling around it getting water. A traditional well, we learned, is a deep hole with a wooden tree branch (deeply carved by the rope) laid across it to use to act as a pulley for a rope to which is tied a bucket. Women drop the bucket into the well and then pull it up full of water. After targeting the well, our drivers communicated with each other and we left the “road” and bumped over towards it. Our translators told the amazed group of women why we were there. Eagerly, they agreed to allow us to film how they get water and they talked to us about the physical pain of pulling up the water and carrying it home on their heads. A couple of them laughingly helped me try to pick up a jerry pan of water and put onto my head as they were all doing. It was impossible for me to lift it by myself, and far too heavy for me to keep on my head. Those women were about to walk four miles back to their village – carrying those full jerry cans on their heads. Typically, these cans weigh 40-60 pounds each.

### **Input from our Stakeholders – Interviewing Women about the Need for Safe Water**

Later that day, we pulled under a large tree where everyone in the local village was waiting for us, women and children sitting on mats on the ground to our left, and men and older boys standing to our right. The chief and elders spoke to us via our translators, welcoming us to the village and thanking us for the well we were providing them and which would be finished later that very day. Then our Founder spoke graciously, telling them how proud we were to be able to provide them with the clean water. She reminded them that all members of our group (and most of our donors back home) were decades older than most of them, and that we are mostly just women trying to help other women.

Over the next several days, we visited five villages, and, with the help of our World Vision translators, we talked with a number of women, some of whom had never left their villages and some of whom had never seen white people. Several times, women asked our translators if we were men or women. They thought we were men (because of our hiking pants, sunglasses and hats), except that we had breasts and some of us wore earrings! And we were standing in front of the entire village speaking to the chief and elders – something unheard of for women in their world.

The women we saw were dressed in bright polished cotton clothing, some with matching turbans. They acted pleased to see us though they were a bit frightened of us. They had been told we were coming, and like women everywhere, they wanted to look their best. One woman backed away from us saying “Can’t you smell me? I’m so ashamed but I am unable to bathe”.

Some of the kids were initially frightened when they saw us, thinking we were ghosts! We were constantly surrounded by swarms of children covered with light gray dust on their dark faces (making them look like ghosts themselves!). Many had flies on their faces that they weren’t even trying to brush away. They would crowd all around to watch us, even the braver ones standing no closer than two feet away. They were unfailingly well-mannered. Many, many times, members of our group would photograph the kids and then turn the camera around for them to see their own photos, which fascinated them. Most had never seen their own face. Often, I would kneel down to photograph them at their eye level. They enjoyed that, but if I would reach out to touch a shoulder to help myself stand or attempt to walk closer to the group, the entire group would quickly back away 10-15 feet.



At that first village, as well as the four other villages we visited during that trip, we spoke with one or two women at a time about their critical need for safe water, and how they thought things would change once they had access to “good” water (uncontaminated water).

All the water people in these small villages have access to is contaminated to a lesser or greater extent. Originally, villages had been built near sources of water, but

desertification over the centuries has dried them up, so women have to walk further and further to find water in ponds or small streams or shallow wells, water that is shared with animals -- which is why the water is typically contaminated. On one of our trips we saw a small pond, where



women, all dressed in their brilliantly colored outfits, were wading to scoop up water to take home for their families' drinking and bathing needs and for food preparation.



Alongside them were several camels and goats drinking the water – and defecating and fouling the water. The hand pump wells we drill tap clean, uncontaminated water from the water table 250-300 feet below.

Many of the stories we heard in our interviews were heartbreaking. As videographer, I found it difficult to stand there behind my video camera and hear the stories of pain the women were sharing with us. What do you say to a woman who has lost eleven of her twelve children to water caused diseases? We had no words to convey our sympathy. Many times, we would all stand there with tears running down our faces.

One woman sadly shared her story of when she left her three-year-old daughter, who was ill with severe diarrhea, at home while she walked to get water for the family. When she returned the child had died. The woman tried to borrow water from others in the village but could not collect enough to wash her daughter for burial. She walked three more days until she had enough leftover water to clean her child so she could bury her.



