

PM WORLD TODAY – FEATURED INTERVIEW – APRIL 2009

Interview with Paul C. Dinsmore

Part II – The Light of Project Management: Consulting, Writing and Teaching the World about PM

Paul C. Dinsmore, is President and principal consultant for Dinsmore Associates, an international project management and organizational change consultancy with global offices based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Paul is a globally recognized author, expert and authority on the subject of modern project management. A long time member of the Project Management Institute (PMI®), Paul has been honored with PMI's Distinguished Contributions Award as well as the prestigious Fellow Award. He is one of the early PMPs -- Project Management Professionals (PMP number 129) certified by the Institute. Paul participated as a member of the PMI Standards (PMBOK) and Research Committees, is a former director of PMI's Educational Foundation, and is founder and counselor of PMI Chapters in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil. Paul Dinsmore works as consultant and keynote speaker in South America, North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. He is a graduate in engineering from Texas Tech University and completed the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School and Postgraduate in Management by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in São Paulo. He is the author of 17 books published in the United States, Japan, Brazil and Korea. Among them: How to Become a Project Management Professional; Winning in Business with Enterprise Project Management; Creating The Project Office – A Manager's Guide to Leading Organizational Change, and the AMA Handbook of Project Management.

Editor's Note: Paul Dinsmore is one of the world's most entertaining and popular authors and speakers on the subject of modern project management. A Fellow of the Project Management Institute (PMI®), he is also a Global Advisor to PMForum, a PM Ambassador™ and an Advisor to major corporations and government organizations in North and South America. This interview was conducted in March 2009. Part I of the Interview with Paul Dinsmore entitled "The Early Years of a Project Life: How Projects & Project Management led me to Brazil", was published in the March edition of *PM World Today*, which can be found at

<http://www.pmworldtoday.net/interviews/2009/mar/Interview-with-Paul-Dinsmore-Part-1.htm>.

PM World Today (PMWT): Paul, thank you for sharing some of your early project experiences in answering previous questions. Now we would like to change directions a little, and inquire about your writing, consulting and teaching – or coaching – career. I think you have now authored a dozen books on various project management topics. Can you just mention their titles and when they were published?

Paul Dinsmore: Books published originally in English include the following:

- ***Human Factors in Project Management***, 1984, Revised Version 1990, Amacom, NY
- ***Winning in Business With Enterprise Project Management***, 1999, Amacom, NY
- ***Creating The Project Office*** (co-author), 2003, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco
- ***AMA Handbook of Project Management, Second Edition*** (co-editor and co-author), 2006, Amacom, NY (Third Edition scheduled for 2009)
- ***Right Projects Done Right***, 2006 (co-author), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco

Books originally published in Portuguese were these:

- ***PMP Preparation: Como se Tornar um Profissional em Gerenciamento*** (co-editor and co-author), 2003, Qualitymark Rio de Janeiro (Revised edition scheduled for 2009)
- ***TEAL - Uma Revolução em Educação Empresarial, A revolution in Education*** (editor and co-author), 2004, Senac, Rio de Janeiro
- ***Basic Project Management, Gerenciamento de Projetos*** (co-author), 2004, Qualitymark, Rio de Janeiro
- ***Project-Based Coaching, Coaching Pratico*** (co-author), 2008, Qualitymark, Rio de Janeiro
- ***VIPs -- Value Improving Practices, Práticas de Melhoria de Valor em Grandes Empreendimentos*** (co-editor), 2008, Brasport, Rio de Janeiro
- ***Prosolve, Techniques in Problem Solving, Resolucao de Probelmas*** (co-author), 1990, COP Editora, Rio de Janeiro
- ***Influence Management, Administracao por Influencia***, 1990, COP Editora, Rio de Janeiro

PMWT: With the publication of *Human Factors in Project Management* in 1984, it seems that you were in the forefront in recognizing the importance of people in the whole project management process. What are some of the reasons you wrote your first book on that topic?

Dinsmore: The first reason jumped out at me through simple observation. As infrastructure project manager of a major iron ore processing project, I spent much of my

time dealing with the subtleties of human affliction. Later in seminars, I posed the question "What are the problems you face in managing your projects?" Invariably, over 60% of the answers were behavioral in nature.

PMWT: Do you think that the human side of managing projects is the most important aspect? Do you think that project management standards and books published since then have fully addressed this topic, or are there still important issues yet to emerge in this area?



