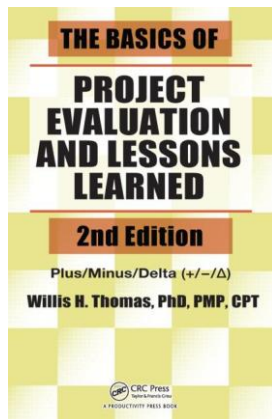


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***The Basics of Project Evaluation and Lessons Learned***

Author: **Willis H. Thomas**

Publisher: **CRC Press**

List Price: US\$24.99 Format: soft cover, 214 pages

Publication Date: August 2014 ISBN: 978-1-4822-0453-7

Reviewer: ***Maryanne Coelln, PMP***

Review Date: February 2015

Introduction to the Book

This is the second edition of an original work created for a doctoral dissertation supported by renowned experts in the field of evaluation.

Looking for an easy to read tutorial on what is, and how to conduct, lessons learned on a project? Mr. Thomas has the ticket for you.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book starts by orienting the reader with a few informational chapters on project management. They're easy to skip if you are a seasoned project manager, and helpful to read if you are new to the discipline.

Chapter headings lead the reader to areas of their interest. Help on agile projects? Want to get examples of what questions to ask? Is there a company out there similar to mine that I could learn from in a case study? How can I benchmark my improvements? Mr. Thomas has nicely organized the material to help find an area that applies to what is being searched.

Highlights: What's New in this Book?

Mr. Thomas added three new chapters from his first revision. The new chapters cover Agile Retrospectives, Knowledge Transfer and PRINCE2 (a methodology more common in Europe; a de facto process-based method for effective project management).

Highlights: What I liked!

What I liked most was that the book is written in a very conversational tone. The chapters are easily identifiable as to content, and topics of greater interest can be found quickly. The breadth of project management functional areas to review for

improvement and the follow up approaches using various methodologies are very good.

I had an online version for my review, but the hard copy version includes a CD of a Project Evaluation Resource Kit (PERK) that could help the reader. It's a fully functional MS Access Lessons Learned Database if you'd like something set up for you to help store and search for captured lessons learned.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

I selected this book to read hopeful to get an approach on how to create a searchable repository for the wide variety of lessons learned that our company documents after every medium to large sized project. I eagerly looked through the book to see if I could find something that I could use, but nothing jumped out at me. I had used an Excel repository in the past, and hoped for some examples in the book for low level archives.

The bonus CD included in the hard copy book is not available in the online version, or at least in the way I downloaded my copy. It appears that unless you use the CD, there isn't a format or recommendation for an elementary or middle ground to document lessons learned in a repository.

I was also hopeful to find a complete list of questions in one area to ask, but didn't find this. However, there are good questions to ask throughout the chapters, so it's possible to create a list after reading the text.

Who might benefit from the Book?

The primary target audience would be someone who is interested in a more in depth analysis and structured approach for conducting lessons learned, creating metrics and implementing changes to their processes to leverage what was learned. With or without implementing the MS Access database provided, it's helpful to have other thoughts on lessons learned approaches.

Conclusion

I strongly support conducting lessons learned sessions, and implementing what's found into standard operating procedures. So many times I hear project managers say, "oh, well, that'll be in the lessons learned" as if they're giving themselves a free pass until the next project. The key to good lessons learned is to have the goal to have fewer and fewer of them, and never the same one twice. This book supports my beliefs in implementing what you learned into a company's standard project management methodology, so that lessons learned return the value in the time spent identifying them.

The Basics of Project Evaluation and Lessons Learned, by Willis H. Thomas, published by CRC Press; 2014 ISBN 978-1-4822-0453-7; \$24.95 USD; 214 pages, soft cover. More at <http://www.crcpress.com/product/isbn/9781439872468>

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Maryanne Coelln, PMP, is Director of Project Delivery for the American Airlines Federal Credit Union. Maryanne has a B.S.C. degree in Marketing from Santa Clara University, California and earned her PMP in 2003. She has over 15 years of experience in leading technical project teams and is focused on developing practical methodologies. She has been an active member in the PMI Dallas Chapter for many years.