

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TOP

An Interview with – Eugene Bounds, PMP, 2008 PMI Board of Directors, Secretary / Treasurer and Chair, Performance Oversight Committee

This is the second in an ongoing series of interviews with business executives, government officials, academics, and project managers to be published in the PMI NAC Newsletter. Our goal is to present leading ideas and insights on the practice of project management for our readers.



Gene Bounds is a Principal at Booz Allen Hamilton with expertise in economic business analysis.

He also serves on the 2008 PMI Board of Directors as Secretary / Treasurer and Chair of the Performance Oversight Committee.

In this interview, Gene discusses his thoughts about contemporary project management challenges.

PMI is governed by a volunteer board of directors comprised of 15 elected directors-at-large serving three-year terms. All serve independent of their company affiliations. Three directors, who are elected by others on the board each year, serve as officers of the Institute. In his role as Secretary / Treasurer and Chair of the Performance Oversight Committee, Gene Bounds has been elected to serve as one of the officers of the institute.

Additional information on the PMI Board of Directors is available at:

<http://www.pmi.org/WhoWeAre/Pages/Board-of-Directors.aspx>

Booz Allen Hamilton, a leading global consulting firm, has 19,000 employees serving clients on six continents. Integrating the full range of consulting capabilities, Booz Allen is the one firm that helps government and commercial clients solve their toughest problems with services in strategy, operations, organization and change, and information technology.

In Huntsville, Booz Allen has made a difference for more than 20 years. More than 130 consultants serve clients including the U.S. Army Aviation & Missile Command, Ground-Based Midcourse Defense, and the Strategic Missile Defense Command. Other clients include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and The Boeing Company. Booz Allen consulting services include System Engineering, Modeling/Simulation of Dynamic Systems, War Gaming, Organizational Change, Economic Business Analysis, Logistics and Operations, Information Technology & IT Strategy, Structural/ Stress Analysis, Guidance, Navigation and Control, Robotics, Electomechanical Systems, Simulation Visualization, and Geographical Information Systems.

Visit <http://www.boozallen.com> for more information about Booz Allen Hamilton.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TOP/ PMI NAC DECEMBER 2007

PMI NAC: What is it about the PMI Board of Directors that helped persuade you to accept a leadership role on the Board?

Bounds: PMI is a dynamic international organization with 250,000-plus members and more than 250 chapters worldwide. These attributes are very consistent with the global perspective Booz Allen has as well. Much like PMI, our company is engaged on virtually every continent in the world. In almost every case, we work at the forefront of the project management discipline to bring the insight and value our customers have come to expect from us.

Today, business and government entities everywhere face major challenges and the need to leverage innovation and management expertise across a range of disciplines. Our links with PMI – independent of me serving on the board – help us focus on being a more competitive business enterprise. PMI standards and credentials are enablers. It helps us meet competitive challenges head on. PMI makes it more likely we will be nimble, early adopters of models and methods that give our customers and us – competitive advantages.

While our participation in PMI is an investment for Booz Allen, we believe the benefits we obtain far outweigh the cost to us on the bottom line.

For example, our participation has enabled Booz Allen to participate in major initiatives such as the development of the PMI Organizational Project Management Maturity Model, known as OPM3.

Those of us from an information technology background are well acquainted with the work of the Software Engineering Institute and its Capability Maturity Model (CMM) that identified, validated, and promoted an industry-wide set of standards for benchmarking IT processes.

PMI led the way in developing the OPM3 global standard to provide a way for organizations to understand their organizational project management competencies and to measure maturity, or stages of process development, against best practices.

So through its vision and participation of its member corporations and government agencies – really on a global scale – PMI has helped the project management discipline enter the modern age with its development of our own consistent standards for measuring and assessing maturity of project management processes across organizations – literally anywhere in the world.

Serving on the Board of Directors of this multinational organization – that is the recognized global authority on project management theory, practices, and standards – is an honor.

PMI NAC: Along with other multinational companies, how does Booz Allen benefit through your participation on the PMI Board of Directors understanding that you are a member of the board and are not representing Booz Allen Hamilton in that position?

Bounds: Booz Allen enthusiastically supports PMI and my serving as a member of the Board of Directors. We have 700-plus PMPs and we're actively adding more of them almost every day. We're a staunch supporter of PMI and its core principles and ethics. Also, Booz Allen is one of the founding members of the Global Corporate Council.

We have internal challenges to run Booz Allen as a business – and our clients look to us to help improve their bottom line as well. In simple terms – we're in the consulting business. If our clients are not successful, neither are we. Our ability to help our clients succeed and prosper is the key to our own growth and profitability.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TOP/ PMI NAC DECEMBER 2007

The phenomenon of large project management has been part of our Booz Allen business culture and heritage for decades. As a result of this experience, we've learned a great deal about the factors that lead to success or failure in large projects and the project management discipline. We also invest time and resources in research in this field to help us learn more about issues and trends that will affect our business and clients.

