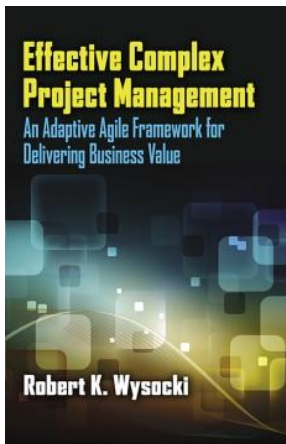


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Effective Complex Project Management: An Adaptive Agile Framework for Delivering Business Value***

Author: Robert K. Wysocki

Publisher: J. Ross Publishing www.jrosspub.com

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Introduction

Robert Wysocki states in his Introduction: “To be successful with the ACPF, you have to ‘think like a chef and not like a cook!’ ... create or modify a recipe [project management approach] based on the specific characteristics and environment of the project ...” He sprinkles this simple analogy throughout the book to illustrate the significance of the creative thinking required to apply the Adaptive Complex Project Framework (ACPF) tool he’s developed based on years of acquired expertise in managing complex projects.

He holds that effective complex project management includes keeping things simple and intuitive with an organized, common-sense approach. To that end, the ACPF provides vetted and customizable tools, templates, and processes that align with the *PMBOK® Guide* and other principles of lean management guidelines. (Refer to *Appendix C – References and Further Reading*.)

Overview of Book’s Structure

In Chapter 1 the author introduces the concept of Adaptive Complex Project Framework (ACPF). In Chapter 2 he describes the challenge of uncertainties in today’s complex business environment – high speed, high change, lower costs, increasing complexity, and increasing uncertainty. Wysocki states: “*Increasing levels of complexity and uncertainty mean the project management approaches must allow for creativity, flexibility, and adaptability on the part of the complex project team.*” He defines a complex project team, including the skills and capabilities required of a complex project manager (CPM). “*A complex project manager is a chef, not a cook.*”

Chapter 3 provides an overview and background of the holistic Adaptive Complex Project Framework. Wysocki then presents in Chapters 4 through 6 the step-by-step detail of how to creatively apply the uniqueness of the three ACPF phases – Project Ideation, Project Set-up, and Project Execution – to effectively and efficiently

manage a complex project to deliver greatest business value to the client organization.

Wysocki considers meaningful client involvement to be a Critical Success Factor (CSF) in the successful management of complex projects using ACPF and dedicates Chapter 7 to an in-depth discussion on how to establish and sustain that client involvement, including the challenges involved.

Finally, in Chapter 8 the author discusses implementation of ACPF in an organization. If your organization's Project Management Office (PMO) [which Wysocki renames to "Project Support Office (PSO)"] primarily uses Traditional Project Management, then the transition to a complex project mindset likely will require a carefully-handled assessment of PMO current state and development of a transition plan to enhance current processes and practices. A PMO desired end state focuses on adding vetted complex project management tools to ensure an increase in project business value to the client.

Highlights

Phase One of ACPF is Project Ideation. The ACPF unique holistic approach begins, not with the Project Overview Statement (POS), but with the development of the roots or ideas for a possible project.

Step 1: Develop the ACPF Business Case – What is the unmet need and what is the evidence and justification for a project investment to address the need? Wysocki highly recommends brainstorming as an effective approach to developing the ideas, followed by recommended analysis and prioritization methods to select the project to be proposed.

Step 2: Elicit Requirements – With meaningful client involvement, development of requirements includes first the set of high-level requirements sufficient to define success criteria and expected business value to be delivered. Then comes decomposition of the high-level requirements for further description of what each includes – the (incomplete) Requirements Breakdown Structure (RBS). A complete RBS will be learned / discovered during iteration throughout the project life cycle.

Step 3: Write a Project Overview Statement (POS) – This formal 1-page project document describes the selected high-level project idea presented to senior management for approval to proceed with set-up of a project. [ACPF Stagegate #1]

Wysocki calls ACPF Phase Two, Project Set-up "... the 'create the recipe' phase of a complex project." This is the opportunity for the complex project team to be flexible and creative in choosing best options to manage the complex project, based on unique ACPF tools.