### **The Difference a Well Makes**

On that first trip and the following trips over eleven years, we visited not only villages with traditional wells or distant water sources but also villages where a hand pump well had already been drilled or was about to be drilled. We were able to see for ourselves the difference a well makes in a village, and talk to the women about how the handpump well had changed their lives. We quickly learned how different a village with a hand pump well in or near the village looks from one that doesn't. The difference is visible from the time we drive up to the village. Walls, and sometimes houses, are made of mud (rather than sticks or straw). The village is cleaner. Kids' faces no longer have that thin layer of gray dust. Little girls are no longer the sole caregivers for their smaller brothers or sisters. There are camels and goats and chickens in the village. There are gardens, very fertile gardens. Without nearby water, these things are impossible. But, most importantly, there is 70% less child mortality! And girls are freed up to attend school! All this happens because we drilled a water well in the village 250-300 feet below the surface.

At some of the villages, we were able to share the excitement in the village when the well is first opened. The World Vision drilling team creates a waterspout which shoots high up into the air. The entire village encircles the well site. Children run back and forth thru the falling water laughing! Men beat their drums and dance, while others sing!





If the staff has already tested the water for purity, the women rush to line up to try out the new hand pump. All this happiness being demonstrated is because this “good” water we’re giving them is like giving them life itself!!





## A Night to Remember

On one memorable night when we were too far away from our hotel to return during daylight (roads are typically too unsafe to drive after dark), we spent the night in the World Vision barracks near a village. The building was sparsely furnished with only bunk beds for furniture. There was no electricity, no water except that we had brought with us, and no toilet. That night two of us walked over to use the nearby latrine. To our extreme horror, every inch of the walls and floor was black with crawling cockroaches! We couldn't stomach the idea of walking on those roaches and squatting at the latrine hole, which had roaches swarming in and out! Embarrassing to say, we found a bush to use instead. We were all exhausted, and the night went uneventfully. The next morning, I stood outside the building trying to put on makeup and do my hair using a compact mirror. It was a memorable experience!



Earlier that day, while we were visiting a nearby village which had just gotten its hand pump well, the village chief surprised us by presenting us with a male goat. To prove it was a virile goat, someone brought over a female goat, and the male goat immediately mounted it! We were touched by the generous gift and understood it would have been rude to refuse it. (At our lunch, we named him "Hornee" because it sounded French and seemed a suitable name given the exhibition.) Later that day, another village gave us several live chickens. That evening, we donated the goat and the chickens to our security guards at the barracks, who were quite happy with our gift.

## Economic Empowerment for Women

In 2012 during our second visit to Niger, we recognized the need to educate women on how to start their own small businesses, something that they wanted very much to do after their time was freed up from walking to get water. We discussed this with World Vision (our partner in every sense of the word), and they provided us with three options for the kinds of economic development for women we wanted to provide. We decided to use the savings plan method.

Here's how it works: a group of about 25 women is formed and we provide the group with a metal savings box with a small notebook inside for each woman to record the money she puts into the box. A female World Vision employee visits the group once a week over the course of several months. She starts by training the women on how to write their names on their notebooks and how to count (In Niger, 85% of women cannot read or write.). Each week the women contribute small amounts of money into the box, and they pool their resources. The group decides who gets interest free loans and they take turns getting the loans. These tiny loans are used to start small

businesses such as making peanut oil or millet cakes or packets of spices to sell in the markets. These loans are always repaid since the groups are made up of family members and friends.

Women in these savings groups are extremely proud of their successes. It's amazing to see how they change after being educated in this way and after they experience the thrill of earning their own money for the first time in their lives. They are proud and confident about their accomplishments and say that it impacts the quality of life for the whole family. The women even say their marriages are better. When we interviewed the husbands, they unhesitatingly confirmed this to be true.

### **Our Unique Model**

Early on, with the help of World Vision, we created a model different from that of many other nonprofits. Sad to say, often well-meaning organizations work with a drilling team in Africa to drill a well in a village, and then they all leave. A few years or even months later, the well may be abandoned -- because something goes wrong with the well and the villagers are waiting for the "owner" to return to repair or replace a broken part. Our model is different. World Vision uses employees only from West Africa who are trained in water engineering and who speak the local language (Hausa) and understand the native religion and culture. They go into a village and offer to drill a well to provide safe water but only under two conditions. The village must 1) contribute a small amount of money (to ensure a sense of ownership) and 2) create a maintenance committee of 5 or 7 people (half women) whom we train in well maintenance, sanitation / hygiene and how to build latrines. These maintenance teams then train the rest of the village. Next, one of World Vision's drilling rigs comes into the village and the hard-hatted team drill 300 or so feet below the surface to create a well. The staff tests the water for safety before villagers can drink it. They remain in touch with the villages to provide help with the wells for roughly three years.

