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Business Leadership for IT Projects
Author: Gary Lloyd
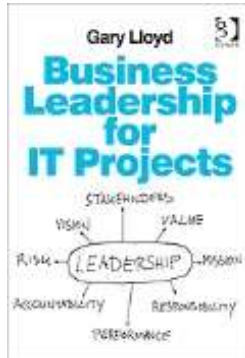Book Review   Reviewer: Shailaja Suresh

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title: *Business Leadership for IT Projects*

Author: **Gary Lloyd**

Publisher: **Gower Publishing Ltd**

List Price: US$85   **Format:** Hard cover; 165 pages

Publication Date: **September 2013**

ISBN: 9781409456902

Reviewer: **Shailaja Suresh**   **Review Date:** April, 2014

Introduction to the Book

The author interests the reader right at the introduction by briefing why most IT projects fail. He indicates that according to research, most IT projects fail because of people rather than technology issues. According to him, "An IT system achieves nothing unless it is coupled with the achievement of a business outcome". Thus in the book, he emphasizes the importance of business leadership in IT projects to make them successful.

Apart from the above, the book helps to address the psychological bear-traps in two ways: first, by finding ways to slow down thinking to give the more evolved aspects of the brain to join the brainstorm; and second, by soliciting outside views to give different perspectives to deal with IT projects with lesser emotional involvement.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book changes the regular pattern of thinking while doing IT projects. It asks the readers to reconsider alternatives before designing an IT solution to address a business problem. It is important to identify other options to solve such a problem. The alternatives like changing processes or buying a service that already exists may be all that is required in many cases.

In the subsequent chapters, the crucial elements that are required to focus on to make an IT project successful are dealt with. The key focus areas include:

1) Take leadership and 'step up to the plate'
2) Have a clear vision of what the project would accomplish from the angle of the key stakeholders

3) Structure the solution such that it delivers business value at regular chunks that could be evaluated against performance criteria, cost and schedule
4) Set performance criteria, budget and schedule constraints of the solution right at the beginning of the project so that the direction of the solution is clear
5) Review the business case summary regularly with the stakeholders so that the vision is not lost
6) Be proactive. Review expenditure and progress versus the budget and schedule using earned value analysis

The flow of the book is seamless and grips the reader in every chapter. The sequential flow of chapters on the key ideas above helps create a mind map on the practical angles rather than the theoretical angles of project leadership.

Highlights: What's new in this book?

Even the book's title throws light on the new dimension of handling IT projects through *business leadership*. It greatly differs from most other books by asking the readers to 'do IT' only if it is required. It insists on comparing it to the value provided by the other alternatives like changing the process or buying an already existing service.

It brings out the new idea on developing a project strategy which does not require the stakeholders to wait until the project's end to get all the value. There should be *regular value* delivered throughout the project.

There is also this new idea of defining the required performance criteria of the solution before the start of the project like, "The new solution should be more flexible than the existing business solution". Such a criterion helps to choose the right solution option with the right technology, with the right business case to deliver the right value.

Highlights: What I liked!

The book proves to be a good read focusing more on practical business leadership than theoretical project management. It makes one believe that every fact is a fact as the author gives evidence of statistical data for every statement he makes. This is a rarity in management books where usually the ideas alone are just quoted from other books.

Every chapter in the book is so very intelligently designed to throw light on only the key aspects of business leadership. This makes it an interesting and a light read. The fonts and line spacing of the book are very friendly to the eyes as well.

Ideas like "Tailor the business to the solution, not the solution to the business" sound not only catchy but are also promising since the author has proven such concepts in his projects. Overall, I like the book since there is emphasis on proactivity and leadership

rather than just management unlike most other books. I would recommend this book as a guide to all the members of an IT solution team.

Who might benefit from the book?

The book has been targeted for business managers/sponsors, functional line managers and business owners. Project managers may use this book to optimize return on investment through the effective involvement of business managers.

One can also use this book as an overall guide or as a source of individual tools to experiment on IT projects.

Conclusion

Since the book focusses on keys aspects of business leadership and elucidates the tools and techniques to achieve those, it is more a practical book. It has new ideas with proven approaches which could be experimented with the IT projects to make them successful. Since the author has a vast management consulting experience using these concepts, the book is definitely worth a read.

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. Reviewers can keep the books and claim PDUs for PMP recertification. 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.

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About the Reviewer

Shailaja Suresh

Shailaja Suresh did her B.E and B.Tech (dual engineering degree) from College of Engineering, Guindy, Chennai, India. She also did a c-PGDBA in management from Symbiosis, Pune, India. She is a PMI certified Project Management Professional and a certified Scrum Master who has a vast experience and exposure in Agile related software methodologies.

She loves reading, writing and solving puzzles. She takes great interest in archaeological studies and artifacts. Collecting old Indian coins has been one of her hobbies since childhood.

Anything out of the ordinary interests her and kindles her curiosity. She enjoys interacting with people on space and management related topics.

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