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Sydney, Australia

THE CRITICAL PATH

December 2020

PMI Sydney Chapter Report from the President

2020 and Covid-19 Impacts

I am sure I am not the only one in saying good riddance to a 2020! As Her Majesty the Queen once so aptly stated, 2020 been an annus horribilis. Bring on 2021!

Just when the new Board came into being and we had completed our annual planning in March, COVID-19 hit us all like a freight train. Apart from the health and economic aspects, we were all forced to find new ways of accomplishing what we did prior to this pandemic and dealing with the subsequent advantages and disadvantages this posed. For many of us it also gave us an opportunity to learn new things, or to deeper dive on topics that we had not had the opportunity to do before, but also posed a challenging time for us all as we had to adapt to 'the new normal' and use the most common phrase of 2020 "*Hey, you're on mute!*".

Where this hit us the most from a Chapter perspective was our inability to have in person Chapter Events and Professional Development courses (and for that matter in-person Board meetings). Where before we could get together with friends and colleagues for an in-person catch up and a beverage (or two) and/or network, we have had to move to using Zoom to conduct these activities virtually. The ability to effectively network was greatly impacted by this and seen a reduction in the number of members attending Chapter events – despite having some great speakers and conducting two events on average per month over the past several months.

This also has the benefit of having speakers that are not in Sydney and we have had several overseas speakers present to us. This has also impacted our membership retention for those that saw the opportunity to network and collaborate in-person as being a key value in their Chapter membership. In the new year I have asked our Board to look at returning to in-person Events and Professional development courses ASAP as much as it is safe to do so and abides with health regulations – however for the foreseeable future we will have to use a hybrid approach of some people attending physically whilst others are virtually attend.

The nation has held up remarkably well in comparison with most due to the decisive action of our Commonwealth and State Governments and our health care professionals. The economic recovery has started and whilst we are not where we were before the pandemic, the job market is heating up which bodes well for all of you who are currently seeking employment, or for those of you that are business owners looking to develop your sales pipeline. I am confident that 2021 will be a much happier and fruitful one for all of us.



PMI Sydney Chapter Strategy 2020/2021

At our Board kick off in March, the Board agreed on the following strategy. Whilst being hit with the Corona virus, the overall strategy has remained the same as what has changed because of the Corona virus is HOW we get to executing and achieving the strategy.

There are four strategic pillars:

Serving Chapter Members

- Grow and foster our membership
- Rejuvenation of sponsorships and partnerships
- Reinvigorate our dormant members
- Attract and retain more and better qualified mentors
- Identify target segments for events and members
- Value through career lifecycle

Healthy Board Culture

- Inject renewed confidence in our Board and operations
- Improve governance through revisions of bylaws, handbook, policies, and procedures
- Culture of sustainability and succession planning
- Director accountability to each other and our valued members
- Board transition to focus on strategy, governance, and thought leadership
- Operations driven by Associate Directors & volunteers with Board oversight

Promote Disciplined Agile (DA)

- Identify DA Champions
- Capability Uplift across the Chapter

Exemplar of what a Chapter should be

- Positive collaboration across Region 10 (AUS & NZ)
- Help nurture and grow Canberra Chapter
- Be involved in Leadership Institute Meetings
- Support and execute PMI global transformation program
- Volunteering for PMI and the Chapter should be an enjoyable experience
- Update processes, tools, and technology to make our volunteering easier to execute.

Whilst the pandemic has made some of these harder to execute than others, we are making continued forward momentum and are keen to accelerate the pace of the fruition of these during the next term.



Australia & New Zealand PMI Virtual Conference

Prior to 2020 (and our friend the Corona Virus) New Zealand held a national (in-person) conference, and Australia held a national conference (in-person) whereby a particular State hosted the conference in a particular year. New Zealand was to host their conference in May in Wellington whereas the Australian Chapters collectively decided not to have a conference in 2020.

With Corona hitting us, regionally we decided that we would conduct our first ever joint Australia and New Zealand PMI Conference and to do so virtually. The conference was held October 19–22nd 2020 with the theme 'A brave new world' (and how apt under the circumstances we have all found ourselves in this year). James Dobson from PMINZ was the conference convenor with an enthusiastic team of volunteers mostly from NZ. The Presidents of the Australian Chapters along with the President of New Zealand Chapter where members of the SteerCo.

The following summarises some of the key aspects of the conference.

- A total number of 240 delegates attended with approximately half of those from New Zealand
- 3 Masterclasses were undertaken.
- Speakers came from New Zealand, Australia, the UK, and the US with delegate feedback being very positive with delegates remarking upon the excellent speaker quality and very relevant topics.

