

‘Time is NOT money’ a conversation with Keith Pickavance

Keith Pickavance FCIOB, is the President of CIOB, Senior Vice President of Hill International based in Hong Kong, and was an invited Keynote speaker at the PM Asia conference in Singapore (October 2008). His keynote presentation at PM Asia focused on recently published research undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) investigating the actual use of effective ‘critical path’ scheduling to manage the time risk on construction projects. The research covered over 2000 projects and found that *‘very few projects were managed by reference to modern methods of time control’* (defined as a regularly stated and updated CPM schedule) and despite CPM being developed more than 50 years ago, *‘less than 20% of the respondents thought that current standards of training and education of project schedulers was satisfactory’*. The full CIOB report, **‘Managing the Risk of Delayed Completion in the 21st Century’** and an executive summary may be downloaded from <http://www.ciob.org.uk/resources/research>.

During the networking session following Keith’s keynote address, the Chair of the PM Asia Program Committee, [Patrick Weaver](#) caught up with Keith over a Tiger Beer to discuss his views on the current state of the allied professions of project and construction management.

Keith’s career has covered many paths, beginning as an Architect in the days of Indian Ink and linen drawing media, he migrated to construction management by way of a Law Degree and establishing his own multi-disciplinary practice, and then to a specialist role focused on managing delay and disruption in construction projects. He is the author of ‘Delay and Disruption in Construction Contracts’ (3rd Edition 2005) and now practices as an Expert Witness, Arbitrator and Adjudicator as well as managing Hill’s Hong Kong and China businesses. Keith is also the current President of the Chartered Institute of Building. Based in the UK, with over 43,000 members spread around the world; the CIOB will be celebrating its 175th year in 2009.

Keith followed his father into Architecture despite an earlier passion for chemistry. His most memorable experience remains the wonderful smell of freshly cut hardwood flooring being laid in the University of Keele Chapel, Staffordshire and the kindly interest of the tradesmen in the curiosity of a youngster. Keith’s father was the Architect and his son was accompanying him on a Saturday morning site visit.

This opened a topic of discussion around the roles and value of professions and professional associations. Keith pointed to the various level of protection offered by governments ranging from the prohibition of practicing some professions such as medicine, or prohibitions on calling yourself an ‘Engineer’ or ‘Architect’ without appropriate qualifications (largely determined by the professional bodies but enforced through legislation). These statutory protections do not extend to professions such as construction manager and project manager where anyone can call themselves a ‘project manager’ or a ‘builder’ and offer their services for hire. The sole benefit of belonging to the professional association revolves around the association and its members offering an assurance to the market that the ‘qualified professional’ has a certain level of skill and knowledge.

Keith’s view is that the primary force behind these different levels of legislative protection was a Government’s assessment of the need to protect its citizens from harm. Where malpractice can result in death or injury, Government is more likely to legislate protection (focussed on protecting the public, not the profession). Where the sole consequence of malpractice is likely to be financial loss, the approach is more likely to be ‘hands off’ and if a person or a business chooses to employ unqualified practitioners ‘let the buyer beware’!

The conversation then moved to the formal recognition of professional associations. In the UK ‘professional associations’ are recognised by Royal Charter. CIOB has enjoyed the privileges and responsibilities of a Charter since 1980, and the Association for Project

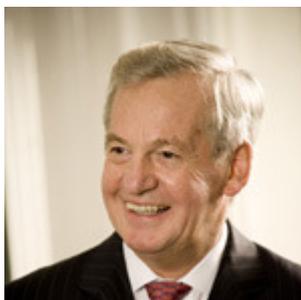
Management (APM) has embarked on a quest to achieve Chartered status by 2010. I asked Keith for his thoughts on the value of this process; his reply was unequivocal. Aspiring to the professional recognition associated with achieving a Royal Charter requires an association to establish ethical and educational standards for its members, the uniform assessment of members prior to accreditation and the maintenance of the members experience through mandated 'continuing professional development' activities monitored by the association. This discipline can only enhance the credibility of professional members and help distinguish the 'professional' from other practitioners.

From this foundation, Associations can enhance their value to both members and the public by developing schemes such as the CIOB 'TrustMark®' to identify builders that aspire to meet CIOB's high standards and objectives, focused on professional service delivery to the public.

In closing I asked Keith for his thoughts on the likely impact of the current financial turbulence. The news is not good! Keith believes funding for new projects will be very hard to arrange in the short term and the flow through will result in problems for both contractors and employers. As new work dries up, contractors will be bidding at or below cost to maintain turnover and hoping to make money from claims. If they are successful the client will pay dearly; if the contractor fails and becomes insolvent, the client will also pay dearly. When funding becomes more readily available, the inevitable rebound will also be problematical. Contractors will have bid work with a 2 to 4 year timeframe at the 'bottom' of the market and have to deal with rising prices and supply shortages as the overall economy recovers. Keith's view is there will be a need for intelligent management and collaborative contracts to protect both parties, and importantly, the client's will need to focus on proactively managing both time and cost to achieve a successful project outcome. He suggested the conclusion to be drawn from CIOB's survey, '*Managing the Risk of Delayed Completion in the 21st Century*' is that **time is not money** or more accurately, managing the monetary aspects of a project does not equate to managing its time aspects.

The clear message I took away from listening to Keith's keynote presentation followed by our conversation was firstly the critical need for the client to be engaged in managing all aspects of its project, including time; and the desperate need for the professional associations to develop improved standards, training and certifications for project schedulers to help develop the skilled professionals needed to improve both the client's and contractor's capabilities to manage 'time'. Certainly both PMI and the AACE have made a start in this direction but a lot more needs to be done to define a 'useful' schedule. Under Keith's leadership, the CIOB will be doing its part by embarking on a program to create a 'Best Practice' framework to define a 'useful' schedule and facilitate improvements in the training and certification of schedulers. In the same way that cost control and project management were the management disciplines of the 20th century; Keith believes time-risk management is going to be the management discipline of the 21st.

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