

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Project Management Checklists for Dummies***

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Introduction

“Project Management Checklists for Dummies” is a book packed with handy checklists and templates designed to help one develop an orderly approach to project management by encouraging thinking things through carefully and not leaving important details to chance. It emphasizes getting things done right the first time so that expensive redesign and rework can be avoided later on in the project.

While the underlying theme of the book centers around checklists, its goal is not meant to be a mindless exercise of checking off items but instead is meant to provide direction and guidance as to how those items were identified and the criteria used to determine whether or not it should be included on a checklist.

Overview of Book’s Structure

The book begins with a clearly defined and labeled Introduction section. Despite the fact that it is titled ***“Project Management Checklists for Dummies”***, it makes no assumptions that the audience reading the book is limited to just Project Managers only. Extra resources are provided for those who do not have the official title of ‘Project Manager’ but aspire to gain a better understanding of the Project Management field and its concepts. Icons are provided in the left margins of the book to indicate salient points such as tips, examples, and warnings.

“Project Management Checklists for Dummies” is designed so that one can dip into the book at different points according to what one needs at the time. In that way, there are no dependencies between chapters though one will want to read Chapter 1 first just to lay the groundwork for the rest of the book.

Highlights

“Project Management Checklists for Dummies” is structured into 6 parts and 23 chapters. Part 1 – Understanding Projects and Checklists provides an overview into projects and checklists and how to use them. Part 2 deals with checklists associated with Kickoff meetings and the Initial Phases of the project. Part 3 deals with Planning checklists. Part 4 examines checklists used for Project Control. Part 5 goes over

Additional Project checklists, and Part 6 wraps up with a discussion on effective planning and estimation techniques.

In the Kickoff portion of the book, several useful checklists are provided. Among them include the Ideas Checklist, the Recommendation Checklist, the Consultation Checklist, and the Ready to Roll checklist. Each checklist focuses on select parameters and the book provides guidelines on how to construct each one. For example, for the Ideas checklist, the book recommends that it should be created on a single side of paper and focus on one clear idea perhaps as a meeting item. It should include the following fields – background, description, business perspective, advantages, and resources and timing. The goal of the Ideas Checklist would be to get approval to do more research and ultimately to produce a Recommendation, which is where the Recommendations checklist would come in. Each checklist establishes a relationship with the others.

Several useful templates that make up the Planning checklists include the Business Case checklist, the Product Planning checklist, the Staffing checklists, Resources Checklist, and Risk Checklists. Similar to the Kickoff portion of the book, each checklist establishes a relationship with one another and the information from one could be used as an input to another.

The Project Control portion of the book describes a number of checklists associated with Stage Reporting and conducting a Stage Gate. It also includes templates for completing Team Progress Reports, Stage Progress Reports, and a Project Evaluation Report.

Under the Additional Project Checklists, guidelines are given for how to take over an existing project and how to audit someone else's projects. The final portion of the book is dedicated to the part of tens – Ten Sets of Also Known As (AKAs), Ten Tips for Effective Planning, and Ten Tips for Estimating.

Highlights: What I liked!

The best highlights of the book are the individual checklists themselves. Checklists are categorized into the major stages such as Kick Off, Planning, and Project Control. Within each major stage are subcategories which further drill down the Project Checklists into more specific elements. For example, within the checklists for Kickoff meetings contains a set of checklists for Roles and Responsibilities that can be tailored for the project one is working on. The templates provided also allow for a systematic way of organizing the information and presenting it to all stakeholders in a simple, easy-to-read format. The fields within each checklist help guide one's thought process in a questionnaire style format and can easily be expanded upon or modified as necessary, allowing for professional looking documents to be created in minimal time.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Anyone who wants to run or help run effective projects can benefit from this book. This includes the following roles, but is not necessarily limited to this list.

- Project Managers
- Functional Managers
- Senior Managers
- Project Steering Group Members (such as a Project Sponsor)
- Team Leaders
- Project Administration Staff
- Project Auditors
- Project Support Staff

Conclusion

In conclusion, “***Project Management Checklists for Dummies***” is a must-have tool for anyone who plans to work with projects in any role. It features a rich set of checklists from practically every phase of the project lifecycle from Initiation to Closure. The checklists are presented in a simple, easy-to-read format and the fields on each one can be customized to one’s particular project needs. In addition the fields on each template offer thought-provoking questions designed to maximize the power and impact of each checklist and template.

This book’s primary intent is to provide a roadmap towards identifying the key elements of projects and capturing them in checklists so that the important details do not get missed. It stresses the power of getting things done right the first time and maximizing control over issues proactively versus firefighting and having to endure one crisis after another. It also encourages the reader to think critically about what elements really belong on a checklist versus mindlessly putting together a number of boxes and ticking them off just to fill the points.

The checklists presented in this book also serve as excellent communication tools with stakeholders at all levels of the project. This helps to level set the outcomes and expectations of the project overall which greatly increases its chances of success.

For more about this book, go to: <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1118931432.html>

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@peworldjournal.net.

About the Reviewer



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Anil Bapat is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) with over 15 years of experience in project planning, implementation, and execution. He has supported multiple projects of medium to high complexity with a consistent track record of on-time and on-quality delivery. Anil is a member of the Project Management Institute – Dallas Chapter and received his Masters of Science degree in Software Engineering from the University of Houston - Clear Lake. Anil also holds a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Computer Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. Email address: bapata36@yahoo.com