

Project Management needs a Higher Purpose!

Part 3: The Future of the Planet, Civil Society, Doing the Right Projects, What about Governance and the Power of Why ¹

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Introduction

In late December 2020, I authored a long editorial as a follow-on to my June 2020 editorial on black elephants². On good advice, that long editorial was broken into four parts so that a few more readers might make it to the end. That said, the long original covers many topics that I thought important to my argument that the project management professional world needs a higher purpose than earning more money, helping organizations become more profitable, or just advancing PM processes, methods or skills. What is that higher purpose though? It's for us to decide. For those interested in reading the long editorial, it has been posted in the PM World Library.³

In part 1 published in January, I introduced the topic and referred to my June black elephants editorial in which I discussed the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and other global problems (the black elephants that everyone knows about but few seem to want to address) and what the PM professional world could (or should) be doing to help. In part 2 last month, I discussed organizational mission statements and social responsibility, and the 'rogue black elephant', corruption. Specifically, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to inflict sickness and death around the world, and as extreme weather events multiply (as we experienced here in Texas in February), a focus on organizational social responsibility seems ever more important.

Part 3 this month builds on those topics. In particular, if the planet is destroyed or civil society collapses, what good is a free market, organizational productivity, projects or project management, for that matter? What is project success, if the wrong projects are initiated, even if completed to scope, schedule and cost? Shouldn't the right projects also be good projects? Does governance of programs, projects or project management really work? Perhaps we should reconsider why projects are important, why we work on them, and why modern project management matters at all. These are the topics this month.

Now comes news that anomalies are occurring in the Atlantic Gulf Stream, with the larger AMOC ocean circulation system slowing down. "The larger system in which the Gulf

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² Pells, D. L. (2020). Black Elephants and ... maybe Project Management. *PM World Journal*, Vol. IX, Issue VI, June. <https://peworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/pmwj94-Jun2020-Pells-black-elephants-and-maybe-project-management-editorial3.pdf>

³ <https://peworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/pmwj101-Jan2021-Pells-project-management-needs-a-higher-purpose-editorial-January-complete2.pdf>

Stream flows is called the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, or AMOC for short. The AMOC is a large system of ocean currents, like a conveyor belt, driven by differences in temperature and salt content, which affects its density. The Gulf stream is just the surface part of the AMOC in the North Atlantic".⁴ Scientists say the AMOC is weaker than it has been in 1,000 years.⁵ The result is likely to be more severe extreme weather events in both North America and Europe (UK especially), or even worse. And have you heard about the new "cold blob" off the coast of Greenland?⁶

So let's start with the climate change and risks to the planet this month.

The Future of the Planet is at Risk

I vividly remember one time on a flight across the country some years ago, at around 30,000 feet looking down on the land far below and thinking, "wow, the band of atmosphere in which humans live on the earth is really small, only around 3,000 meters (less than 10,000 feet), much less for most people. That's a really narrow band of air for the entire human race." If you also consider that we live on land masses, and primarily in hospitable locations, the situation seems very fragile. This leads to the obvious realization that climate change, severe weather and natural disasters will be devastating to many people and perhaps to civilization itself.

Those thoughts have magnified my perception of the risks of climate change, especially as I've been studying disasters in recent months. While researching global warming, climate risks and disasters for this paper, I was thinking a lot about the massive fires in Australia and California, the hurricanes that hit the United States and Central America in 2020, and typhoons in the South Pacific, the heat waves and droughts. And of course the Covid-19 Pandemic that has infected and killed millions worldwide. It seemed to me that severe weather is becoming more common and is likely to continue, and this is what climate experts also predict. But how bad can it get?

Then I noticed an announcement on LinkedIn in late November by Prof Bent Flyvbjerg of Oxford about his latest paper published in the December edition of *Environmental Science and Policy* on how to survive Covid-19, the climate crisis and other disasters.⁷ Access to the full paper was free for 30 days so I quickly found and read it. It scared the hell out of me. Here is Bent's abstract: "Regression to the mean is nice and reliable. Regression to the tail is reliably scary. We live in an age of regression to the tail. It is only a matter of time until a pandemic worse than covid-19 will hit us, and climate more extreme than any we have seen..."⁸ In his paper, he lays out the statistical argument, identifies some likely coming disasters, and offers some basic principles for navigating such extreme risks, for governments, businesses and the public.

