

On the Subject of Organizational PM Maturity ¹

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

26 October 2020

Ref: Pells, D.L. (2020). Whatever Happened to Organizational Project Management Maturity? Editorial, *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue X, October. Available online at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/pmwi98-Oct2020-Pells-whatever-happened-to-organizational-project-management-maturity3.pdf>

Dear Editor,

As many readers may know, **Organizational Project Management (OPM)** is a term that was coined in 1998 in a meeting of the Project Management Institute's (PMI) Standards Committee to denote the system for implementing an organization's strategies through projects, specifically through the integration of the portfolio, program, and project management domains, i.e. through the integration of "PPP." The **Organizational Project Management Maturity Model (OPM3®)** is a PMI standard for assessing and developing maturity in Organizational Project Management (OPM). OPM3 was first published in 2003 and has been updated several times. Over the years, it has inspired others to create alternative maturity models that all seem to have the number "3" in their names. Though many people have mistaken the "3" in OPM3 to refer to the three domains of "PPP" (or, in some cases, to assume the 3 refers to OPM3's third edition), the "3" actually signifies the three M's in "Management Maturity Model." That was merely a convenience for abbreviating what would otherwise be "OPMMM," which may be awkward to pronounce. I know these things because I was in that meeting of the PMI Standards Committee in 1998, because I proposed to the committee that "OPM" should mean an organization's project-based strategy implementation (and not merely the management of an organization's projects), and I named the proposed standard "OPM3" because it was easier to pronounce than "OPMMM" (and because OPM3, unlike OPMMM, did not suggest an ingredient for heroin, much less pleasure at the thought of it, i.e. "opium, hmmm"). Much like the mystery of OPM3's name, the relationship between OPM and *OPM maturity* is easily demystified.

OPM3 has been adopted by many Fortune companies and government organizations, e.g. [Microsoft](#) (the world's largest software company), [Verint](#) Systems (a leading analytics and

¹ How to cite this work: Schlichter, F. J. (2020). On the Subject of Organizational Project Management Maturity, Letter to the Editor, *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue XI, November.

artificial intelligence company), ADP (leader in business services), L3Harris Corporation (terrestrial/spaceborne electronics), Panasonic-Mobile (2nd largest manufacturer of mobile devices), T-Mobile (3rd largest mobile service provider), SAP (a Fortune 50 company for enterprise applications), Johnson & Johnson (a Fortune 50 health conglomerate), Melco-Crown Entertainment (top gaming operation in China), Studiocom (online product launch and branded entertainment), Cooper University Hospital (a leading trauma hospital), MCIC (risk retention group comprised of Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons, Johns Hopkins Medicine, New York Presbyterian Hospital, University of Rochester Medical Center, Weill Cornell Medical College, Yale New Haven Health and Yale University School of Medicine), FRTIB (the largest retirement plan in the world), Inter-American Development Bank or IDB (the largest source of development financing for Latin America and the Caribbean), National Bank of Abu Dhabi (leading UAE bank), Popular Financial (large financial services company operating in Puerto Rico 100+ years), Battelle Memorial Institute (an applied science nonprofit that manages all of America's national laboratories), C.A.R.E. (a nonprofit fighting poverty in 70+ countries), CARICOM (trading bloc of 15 Caribbean nations), AECID (Spanish government foreign relations), European Union External Action Service (EEAS) (EU foreign ministry for intelligence and crisis response), Kurdistan Regional Government (Iraq's north regional government), Lockheed Martin (world's top ranked defense contractor), Northrop Grumman (4th largest aerospace company), Saudi Arabian Ministry of Interior (national security for the birthplace of Islam), TransLink (a multi-billion dollar mass transit authority), MARTA (a large rapid transit system), Valassis (America's top print manufacturing company), CMPC (the world's largest pulp and paper manufacturing company), Pearson Education Measurement (top education publishing company), Quality Assurance Institute (a training company in India), WorleyParsons (a global engineering company), Pentair (a multi-billion dollar leader in fluid controls), Flowserve (top supplier of industrial machinery), Amana (billion dollar construction program of Jeddah Municipality), and many others.