Dinsmore: The human factor leaps to the forefront when the causes of project problems are under discussion. PMI has published books on the topic and the PMBOK Guide also touches on HR issues. The IPMA International Project Management Association model gives more emphasis to behavioral and organizational issues than PMI, although as new PMI norms and standards evolve, the relevance of the human factor is also being recognized. Leadership, although a general management issue, could use more focus in PM literature. Human behavior in geographically-scattered projects involving virtual communications is also a ripe field for additional research and writings.

PMWT: The *AMA Handbook of Project Management*, originally published in 1992, was also a big and successful project for you. You were both editor and author of some of the chapters of that best-selling textbook. I was honored when you asked me to provide a chapter (on project management plans). How did that book project come about, and who were some of the contributors?

Dinsmore: During the 1980s I developed several training materials for AMA, The American Management Association. As a result, AMA asked me to compile a handbook to add to the then-beginning-to-bloom literature field on project management. The original Handbook and subsequent editions have too many distinguished collaborators to mention here. Professor Emeritus David I. Cleland kindly provided the Foreword for the book pointing out that "The material in the book comes from authors who are notable contributors in the project management community, ranging from academics to practitioners who grapple with the challenges of managing or teaching in the project management field."

PMWT: Does that book continued to sell? Has it been translated into other languages?

Dinsmore: The *AMA Handbook of Project Management*, second edition was fully updated in 2006 and includes PMP preparation information. The third fully updated edition is slated for publication in late 2009. AMA reports brisk international sales for the English version, and the Portuguese book is well received by the active Brazilian community.

PMWT: *Winning in Business with Enterprise Project Management* was another of your successful books, at the time addressing another hot topic that still resonates today. When was that book published, and what was its main message?

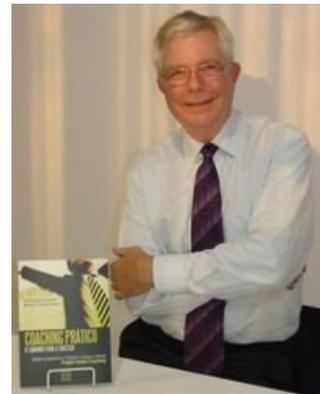
Dinsmore: Projects permeate all aspects of organizations. For businesses to survive and to prosper, new and effective projects are required. Therefore, a projectized approach to doing business is called for. That's the essence of *Winning in Business with Enterprise Project Management*, The book was released in 1999, and promptly translated into Korean, Japanese and Portuguese as well as sustaining substantial English-language international sales.

PMWT: Your book entitled “*Creating the Project Office – A Manager’s Guide to Leading Organizational Changes*” also addressed a timely topic in the project management field. Why did you choose that particular title, and why is the subject important?

Dinsmore: My learned co-authors Bob Graham and Randy Englund invited me to participate in the Project Office manuscript they were beginning to develop. I was particularly excited about adding my views since the thrust of the message was aimed at the practicalities of making the concept work. The book maps out the route for successful implementation and at the same time spotlights the pitfalls that hide behind each curve along the pathway.

PMWT: *Right Projects Done Right* (Jossey-Bass, 2003) was another book with a broad view of project management. How did that book come to be?

Dinsmore: In global encounters at conferences in South Africa, US, UK and Australia with my distinguished co-author Terry Cooke-Davies, we decided to focus on the full context of projects; ie, how to insure that the right combination of the right projects are done right. Doing projects right is fundamental of course. But they have to be the right projects. And finally, for benefit to be reaped, the company's portfolio has to be balanced. That's the essence of *Right Projects Done Right*.



PMWT: It seems that you have been able to write books on very timely topics, as the field and profession of project management have grown and matured. How do you stay on top of trends in the project management world? How do you decide what to write about anyway?

Dinsmore: I have an active project management consulting and training practice, so fellow professionals and clients help me keep up with the challenges of the times. My participation in PMI and international conferences is another solid source of current information.

PMWT: When did you start consulting in the project management field? What were some of your early consulting assignments, and where were they?

Dinsmore: After 20 years of project managing, as described in part I of this series, I began doing project management training in the early 1980s. Emphasis at the time was on the fundamentals, and also on the human side of managing projects. Consulting assignments included assessments of project management maturity, PMO design and implementation, organization re-design, development of project management methodology and coaching of executive sponsorship.

PMWT: When did you actually form Dinsmore Associates? How large has your firm become, and where do you have people working today?



