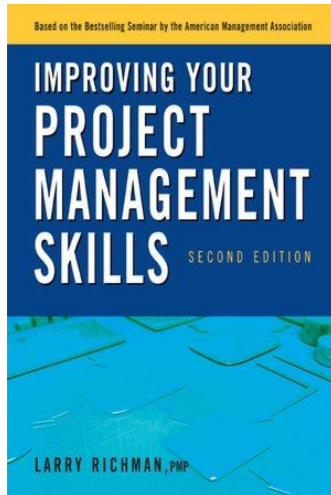

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Improving your Project Management Skills, 2nd Edition***

Author: **Larry Richman, PMP**

Publisher: **AMACOM**

List Price: US\$29.50

Format: soft cover; 156 pages

Publication Date: 2012

ISBN: 9780814408759

Reviewer: ***Mark Davis, CISM. PMP***

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Introduction to the Book

The premise of this book is that people are the greatest cause of project challenges – and for this reason, project managers must develop and demonstrate leadership skills beyond technical competency and project management methods.

A successful project manager is required to use his soft skills to a greater extent than his hard (technical) skills. Therefore, the secret of project leadership is learning how to grow and leverage these soft skills – interpersonal relationships in particular.

Overview of Book's Structure

The author presents three detailed projects, each in the form of a “Project Play”. These plays provide examples of a failed project, a project with a reasonably fair result, and a project with a very good outcome. Each project involves a fairly complex ERP software implementation, with large and diverse project teams that include “Type-A” personalities in decision-making roles.

Each scenario illustrates that 80% of project issues are due to people. And successful completion of the described project required a flexible project manager with strong interpersonal skills.

Highlights: What's New in this Book

The author emphasized the importance of the project manager building a cohesive team by facilitating team-building events. Many project leaders make three incorrect assumptions: 1) adults in the workplace naturally know how to work together, 2) we expect everyone to behave in the same manner, and 3) we can resolve differences by simply discussing them with each other in a logical manner. Consideration should be given to team building prior to and throughout the entire project.

Highlights: What I liked!

Successful project managers need a balance of professional skills (described by the author as a “three-legged stool”). This includes technical competency, understanding of project management methods, and interpersonal (soft) skills.

A dysfunctional team typically results from two causes: a lack of trust and poor communications among its members. The author provides four questions that help a project manager assess whether his project team is dysfunctional or not.

The author also provided a list of seven essential elements of high performing teams.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

One of the project plays seemed somewhat outdated. This book was published in 2011, but the second play described that the Y2K rollover-event was fast approaching (and the company was unprepared for it). Nonetheless, the lessons from this project were still useful to illustrate the theme of this leadership book.

An organizational diagram would have made it easier for “visual learners” like me to follow along with so many names mentioned as characters in each story.

Who might benefit from the Book

This is a good resource for intermediate to advanced project managers. Some of the lessons may seem to be common-sense, but the case studies serve as a good reminder of the importance of strong inter-personal skills (a lesson which many project managers, including myself, learned first-hand from managing from troubled projects).

Conclusion

Practicing project management can equate to a great deal of emotional stress. The personal style and soft skills of the project manager can greatly influence the success of the project manager and the individual projects that he manages.

Improving your Project Management Skills, Second Edition, by Larry Richman, PMP, published by AMACOM; 2011; ISBN 9780814417287; \$15.00 USD; 224 pages, soft cover. More at <http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814417287>

Editor's note: This book review was the result of cooperation between the publisher, PM World and the Dallas Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI Dallas Chapter – www.pmidallas.org). Publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members are all mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.net.

About the Reviewer



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Mark Davis is an Information Technology Director at Miraca Life Sciences in Irving, Texas, USA. His current role includes leadership of a Project Management Office, IT Risk and Compliance, and Software Quality Assurance. He has an MBA from the University of North Texas and certifications in Project Management and Information Security Management. Mark can be contacted at markcdavis01@gmail.com.