

Welcome to the August 2020 PMWJ¹

David L. Pells

Welcome to the August 2020 edition of the PM World Journal, the 96th monthly edition. It's mid-summer in the Northern hemisphere, hot here in Texas in two ways: the weather and the Covid-19 pandemic. The positive case rate decreased here this last week, but the death rate doubled. It's a mess! The biggest problem seems to still be related to testing, not only here in Texas but throughout the United States, not the testing per se now but the long time for test results to be available – between three and ten days. Professional sports teams and some hospitals appear to have rapid turnaround of test results, but not a majority of cities and towns. Today I read that rapid test kits are being rolled out in the UK that will provide Covid and Flu confirmations in 90 minutes. I hope some of these find their way here.

Why do I start out discussing the pandemic? Because, it seems to me that the response in the USA and many other countries has been totally botched program management – lack of planning, inadequate risk management, incompetent resource and logistics management, terrible stakeholder engagement, weak leadership and very bad project implementation. How is this possible in 2020? How is it possible with so many project and program management standards, guides and expertise promoted by PM professional bodies around the world? Isn't anyone listening? As I suggested in my June editorial on Black Elephants, why hasn't the PM profession stepped up? And as I also suggested, what will happen when the U.S. is hit with another serious hurricane in the middle of the pandemic? A minor hurricane is hitting the Eastern seaboard this week; another big one is just around the corner.

Meanwhile, in some parts of the world, PM organizations and individuals are making a difference. For example, read the report from Argentina this month by Ardiana Cibelli. In fact, read all of the reports this month for updates from Finland, Spain, UK and Zimbabwe. I can also see the correlations to lack of leadership during this pandemic in Spring's interview with Robert Buttrick, in Alan Stretton's new paper related to project outcomes, benefits and strategic management, and in the series articles this month by Iain Fraser and Frank Saladis. The series of articles by John Cable provides useful perspective and guidance for academic leaders forced to convert to teaching online.

A highlight for me this month is the "Black Elephants" featured paper by Bob Prieto, one of America's leading authorities on mega-program management. Bob has taken my black elephants topic to another level; everyone should read it, especially those involved with big projects and programs. A frequent contributor to this publication, Bob has also contributed two other powerful papers this month on the 'systems nature of large complex projects' and 'the physics of large complex projects.' Note that we don't normally accept

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so many contributions from an author for the same edition; an exception was made for Bob Prieto due to his preeminence in the field and because he is a regular contributor and a strong supporter of the journal.

Most of the rest of the articles and papers this month deal with traditional topics and practical aspects of project and program management. The featured papers are serious, research-based, contributions by experts and academics in eight countries. The advisory and commentary articles are personal contributions by well-respected project management professionals and leaders. I am also happy to republish four strong papers from two 2020 conference – those organized by the University of Latvia in April and the University of Maryland in May. They are all excellent papers; I especially recommend to you the paper titled “25 Years of Projectification Research” by Prof Arvi Kuura in Estonia. (I will be referencing his paper in my editorial next month.)

That’s it this month, 35 good contributions by 41 authors in 21 different countries. No editorial this month, but that will change in September. Too much happening in our lives now, some good but much very worrisome. I hope to receive more articles and papers in coming months related to the current pandemic, dealing with black elephants and the new normal of project management work. Or just send your thoughts in a letter to the editor.

Thank you for reading the PMWJ, take care and please share the journal this month.

About the Author



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David L. Pells is Managing Editor and publisher of the **PM World Journal** (www.pmworldjournal.com) 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 occasionally acts as project management advisor for U.S. national laboratories and international programs, and currently serves as an independent advisor for a major U.S. national nuclear security program.

David Pells 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); the Istituto Italiano di Project Management (ISIMP); and the Russian Project Management Association (SOVNET). Since 2010 he is an honorary member of the Project Management Association of Nepal.

Former managing editor of *PM World Today*, he is the creator, editor and publisher of the *PM World Journal* (ISSN: 2330-4880). David has a BA in Business Administration from the University of Washington and an MBA from Idaho State University in the USA. He has published widely and spoken at conferences and events worldwide. David lives near Dallas, Texas and can be contacted at editor@pmworldjournal.com.

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