
PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Project Pain Reliever: A Just-In-Time Handbook for Anyone Managing Projects***

Editor: **Dave Garrett**

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Reviewer: **Sheila Jackson** Review Date: January 2015

Introduction

Think of this book as a trusted friend, a mentor, that person to call before acceding to your final answer. Indexed in a question and answer format, the aptly titled Project Pain Reliever is a compilation of answers to common project management questions and problems authored by thirty leading project management experts. The handbook's tone is straightforward, at times advising the reader towards a hard, but honest, assessment of his/her responsibility, but always supportive and actionable.

As Editor Dave Garrett explains in its preface, "Project management can be a lonely and even painful job." This collection, then, is an antidote to what can be an isolating endeavor. Covering a broad range of topics, the book is comprised of two parts: Leadership (or the art of project management) and Management (or its science), and their sub-areas. The handbook also includes additional web downloads through the publisher's site, www.jrosspub.com.

Acknowledging that many of those responsible for managing projects are doing so as one role that they play, and not as their profession, Garrett refers to these as "accidental" project managers, he compiled this handbook of solid solutions to situations that every project manager faces at one time or another, to one degree or another. Garrett gathered this collection with this "accidental" group in mind, among the larger pool of those responsible for project results. In the alphabetized Contributors section Garrett provides brief professional bios for the panel of expert authors and notes their respective sections.

Overview of Book's Structure

For ease of use, the handbook is formatted to facilitate quick access to experienced, and nuanced, solutions on specific topics. Written in approachable, non-technical language the template for each response is comprised of five questions. So, each response answers the same five questions: 1) Problem 2) Warning Signs 3) What will happen if I do nothing? 4) Solution, and 5) What should I do?

What makes this handbook so accessible is its formatting, including a detailed table of contents listing each question. Also, the brief Contributor bios provide context for individual content. Rather than reading an entire book (this one or any other), those seeking guidance can quickly focus on specific topical questions and their expert solutions. Garrett selected the nine categories and their respective questions based upon a decade of project management and project-critical discussions that he observed as CEO of ganthead.com.

In *Project Pain Reliever's* two parts, Leadership and Management, thirty experienced project managers answer common questions/problems in nine sub-areas:

LEADERSHIP

- 1) Focusing Your Efforts
- 2) Motivating People
- 3) Effectively Communicating
- 4) Navigating People Challenges

MANAGEMENT

- 5) Dealing with Constraints, Assumptions, and Scope
- 6) Building and Delivering on Requirements
- 7) Planning
- 8) Managing People Day to Day
- 9) Managing Risks

Highlights

As a handbook, *Project Pain Reliever* doesn't have a narrative or linear plotline so assessing its highlights is highly subjective. Its likely merit is in its application in varying environments, under varying circumstances and conditions, obviously the most important being one's most immediate need or problem.

So, in a week when constraints, assumptions, and scope are pressing, one can peruse the nine related chapter 5 questions such as, (5.1) We took on too much, (5.2) Everything has changed. I need to reset goals and expectations, (5.5) We're fine, but short on time, and/or (5.9) The requirements keep changing.

Most every project manager at some point has asked, "How do I gain my team's trust?" In 3.1 Dave Prior, President of ProjectWizards, Inc. (among other credits), outlines ten tactics towards this end.

When "Vendors are not delivering" the reader can turn to 8.2 where Andy Jordan, President of Roffensian Consulting Inc., lends his insights and alternatives. Or, when "People are ignoring my emails", Josh Nankivel, BSc in Project Management, PMP, coaches us in 8.3 to first analyze our current methods of communication. He then provides a timely refresher on valid and invalid uses of email, and the importance and appropriateness of other forms of communication.

Highlights: What I liked!

I wish I'd had access to a collection like this earlier in my career. Like many others I learned along the way, hit or miss, absent of this degree of expertise. As Garrett describes it, this pursuit of knowledge (let's call them pain points) fuels the vibrancy of discussions at gantthead.com. These selected pain points are also recurring topics of discussion at the local PMI chapter dinners. I appreciate the breadth of candid content in Garrett's collection and its uniform tone of support and implied advocacy, obviously the result of prudent and proficient editing.

What drew me to this book initially was its title, after all, don't we all need a Project Pain Reliever? I have so much to learn, however, I am more confident knowing that I have a resource like this. Critically the book outlines actionable steps that I can take as PM towards resolving whatever is causing or creating project pain. In some cases, several candid authors advise, I may be the cause, while in other cases resolution may require strategic or tactical approaches. These assessments and subsequent decisions are prescriptive in successful project management, and as Ty Kiisel tells us in 1.8, "the refusal to make decisions is akin to voting yourself *off the island.*"

Who might benefit from the Book?

Most of my PM experience has been in a non-technical (IT) environment. Fortunately, Project Pain Reliever is written to a broad audience, anyone managing projects as a part or entirety of one's role. The language is approachable and welcoming, non-judgmental but candid. Readers can do further research to delve further into specific topics of interest. However, the book's content is applicable at all levels of experience because the questions selected are so universally relevant. In other words, the content is neither dated nor dependent upon some anachronistic assumption.

Conclusion

This book is a collection of viewpoints, yet is singular in message. Therefore, Project Pain Reliever benefits from its diversity of sources, acknowledged industry experts, in the voice of a single editor. If the title drew your attention, then you likely need this handbook. I anticipate referring to and applying this handbook for years to come, along with the dynamic web content available through www.gantthead.com. Yes, this is a book that I will keep handy.

For more about this book, go to: <http://www.jrosspub.com/project-pain-reliever.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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Sheila Jackson, PMP, MBA has more than fourteen years of project management experience, working mostly in marketing, live events, and ecommerce. For twelve years she worked for a global marketing/advertising agency; her most recent work has been within omni-channel ecommerce. Sheila has a BA in Psychology from Baylor University and an MBA from the University of North Texas.