

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES FROM THE TOP

### ***Joseph Fehrenbach, Vice President, Security, Government & Infrastructure, Intergraph Corporation***



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

*In addition to his role as the Vice President for Security, Government & Infrastructure at Intergraph Corporation – and other activities, Joe previously was Vice President of Programs for the Project Management Institute – North Alabama Chapter.*

*In this interview, Joe discusses his thoughts about the need for talent, domain expertise, and project management skills to meet the competitive challenges Huntsville-based firms face in the years ahead.*

---

**Intergraph Corporation** – As a 35-year veteran provider of software and services, Intergraph offers industry-proven solutions capable of addressing the most demanding projects.

Intergraph provides its clients with industry-standard solutions that optimize the value of clients' assets, such as people knowledge and specific industry know-how, in order to protect and apply these assets for a competitive advantage in their respective industries.

Intergraph capabilities include – Incident Management & Emergency Response, National Security, Plant Design and Engineering, Marine Design and Engineering, Geospatial Data Collection & Analysis, Resource, Infrastructure & Facilities Management, Life Cycle Management, Systems Engineering & Integration, and IT Solutions.

Long known as a pioneer of interactive graphics and Windows®-based technical computing, Intergraph has led the industry in adopting innovative technologies and approaches. The firm has been integrating systems for more than three decades, including complicated engineering systems, complex data, and a variety of business processes. Building on its knowledge and experience, Intergraph continually expands its product lines and services to meet the ever-changing needs of its customers.

Visit <http://www.intergraph.com> to learn more about the Intergraph Corporation.

---

***PMI-NAC: What level of experience do you and your firm have with the Project Management Institute and its approach to the practice of project management?***

**Fehrenbach:** First, I would describe the situation we had two years ago. We were the largest division of a very successful company that had undergone significant change in the past few years. Although we are primarily a software company, we had developed a successful services arm focused on implementing our software in intensive customer environments, such as emergency response centers and nuclear facilities, for example.

While we were proud of the role we played in protecting lives and property – we were not pleased with the consistency of our project management in less mission-critical situations. This inconsistency indicated the need for employee development and the establishment of specific expectations during the recruitment process. We therefore instituted in the spring of 2007 a Project Management Development program that is a combination of internal company-specific training and industry-standard external accreditations.

PMI was chosen as the preferred certification due to its recognition in the US and its leadership position worldwide. This was critical since we are a global company with 50 percent of our revenue coming from outside the US.

We have 140 US project managers and aspiring project managers in the program today. I am happy to state that a half dozen project managers have gained the PMP certification in the past year. In order to increase that number, we have partnered with PMI-NAC to deliver an in-house PMP Exam Prep class that 20 of our Huntsville-based employees will attend with about 10 more remote employees via web conferencing.

Several of our Intergraph employees in the area also participate in PMI-NAC events on a regular basis.

***PMI-NAC: Does your firm have special requirements or emphasis areas in its use / application of project management skills and expertise?***

**Fehrenbach:** In all cases our project managers must possess core technical and communications skills required to operate successfully in a rapidly changing, high technology environment.

For projects focused on implementing Intergraph software in customer environments, we typically require that our project managers possess not just project management expertise but also domain knowledge associated with the particular business area. For example, a person managing a project in the Utilities and Communications sector must be knowledgeable of the standards, taxonomy and business priorities in that industry.

We also have a large services organization focused on the US Government market. Those project managers must be well-versed in the project management methodologies of their customer. Since we work with all branches of the DOD and several intelligence and civilian agencies, our core methodologies and processes must be adaptable to the complexity, scale and customer-specific requirements of any project.

**PMI-NAC:** *What do you see as the key project management challenges facing Intergraph and other high-technology firms in your industry over the next 5 years?*

**Fehrenbach:** The most significant challenge is competition for talent. Our technology is complex because it makes decision-making easier and faster for our customers in very difficult situations.

We help our customers make better and faster operational decisions by helping them visualize vast amounts of complex, often disparate data. We therefore need to attract and retain the best talent available, regardless of where it is.

As I conduct this interview by phone, I am in Austria surrounded by some of the best minds in geospatially-enabled technologies. Next week, I will be in the Czech Republic meeting with world class technical talent from across Europe and the Middle East.

The companies that will be the most successful are those that smartly recruit the best talent available and find a way to unleash that talent in a concerted organized fashion.

---

**Joseph Fehrenbach** is Vice President for Security, Government & Infrastructure at Intergraph Corporation. He founded and has executive responsibility for Intergraph's Project Management Office. Joe has served more than 20 years in technical, business management and program management roles in Intergraph's Government and Security businesses.

*At Intergraph, Joe has managed several large DOD contracts with a combined contract value that exceeds \$1 billion. Previously, he managed consulting services at Bentley Systems, Inc., and held key positions with the United States Geological Survey and Environmental Protection Agency in emerging technology areas.*

*Joe also has served as an Assistant Professorial Lecturer at George Washington University. He holds a bachelor degree from the University of Delaware, a masters degree from the University of Georgia, and an MBA from the University of Alabama.*

*Joe is a member of the Huntsville Rotary Club, an active member of Leadership Huntsville's Focus and Leadership programs, past Vice President of Programs for the Project Management Institute North Alabama Chapter.*

*He also serves on the Executive Board of the Greater Alabama Council, Boy Scouts of America and on the board of the North Alabama International Trade Association (NAITA).*

---

The editors wish to thank Joseph Fehrenbach and the Intergraph Corporation for information about the organization and its activities 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 © 2008 by PMI-NAC.