

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Personal Effectiveness in Project Management***

Author: **Zachary Wong, Ph.D.**

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Reviewer: **Dan Murphy**

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Introduction

Upon first seeing a copy of this book, I was intrigued by the subtitle: “Tools, Tips, and Strategies to improve your decision-making, motivation, confidence, risk-taking, achievement, and sustainability.”

What project manager **doesn't** want to be a better leader, make better decisions, achieve greater goals, and do so time after time, project after project? Without question, a successful project manager has command of those reasonably well-defined skills such as project planning, requirements definition, resource allocation, cost control, and risk identification and mitigation, and strives for improvement in all those areas.

To complement those skills, this text aims to help the reader understand their own human factors –what makes them unique, what their values are, their areas of influence, their attitude and outlook, their own goals and objectives. From that understanding comes a greater ability to make the right decisions, to motivate teams, and to set and achieve goals that lead to personal and professional success.

Overview of Book's Structure

In the first chapter, the author provides an exposition of the text and presents a framework for managing what are often referred to as “soft” skills. He calls this framework the “*personal effectiveness cycle*” and describes the four functions in this cycle as **decision-making, motivation, achievement, and sustainability**. Each of these four functional areas is supported by two “human factors”:

1. **Decision-making** – a process that requires an understanding of who you are (the author calls this factor *diversity*) and what you believe in (*values*).
2. **Motivation** is described as an internal feeling that is both self-generated (from the human factor the author calls *set point*) and externally induced (by the factor of *space*).

3. **Achievement** – the desired outcome of your actions, opportunities, and abilities – is affected by the human factors of *fear* and of *inclusion* (or *engagement*).
4. **Sustainability** – the capacity to achieve continuous success – to get results and feel good about it – is supported by the factors of *passion* and *goals*.

For each of the four functions, the book devotes a module of three chapters; one chapter each for the human factors, and one chapter as a “How-To” with tips on applying the concepts.

Highlights of the Text and What I Liked Most

The author does an effective job of explaining the concepts and ideas presented and the terms and language he uses in his defined framework. For instance, when he uses the term *diversity*, he makes the distinction that it “is not a process or policy, but a crucial human factor in teamwork and decision-making.” He goes on to illustrate that he casts diversity not merely in terms of cultural background, but in the combination of knowledge, skills and training, experience, and talents and temperament, describing it as a “personal library”. This self-awareness - the knowledge of one’s strengths and weaknesses, all the factors that make up one’s individuality – enables people to do their best.

In a similar way, the author explains the human factor of “set point” – one’s temperament and outlook towards life and its events, and how that is a net effect of various motivating (and de-motivating) factors.

The author provides tools, several in tabular and graphic form, to help the reader with a variety of exercises. These exercises are intended to accomplish such self-awareness tasks as identifying and mapping out their core values, categorizing fears, and distinguishing motivation from passion. At the end of each chapter, the author provides a one-page summary of the key points presented.

I found the definition of terms and the included exercises valuable in understanding the framework of the personal development cycle and gaining more insight into the underlying factors. I believe that many of the concepts may already be familiar with readers, but perhaps not in the same terms as the author uses. Readers may feel that they have been exposed to these ideas and concepts before; the author’s framework provides a useful structure from which to ask, and begin to answer, questions that can lead to greater knowledge of how they make decisions, how they motivate themselves and others, how they establish and achieve goals, and how they ensure continued success.

Who might benefit from the book, Conclusions, and Commentary

If the best project managers are the ones who seek to be self-aware, to pursue continuous personal growth, to understand what motivates themselves and their teams, and to provide leadership that stems from their core values, then this text can be a valuable tool in the pursuit of all of these characteristics.

The factors often referred to as the “soft skills” are things that most project managers are familiar with. But the framework the author presents and the definitions of human factors that he provides may take a different approach than one may be used to. This book, then, can be both a challenge in that it presents familiar material in a different manner, as well as a useful reference text that can be pulled from the shelf and re-visited as often as warranted.

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About the Reviewer



Dan Murphy

Beaverton, Oregon



Dan Murphy, PMP, is a project manager with over 10 years of experience leading teams to develop and introduce high-performance electronic components in a manufacturing environment.