Maturity in Organizational Project Management is achieved by adopting best practices listed in OPM3, specifically through the assessment and adoption of "Capability Statements" associated with best practices in the first edition of OPM3. The Capability Statements corresponded to Outcome Statements and KPI's. In other words, to assess whether a capability described in a Capability Statement exists in an organization, you would assess the outcome(s) described in the corresponding Outcome Statement(s), which are defined in terms of KPI's. Most of OPM3's Capability Statements, Outcome Statements, and KPI's described application of Statistical Process Control (SPC) techniques to portfolio, program, and project management (PPP) processes. As of the year 2020, people perform critical aspects of these processes, which are merely human activities teams agree upon that take inputs and add value to the inputs to create outputs (which produce outcomes inuring to the benefit of stakeholders invested in those activities). You can apply SPC in this manner to the processes described in PMI's *Standard for Portfolio Management*, *PMI's Standard for Program Management*, *PMI's A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, or alternatively (if you like) the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) *Best Practices for Agile Adoption and Implementation*, which emphasizes the need for repeatable (predictable) processes.

The idea is that SPC techniques (namely standardizing, measuring, controlling, and continuously improving processes) can help create more capable Organizational Project Management systems. *Standardizing* means consistent implementation of work methods performed by motivated teams empowered to succeed. *Measuring* means identifying and monitoring critical characteristics of those work methods. *Controlling* means deciding the ranges of variation that are acceptable for those characteristics and maintaining performance within those ranges; in this context, a better word than Controlling may be “Performing,” as these two terms mean the same thing, and some people may misconstrue the term “controlling” to mean command-and-control organization design (though it has nothing to do with that). *Improving* means continuous and decentralized improvement without a loss of control. Through standardizing, measuring, and controlling, teams can establish Cpk (Process Capability) for the aspects of portfolio, program, and project management that are most critical to their organizations, indicating how predictable those activities are. Organizations that have adopted OPM3’s Capability Statements have wide latitude to apply SPC to PPP as they see fit, and they may do so to make the use of any portfolio, program, or project management framework more successful, consistent, and predictable within their organizations. As such, OPM3 is compatible with PMI’s PMBOK Guide, MoP, SFPfM, SAFe, AgilePfM, Bimodal PfM, AgilePgM, MSP/SfPgM, AgilePM, PRINCE2 Agile, LeSS, Nexus, DAD (Disciplined Agile Delivery), ScALeD, TFS, Scrum, Kanban, Scrumban, S@S (Scrum at Scale), (Bus)DevOps, Design Thinking, COBIT, Lean Six Sigma, and other rubrics. This creates the possibility of dismantling false dichotomies between *people and processes* to defeat bureaucracy and unleash the power of teams at scale for project-based strategy implementation.

The OPM3 Capability Statements, Outcome Statements, and KPI’s are not currently available to new users because PMI wrote off the expense of packaging that IP in a failed PMI software product named ProductSuite, and retirement of PMI’s ProductSuite confused the separate issue of OPM3’s *legacy*. These decisions (including how to release the IP going forward) are under review by PMI’s new CEO Sunil Prashara, with whom I have been discussing the matter for some time, looking forward to the PMI4.0 strategic plan. When the knowledge contained in OPM3’s Capability Statements, Outcome Statements, and KPI’s becomes available to organizations adopting Disciplined Agile Delivery (DAD), Citizen Development, or other frameworks, the leaders of those organizations can use that knowledge to increase maturity and perform team-based work more successfully, consistently, and predictably.

Providing this kind of thought leadership to the world is PMI’s very purpose and the true power of PMI’s brand, which is something your readers should discuss in response to your question “Whatever happened to Organizational Project Management maturity?” Now more than ever, as Americans conclude national elections, the world needs purpose-driven thought leadership from all levels of PMI that encourages *democratization*, starting with standards. *Democratization is the key to empowering both PMI members and citizens everywhere to discover for themselves that different perspectives, different ways of working, and different frameworks can work together to create a more sustainable future globally.*

For more information about OPM maturity, see the [OPM Experts](#) website.

Regards,

F. John Schlichter III
Founder, OPM Experts LLC
Atlanta, Georgia, USA