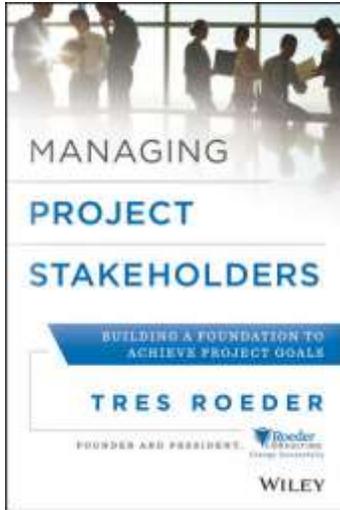

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Managing Project Stakeholders: Building a Foundation to Achieve Project Goals***

Author: Tres Roeder, MBA, PMP

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Reviewer: ***Christopher Frost, MBA, PMP***

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Introduction to the Book

Managing a successful project requires a balanced approach of technical skills, business knowledge, and people skills. Tres Roeder believes that the lack of a balanced approach is a major reason for project failure. Unfortunately, the PMBOK is so focused on technical project management that it misses how to effectively work with people. In *Managing Project Stakeholders*, Tres does a nice job supplementing the PMBOK Guide and showing readers some best practices for managing people involved with the project.

To successfully manage projects in today's world, one often has to influence stakeholders without dotted-line authority and push along the project, using negotiation and a wide variety of "soft skills". According to a 2012 Roeder Consulting survey, 82% of project managers had no direct reports. This increased dependence on collaboration makes people skills, or what Tres refers to as "sixth sense", more important than ever.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book starts by showing how to categorize stakeholders and prioritize them using the stakeholder register. Tres breaks out stakeholders into five groups – project team members, executives, external stakeholders, stakeholders impacted by change, and phantom stakeholders. Within each group, he provides tips on working with that particular stakeholder group, as well as things to watch out for.

Halfway into the book, he moves into a broad discussion on stakeholder communication where he emphasizes the importance of communicating through as many channels as possible. This leads into a separate chapter on managing virtual teams where he has a nice discussion on dealing with technical difficulties and time zone differences. Then, he wraps up by talking about how to deal with difficult stakeholders. The author reiterates that the most difficult aspect of handling a project involves people issues. Instead of fixating on each objection as a hurdle, he advocates looking at each potential problem as an opportunity to take a leadership role and drive change.

He ends the book with sections on leadership, getting buy-in, and negotiation. Tres gives a number of tools and techniques including an explanation of the Situational Leadership Model. With situational leadership, part of the art of leadership is knowing when to lead and when to follow. He also talks about adapting one's leadership style to match the time of the project and the experience level of the team members.

Highlights: What's New in this Book

In his section on Leadership, Tres Roeder recaps parts from his earlier book, *A Sixth Sense for Project Management*. In it, he advocates that six disciplines form a framework for leadership skills. He applies these in three steps – Aware, Adapt, and Act. The first step is Awareness - starting with awareness of a leader's own style, awareness of others in the group, and an awareness of the situation. The second step is Adaptability - using that awareness to adapt the leadership style to fit the group and situation. The final step is to take action using the four remaining disciplines of Whole Body Decisions, Clear Communication, Diplomacy, and Persistence.

Also, Tres adds a classification for phantom stakeholders. These are stakeholders that are unidentified and unknown to the project team. Part of managing a successful project is being vigilant for these phantom stakeholders by continuously looking for discrepancies between expected and actual project execution and asking, "What is missing?" If someone knows about a surprise before you, they might be a stakeholder. And when a change occurs to the project and the initial source is not known, it might point to a phantom stakeholder. Once these phantom stakeholders have been identified, they can be addressed in the stakeholder register.

Highlights: What I liked!

The author regards buy-in as an ongoing process. He addresses this through the Circle of Support where stakeholders are included, observed, and then responded to. When resistance is encountered, Tres advocates asking why 5 times to define the root causes of the resistance. This is especially important in diffusing emotional reasons for resistance. To provide for meaningful conversations, the author emphasizes the importance of building in time for people to process change.

Since projects can produce controversial changes, the project manager's role as a diplomat is critical to work out concessions between various stakeholders. The book's final section on Negotiation suggested several ways to change a power play into a negotiation. It also warned the project manager against forcing a project down the throats of the various stakeholders, preaching that negotiation is a two-way street.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

The book does a very nice job of delivering exactly what it promised – a set of tools and techniques to manage project stakeholders from project initiation to completion. The last section was especially interesting to me and I would have personally preferred more on Gaining Buy-In and Negotiating. However, I understand that you could easily have a separate book devoted to either topic.

Who might benefit from the Book

This book would benefit anyone who works with people on their projects. With the PMBOK Guide's inclusion of stakeholder management in the 5th edition, there might also be PMPs who want to use this book to gain a better understanding of this knowledge area.

Conclusion

Managing Project Stakeholders is a quick, easy read with lots of good tips and tools. In a recent May webinar, Shawn Kent Hayashi talked about having conversations that get results and inspire collaboration. For her, the project is a direct result of all that dialogue.

As project manager, we start the conversation with ourselves, share those conversations with others, and inspire passion by what our team can achieve together. Tres Roeder has written a guide on how to identify those people who need to be included and how to make them active participants in those conversations. He has a concise writing style that nicely picks up where the PMBOK Guide leaves off.

Managing Project Stakeholders: Building a Foundation to Achieve Project Goals, by Tres Roeder, MBA, PMP, published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 2013, ISBN 9781118504277; \$45.00 USD; 236 pages, hard cover. More at <http://www.amazon.com/Managing-Project-Stakeholders-Building-Foundation/dp/1118504275>

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 generally 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



Christopher Frost



Christopher Frost, MBA, PMP, works as an IT project manager for Collin College and resides in Plano, TX with his wife and 4 kids. Although currently active in higher education, Chris has worked with a number of Fortune 100 companies including UPS, Verizon, and American Airlines. With more than 15 years of experience in Information Technology, Chris has been active in dozens of projects involving enterprise databases, business intelligence, and web-related projects.

In addition to his PMP certification, Chris is both an Oracle Certified Professional and a Microsoft Certified Professional. He has authored a book on Android and spoken at several higher education conferences as a technical expert.

In his free time, Chris volunteers with the PMI Dallas chapter, the Soupmobile, and the Dallas Oracle Users Group. He also is passionate about staying fit and recently completed his first half marathon.

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