A big thank you to those involved in organising the conference (I know from prior experience it is a lot of work), and to those of you who attended from PMISC. Additionally, congratulations to our members who were successful in the draw to attend the conference. We hope you had a rewarding few days from some very insightful speakers across Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and USA.

PMDoS

PMI Sydney held its 3rd Project Management Day of Service (PMDoS) on the 2nd of November 2020, partnering with the International Institute of Business Analysts (IIBA) Australia Chapter as well as the University of Wollongong.

For those that do not know the Project Management Day of Service (PMDoS) is an event whereby project professionals are partnered with charities and not-for-profit and offer a unique service pioneered by PMI. On this day, project professionals and their designated charities and NFPs collaborate to come up with a solution or strategy to move their initiatives forward.

PMDoS was initially held in various states in the U.S. but is now an international event. In Australia, it has been pioneered by Queensland 5 years ago, with PMI Sydney and PMI Melbourne following. This year we had 4 the charities & NFPs

- [The Council for Intellectual Disability](#)
- [Mates on a Mission](#)
- [Sydney Basket Brigade](#)
- [The ERC Group](#)



Whilst the pandemic again impacted how this event was planned and executed, they performed admirably and did a great job in representing the Chapter and the charities & NFPs involved. Some participants were together however most were virtual via Zoom. Our professionals added great value to the participating charities & NFPs which was warmly appreciated.

I would like to thank our Immediate Past President Julia Checchia and her enthusiastic PMISC PMDoS team of volunteers for an outstanding event and a job well done.

New Region 10 Mentor

We have a new PMI Region 10 (AUS & NZ) Mentor in James Dobson from the New Zealand Chapter. James replaces the former mentor Annie Sheehan from Melbourne Chapter who has moved on to a PMI staff position.

James is the Immediate Past President of New Zealand Chapter and was the Conference Convenor at the recent Australia & New Zealand PMI Virtual Conference.

On behalf of the Board and the Chapter, welcome onboard James. We look forward to working with you and our New Zealand colleagues more closely.

Bylaws & 2021 Board Elections

PMI called upon the Board earlier this year to simplify some of our bylaws and better align them with local legislation and other PMI Chapters.

PMISC appointed a “Legal Committee” to undertake the review and redrafting of the Bylaws so they aligned with the above requirements and draft these alongside the Chapters legal counsel and PMI GOC (Global Operations Centre) in Singapore.

After presenting the proposed bylaws and the Board voting upon these, the proposed bylaws were presented to the Chapter membership according to the process set within the existing bylaws for member review and approval. There have been two attempts now to conduct a meeting virtually to for member review and approval, however unfortunately we were unable to achieve the minimum quorum under our existing bylaws.

In light of this, our PMI GOC (Global Operations Centre) in Singapore will shortly facilitate an electronic vote for you of the proposed bylaws of which either a “Yes” or “No” vote of the whole document is required. This will be actioned prior to Christmas.

Therefore, the revised high-level milestones for the bylaws vote and our Board Elections is as follows:

- 15 January 2021 - Close of online voting and finalisation
- 15 March 2021 – PMISC Board Elections complete
- 22 March 2021 (Week commencing) – PMISC AGM & new board announcement

A more detailed timing of the above will be communicated shortly. Our Chapter nominations Committee (NomCom) facilitating the election early next year are:

- Red Newstead
- Cath Graham
- Angela Dunn
- Graham Colborne



I would like to take the opportunity to encourage anyone wanting to step up and play an active role in developing and growing our Chapter and the benefits and value it brings to our members to consider running for our Board elections next year. We are looking for active volunteers with great ideas particularly in this time of 'the new normal'. It is a big commitment but a very rich and rewarding one.

Summary

This has been a very trying year! We cannot wait to get it behind us and have a well-deserved break with family and friends and come back reinvigorated in 2021. Wishing you all a wonderful and safe Christmas / Holiday period, and I look forward to working with you all again in the new year. Happy cat herding!

Benjamin Howell PMP

President & CEO
PMI Sydney Chapter

The PMI Sydney Chapter Board wishes you a great 2021!!



