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Panel 18 Project Management Best Practices: Year 2000 and Beyond

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PANEL 18

PROJECT MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES: YEAR 2000 AND BEYOND

Chair: **Kate M. Kaiser**, Marquette University

Panelists: **Jane Fedorowicz**, Bentley College

Janis L. Gogan, Bentley College

David J. Jankowski, California State University, San Marcos

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As information technology (IT) professionals approach one of the few true deadlines, how well will project management techniques assist in the conversion and what can we learn from this setting for other types of systems development projects? The panel will present field data from firms that have prioritized their Year 2000 workload focusing on applied project management techniques. The audience is invited to contribute their experiences with Year 2000 and other projects, note similarities across enterprises, and question ways that these early stages were managed. The panel will develop scenarios for additional research still possible at this time using Year 2000 projects as a laboratory to generalize, test, and develop project management techniques.

For the first time, information technology professionals face a deadline that can have no extension. Gartner Group indicates that we deliver on schedule less than 20% of the time. Using our own tools, such as CASE applications, to facilitate the systems development process seems to have made little more than a dent. Project management expertise, not a host of COBOL programmers, provides the key to delivering functional critical systems by midnight December 31, 1999.

Some practitioners and academics do not agree about the impact of the problem. Those firms that have begun the process can offer grave insights to nonbelievers. More importantly, we can learn and develop best practices of project management. Assessing workload, managing offshore contractors, determining conversion options, retaining staff, meeting benchmarks, and developing contingency plans increases the likelihood of success internally. With dependence on interorganizational systems, firms must also invest in collaborative efforts with their external partners. Panelists will discuss the complications of highly distributed systems and heterogeneous IT architectures and governance mechanisms, as well as the additional strain for European-based firms of Euro currency conversion.

The panelists will briefly describe lessons from projects that have already completed the analysis and prioritization stages for Year 2000 compliance at Equifax, New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Pennysaver, a multinational bank, a Canadian insurance company, a multinational conglomerate, and the SIM Year 2000 Working Group. Project management techniques provide the focus of the discussion. Each panelist will provoke the audience with a project management issue from their settings to promote discussion of alternative techniques.