⁴ <https://www.severe-weather.eu/global-weather/gulf-stream-amoc-ocean-anomaly-united-states-europe-fa/>

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/02/25/atlantic-ocean-currents-weakening-amoc-gulf-stream/>

⁶ <https://www.9news.com.au/world/cold-blob-slowing-down-atlantic-ocean-currents-drastic-climate-changes-research-says/9ead0abc-7ca1-42da-920f-809d6ab62924>

⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1462901120308637?dgcid=author#bib0025>

⁸ Ibid

We've all seen movies about massive earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and fires and for most of us, they're just entertaining. Having lived in California, I am very conscious of the history and risks of earthquakes on the West coast of North America and, in particular, along the famous San Andreas Fault. A massive earthquake has been predicted for decades, potentially resulting in the coasts of the U.S. states of California, Oregon and Washington sliding into the Pacific Ocean. In February 2001 (almost exactly 20 years ago), I actually experienced a major earthquake that struck Seattle. It was pretty scary!

See my 2011 editorial titled "Project Management in the Ring of Fire."⁹ I also refer you to an article posted in February of this year by Christopher McFadden with a list of potential natural disasters that might threaten much of life on earth.¹⁰ It's really not funny!

Now I want to refer you again to the seminal 2017 document prepared by Prof Peter Morris, emeritus professor of construction and project management at University College London (UCL) and published by APM (Morris 2017). According to Peter's introduction, "...There has always been climate change, but this time the size, speed and consequences are so much greater than before, and have often been so willfully created that we would surely be foolish not to be addressing it... This document reviews where society stands regarding the potential impact of climate change and what project management as a discipline could, and should, be doing about it... project management uses a number of tools and techniques, and deploys practices, processes and procedures, by people having special skill sets, which together form a distinct body of knowledge... There is a danger that, as a discipline, project management can be more concerned with the use of these practices than with what its impact is on producing outcomes of real value... there is clearly a case for making sure that the discipline focuses on ends rather than just means: on ensuring its work contributes in the most effective way possible to society."¹¹

As Sara Drake, APM's CEO, said in her foreword to Peter's report, "Research on climate change has so far been led predominantly by physical scientists, but addressing how to mitigate and adapt to it will also require management and social science skills. Those expert in the world of projects and their management should have a significant role in this..."¹²

And in case some readers think that fighting climate change is just about environmentalism (and anti-business), consider the impact of deforestation on human health. As tropical forests disappear, dangerous human/animal interactions are increasing. If you want to be really frightened, read "Disease X: The Next Pandemic"¹³ or "Hunting for 'Disease X'".¹⁴

⁹ <https://peworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/pmwj21-apr2014-Pells-Ring-of-Fire-SecondEdition.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://interestingengineering.com/13-disasters-that-might-threaten-the-world-in-2020>

¹¹ <https://peworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/171101-APM-Climate-Change-Report.pdf>

¹² Ibid

¹³ <https://www.ecohealthalliance.org/2018/03/disease-x>

¹⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/22/africa/drc-forest-new-virus-intl/index.html>

The Future of Civil Society is at Risk

If the planet dies or becomes unlivable, civilization will collapse and the human race might die out. There have already been times in history when humans survived catastrophic climate change, but civilization did not. (Diamond 2005) While the probability of such a future seems low, negative changes in civil society are another matter. It is already happening.

According to the World Health Organization, “Civil society refers to the space for collective action around shared interests, purposes and values, generally distinct from government and commercial for-profit actors. Civil society includes charities, development NGOs, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, social movements, coalitions and advocacy groups...”¹⁵ The United Nations defines civil society as “Civil society is the ‘third sector’ of society, along with government and business. It comprises civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations.”¹⁶

Wikipedia expands on these definitions as follows: “Civil society can be understood as the ‘third sector’ of society, distinct from government and business, and including the family and the private sphere. By other authors, *civil society* is used in the sense of 1) the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens or 2) individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government... The term *civil society* goes back to Aristotle's phrase *koinōnía politiké* (κοινωνία πολιτική), occurring in his *Politics*, where it refers to a ‘political community’, commensurate with the Greek city-state (*polis*) characterized by a shared set of norms and ethos, in which free citizens on an equal footing lived under the rule of law... Robert D. Putnam has argued that even non-political organizations in civil society are vital for democracy. This is because they build social capital, trust and shared values, which are transferred into the political sphere and help to hold society together, facilitating an understanding of the interconnectedness of society and interests within it...”¹⁷