Left to right: Joanna Nelson, Sandra Vaz, Gianluigi Bortoluzzi, Hammam (Marshal) Alkouz, Omer Iqbal, Gaurav Wadekar, Benjamin Howell. (Apologies: Julia Checchia, Zahid Siddique)

Managing Projects Through Uncertainty

Surrounded by the aroma of universal success that pervades the society, it sometimes appears unusual that anything could go wrong. The world abounds in massive success stories, perhaps in every organization and family. Consider the vast effort and resilience, dedication and commitment that went into the construction industry, as a supreme example. Each town and city is witness to exceptional human capital and institution building. Instead of taking everything for granted, appreciation should be given where it is due.

Consider grand projects that succeeded like a dream

Panama Canal, Dubai International Airport and the Channel Tunnel were not built without the tensions and hiccups. Yet, they succeeded so well and continue to bring in enormous profits for the concerned stakeholders. Instead of giving way to pessimism, it would be a good idea to hold up such exceptional models to imitate. Inspiration is needed and what could be greater than these glorious examples of superb human achievement. Technology has been a faithful partner in human progress.

A world of megaprojects and elaborate infrastructure

The present world witnesses a rise of corporations at the cost of small businesses. Gone are those cute little shops in the neighbourhood. The intricacies and costs, management expertise and nowadays, technological skills are all elevated. Naturally, while abilities are greater, risks are getting higher too. Like a very complex machine, each part needs to be carefully managed. Chances of pilferage, sabotage, mismanagement and failure do exist all along the process.

Possibilities of failure loom everywhere

Just like the sweet rose bush adorned with thorns, the dangers need to be recognized too. Every journey carries an element of risk, but the millions travel each day safely. Few suffer. Yet, 2020 goes down as the year that brought endless nightmares with the corona pandemic. The worst seems to be over now but not quite. In terms of dangers, threats and uncertainty, what could be worse than the virus that came only once in the century? Nobody anticipated that and the blame game continues.

Plans and Estimates sometimes collapse

Manufacturing and Healthcare, Financial and Educational companies and so many more across the spectrum require detailed planning and clever execution to succeed. It is the same components of human resources, raw materials and money that are primarily required. The initial foundation is a plan of action. When it comes to managing time and money, manpower and materials, the market forces are hard to predict. Supply and availability of materials and manpower, the time factor and the budget are all uncertain. It is possible to say that some industries carry greater risk according to a variety of factors.

Researching the uncertainties

Needless to say, successful project management requires superhuman skills with lots of experience. If the location is a war zone or venue of communal clashes, the uncertainty looms greater than ever. When irregular supplies of materials and budget constraints may arise, the headaches consequently increase. As a ladder, each stage is fraught with uncertainty. If a single aspect fails, the entire system grinds to a halt. Working out certain systematic strategies would allay the fears and lessen the impact of threats and dangers when they happen.

Allocating margins of uncertainty

As with any task, only approximations may be offered in terms of the time, money, materials and skills required for completion. According to historical, geographical, cultural and local factors, tentative plans are drawn up. These may be legal documents, but yet the loopholes exist. What factors could hinder successful project completion? Starting from sickness and injury, theft, breakdown of machinery, counterfeit currency and manipulative managers, the dangers are numerous. That is why both time and money need to have a margin like any personal shopping experience. More time and money than anticipated are always spent. A margin of 25% seems reasonable, whatever the dimensions of the task.

Can the reverse be true?

While projects like writing examinations are a bit of a gamble, sweet surprises sometimes happen. Diligent students succeed very well, and so do powerful managers who know all the secrets of the industry. Rarely does the media report success stories of companies that succeeded in completing projects at cheaper costs within less time. Most sensational projects talk of delayed completions and high costs way beyond the stipulated price. Apartment complexes are a typical example found in every urban jungle.

Learning lessons from business history

Betamax and New Coke, along with the Challenger Space Shuttle are supreme examples of projects that went miserably wrong. The analysis would decipher where the mistakes lay, and the experts have attempted that in copious detail. It is not necessary to find mammoth failures when the locality and town would provide several examples of failed businesses. On the other hand, business successes are numerous, too, like garlands that surround the daily media. They deserve scrutiny also to know how and why they succeeded. Questions need to be asked. What factors resulted in the parameters combining successfully? For the failures, what exactly went wrong, when and why?

Managing Risks with Plan B

Like fighting a war, absolute knowledge of constraints should prepare a second line of attack. A thorough, researched understanding of the field and industry in the practical sense should examine the variables. What are the negative factors, and how could they affect performance? If estimates are unrealistic, prepare for adjustments along the way. Predictability works precisely in a great majority of cases where numerous similar projects are ongoing, like establishing kitchens in the town. If the uncertainty is high, many threats are involved, and risks are paramount. It is hard thinking, patience and endurance that win the race.