Dinsmore: 1980 was formal start up for Dinsmore Associates with a base in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The number of employees and associates has peaked at 105 and fluctuates depending on contracts underway. Consulting assignments are now ongoing in Houston, Texas with Dinsmore Associates Consulting Services, as well as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro Brazil. Training assignments have taken us all over Brazil, to Chile, Argentina, Peru and Mexico, as well as to Orlando and Miami in Florida. Speaking engagements have taken me to other parts of the globe including South Africa, the UK, Portugal, China, Japan and sundry spots in the USA.

PMWT: Have you tended to specialize in specific aspects of project management, such as human factors or enterprise PM? Or are you a generalist who can address most aspects of managing projects?

Dinsmore: At the start my associates and I specialized in classic project management training with a sprinkling of consulting assignments. Focus in the 1990s, however, shifted to team building when I took outdoor experiential training to Brazil (ropes courses and adventure courses). Team building initially aimed at project management spilled over into generalized team building and the program became extremely popular in Brazilian industry and so continues today as new approaches are developed. Coaching is another growing demand that includes scope ranging from project management specifics to issues of general management. PMO design and implementation, project support teams, and enterprise-wide project management are the focus of consulting services. Training includes PMP preparation courses, classic project management, advanced courses, as well as general management topics such as time management, negotiations, strategic planning and of course team building.

PMWT: It seems that your early career was related to engineering, power and industrial projects. Has your project management consulting practice been focused on those types of industries? What other sectors are represented among your client organizations?

Dinsmore: The industries range from engineering and construction, oil & gas, electric power to IT, banking and retail applications. As the word spreads about the benefits of

project management, new industries become open to learning about how to implement projects effectively.

PMWT: Have you done much consulting for governmental organizations? If so, in what types of agencies and in which countries?

Dinsmore: We developed project management training and consulting programs for two city governments (Natal and Macae) and for the federal government agencies Central Bank and Bank of Brazil.

PMWT: I remember binging you to Dallas to teach a project management seminar in the early 1990s, and I know that you have led many workshops and seminars over the years. What types of project management course have you created and taught?

Dinsmore: In the 1990s I concentrated on the Project Management Office concept and developed experiential learning seminars aimed at team building. Underway right now is work on leadership. I am developing workshops showing that virtually all leaders---even those not directly involved in conventional projects-- must be conversant in and know how to apply basic project management principles.



PMWT: From a training standpoint, when were you the busiest? What years? What were the courses and locations?

Dinsmore: The demand has been on the rise over the years, so now much of the load is shouldered by other instructors. There was a particular surge in the 1990s when awareness of project management began to expand. Popular courses include PMP preparation, advanced seminars and team building.

PMWT: Which do you prefer, coaching or teaching? How important is mentoring for young project managers, in your opinion? Do you ever find yourself in this role?

Dinsmore: Coaching is a major focus for me at this time. Most of the coaching is aimed at executive levels. The coaching includes project principles applied to leadership positions, but also includes topics such as influence management, and behavioral issues. Coaching for young and aspiring project managers is particularly relevant, yet most organizations do not have the foresight to invest in coaching at early stages of professional development.

PMWT: Of all of your books and writing assignments, which was your favorite?

Dinsmore: *Human Factors in Project Management* is a favorite as it was my first US book and represented a breakthrough in the literature. But *Winning in Business with Enterprise Project Management* reflects a message I hold particularly dear; ie, that project management

can be applied on an enterprise wide scale, rendering major benefits to companies when melded with the broadened views of project management governance, portfolio management, sponsorship and program management. I am also particularly proud of a paper I published through PMI called Project You, in which I proposed that the principles of project management could be applied to life, since, after all, life is a project: it starts, has intermediate phases and ends.

PMWT: Of all of your consulting, coaching or teaching projects, which was the most fun? Please elaborate, and what was the lesson there?

Dinsmore: Team building is generally fun and also fulfilling. Coaching likewise is fun and generally fulfilling. Consulting and teaching are consistently fulfilling, and sometimes fun. Fun is good, but not necessarily effective all the time. So a nice mixture of challenge and fun makes an effective package.



Editor's note: We want to thank Paul Dinsmore for taking the time to answer these questions, and for sharing some personal stories from his life in project management. Paul Dinsmore is also a PM Ambassador™ and available for speaking engagements worldwide. For information, contact editor@pmforum.org.