According to George Ingram at the Center for Sustainable Development, “If anyone needs a crash course in the critical role played by civil society organizations, COVID-19 is providing it—from increased need for the services they provide to those less fortunate, to the strain they are experiencing from lack of supplies and the need to “social distance,” to government having to act too quickly without civil society input. But beyond the current crisis, civil society is an essential building block of development and national cohesion. In a country blessed with peace and stability, civil society fills the space untouched by government and the private sector. In a fragile and conflict-ridden country, it plays an even more important role...” (Ingram 2020)¹⁸

According to the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress in December 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic began, “Civil society is both integral for social health and

¹⁵ https://www.who.int/social_determinants/themes/civilsociety/en/

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/sections/resources-different-audiences/civil-society/index.html>

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society

¹⁸ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/04/06/civil-society-an-essential-ingredient-of-development/>

irreplaceable by the market or the State. It comprises institutions that facilitate what we do together beyond the home. Though often formed to provide material support and mutual aid, its principal contributions to society are immaterial. As articulated in the Social Capital Project's inaugural report, 'What We Do Together' civil society holds our common life together by supplying 'extended networks of cooperation and social support, norms of reciprocity and mutual obligation, trust, and social cohesion' and by 'forming our character and capacities, providing us with meaning and purpose.'"¹⁹

According to Sarah Repucci at Freedom House in her report *A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy*, "Democracy and pluralism are under assault. Dictators are toiling to stamp out the last vestiges of domestic dissent and spread their harmful influence to new corners of the world. At the same time, many freely-elected leaders are dramatically narrowing their concerns to a blinkered interpretation of the national interest. In fact, such leaders... are increasingly willing to break down institutional safeguards and disregard the rights of critics and minorities as they pursue their populist agendas. As a result of these and other trends, Freedom House found that 2019 was the 14th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. The gap between setbacks and gains widened compared with 2018, as individuals in 64 countries experienced deterioration in their political rights and civil liberties..."²⁰

I feel it in the United States, this year (2020) in particular. In early 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement resulting from highly visible police brutality against minorities led to social unrest and divisions. Since the recent presidential election which the current president has contested, a broad campaign of lies and disinformation has divided America as 40% of voters seem to believe these messages. Plots and threats against elected officials have increased, along with demonstrations, political clashes and riots. Animosity, even expressions of hatred, seem to be everywhere, even in churches, schools and other civil institutions. It seems that civility and civilized behavior are in decline, even as civil society is needed more than ever during the current health and economic crises. It seems a mess in this country, but it also seems to be happening in some European countries, in the UK, India, Brazil and other countries.

Now I need to mention the doomsday scenarios, the predictions of catastrophe based on the collapse of life on the planet due to extreme climate change AND the collapse of civilization as we know it. These predictions have been around for centuries, some associated with the "end of days", with millions of believers and followers. They have led to an entire "survivalist" movement with its own industries. The latest appears to be a 2018 paper titled "Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating the Climate Tragedy"²¹ by Jem Bendell, professor of sustainability leadership at the University of Cumbria in England. Prof Bendell convincingly argued that it is already too late to avoid climate collapse and its repercussions.

¹⁹ <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republicans/analysis?ID=78A35E07-4C86-44A2-8480-BE0DB8CB104E>

²⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy>

²¹ <https://mahb.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/deepadaptation.pdf>

According to Bendell: “My own conclusion that it is too late to prevent a breakdown in modern civilization in most countries within our lifetimes is not purely based on an assessment of climate science... It’s based on my view of society, politics, economics from having worked in probably 25 countries across five continents, worked in the intergovernmental sector of the U.N., been part of the World Economic Forum, working in senior management in environmental groups, being on boards of investment funds...”²²

While Prof Bendell’s scientific claims have been disputed²³, he now has an online forum and millions of followers; his paper has been translated into multiple languages²⁴ and has spawned a global movement.²⁵ It seems to me that the deep adaptation approach while raising a useful alarm may actually be contributing to the breakdown in civil society. I think neither climate change resulting in environmental collapse nor the collapse of civilization has either a 100% or zero probability. But there appears to be some probability that life on the planet could be at risk if current climate change and negative trends in civil behavior continue unabated. More corrective actions are clearly needed, and more programs and projects to reduce the risks. More honesty, less corruption, is needed as well. We don’t need so many public lies, distortions of fact and conspiracy theories in society, and certainly not if we want important programs and projects to be successful.