One hundred percent (100%) of all our donations goes towards our well drilling projects, a claim few other nonprofits can make. Our organization is run solely by volunteers, with only one paid administrator paid for out of a corporate grant from Panda Restaurants. So far, we have raised over three million dollars and drilled 620 hand pump wells and two solar wells, changing the lives of over 600,000 lives forever and for generations to come. Every donor receives a well report about the well they've funded. It shows the date the well was drilled, the name of the village, its location on the map of Niger, its GPS coordinates, its population, and the depth of the well.

Although the process is repeatable and is the same in every village, each well we drill in a village, together with the training program for women, is a project. There are different depths to the water table and other factors, such as ground composition and density, that are required to make a well feasible. The people resources in each village are different, also. Each well is a different project and the collection of wells we hope to drill in Niger is our portfolio, one which unfortunately is large and will take many years to complete.

## **Getting Our Act Together**

After that first trip to Niger, we created a website with the photos and videotaped interviews from the trip, and we update it regularly with new videos and information. There is a Water Circle section on the website, where an individual can create his own web page personalized with photos and text and a thermometer to track donations to the site. These are individual fundraising campaigns which any person can use to create awareness and raise funds. The campaigns can be created in honor of a family member or to celebrate a birthday, graduation or other event. We also added a blog section addressing issues about Niger such as water scarcity, women's issues, economic development for women, global warming and its impact on Africa.

We expanded our original fundraising efforts by initially attending every event possible – farmers markets, art fairs, temples and churches, colleges, schools. But we were burning out our volunteers and our donations were few. We quickly learned to weigh results against efforts. We now have one major fundraiser a year and also use emails for fundraising throughout the year using an email schedule recommended for nonprofit fundraising.

We formed a 501(c)3 corporation and created a Board of Directors. We have now developed a template for BOD meetings which includes a timed agenda and meeting reports which document assigned work tasks along with the owners and deadlines for each. We have a Parliamentarian and run the meetings using Robert's Rules of Order. We created a Strategic Plan which we update annually. We decided on the working teams for the organization (corporate partnership research team, blog team, social media team, grant writing team, web support team, marketing/PR team, and special events planning team).

Another of these teams is the Volunteer Recruitment /Management team (my team). This team creates volunteer job descriptions and posts the openings on a site called VolunteerMatch.org. Early on I created an interview script, a nominee tracking process, a volunteer communications plan including a follow-up with the volunteer by the original interviewer after placement in a volunteer position, a plan for simple quarterly reports from each team, and a monthly volunteer newsletter (created to help with retention). I also created training materials on managing volunteers for our team managers.

## **Returning to Niger**

One or two of our organization travels to Niger every year or two. Every trip has different goals and provides us with new information and understandings, along with new photos and videos for our website. Every trip provides us with more new stories that will likely resonate with us forever. On our first trip to Niger, we interviewed Halima, who had lost eleven of her twelve children to water caused disease. We returned to her village three years later and had an opportunity to talk with her again. This time she had good news – her brother had given her one of his daughters to help her with the daily effort of living in such a harsh environment. Not surprisingly since visitors



to her village are few, she remembered us, which truly touched us because we remembered her so vividly. It is these kinds of stories which inspire and motivate those of us fortunate enough to be part of a trip team to Niger. Seeing and hearing what these people go through makes our short-lived discomfort with the heat and the dust seem irrelevant.

Increasingly over the past few years, there have been concerns about terrorist attacks and the Nigerien government has insisted on providing each of our convoys with 10-12 armed guards with a machine gun mounted on their trucks. They travel with us everywhere we go. If one of us takes a toilet break, two of the (very young) soldiers go with us and stand fifteen feet away, guarding us (and making us pretty uncomfortable, I must admit!). Recently, these attacks have become much more violent and frequent. Westerners are considered prime kidnapping targets. Our recent trip planned for February 2020 was abruptly canceled due to such an attack. But fortunately, civilians in Niger are not being targeted, so our well drilling is able to continue since the Niger World Vision staff are all from West Africa. Our effort to bring “good” water to villages in Niger continues.



*From “bad” water to “good” water*

## Volunteers for the Cause

As mentioned earlier, our organization is run solely by volunteers (with one exception). As Director of Volunteer Management, I work with a team of three volunteers who write job descriptions, post volunteer openings, interview applicants and assign to volunteer positions. We normally have fifty to sixty active volunteers, as well as on-call advisors willing to share their expertise as needed without consideration in return.