Over the years, we've seen improvements in several key areas that point back to the work done by PMI. Our participation in PMI at the executive level helps us promote leading PMI knowledge and ideas at Booz Allen from the top down – and it helps ensure new ideas will get the attention of our executives at the earliest opportunity – when our ability to leverage new ideas is greatest.

Credible studies add useful detail here. We've seen a significant reduction in the percentage of projects that finish with schedule and cost overruns. That's a very basic measure that shows the benefits the project management profession makes to our bottom line. But other measures also matter. Today, more projects are being judged as successful with regard to satisfying stakeholder and customer expectations. It's only one part of the story to hit your numbers on cost and schedule. We must be even more concerned about delivering on expectations.

Seeing genuine improvements in meeting client requirements and expectations is just as important at PMI as it is to Booz Allen.

PMI NAC: How has your involvement as a director at PMI added to your insights about portfolio, program, and project management activities?

Bounds: Most of us grew up in another field. Over time we find our way into managing projects. Success is still measured project by project in this stage. As we grow and gain experience with government customers we begin to see collections of projects organized in portfolios and how that concept fits into our own business models as a way of growing beyond the “project view” to contribute at the next level of organizational strategy and planning.

Analysis of our projects in the context of portfolios and programs gives us more flexibility in supporting the needs of our clients. Simply, this approach helps us manage complexity far more effectively. Most of us are all too familiar with the project that is all things to everyone. It doesn't have to be that way. Having the discipline to apply these principles takes time and experience.

There is a chasm between the perceptions of many project professionals and senior business leaders. What projects looks like at the executive level – return on investment, stakeholder management, risk mitigation, and other enterprise issues – will be different than for the new manager working that first project.

PMI NAC: Can you share any examples of how Booz Allen translates PMI Project Management principles and processes into results for your company and customers?

Bounds: Take a step back – and recall that Booz Allen is a strategy and technology consulting company. Our biggest challenges involve implementing complex projects. Key for us – what we've learned is a critical part of implementing large projects is that project management practices and processes are enablers. Today change management and communications strategies and concepts are equally important.

In the past – success was often measured as meeting cost and schedule. Now, our clients are equally – if not more focused on assessing the degree to which a project achieves mission and strategic goals. These objectives are often more difficult to measure than dollars and cents and days needed to complete the assignment.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TOP/ PMI NAC DECEMBER 2007

Taking on the need to change culture, rewards, incentives, and processes – for project managers 20 years ago – this was not an issue. Today at Booz Allen, we translate project management principles and practices by what we're able to do integrating the change management and communication elements as a part of the overall project management solution we bring to the table.

PMI NAC: *What do you see as the key project management challenges facing Booz Allen and other supporters of PMI over the next 5 years?*

Bounds: First – having strategic vision and planning methods to accomplish activities such as the OPM3 initiative. This is a critical insight. To make real progress in this discipline requires all of us to leave behind proprietary management models and approaches and transition to proven, standardized methods based on best practices. Doing this promotes use of a common language for project management that has the same meaning and will help realize complementary results across governments and businesses.

Second – a continuous pipeline for education and training groups of PMs and the enablement that it provides. To grow and achieve what they are capable of, project managers need more experience and exposure to strategic perspectives.

This means we need to give more attention to feeding their understanding of the big picture. Help them take that leap from PM practitioner to business and mission leader

The Leadership Institute established by PMI is a great start in this direction. We also are seeding more graduate programs and colleges/universities to get this message in the right place with the right recipients. That's a challenge for us now – to grow our project leaders in government and business from the practitioners we have working today.

Third – PMI was founded by and is governed by volunteers. Serving on the Board is the ultimate volunteer role for our PM professionals. For me, after 20 years as a PMI volunteer, mostly at the Chapter level – it is hard to see a more exciting thing to do than to attract young and developing project managers – as they strive for excellence in project management and become volunteers to the Institute.

As a young software engineer starting out, my PMI volunteer activities provided opportunities to learn and apply things I had no access to in my day job.

Being a volunteer takes work, mostly evenings and weekends. But the results in personal growth, learning, networking, and being able to set, and exceed, stretch goals for me and the teams I've managed – that experience has returned much more to me than I've had to give.

The editors wish to thank Booz Allen Hamilton and the Project Management Institute for the information about their organizations and activities that they provided for use in this interview published in the PMI-NAC Newsletter.

The PMI-NAC Newsletter is published monthly by North Alabama PMI P.O. Box 5037, Huntsville, AL 35814. Copyright © 2007 by PMI-NAC.