Doing the Right Projects

Returning to the topic of project management, one of the most significant shifts in the PM world occurred some 20 years ago, when Terry Cooke-Davies in the UK and a few others recognized that if you are working on the wrong project, it doesn’t really matter how well it is managed. As portfolio management picked up steam, Terry and the late Paul Dinsmore in their 2005 book “*Right Projects Done Right*” addressed three important questions: Has the right portfolio of projects been chosen to ensure that company strategy is implemented successfully? Have the right projects with the right scope been selected as candidates for the portfolio? Are the projects managed well? (Dinsmore/Cooke-Davies 2005). Since then, many others have addressed the topic of ‘doing the right project’, including Alan Stretton earlier this year in this journal. (Stretton 2020b).

Portfolio management and the selection of the ‘right projects’, of course, moves program and project management into the strategic planning space, which has happened in recent years. The identification and selection of projects represent the front end of a broader, more comprehensive lifecycle model for program/project management. On the back end, post project, the focus in the last ten years has been on project outcomes and benefits, ultimately the critical determinants of project success. The late Russ Archibald devoted serious attention to this broader model in this journal^{26,27} and in conference speeches.

²² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/26/style/climate-change-deep-adaptation.html>

²³ <https://theecologist.org/2020/jul/15/deep-adaptation-flawed-science>

²⁴ <https://jembendell.com/2019/05/15/deep-adaptation-versions/>

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_Adaptation

²⁶ <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/PMWJ5-Dec2012-ARCHIBALD-DI-FILIPPO-Featured-Paper.pdf>

²⁷ <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/pmwj29-dec2014-ArchibalDs-DiFilippoS-Linking-ICEC-paper-second-edition.pdf>

Numerous models have now been developed that incorporate program, project and portfolio selection into the strategic planning process. Some, but not all, also incorporate the post-project phases of outcomes and benefits in a broader strategic management model. In recent months we have published a series of papers by Alan Stretton, who has developed a comprehensive strategic management model showing these relationships. (Stretton 2020c). Alan is now revisiting his model in a new PMWJ series titled “Revisiting Organisational Strategic Management: A Recursive strategic management model...” (Stretton 2020d).

Of equal importance to this whole topic has been the expanded perspective of projects and programs as subsets of a broader asset management process in many organizations, made clear in important papers by several PM-based authors like Paul Giammalvo²⁸ in Indonesia, Steve McGrath in Australia²⁹ and Bob Prieto in the USA³⁰. Considering programs and projects in the context of asset management introduces a much longer view, as many physical assets have a 10, 20, 50 year or longer lifespan. This perspective is important in asset-heavy industries such as governmental organizations (at every level), infrastructure, buildings, manufacturing, heavy industries, mining and other natural resources, etc. Consideration of projects in the asset life cycle context introduces issues related to the end use, operations, maintenance and disposal of project outputs. An obvious issue becomes longer term costs versus project investments – the return on investment (ROI).

This longer-term perspective has resulted in a widespread focus on sustainability in asset management, and by extension in the planning of programs and projects that create assets. This is exactly what’s been happening in the project management world, as sustainability has been one of the most visible topics in PM papers and conferences over the last decade. It’s even the topic of research projects and graduate degree programs in universities. And this brings us full circle back to climate change and the SDGs.

I believe “doing the right project” must go beyond corporate strategic alignment. The impact on the environment and society must be considered – for ALL Projects. The first, and most important, consideration is “Do No Harm!” This of course can require quite a lot of analysis and planning, for example, understanding the supply chain, reviewing materials and resources for sustainability, reviewing contracts, reviewing processes and procedures, etc. Many organizations are already doing this, for example, examining the “carbon footprint” of their various activities and supply chains; but every program and project should be doing this as well. An assessment of project elements against the SDGs should also be performed, perhaps using GPM’s P5 Standard or something similar, to determine potential harm to the environment, various stakeholder groups, institutions or civil society. Some professional bodies are already moving in this direction, for example in the UK where public projects must comply with the Social Value Act of 2012.

²⁸ <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/pmwj80-Apr2019-Giammalvo-Agile-is-not-a-subset-of-project-management.pdf>

²⁹ <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/18421731.pdf>

³⁰ <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/pmwj15-oct2013-prieto-Role-of-Sound-Asset-Management-System-FeaturedPaper.pdf>

The second consideration for the “right” projects is, how does the project benefit the environment or society? Use the SDGs as a scorecard. If an organization is serious about social responsibility, this should go without saying. Yet this also takes a lot of work. Nevertheless, I think these considerations should be institutionalized in standards, models and processes for selecting and managing projects (and programs).