Most of our volunteer teams are virtual, with exception of the BOD and the Special Events Team. Virtual teams are notoriously more difficult to motivate and retain. To focus on retaining our volunteers, my team and I do check-in calls with each volunteer a month or so after placement to see how he/she is enjoying the volunteer role and solicit suggestions for improvement of our processes. We encourage managers to communicate frequently with their team members, form

interpersonal relationships with each volunteer, and encourage team members to communicate with each other. And we publish a monthly volunteer newsletter which introduces new volunteers and helps volunteers continue to feel connected to the organization (because sometimes the work a volunteer does feels far removed from the cause that originally motivated him/her to become part of the cause and the team).

### **Side Effects of Volunteering**

Recently, at the request of PMI Los Angeles (at which I served as President for two years and Trustee for the past 15 years), I enrolled in the UN Sustainable Development program to track my hours working with my non-profit's efforts related to the UN's Clean Water and Sanitation goal. I indicated to them that I anticipate working 700 -1000 hours in 2020, as I have for the past 11 years.

Needless to say, working with my water organization has changed my life or I would not have continued for all these years. I have traveled to Niger three times to interview women and to create videotapes and photographs for our website (and was planning to return in February but, unfortunately, that trip was canceled due to terrorist attacks). I have an intense emotional connection with the cause, and I get a strong sense of purpose from my work for the organization. I enjoy the process of interviewing nominees and finding just the right position for them. I love motivating and mentoring my interviewing team and positively influencing my team managers to better lead their teams. The connections I've made and the bonds I've formed makes it all even better. Even after my own team members (including those across the country and on different continents) move on with their lives, we stay in touch. Because of my volunteer work, I have become lasting friends with other Board members, volunteers and donors.

My volunteer experience is not one of a kind. Volunteering is an opportunity to make a difference, to be a part of something greater than one could do alone. I can experiment and use my skills in ways my paid work would not allow. In so doing, I have increased my self-confidence, my speaking skills, my writing skills, and my leadership skills. Most importantly, I have increased my circle of friends and acquaintances. Ultimately, I have gained an improved sense of value and self-worth -- all because I am using my professional skills for a cause greater than myself. So, actually, the reason I volunteer is "somewhere between altruism and selfishness" (Altland, 2015). And there is nothing wrong with that! I invite you to do the same.

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## About the Author



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**Ida B. Harding, PMP** is a BOD Member and Director of Volunteer Management for Wells Bring Hope, an organization which drills wells in Niger, West Africa. A Project Management Professional, Ida is a graduate of the PMI Leadership Master Class and has presented at several PMI Leadership Meetings. She has been an active PMI member at global levels as well as the chapter level since she joined PMI in 1993.

At the global PMI level, she served on the BOD for the Education Foundation. She also served on numerous PMI committees, including PMI BOD Nominations Committee, Professional Awards Member Advisory Group, Component Services Member Advisory Group, the Project of the Year selection team, and BOD of Association for Chapter Presidents (ACP), among others. During her term on the ACP, Ida headed the Component Mentor Program and coordinated the 15 mentors across the globe for several years. Since 2011, she has served on the planning committee for the SPA for the Mind, an annual meeting of graduates of the Leadership Institute program. Recently, she became involved in the PMI Global Accreditation Committee to do onsite university evaluations.

At a local level Ida has been an active PMI- LA Chapter member, serving twice as President, and won the “PMI Chapter President of the Year” award for both terms. Before and after her presidency, Ida served in virtually every other chapter BOD role. She served as Trustee 2001-2019. In addition to her PMI volunteer work, Ida has also played active roles in several other volunteer organizations including Cancer Support Community, Lymphoma Research Foundation, Toastmasters, Venice Family Clinic, and California Special Olympics Games.

Now retired from paid employment, Ida’s first career was in higher education in Wisconsin. She taught courses in how to teach reading and how to diagnose and remediate reading problems. Later she worked as Assistant Dean of Students, managing the academic advising program. In an effort to move away from academia, she got her MBA at the UCLA Anderson School of Management. Recruited there by IBM, Ida spent ten years working in project management and marketing for IBM and later in contract and procurement management for Federal Defense projects for a small family owned corporation. In addition to her MBA, Ida has degrees in English Linguistics/Literature and Higher Education (M.A. and ab for Ph.D. at University of Wisconsin), as well as Elementary Education (B.S. at Georgia State University).

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