The PMP® Exam is Changing on 2nd January 2021

The priority is certainly not the mere passing of examinations but the creation of quality project managers. The times are changing rather rapidly from year to year with new and robust digital technologies. A world of apps has carved more effortless and more refined techniques to work with precision. Far-flung remote regions can collaborate over video conferencing and exchange files and programs through lightning-fast digital means. With 2021 around the corner, it is goodbye to the old examination system with the five domains now reduced to 3. Technical knowledge is deemed less critical compared to real leadership skills and management expertise. Yet, concepts and techniques of project management methods remain crucially crucial and emphasize leadership ability.

Changes in the profession and the need to keep pace with emerging trends resulted in changes that the project management institute has made. The present system that incorporates the 2015 course will change soon, on 2 January 2021. 31 December 2020 indicates the last day of the current system. Now that ample time does not exist for exam preparation over 8 or 10 weeks, examinees do not have a choice. They will have to appear for the new 2021 system. Yet, changes of any kind are always traumatic though they may finally lead to better things. Life and time tell stories of the universal change that has happened over the centuries as long as humanity can remember.

Three domains

PEOPLE

PROCESS

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The new PMP Exam Content Outline (ECO) indicates three domains. People, Process, and Business Environment are the 3 Domains. In terms of the proportion of test items in each part, People has 42%. The process has 50%. The Business Environment has 8%. Total of 100%. The structure of the PMP examination indicates Domains, Tasks, and Enablers too. By definition, domains refer to the knowledge essential to project management. Tasks refer to the vital responsibilities in each category. Enablers refer to the illustrated examples of work connected with the study.



Comparing ECO 2015 with the new ECO 2019

ECO 2015 had five domains, namely Domain I (Initiating), Domain II (Planning), Domain III (Executing), Domain IV (Monitoring and Controlling), and Domain V (Closing). ECO 2019 has only three domains, namely Domain I People, Domain II Process, and Domain III Business Environment.

Within the three domains, the examination will test Tasks that project managers need to carry out. The analysis will also test Enablers or actions required to fulfill the tasks. Approximately half of the examination will test predictive project management approaches. Agile and hybrid processes will be tested in the other half.

Implications of the new changes in the exam system

1. The new exam is an enlarged version. Analyzing the changes, Domain II Process contains as much as 70% of the current exam. People and Business Environment have comparatively new content.
2. Introduction of AGILE and HYBRID approaches. Knowledge and experience of working in such environments will be required to succeed.
3. The PMP exam is getting more complicated with the introduction of new topics and methods. More significant effort will be required to succeed.
5. Learning the content would require a minimum of 35 hours of specialized instruction. Twice the content would mean more intensive preparation in-depth, and the time required will be far more significant compared to before.



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Practical Strategies to Manage Project Teams Remotely

Now that more and more work shifted to home offices during the coronal pandemic, lifestyles are rapidly changing. Certain advantages, such as avoiding long commutes and saving on costs with more time to relax, are certainly advantages. Is the work culture improving? The answer is yes, and no. The problem is that the office togetherness or factory group work is being interfered with. No longer does the 'hi' and 'bye' culture exist, and walls have sprung up between workers and their bosses.

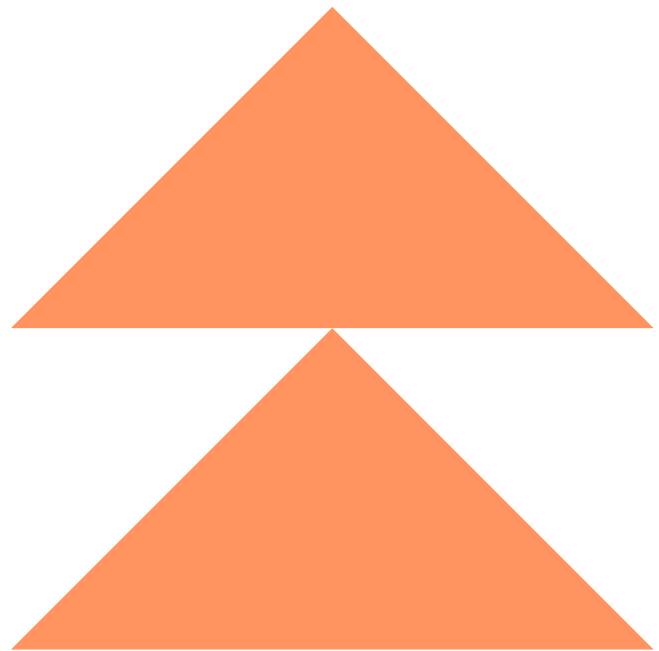
Working in remoteness has always existed with far-flung projects located in forests and mountains, deserts and the oceans. How do they manage? The magic hand of technology and digital software would take care of many issues. For getting face to face being possible with a few clicks and certain inexpensive equipment, close communication is quite possible.