The third consideration is related to corruption, as I’ve explained it (Pells 2021b). Projects that advance corruption in any form should never be launched. I believe the PM professional world should take a stand on this issue as well. It is not enough to regulate the activities of PM professionals. Corruption on all programs and projects should stop. Those who lie should not be condoned, should be questioned and corrected. The saying in our profession of “the right project done right” must mean done honestly, so that stakeholders can trust both the performance and the results.

These are the reasons that I said previously that not all projects should succeed, nor should some projects even be started. Projects that cause harm, are conceived for corrupt (or illegal) purposes, or rely on corrupt (dishonest) means should never see the light of day. Corrupt organizations should not be condoned! Corrupt leaders should never be followed!

What about Governance?

Some discussion of governance is highly relevant here, as we consider the relationship of PM to social responsibility, organizational strategy, corruption and doing the “right projects”. Governance of projects, and of project management, have been front and center in the PM world in recent years, with guides and standards issued by professional associations, many excellent papers published (for example, see Kelly (2010) and Weaver (2007) as well as their respective references) and a few excellent books. Governance has also been incorporated into portfolio, program and project management standards and approaches.

The attention to the governance of projects and project management stemmed directly from the changes in corporate governance laws following public scandals in the United States. The public corruption of Enron and WorldCom corporations led to the now famous Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002³¹ (widely known as “SOX”) passed by the U.S. congress, followed by similar legislation in the UK, Europe, Australia and other countries.³² Although SOX was primarily focused on corruption and the welfare of investors, corporate governance frameworks and guides broadened as “the structure through which the objectives of the company are set, and the means for attaining those objectives and monitoring performance are determined.” (OECD, 2015)³³

In the UK and other countries, corporate governance and social responsibility were married, as is the case of the Social Value Act 2012³⁴ which requires the public sector to

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarbanes%E2%80%93Oxley_Act

³² <https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/project-governance-apm-directing-change-7368>

³³ <http://www.oecd.org/corporate/corporate-governance-factbook.htm>

³⁴ <https://socialvalueportal.com/legislation-overview/>

ensure that money spent on services creates the greatest economic, social and environmental value for local communities...(Thompson 2020). Those social value regulations in the UK were updated in September 2020 to incorporate new needs stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic.³⁵

As mentioned above, many leading authors and authorities within the project management world have addressed, discussed and defined project and PM-related governance as defining how corporate governance requirements can or should be applied to projects and PM and thus how PM should be implemented and monitored on projects. One of the most widely used is APM's "*Directing Change: A guide to governance of project management*" (APM 2011)³⁶ The APM guide defines governance of project management as "those areas of corporate governance that are specifically related to project activities. Effective governance of project management ensures that an organization's portfolio is aligned to the organisation's objectives, is delivered efficiently and is sustainable. Governance of project management also supports the means by which the board and major stakeholders exchange timely, relevant and reliable information."³⁷

The APM governance guide is a fantastic document, containing 11 outstanding governance principles and describing four core components of PM governance: portfolio direction, project sponsorship, project management capability, and disclosure and reporting. APM's other related guide is equally significant, *Sponsoring Change: A Guide to the Governance Aspects of Project Sponsorship*. (APM 2009) PMI has incorporated governance into its Standard for Portfolio Management, among others; as far as I know, all other PM professional bodies have embraced project governance in line with the APM guide.

Since alignment of projects with corporate strategies and project management with corporate governance are fundamental aspects of the governance of projects and PM, it seems that this is where the issue of selecting the right projects belongs. This is also where the issue of project ethics should be addressed. Yet on both matters, I think current project governance guidelines may be inadequate, for five main reasons.

