

**Lourdes Godfrey**  
**President-Elect**  
**Project Management Institute**  
**North Alabama Chapter**



*This is the ninth 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 serving as President Elect of PMI-NAC, **Lourdes Godfrey** is employed by Booz-Allen Hamilton where she is a project manager and strategy consultant supporting her firm's business with NASA.*

*In this interview – Lourdes discusses her experiences with project management and the PMI-NAC chapter in particular – with an emphasis on Board elections in September and what candidates should consider as they plan to run for office.*

**Lourdes Godfrey was interviewed for the PMI-NAC Newsletter by Don Ross, PMP**

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**PMI-NAC:** *As PMI-NAC President Elect – many of us in the chapter interact with you on a regular basis. For those with less experience working with you – what three things or ideas about PMI and our chapter in particular – motivate you to do your "chapter job" every day?*

**Godfrey:** From a big picture standpoint – I've found that PMI and my role in the chapter gives me the opportunity to do things in new and innovative ways, where the focus is not simply dollars and cents and the bottomline – but something bigger. What makes this very special is that by and large the members of PMI-NAC are here because they want to be. If you look around at the world today, you'll see that there are many great causes and truly noble callings we all share. Important things need to be done that will make the world a better place. For many of us at PMI – we have found that being a good project manager allows us to be more effective at accomplishing our most important goals and making a real difference at work, at home, and in our communities.

Three things that relate directly to our chapter – and help to motivate me – include:

- (1) The growth of our chapter and opportunity to shape that growth and leave a positive legacy in our community is a big driver for me. PMI-NAC is not the biggest PMI chapter in the world – and there are hundreds of chapters worldwide – but it turns out that currently PMI-NAC is the *fastest* growing PMI chapter in America. We were able to verify this at the recent PMI Leadership Institute Meeting held in Atlanta. The Board is really excited about that and we're very focused on adding value for our members so we continue to grow and keep our growing chapter not only satisfied but excited about PMI.
- (2) Another key in this is that it's not just about the work you do that brings satisfaction and a sense of achievement every day. The journey you make in life is at least as important as the destination. Well I've found that *who* is there to share the journey and help contribute insight and ideas on the way makes that journey special. Our wonderful team serving on the PMI-NAC Board has made the journey special every day. We have a group that is very high energy and very smart – but with great humility and a sense of humor. Everyone is a professional at what they do and they bring unique skills, knowledge, and experience to the table. We have lively discussions and the occasional disagreement – but we are passionate and committed to doing the best we can – and at the same time we work together and help each other – so we can make the chapter better together.
- (3) Finally, the intellectual and theoretical work that comes out of PMI is often not the first thing people consider as a reason to join PMI or our chapter. PMI has expert groups that delve deeply into leading edge areas where effective and efficient project management makes a real difference. Today, project management has a global "user group." PMI has members on virtually every continent. We want to help northern Alabama stay on top in this new world.

An area PMI is leading the way on that excites me is the new focus on linking project management to organizational strategy. This linkage will help organizations execute their strategy through successful completion of strategic projects. The successful execution of strategic projects requires really great project managers.

Successful execution of strategic projects is what will make any organization, public or private successful. All PMI chapters are implementing more structured strategic planning processes. This is one area that I am excited about leading for our chapter.

***PMI-NAC: Chapter President Bill Carswell graciously offered to shine the spotlight on you in this interview for PMI-NAC News (Bill will be interviewed in fall 2008). In your view, what are the three most important things Bill has done for the PMI-NAC chapter during his tenure as president – and what sort of impact has he had on your thinking and approach to your new role leading the chapter next year?***

(1) As I said before, we are the fastest growing chapter in America. We've grown from about 200 to more than 370 members in just a few years. During his years in the chapter and on the board, Bill focused on stabilizing the chapter during this growth spurt, which we do not see slowing down any time soon. A well-known author once said the most difficult challenge any business or organization will face is managing effectively during a period of "explosive growth." Bill has brought the insight and wisdom to the board that we needed to handle the amazing growth we've had in recent years.

Our growth and its associated needs with a growing membership base required the board to quickly and smoothly formalize aspects of day-to-day management previously done in a less formal way. Our financial management process is a great example. When I joined the chapter our financial system was a checkbook and spreadsheet. Later, we had money in the bank and the ability to provide more services as opposed to just struggling to keep the bank balance in the black. Now, we're using much more sophisticated tools to manage our expenses and predict cash flow and reserve requirements for the chapter. This means our money is now working harder than ever before for our members.

(2) Bill also focused our efforts on documenting our chapter processes so we could more effectively transition board responsibilities to our new board members who are elected for one-year terms. This will help all future board members come up to speed more quickly. We plan to keep this original baseline operating manual up to date as we include lessons learned and try new things along the way.

(3) Thankfully, Bill is not a micro-manager! He has the insight and confidence in others to be a hands-off leader – much like Ken Blanchard's *One-Minute Manager*. He helps each board member do what they think is best to accomplish their strategic objectives, which we captured in our 2008 strategic plan. He is a great mentor and a real humanitarian at the same time. This enabled the board to gel and find ways to work together and support one another. As a result, we're all good at sharing and helping each other with our work.

