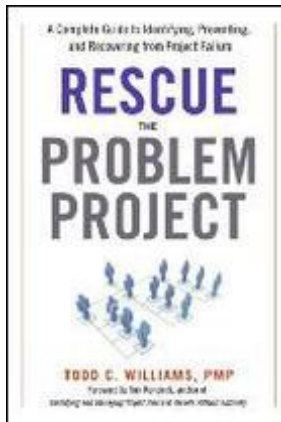


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Rescue the Problem Project: A Complete Guide to Identifying, Preventing, and Recovering from Project Failure***

Author: **Todd C. Williams, PMP**

Publisher: **Amacom**

List Price: US\$ 22.00      Format: Hard cover; # 277 pages

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Reviewer: ***Jimmy J Godard***

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### Why should you read this book?

How did you do on your last project?

The goal of all project stakeholders is that everything goes well. This is not realistic in many organizations. Research indicates that more than 15 percent of large projects fail; threatening the existence of the organization and delivering 56 percent less value than predicted.

I recommend this book because it lays out an insightful process, based on real world examples, to identify, prevent and recover from project failure. I had the opportunity to work with the author, Todd Williams, as a fellow board member at the Project Management Institute (PMI) Portland Chapter (Oregon). Todd, a seasoned professional, has served our PMI local Chapter, provided guidance, built leading-edge systems, recovered red projects and helped prevent recurring failures for more than 25 years. Executives at all levels seek Todd's guidance on how to improve their organizations. He has now made his working knowledge available to us via this book.

### Overview

The premise of the book is to profile a recovery process for failing projects. It is not a manual that provides guidance on how to manage projects. Rather, it is an end to end process on rescuing projects.

The target audience is stakeholders who are seasoned in project management, with specific applicability toward consultants. The book is technical in nature; which fits the purpose and subject. Therefore, it is not an easy read in which you follow a story from beginning to end. The book contains 20 chapters. There is a chapter that lays

out the nature and purpose of each chapter and even establishes relationships between them. In addition, this book cites real case studies in each chapter that illustrate or support the materials and augment the book.

Williams highlights four driving elements that are important in rescuing a distressed project. At the outset, he outlines a common sense approach on how to rescue a project from the brink of disaster. His recommendations are to 1) Identify what is wrong with the project, 2) Develop a plan to correct it, and 3) Understand the measures required to prevent recurring failure.

He then depicts a process flow that teaches how to 1) Audit the project, 2) Analyze the data from the audit, 3) Negotiate a solution with the team and management and 4) Execute the negotiated solution as a new project. Next, he advises how to prevent failure and find a negotiated solution that can follow the same path as the original project. He further explains how to identify the early signs of a failing project and how to understand the dynamics behind it.

Finally, he reviews in detail two distinct methodologies (Agile and Critical Chain) which can be leveraged to execute the new project and briefly discusses the traditional or waterfall methodology.

## **Relevance**

As a senior change manager for a Fortune 500 company, I can relate to the case studies described in the book. I recently completed a four year program and wish that I read this book during the time I was overseeing the projects under the program. Some of the projects got into trouble, and it became necessary to bring in a reputable consulting firm to assist in resolution. This book has now given me a rational reason as to what went wrong and what I can do in the future to avoid sleepless nights.

## **What is missing?**

Todd depicts a common sense approach in the book. It is a great reference to help rescue your distressed project or get it out trouble. Although the case studies highlight the real world success stories, they also unintentionally portray outside consultants as rescuers to failed projects. I do concur with the notion that senior executives tend to listen to outside consultants rather than their own project managers. I would have appreciated some examples on how internal project managers have applied the process to get a project back on track. Furthermore, the case studies could have provided more credence to the book had they also highlighted some failed projects, as well as examples of what not to do.

## **Conclusion**

This book displays a wealth of real industry knowledge project managers can leverage to identify anomalies with their projects how to be aware of the negative factors. It depicts a practical approach to handling and recovering troubled projects by: 1) Realizing that a problem exists, 2) Auditing the project with facts instead of

emotions, 3) Analyzing data objectively, 4) Negotiating solutions with stakeholders and 5) Executing the new plan as a new project.

Many may argue this book is not a silver bullet or that there is nothing new here. I would agree. Yet, it is frequently the simple standard that we overlook. It is the various shortcuts that often lead our projects to disaster. The process this book outlines will assist the project manager to architect a recovery plan, and make adequate changes to inhibit recurring failure.

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*Rescue the Problem Project: A Complete Guide to Identifying, Preventing, and Recovering from Project Failure*, by Todd C. Williams, PMP, published by AMACOM, \$USD 22.00; 277 pages, Hard cover. More information at [PMI Marketplace](http://PMI Marketplace)

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## About the Reviewer



### **Jimmy Godard**

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Jimmy Godard, MBA, PMP, is a seasoned change manager. His work focuses on implementing global enterprise wide changes that impact, people, process, and technology.