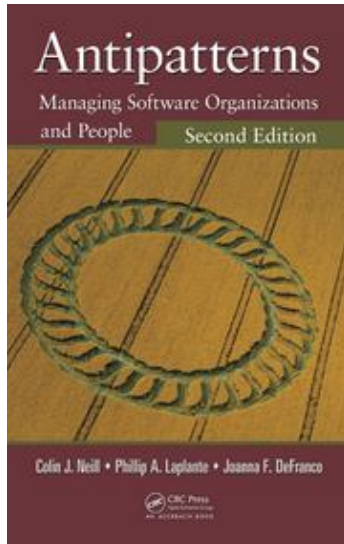

PM World Book Review



Book Title: ***Antipatterns: Managing Software Organizations and People, 2nd Edition***

Authors: **Colin J Neill, Phillip A. Laplante, Joanna F. DeFranco**

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Reviewer: **Bert Potter**

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Introduction to the Book

Patterns are defined in the preface as “problem-solution pairs for architecture, design, management, etc.’ Antipatterns are those problem practices or solution pairs that cause projects to fail. This reference guide discusses patterns and anti-patterns, human patterns and anti-patterns, successful team leadership, management and environmental anti-patterns and finally how to deal with anti-patterns. It details 48 specific antipatterns and their characteristics and potential solutions.

Overview of Book’s Structure

The book starts out with a discussion of patterns and antipatterns in general and breaks the entire set of antipatterns into either management or environmental antipatterns. Further setting the stage, the authors discuss human patterns and antipatterns in the context of personality types using several personality tools and how to use human patterns. There is a discussion of negative personality types, how to handle them and conflict management. Group patterns and antipatterns are discussed with leadership and team theory. Next, the authors lead us through successfully leading teams discussing team size, Theory X, Y and Z as well as other leadership theories. Closing out the book are discussions on particular management antipatterns, environmental antipatterns and general advice in dealing with antipatterns.

The authors have set about to create a 'reader-friendly' text, trying to keep it from being too dry. They have plenty of examples to illustrate their discussions, exercises and references at the end of each chapter.

The book is targeted at IT and software engineering managers and team members for use as a reference guide. Chapter 1 introduces the material and gives a simple look up table for relevant antipatterns from the catalogs in Chapters 4 and 6. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 introduce material on human behavior and management theory for groups and individuals. Chapters 5 and 6 are catalogs of various antipatterns the authors have found and each antipattern is set up with a "Central Concept," "Dysfunction," "Vignette" (to illustrate), "Explanation," "Band Aid" for a quick fix, "Self Repair," for the manager, "Refactoring" to fix the problem and "Identification" to help insure correct antipattern identification.

Highlights: What I liked!

This update has been needed, having bought and read an antipatterns book in 1999. I found the examples relevant to real world issues and practices. Having seen many of these, you often chuckle in reflection and identification with what the authors are talking about.

The authors also task team members and those leading teams to think about leadership and organizational behavior. Leadership as the glue of successful teams is often over looked, and a key driver of failure. Understanding and learning from your and other's mistakes and problems are key to successful projects, programs and effective project delivery.

There are many examples of antipatterns, and the authors freely admit that new and interesting antipatterns are being created every day. I really liked the idea that there is a core framework to look at antipatterns, diagnose them, and work on the refactoring or corrective actions to get back on track.

The discussion of conflict management is a very relevant tool when looking at antipatterns. Antipatterns exist when there are problems and problems and their solutions often involve changing behaviors which can cause friction and conflict. Successfully handling conflict as a part of the refactoring is important.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

The academic tone of the book may be off-putting to some project professionals or managers, but the meat of the books is excellent. The authors do attempt to make this a more readable book with humor and an eye for real world examples.

Classifying all antipatterns as either Management or Environment issues may be a bit broad. There could be antipatterns in the design, technology direction or external forces that are outside of management or environmental silos.

Who might benefit from the Book

This book should be a part of software managers at any level, team members and project professionals' library. An excellent reference when things are not going quite right. The behaviors extend outside of software teams, but the core target is software teams and management and improving the success of development efforts.

Conclusion

Discovering antipatterns years ago was extremely helpful. Understanding from other's mistakes or problems clearly drives better results. This book extends to new territory and with new tools the original work. Having seen many of the examples and patterns first hand, it validated that these are real world problems and potential real world solutions.

Antipatterns: Managing Software Organizations and People, 2nd Edition; by Colin J Neill, Phillip A. Laplante and Joanna F. DeFranco; Published by CRC Press/Taylor & Francis Group; October 2011; ISBN 978-1-4398-6186-8; List Price = US\$79.95; more about the book at <http://www.crcpress.com/product/isbn/9781439861868>.

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