

ISO 21500 Project Management: The Beginning of a Journey Towards a New Standard

On October 29, 2007 Peter Monkhouse entered the British Standards Institute (BSI) building on the Chiswick High Road in London England for the start of the first plenary session of PC236. He was one of 49 attendees representing 15 countries starting the process of developing the new Project Management ISO Standard 21500.

The journey to develop ISO 21500 started over a year ago, when BSI submitted a proposal to ISO for the development of a Project Management Statement based on the BSI Project Management Standard - BSI 6079. Following ISO's standard procedures, once the proposal was received, it was sent to the 157 member national organizations that make ISO's review board. Therefore, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC), our national standards organization, received the proposal in the fall of 2006. SCC reviewed the proposal and distributed the proposal to over 100 organizations nationwide, including all the 18 PMI Chapters in Canada.

When the Canadian PMI Chapters received the proposal from SCC, a recommendation was developed that the standard be limited to a glossary and that the glossary be based on PMBOK® Guide 3rd Edition. In February 2007, the ISO Technical Management Committee met to review the feedback from the member countries and voted to create a Project Committee PC236 to develop a Project Management Standard. The Chair position of PC236 was given to BSI and the Secretariat given to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). Membership of the PC236 is made up of 20 participating countries (including Canada) and 3 observing countries plus IPMA with observer status.

The structure of PC236 was decided to consist of 3 work groups: Terminology, Processes, and Informative Guidance. The project committee was given until February 2010 to have the standard completed, reviewed, and ready for publication. With the extensive review and administration processes of ISO, this deadline implies that the majority of the work will have to be completed in 2008.

After a summer of planning, BSI appointed Dr Jim Gordon as the Chair of PC236 and ANSI appointed Jason Knopes as the Secretary. The first meeting of PC236 was scheduled in London from October 29th to November 2nd 2007. The first day and a half consisted of introduction sessions, followed by two days of working sessions and finally a half-day wrap-up. During the introduction, 7 country representatives made presentations on the state of project management in their respective countries and their expectations from the new standard. The presentations converged on 2 common themes: everyone wanted a international standard and the standard should be sufficiently flexible to allow for specific national standards to be developed. France and Japan raised a third theme requesting the inclusion of the project managers competencies in the standard. The biggest surprise to many attendees was BSI's acknowledged realization that BSI 6079 was out of date and that it will be updated with the inputs from the project committee PC236!

At the end of the week, PC236 had formalized 3 working groupings:

- **-Working Group 1 – Terminology (WG1)** is chaired by Becky Wilson, from ANSI and past chair of the PMI Board of Directors and Robert Hierholtz from France as Secretary (Robert is a PMI Volunteer Leader).
- **Working Group 2 – Processes (WG2)** chaired by Reinhard Wagner from Germany and active in IPMA with Walter Bowman, PMI Fellow, from ANSI as Secretary.
- **Working Group 3 – Informative Guidance (WG3)** is chaired by Reg Sutcliffe from BSI and Nigel Blampied from ANSI as secretary.

The scope for each working group was further defined: WG1 is using the PMBOK® Guide Glossary as a basis for the terminology for the new ISO standard; WG2 is using the input from PMBOK® Guide Chapter 3, BSI 6079 and IPMA to come up with a new set of project processes; and WG3 is the vaguest of the working groups and will focus on: Normative References (other related standards), why projects are done, project life cycle, hierarchy of plans, and competencies. The working groups have already started

developing the details of their mandated sections aiming to review all at the next plenary session in Washington D.C. in April 2008.

Meanwhile back in Canada, things were ramping up nicely to the point that now we have a pan-Canadian committee of 11 members covering a number of different industries. Peter Monkhouse has been named the Chair of the Canadian Advisory Committee (CAC) and Michael Kamel, the Vice Chair. Peter is the past president of the Southern Ontario Chapter of PMI and Michael, is the President of the PMI Montreal Chapter. SCC is supporting the CAC by providing a shared online space and support from a Program Officer: Ms. Holly Bourque. The Canadian committee has been structured such that some members will be part of working groups while others will provide general feedback to formulate the Canadian position on the different issues discussed at the project committee. The Canadian team has regular monthly meetings and has started planning for attendance at the next plenary session in April. The members of the CAC will have to arrange for covering their own travel expenses for trips related to this standard as the SCC does not provide any funding.

The ISO standard-development process is an open and inclusive one that solicits inputs and feedback from all stakeholders. If you would like more information on the project or wish to discuss it further, please do not hesitate to contact Peter at peter.monkhouse@soc.pmi.on.ca or Michael at mkamel@deloitte.ca.



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