Your Guide TO THE
PMBOK® Guide

10 YEARS

A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide) will be 10 years old in 2006. This is the first in a series of several articles exploring what this key PMI standard is, and what it is not.

A *Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide),* now in its third edition, has over two million copies in circulation worldwide, and is regarded as the *de facto* global standard for project management.

The *PMBOK® Guide* and its precedents, dating back nearly as far as the Project Management Institute itself, have paved the way for future standards, and established credibility for the organization as a whole. PMI is now recognized by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as a Standards Development Organization.

But what exactly is the *PMBOK® Guide,* why was it developed, what sets it apart from other project management texts, and how was it developed?

It was more than 20 years ago that PMI volunteers first distilled the Project Management Body Of Knowledge as part of the Ethics, Standards and Accreditation Project. This project was undertaken in response to a perceived need for a standard that could serve the project management profession. First published in 1996, the *PMBOK® Guide* was updated with the publication of the 2000 Edition, and again with the Third Edition in 2004. This demonstrates PMI's commitment to updating the profession as it continues to grow at

an accelerated pace.

The *PMBOK® Guide* has inspired the creation of industry-specific extensions, and is increasingly translated into additional languages with each reprint.

While this renowned standard has changed and evolved, the definition of the *PMBOK® Guide* itself has also changed. Today, PMI defines it as a "generally accepted, widely recognized document that is repeatable in use, developed by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that summarizes knowledge or practice in project management and is an acknowledged measure of comparison for quantitative or qualitative evaluation."

The *PMBOK® Guide* has become PMI's premier and most popular standard, recognized by ANSI. Its repeatability speaks to its purpose as a standard—to provide the foundation for consistent, predictable successful project outcomes. This level of consistency is important, as standards guide training and education, steer the work of professional practitioners, and form the basis of organizational policies, procedures and project management methodologies.

The PMI Standards Program volunteers strive for a consensus, based on their project management experience, and on their knowledge of current practice in project management. The general public then participates in the exposure draft to provide additional input to its quality. Once approved, the *PMBOK® Guide* serves as a model

for quantitative and qualitative comparisons of other projects.

Not a "Be-All, End-All"
Now that we've determined what defines the *PMBOK® Guide,* it is important to consider some thinking about the *PMBOK® Guide* that can cause frustration among practitioners who attempt to use it for another purpose. Some of these misconceptions inspired this new series of articles to help readers fully understand the function of the *PMBOK® Guide.* According to the Third Edition, the *PMBOK® Guide* is intended as a "foundational reference." It is "neither comprehensive nor all-inclusive," but a "subset of the Project Management Body of Knowledge that is generally recognized as good practice."

As such, it does not attempt to speak to every aspect of every topic, for a number of reasons. Among these reasons are a lack of consensus of certain items, and the fact that some information is too generic to warrant inclusion. Rather, the *PMBOK® Guide* pertains only to individual projects and "project management processes that are generally recognized as good practice" for "most projects, most of the time."

The *PMBOK® Guide* is not a methodology, a how-to or specific set of procedures. It is not the abridged version of a larger body of knowledge. Instead, it is an original compilation that has been tailored down, by design, to include only project management processes, and only address single projects.

It should be thought of as descriptive, as opposed to prescriptive, and is not a template. As its name implies, it is a guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge.

Please see next month's edition of *PMI Today* for more useful information about the *PMBOK® Guide.*
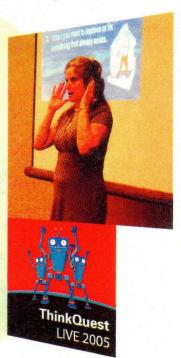

Author Promotes Project Management at Virtual Student Team Celebration

K imberly Liegel, PMP, author of *Make It Happen! Step-by-Step Project Success* and a presenter at PMI Global Congress 2004—North America, recently conducted a workshop at ThinkQuest Live 2005. The event, sponsored by the Oracle Education Foundation, capped off a competition for virtual teams of students from around the world.

Ms. Liegel's presentation focused on the top 10 strategies that can be used on any project to plan, execute and finish with confidence. Her presentation addressed project management concepts, considerations and resources, and included an in-class workshop, guiding participants through the application of tools and techniques that can be used individually or across a project team.

Ms. Liegel is a senior IT project manager for Symantec Corp. Her interest and passion is teaching project management to students so they can gain an important life skill.

ThinkQuest LIVE 2005