Vision and mission

Involving plenty of research and collaboration, looking at the big picture may be challenging since everybody gets caught up in the details. If it is a construction or road building, setting up a warehouse or a poultry farm, work accordingly. After getting the long term vision clear, it is time to embark on the bits of work that refers to the mission. Breaking down the vision like eating in mouthfuls would create a reasonable work plan. Spend ample time on these plans because they form the foundation for the enterprise. Appropriate and realistic assessments of manpower, money and materials at the start with margins, of course, would provide the stimulus for successful project completion.

Building remote teams efficiently

An organized and dedicated work culture lies at the root of project success stories. Certain single projects require the entire process of advertising and interviews, tests and selection of staff. Regular employees in companies have certain advantages of accountability and greater assurance of perfection. The project manager, in either case, needs to know the workers well, whether in person or via software. Management must feel confident about the task at hand and the abilities and skills of the workers. After delegating tasks and copiously detailed planning, it is time to relax but only for a while.



Two-way communication

Voices must be heard and in time. That applies equally to the family and the workforce. Prevent lonely and idle thoughts by engaging the workers in work and leisure activities. Not merely via text messages but proactively communicate through video conferencing with the entire team. Get worker responses and feedback, address grievances though it is all according to official rules and managed by the human resource person. Make sure that it is a living and energetic workforce rather than a mechanical and robot-like worker without a human face. Excessive technology has led to a dulling of the human instinct and the eroding of confidence in fundamental ideas.

Discipline and sustained performance

Just like in the armed forces, rigid discipline and regular work hours along with the supply of machinery and raw materials ensure success. Tracking devices would reveal which worker put in how many hours and when. Productivity lies at the top of the agenda, and the quality of work decides the extent of output. Approaches may be different while comparing farm labour and a hydroelectric power plant, but they all come under the same work category.

Cultures and time zones

Usually, workers belonging to the same ethnic group may be expected to collaborate closely with shared visions. Similarly, differing time zones could obstruct smooth collaboration. It requires skills of adjustment and more significant expertise to overcome culture and time zone differences. The leaders and executives should be exceptional enough to tide over petty issues and keep the flag flying high. Backgrounds and training, along with the service portfolio, would indicate the work culture of exposure and experience. Such factors deserve consideration during the recruitment process. Nothing can replace meeting face to face through video conferencing has now become the norm. Make sure that brief official and personal videos serve as an introduction and ice breaker during the selection and working process.

Challenges

Projects usually commence with a bang, and fervid anticipation with a new, energetic workforce determined to do their best. Like what happens in many marriages too, the passion begins to cool after a while. Similarly, when the project is close to completion, interest revives with the hope of final payments. It is the middle weeks or months that require immense patience and perseverance, endurance and dynamism. Those difficult stages are when the project manager and executives are severely tested. Where does the drive come from? The training and the company policy and philosophy should serve as motivators with so much at stake.

Celebrate successful project completion

Multimedia online now enables communication with the world over social media. Celebrate online and offline after doing duties well with the inauguration or launch of whatever construction or software that took so long and required arduous work. Sometimes it reached breaking point but ensured victorious endings for official and personal reasons. Live it up with a smile in anticipation of the next challenge.



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EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO MAKE IDEAS REALITY

PMI Sydney Chapter was founded in 1997 and held its first Chapter Meeting on 15 April 1997. Today the Chapter has over 1,500+ members from a mixture of industries including, but not limited to:

construction, engineering, banking, insurance, finance, IT, telecommunications, consulting and pharmaceutical. Approximately 50% of Australian PMI's members are PMPs. PMI is strongly supported by a majority of companies in Australia and internationally. The Sydney Chapter conducts regular chapter meetings, education and certification courses and runs an annual conference in an effort to promote the profession of Project Management within NSW and Australia.

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PMI Sydney

This magazine is published by the Marketing and Communications team on behalf of the Project Management Institute Sydney Chapter.

We welcome articles, interviews excerpts, general information and other contributions to enhance project management knowledge and understanding of our chapter members. Please send your enquiries to the Director of Marketing and Communications at marketing@pmisydney.org.