

Anti-Leadership revisited, The War on Ethics and Welcome to the December 2021 PMWJ¹

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Welcome to the December 2021 edition of the PM World Journal, the 112th monthly edition. This month's PMWJ contains 25 new works by 30 different authors representing 13 different countries. This is another great edition, with some seriously good articles, interviews and papers by authors around the world. Works like these make me proud and happy to continue publishing this journal. I learn something every month, and this time the curve was steep.

Anti-Leadership revisited and the War on Ethics

Meanwhile, before getting into the great contents this month, a few words about the world we are now living in, and my big worry related to projects and project management. There seems to be a war on ethics emerging. Dishonesty and corruption have always been problems on projects, especially in some industries and locations, due to human nature and greed; we fight these issues every day with professional standards, professionalism, honest reporting, fair treatment of stakeholders and ethical behavior. Those principles have always seemed like project management 101 to me. But social factors, political trends and organizational dynamics seem to be trending negative, at least here in the USA and most likely elsewhere. Dishonesty seems to be increasing everywhere. I believe professionalism is at serious risk.

In February 2017, I authored an editorial titled "The Big Reverse: Politics, Anti-leadership and the Looming Threat to Professionalism". Writing shortly after then newly-elected U.S. president Donald Trump was inaugurated, I wrote that I was concerned about "the 'post-truth' era and the use of 'alternative facts' by the president and his team – in other words, the apparent broad acceptance of dishonesty in leadership." I continued "the new president demonstrates characteristics and actions in direct conflict with traits (and) ... the leadership standards promoted in the project management profession, and with professional codes of ethics and conduct..." I called this "anti-leadership" and I believed it was dangerous.

In that same editorial, I went on to briefly discuss some of the bedrock principles of professional codes of behavior: honesty, fairness, respect, responsible behavior, competence and ethics. President Trump and his supporters appeared to neither exhibit nor value any of those principles. While the Trump administration embodied this 'anti-leadership', the bigger issue in my opinion was the 63 million who voted for and supported the president. As I stated at the time, "the professional standards of behavior that we are committed to have either lost their standing or were never very important to

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a lot of our stakeholders. As I see it, professionalism is absolutely incompatible with dishonesty or unethical behavior. Among supporters of the new U.S. president, professionalism was either never well-established or is in full retreat. If those supporters are in project-based organizations or on program or project teams, then the PM profession is in trouble in those places.” [1]

In February of this year, I raised the ethics issue again in the second of my “Project Management Needs a Higher Purpose” editorial, subtitled “Mission Statements, Social Responsibility and the Rogue Black Elephant.” I labeled corruption as the “rogue black elephant” that was and is stampeding across the world of projects and project management. I argued, “I think the definition of corruption from Transparency International and used in the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) is incomplete. I believe that dishonesty itself underlies all corruption. Dishonesty includes lying, cheating and stealing. Without honesty, there can be no trust between individuals, organizations or groups of any kind. If we cannot trust what others say, how can we work with them?” [2]

Over the last two years, the situation has deteriorated even more. In the United States, the former President and his supporters have continued to spread lies, misinformation and conspiracy theories about elections, vaccines, healthcare, climate change, energy and many topics. Millions of U.S. citizens believe and help disseminate lies and misinformation, apparently including many business executives. These same trends are now global, as far right political parties have attracted followers in many countries. It’s now been reported that democracy is in decline around the world. This trend seems to be going hand-in-hand with the increase in misinformation, fake news and dishonesty. It’s absolutely frightening.

Yet, project management professional bodies seem to be ignoring the problem. PMI’s recently released Standard for Project Management (2021) and Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, 7th Edition, with their new bases on behavioral principles is a step in the right direction, but too little and too subtle. I see literally no discussion of corruption in projects and project management, as if there is a widespread assumption that all those involved with projects behave ethically and professionally. The truth seems to be more likely that many practitioners and project stakeholders actively spread misinformation or support those who do. I think if lying, cheating and dishonesty in business and politics dominate society, as they may well do in some parts of the United States and other countries, and if democracy dies, so does the project management profession. We need to take a much more active and visible stand against corruption in all its forms.

Now, this month in the PMWJ

The Letter to the Editor from Dr. Ken Smith in Manila is both short and amazing. Ken proves that some older project management professionals actually know more than many of us on some topics, in this case, geometry.

Yasmina Khelifi in Paris has produced two new illuminating interviews, the first with executive consultant Jean-Luc Favrot in Tahiti; the second is with Mike Palladino, Director of the Agile Center of Excellence at pharmaceutical giant Bristol Myers Squibb in the USA. Ipek Sahra Ozguler has coordinated and authored a timely and important interview with Ben Breen, Global Head of Construction and Managing Director for the Asia Pacific region for the Project Management Institute. These interviews are both interesting and informative.

