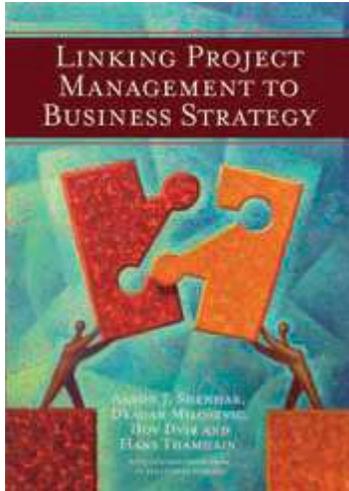

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Linking Project Management to Business Strategy***

Authors: Aaron J. Shenhar , Dragan Milosevic , Dov Dvir and Hans Thamhain, with contributions from 11 additional authors

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This book has made a fairly successful attempt in dealing with the emerging topic of relating project management to strategy. It describes the subject starting with a conceptual discussion followed by empirical research ending finally with insight on what the future is likely to be. This approach will be suitable both to the first time reader of this subject as well as the expert researcher who is seeking answers to specific questions.

According to the authors, the need for such a book has arisen because of the missing elements in PM Best Practices which lays emphasis on planning /efficiency, and obsession with processes, and orientation towards tools. Many organizations assume that all projects are of the same type and mindset is “to get job done”. This is interesting because it strikes at roots of our current thinking both within the project management community and executive levels.

The book talks about the Strategic Project Leadership models and its five poles - strategy, spirit, organization, processes and tools. One will find a lot of literature on the subject of strategic management of projects which include many of the concepts mentioned. Some of these have been elaborated quite well in this book namely those on project spirit and the discussion on project strategy. The former because it describes “passion for projects” as necessary ingredient in project success in a formal way and the latter because of its view with models used for formulating business or organizational strategy. Another interesting topic in the book is Project Success. Here, there is a bold attempt to move away from the more traditional triple constraint parameters of project success to an organizational perspective.

The concept of Project Strategy which is viewed as a missing link is positioned between Business strategy and the Project plan. It has been explained in terms of parameters like cost, customer focus, time and product advantages, which are part of well-known strategy models and therefore makes it an effective means of communication to an executive audience. One of the conclusions drawn is that while project strategy may be formulated at the initiating stage of the project it is often not continued during the executing phase.

Project Spirit or team spirit in projects has been conceptualized to include vision, values, team events /rituals and symbols. Attitudes, emotion and norms have been tested out using four projects and conclusions have been drawn and recommendations made.

Reviewing the meaning of Project Success is received a lot of attention recently and so the discussion on it in the book is quite relevant. This has been viewed in terms of various dimensions which include traditional methods of time budget and requirement goals, benefit to the customer and performing organization and preparing for the future. This is reported through analysis with various case studies indicating likely quantitative measures which can be used to determine project success.

Research work and results mentioned is based on cases of projects from the US, Israel and other parts of the world with some of them being quantitative and statistical. Arguably while this may not cover all geographies or project types, yet it would be useful for getting some insight on linking project management and strategy. Further, case studies seem to be predominantly for product oriented companies and one wonders if similar conclusions can be drawn for projects for external customers and services.

On the flip side, the book focuses on the work and publications of the principal author, and this is also visible from the fact that the contributions and content from the other authors do not entirely blend with the concept of "Strategic Project Leadership ". From the title of the book one could have expected discussion from a wider perspective and not restricted to specific frameworks.

Barring the minor deficiencies that I have noticed, the book has presented concepts, reasoning and the results cogently and it is a step forward in the study of the relationship of project management with strategy

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