Step 4: Determine Project Quadrant – Basically, this quadrant is defined by whether or not the project goal is clear and whether or not the project solution is clear. If both are clear, the project falls in the Traditional quadrant; if the

goal is not clear, the project falls in either the Extreme or Emertxe ('extreme' spelled backwards) quadrant. A project with a clear goal and a not-clear solution falls in the Agile quadrant.

Step 5: Choose the Best Fit PMLC Model – Wysocki here provides detailed information on Project Management Life Cycle (PMLC) model types – Linear, Incremental, Iterative, Adaptive, and Extreme – and how to select the best option for the project type (as determined in Step 4).

Step 6: Assess Project Characteristics – Project characteristics includes risk, cost, duration, complexity, goal and solution clarity, team skills and competencies, and completeness of requirements. Internal characteristics include business value, technology used, client involvement, and organizational aspects. External characteristics are market stability, business climate, competitor behavior, breakthrough technologies.

Step 7: Choose and Modify the Specific PMLC Model – Having chosen the best-fit PMLC model based on project characteristics, the project team then adjusts as appropriate for best alignment based on internal and external characteristics.

[ACPF Stagegate #2] At this point approval of the selected project management approach and required resources is granted. Wysocki states: "Expected incremental business value is the primary metric used to validate, approve, and prioritize a project."

ACPF Phase Three, Project Execution, is uniquely dynamic and continuously adjustable throughout the project life cycle. It includes definition of project version scope and iterative definition of cycle scope and changes, deliverable builds, and client checkpoints.

Step 8: Define the Version Scope – Write the objectives, create a high-level Work Breakdown Structure (WBS), establish team operating rules, and maintain the Scope Bank. The Scope Bank holds all the ideas for solution enhancement and all open change requests for further consideration and prioritization when each cycle is planned.

Step 9: Plan Next Cycle – "A cycle is typically of 2-4 weeks duration, and composed of one or more swim lanes." ACPF cycle planning includes what Wysocki calls Probative and Integrative Swim Lanes and resulting Task Plans.

[ACPF Stagegate #3] Each cycle plan receives approval to execute.

Step 10: Build Next Cycle Deliverables – Execute the cycle build plan.

Step 11: Conduct Client Checkpoint – The client team and the development team reviews deliverables and discoveries in order to plan the next cycle, ensuring consideration of everything in the Scope Bank.

Step 12: Close the Version – The project close step occurs upon completion of the final project cycle and client checkpoint. It includes standard close activities – client acceptance, deliverable installation, project audit and lessons learned, final project report, and celebration!

Highlights: What I liked!

- Focus on continual project management assessment and adjustment throughout the entire project life cycle to ensure that all project activity adds value to the final deliverable and to the business – not wasting time on project activities merely for the sake of PM methodology
- Creativity involved in thinking outside the ‘box’ of traditional project management
- Renaming Project Management Office (PMO) to Project Support Office (PSO)

The ACPF Kit of templates (available for free) on the Web Added Value™ resource center at www.jrosspub.com is a plus.

Who might benefit from the Book

Wysocki’s invitation to think beyond traditional project management practices can be useful to any Project Manager and Program Manager. Even if your organization is rooted in traditional project management, becoming familiar with the ACPF methodology invites out-of-the-box thinking that may be useful in any degree to improve current project management practices and thus deliver business value.

Conclusion

The depth and detail of Wysocki’s Adaptive Complex Project Framework (ACPF) methodology can only be highlighted in this brief book review. The book definitely is worth the time to read and study the tools and concepts.

I think back to projects for which application of this out-of-the-box thinking and creativity could have been useful to improve effectiveness and efficiency of managing complex projects. ACPF concepts and tools are a definite value add for project and program managers.

For more about this book, go to: <http://www.jrosspub.com/business/project-program-management/effective-complex-project-management.html>

Editor’s note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and 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. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. 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@pmworldjournal.net.

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Mary Jane Quandt is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) with specialization in IT application implementation, IT Infrastructure Service Operations and Management and process improvement, including Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Best Practices. Her project management experience includes in-depth analysis of business needs, establishment of project requirements, and successful, on-time execution of project deliverables. Her experience is in the finance, banking, government, logistics, manufacturing, and electrical engineering industries. Email: www.linkedin.com/in/maryjanequandt/ or mjquandt@att.net