First, on the issue of ethics, I quote Peter Morris in his book *Reconstructing Project Management* on the issue of governance. After describing APM's Principles of Project Governance, "Not a bad list, though curiously there is nothing on morality or ethics when of course much of the recent attention to governance has arisen as a result of abuse of power, as in Enron and WorldCom in 2001-2002. Are projects morally agnostic (they are): are project managers? (they absolutely should not be.)" (Morris 2011, p161)

Second, I think the link between organizational strategies and corporate mission (and corporate responsibilities and governance requirements) are often weak or missing. Project governance models and guides assume that both strategies exist and that they

³⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-deliver-value-to-society-through-public-procurement>

³⁶ <https://www.totalmetrics.com/process-improvement/Project-Governance-Guide.pdf>

³⁷ Ibid, page 7

align with corporate missions as well as governance and social responsibility requirements. Where strategies are missing, weak or wrong, how can the “right” projects be selected or supported? Doesn’t mature project management have a right to ask the questions: Is this the right project? Is this a good project and worth doing? These questions become more complicated as programs and projects are implemented, conditions change and strategies need to be re-examined. These questions may be adequately addressed in the APM Directing Change guide in the Portfolio Direction section on page 12, but I’m not convinced.

Third, I’m not sure current project governance models and guides work in the real world of project business. For example, most government agencies and many public companies achieve programs and projects through contractors, subcontractors and suppliers. With whom do the governance requirements lie, the project owner, each contractor? Where are project sponsors? Does each company involved on a project have its own governance requirements, project sponsor, strategic alignment issues, etc.? How do governance requirements flow down the supply chain? Through contracts? I think it’s highly unlikely.

Fourth, project/PM governance is a rather mature topic. Governance is also aimed at executive levels of organizations. Many executives have little or not enough knowledge of project management, let alone program or portfolio management, project sponsorship, project governance, strategic alignment and the other matters discussed above. Executives in large public corporations will generally understand corporate governance, social responsibility, strategic planning, portfolio alignment and related topics. Executives in private companies, small and medium sized enterprises, new businesses, civil institutions, non-profit organizations may not. Younger and less experienced leaders, most likely not.

Fifth, many guides, models, policies and statements are too general. We all try to simplify things, to produce an “elevator speech”, to communicate more quickly and easily with others. But many concepts and issues, including governance and social responsibility, can be quite complex. A corporate mission statement, for example, might be two sentences. But the issues and discussions that resulted in it were undoubtedly more extensive and complicated. This is one reason that I felt compelled to discuss so many issues in this editorial.

The Power of Why

Why is a mission statement needed? Why are corporate governance, project governance, project management governance needed? Why is social responsibility important? Why were the SDGs formulated and supported by millions of people around the world? Why is sustainability such an important topic now? Why should we worry about doing the right project when we get paid to just implement a project well?

According to New York Times best-selling author Simon Sinek³⁸, there are two main ways to influence human behaviour: manipulation and inspiration. Inspiration is the more

³⁸ <https://simonsinek.com/about/?ref=mainNav>

powerful and sustainable of the two... people are inspired by a sense of purpose (or "Why"), and that this should come first when communicating, before "How" and "What".³⁹ His TED talk is worth watching.⁴⁰ His book, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, has been a best-selling leadership book in the United States since its publication in 2009.⁴¹

I think we simply need to explain WHY more often.

Part 3 Wrapup

In part 1 published in January, I discussed the pandemic, climate change and other global problems (the black elephants), the UN's SDGs as a global benchmark for assessing projects, and what the PM profession has been doing recently in response.

In part 2, I suggested that project management organizations and professionals have a social responsibility to contribute to society, and certainly not to harm others. Mission and vision statements are useful strategic concepts for advancing social responsibility. I also labeled the global scourge of corruption as another black elephant that must be addressed, one that I think the PM profession can actually do something about. I proposed expanding the definition of corruption to include lying, cheating and stealing. The impact of lies and misinformation on civil society is now painfully clear to me. The potential harm of lying and misinformation to programs and projects should be equally clear. Corruption in all of its forms should not be tolerated.

In part 3 this month, I covered risks to the planet and to civil society, how projects should not only support organizational strategies but also do no harm to the planet or society (and hopefully do some good), and the role (and current inadequacies) of governance. I suggest that we need to ask the question "why?" more often.

The next edition of the PMWJ will include the final segment of my original editorial, with these topics:

- Part 4: The Future of Project Management, Some Questions, Some Suggestions, First Things First, and What's it to Be?

I think project management needs a higher purpose. This editorial, now in four parts, is my attempt to explain why and what we might be able to achieve going forward. If you would rather not wait and are willing to read the long original version, you can find it at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/pmwj101-Jan2021-Pells-project-management-needs-a-higher-purpose-editorial-January-complete2.pdf>

³⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Start_with_Why

⁴⁰ https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en

⁴¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Start_with_Why

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