***PMI-NAC: Election season is getting closer now in the USA and for PMI-NAC. What key things would you like potential candidates to consider as they make decisions about running for a PMI-NAC Board position?***

Each candidate should do a quick "values analysis" about their reasons for pursuing a board position. Depending on where you are in your career you will have different goals that can be satisfied through participation in our many chapter activities.

For example, when I was new to Huntsville, my participation in chapter activities and then on the board was a springboard for a successful job search. If project management is your calling – this is the right place to get involved!

But suppose you are more settled in your career and working daily as a business leader either at NASA, on the Arsenal, in higher education, or in a commercial environment. You might see this as the time and place to add and expand on your coaching and mentoring skills. That sort of talent and people focus is very valuable to the chapter as we work to develop future project managers here in Huntsville and northern Alabama.

Serving on the board also offers excellent networking opportunities with other board members, with our large group of volunteers, and with our members.

For those in consulting organizations, PMI is a great way to represent your organization positively in the community. The organization each board member works for is granted corporate sponsorship recognition at every meeting and we are planning to offer this in other areas such as our very successful PMI-NAC Internet site and in our newsletter.

Getting involved on the board also offers risk-free experience and training with skills you want to build and put on your resume. At the end of the day – it's a team effort and you have that opportunity to develop ideas and plans on this team that might not be in your current job scope. So here's an opportunity to be creative, develop plans, and share your vision in areas that interest you and act on them – and add to your skills.

I've used the word team several times now – but that's really what it's all about for most of us. Our ability to join teams, get oriented, and become productive has a big influence on our success at work and in our other activities.

The PMI-NAC Board is just a tremendous opportunity to join a great team. We share and learn from each other. Our extended membership and past Board members also provide depth and history that cannot be overlooked in the analysis.

Our existing board brings these qualities to the table – many whom I hope will run again for their current or new positions – because they are very good at what they do. I have learned from each of them. And that's another point to consider – joining the board does not lock you down to just one area of interest. You can serve on the board for as long as five years. If you want to occupy multiple positions in that period of time – all the better!

***PMI-NAC: As the summer vacation comes full circle – what key dates and deadlines do candidates for Board positions need to know – and is there anything else they need to consider as they plan to run for Board positions?***

I don't know if anyone noticed, but we moved the board elections up by one month this year. The reason is there are two annual leadership meetings that PMI Global organizes each year specifically for board members of all the chapters. These leadership meetings are excellent opportunities for learning best practices from other chapters and making connections with others who are doing the same things you are [building your network]. The next PMI Global Leadership Institute Meeting will be in Denver in October.

We want our newly elected board members to have the opportunity to attend this meeting. PMI-NAC also pays the expenses associated with attending the meeting.

For complete details on how to run for a board position, I would urge you to review the information at <http://www.northalabamapmi.org/Elections.htm>. There you will find our strategic plans and details about the election process for 2009.

Any board member will be happy to talk with you and you are always welcome to email me with your questions as well. Just post to [presidentelect@NorthAlabamaPMI.org](mailto:presidentelect@NorthAlabamaPMI.org).

Nominations to run for a board position close August 15. Many top candidates choose to self-nominate and that is very much encouraged by the board. Step up and be counted!

Voting starts August 18 – and it will be electronic this year for the first time. Voting will close September 15. Votes will be tallied and we'll notify candidates of the results shortly thereafter. Election results also will be published in our newsletter and the 2009 PMI-NAC Board will be presented at the monthly luncheon or evening event following the election.

**PMI-NAC: *Thinking about your career and PMI experiences over the past few years – can you share any lessons learned along the way that made a difference for you?***

In my experience, the key to success in almost every area of work and life comes down to planning, planning, and more planning.

Without a solid plan – you are depending on luck or serendipity to deal with risks and the inevitable changes and unforeseen events that will confront you in any project or personal situation.

Next – just as the Project Management Body of Knowledge identifies – communication is at least 90 percent of the successful project manager's job. Never stop communicating!

I've found that communication is equally important in my professional career just as it is in conducting our PMI chapter business. And, it's an essential tool to growing the chapter and getting new PMPs trained and certified. When in doubt – communicate. You will be that much closer to the success you seek if you do.

Finally, you absolutely have to build and develop the best team you can field for each and every project. I always look for team members who have energy and enthusiasm for their work. This is exponentially true for the chapter, since all board positions are voluntary. We hope talented, motivated individuals will choose to run for board positions.

If you choose to come with us – we promise to make the experience memorable and fun!

### **About Lourdes Godfrey**

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Lourdes Godfrey holds a PMP and Six Sigma Green Belt and has worked in Project / Program Management for more than 15 years specializing in IT project management. She has more than 20 years experience with IT system implementations. Her career history includes senior project management at a top-tier consulting firm (Price Waterhouse now part of IBM consulting), project management consulting for major software companies, and senior management positions in industry managing IT groups responsible for implementing and supporting critical business applications.

Lourdes works for Booz Allen Hamilton in Huntsville, Alabama where she supports the NASA CIO with IT Strategic Planning and Balanced Scorecard Reporting. Throughout her career, Lourdes has helped clients achieve business success through successful application of project management principles.

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Thanks to Lourdes Godfrey for discussing her plans and activities as the PMI-NAC President Elect for this interview published in the PMI-NAC Newsletter.

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