The three Featured Papers this month are authored by very experienced project management experts. Alan Stretton in Sydney, Australia has authored a bit of a retrospective on a very important topic, titled “Revisiting classifications of types of projects and programs and their application sectors.” Alan touches on some issues that relate to context for every program and project; we all need to know and understand much more on these topics.

“The origins of WBS & Management Charts” is a history lesson from project management expert Patrick Weaver in Melbourne. He has hunted down and captured some fascinating examples of tables, charts and diagrams that point to a much longer sequence of related concepts in the field of managing major projects. Dr. Harold Kerzner and Dr. Al Zeitoun have returned with another great paper, this one on the topic of “Capturing Project Management Best Practices.” This is an issue many organizations struggle with; the authors provide some highly useful perspective and guidance.

I am very happy to introduce two student research papers this month facilitated by Dr. Mohamad-Fadl HARAKE, Affiliate Professor and Academic Head of the Logistics Programs at l'École Supérieure de Logistique Industrielle – ESLI, Paris campus. Each of the two papers is co-authored by five ESLI graduate students. The well-written papers are on quite diverse topics – Supply Chain Management and AI in one case, making French ports more competitive in the second. Both focus on technology for solving fundamental problems, topics that younger professionals will most likely address well.

Oliver Lehmann in Germany and Frank Saladis in New York have authored brilliant new series articles. Oliver continues his project business management theme with “Educating Professionals for Project Supply Networks”. Frank talks frankly about the state of leadership trends and topics, providing mature perspective in “Leadership for 2022”. These are short reads well worth your time this month.

Five Advisory articles are included this month, thanks to Bob Prieto (USA), Mahendra Gupta (Australia), Dr. Ken Smith (Manila, The Philippines), Anil Seth (India) and Manuel Ancizu (Pamplona, Spain). They provide good advice on a variety of PM-related topics. Prof John Cable at the University of Maryland has contributed another interesting Commentary article entitled “Diverse Teams are More Successful”, a topic that I think few of us would argue with anymore.

It turns out that Dr. Chima Okereke, PMWJ editorial advisor and frequent author, is involved in a very interesting African community development programme. Rather than reveal confidential information, he has authored an interesting Case Study to share some

of the details, titled “Challenges of an infrastructural reactivation and socio-economic development programme in a Third World community.” Please support his efforts by reading and commenting on his article.

The four Reports this month are fantastic, each one covering a lot of ground, full of information and highly entertaining. Yasmina has authored an update from Paris with some information about PMI France and some major projects and programs under way around the country. Allelsandro Quagliarini in Rome has provided a full report on the results of ISIPM’s recent PM Expo® 2021 conference (with some great photos) and a report about the PMI Northern Italy chapter. Miles Shepherd in Salisbury describes a number of major UK programs and projects, some unusual and some less known to many readers, closing with another of his hilarious insights. Dr. Jouko Vaskimo in Helsinki has updated us on the two main Finnish PM societies as well as major power and transportation infrastructure projects underway in his country.

Another older paper by Bob Prieto is included this month, “Yours, Mine and Ours: Risk and Risk Allocation in Public Private Partnerships” from 2009. A review of Morley Selver’s 2002 book titled “Plant Project Engineering Guidebook for Mechanical and Civil Engineers” by Dylan Harms in Dallas is also included, proving that the value of many books can continue for many years after publication.

We close with some recent breaking news articles. Thank you for reading. I hope this month’s edition is interesting and useful to you.

References

[1] Pells, D.L. (2017). The Big Reverse: Politics, Anti-leadership and the Looming Threat to Professionalism and Welcome to the February 2017 PMWJ, PM World Journal, Vol. VI, Issue II, February. <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/pmwj55-Feb2017-Pells-the-big-reverse-editorial.pdf>

[2] Pells, D.L. (2021). Project Management Needs a Higher Purpose: Part 2: Mission Statements, Social Responsibility and the Rogue Black Elephant, PM World Journal, Vol. X, Issue II, February. <https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/pmwj102-Feb2021-Pells-project-management-needs-a-higher-purpose-editorial-part-2.pdf>

About the Author



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David L. Pells, PMI Fellow, HonFAPM, ISIPM, PMA, SOVNET is Managing Editor and publisher of the **PM World Journal** (www.peworldjournal.com) and Managing Director of the PM World Library (www.peworldlibrary.net). David is an internationally recognized leader in the field of professional project management with more than 40 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 security program.

David Pells has been an active professional leader in the United States since the 1980s, as founder and president of several PMI chapters, founder of PMI's first SIG (Project Earth), and member of the PMI board of directors 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; the Instituto Italiano di Project Management (ISIMP - Italy); Project Management Associates (PMA - India); and the Russian Project Management Association (SOVNET). In 2010 he was made 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@peworldjournal.com.

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