

Interview with Cecil White

Director
Project Management Institute



Interviewed by İpek Sahra Özgüler
Istanbul, Turkey

Cecil White has been a volunteer leader for PMI since 2004, and has served PMI on advisory groups at the global level, and as president of the PMI Jamaica Chapter. He is a graduate of the PMI® Leadership Institute Master Class, has held the PMP® certification since 2006, and is a regular speaker at PMI® global events. In his professional capacity Dr. White has served in the government sector as the CEO of a regional teaching hospital, and as a senior vice president at a healthcare benefits administrator and pharmaceutical distributor. Prior to those appointments he spent over 15 years in the private sector with a number of organizations including multinational corporations such as Alcan Aluminum Ltd. in the aluminum extrusion business, and Caterpillar Inc., in the equipment sales and service dealership. He is currently an associate professor at the University of the West Indies. Dr. White has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University, an MBA from Barry University, and is a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt. He has a special interest in professional development and a passion for helping others to succeed.

Today, I have a special guest. I'm sure most of you had heard this name before. Cecil White. He serves as a Director at the 2017 PMI Board.

İpek Sahra Özgüler (Özgüler): Dear Cecil. First of all thank you very much for accepting the interview request. Please introduce yourself for PM World Journal readers.

Cecil White (White): First let me say, thank you for having me. It's a great honor.

I am a former CEO and business executive, with over 25 years leadership experience in public and private companies. As an associate professor, I now help executives deliver greater value to the organizations that they serve through professional development training and consulting. I have been associated with PMI and the project management profession in a variety of roles, for over 12 years and now serve on the PMI Board of Directors.

Özgüler: How did you get involved with PMI?

White: That is quite an interesting story. Many years ago, I wanted to find a way to enhance my career as a business manager. I had heard a little about Project management and the PMI through a friend, it sounded interesting and, I wanted to hear more. So, one afternoon I wandered into a meeting of the local chapter. I asked many questions about the profession and the organization, and I remember being intrigued and fascinated by the answers to my questions. I returned to other meetings and asked more questions. Soon, the chapter leaders realized my interest in the organization, and if I would accept a nomination for an open position on the Board. I accepted, and was elected and served in a variety volunteer roles until I was elected chapter president. After that, I started to serve at the global level, and I've been doing that since.

Özgüler: As a member of the 2017 PMI Board of Directors, what is your role?

White: During 2017, I had the honor of serving as Chair of the Strategy Oversight Committee of the Board. The year 2017 was easily the most gratifying and professionally rewarding year of my PMI career to date. In 2017, PMI Board approved a revised strategy and a new strategic plan, and a detailed multi-year transformational plan to deliver the strategy. It was a very exciting period, as we participated in direction setting, and the development of a revised set of long-term goals for the institute.

Özgüler: What are the main strategies for 2018? Which initiatives and projects are you planning to implement?

White: PMI has recently adopted a winning aspiration statement that reads "Helping individuals to turn dreams into reality". With this in mind, the most significant change in our strategy is that PMI will sharpen its focus on helping practitioners to advance their careers, so that they deliver greater value to the organizations that they serve. Also, PMI will now engage with organizations as channel partners instead of customers.

Özgüler: Could you give a brief background of your project management experience?

White: As a business manager, I've been involved in all aspects of project management throughout my career, from managing individual organizational projects and programs to the management of project portfolios. However, it wasn't until I

became involved with PMI over 10 years ago, and became a Project anagement Professional (PMP), that I began to apply formal project management tools, techniques, and practices. Since then, I've managed a variety of projects in manufacturing, distribution, and healthcare. For me, project management has been an important career enhancer and has been of tremendous value through all the stages of my career, all the way to the c-suite.

Özgüler: How do you use your project management experience for PMI?

White: I have a passion for helping others to succeed, so nowadays I use my project management experience to help business executives become better at what they do. This involves developing and delivering professional development training, and providing coaching, in all 3 aspects the PMI talent triangle; technical project management, leadership, and strategic and business management skills. I use this forum to illustrate the value of project management, and project, programs, and portfolio management may be used to improve business success. This is a part of my contribution to help grow the project management profession, and to advance the purposes of the PMI.

Özgüler: I am curious, what is the daily routine of a PMI Board Director?

White: My best answer is that, it depends. As directors we do not get involved in the day to day management of the Institute, and as such we do not have a fixed Daily schedule. However, each Board member serves on at least one Board support committee, or Task Team. These committees and task teams, have regular virtual meetings either bi-weekly or monthly. This is in addition to the Board's 4 face-to-face meetings and an occassional virtual-meeting. So, a typical day would be spent doing committee work, and reviewing reports and Board papers in preparation for upcoming meetings.

Özgüler: Thank you.

About the Interviewer



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İpek Sahra Özgüler graduated from the Istanbul University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering and from Middle East Technical University with an MSc degree in Software Management. As a project manager, she has more than 10 years' experience in various areas such as portfolio management, program management, project management, software management, business analysis. She became a certified PMP in January, 2012 and a certified SCRUM Master in 2014.

She has managed a variety of projects across manufacturing, defence, FMCG (Cola Cola), insurance (Euler Hermes), audit (Deloitte), telecommunication, ICT and aviation sectors and gained broader insights. In addition, she has worked as international correspondent for the *PM World Journal* since 2014.

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