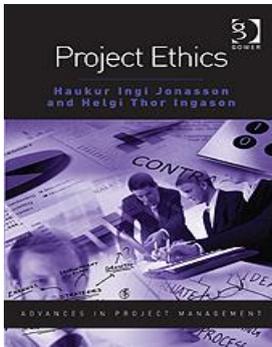


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Project Ethics***

Authors: **Haukur Ingi Jonasson & Helgi Thor Ingasson**

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Introduction

Ethical misconduct contributes and accelerates negative workplace culture and damages trust and project leadership effectiveness. Ethical dilemmas and associated problems are prevalent in projects where team members (multi-disciplinary-cultural) operate with differences in education, past experience, diverse religious backgrounds, values and various degrees of motivation. Ignoring and/or underestimating the significance of ethical project leadership behavior will lead to project failure. It is therefore, essential in the interest of the project that ethical dilemma/s are recognized and addressed quickly to enable the project team get back on scope delivery track.

The book offers the readers concepts of ethics in the context of project management and makes extensive references to philosophical theories related to ethics. It emphasizes the need for a broader approach for handling the issues than the Iron Triangle (time, cost & quality) alone. The authors attempt to describe project ethics using a set of decision-making tools and concepts to navigate around issues with reference to a value system and present a range of grey-areas and dilemmas in project management, suggesting how such issues can be approached. Ethical theories based on value, utility, duty & rights are discussed and a framework for ethical risk analyses is presented. The authors recognize the role of project leader as a key player in environment/s where values, people's rights, and sensitivity to traditions and cultures are neglected in the pursuit of monetary rewards.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book consists of six chapters. The Chapter 1-**Critical Path of Project Ethics**, describes the fundamental concepts of ethics, related issues, role of ethics in projects and four theories (virtue, utility, duty & rights). An academic survey consisting of closed-questions related with the perception of ethics conducted in Iceland that formed the basis of research is also introduced. The Chapters 2 & 3 describe **Outcome-Oriented Ethics (Virtue & Utility)** while Chapters 4 & 5 describe various areas in **Process-Oriented Ethics (Duty & Rights)**. The Chapter 6-**Project Evaluation and (Ethical) Risks**, attempts to describe conventional project risks and ethical risk factors and an

approach incorporating the four ethical theories discussed in previous chapters. Based on project elements and ethical principles, the authors present the descriptive Project Ethics Tool (PET) matrix/chart, followed by brief Conclusions, References and Index.

The book presents 9-Cases across chapters concluding with open-ended questions for the readers to ponder and 2-Cases to apply in the proposed PET matrix.

Highlights & What I liked!

Ethical conduct of project team/s is a sweltering subject matter in project design and implementation, and catching the attention of public & private sector stakeholders across industries. The authors present a conceptual framework of four ethical theories based on virtue, utility, duty and rights to address the issues within the context of project management. As a project professional, I particularly like the virtue and the duty components (utility & rights are addressed from different standpoints in project implementation and delivery).

The book lists open-ended ethical questions at the end of each chapter for the readers to ponder and decide for themselves. The questions would enable discussions and may very well lead to answers that could be included during the preliminary stages and tailored to address unique needs of projects.

In Process-Oriented Project Ethics within the obligations & sense of duty and viewpoint of duty ethics, I particularly like the authors approach suggesting the project leader to take moral option as a rational agent. The project leader must be willing to take a decisive stand in articulating the reason/s and “blow the whistle” and even quit, alerting the stakeholders about substandard performance and compromises. Such ethical and bold stands by strong ethical project leaders would be inspirational for project professionals across industries and will facilitate improved best practices and outcomes in project management.

An exhaustive theoretical and historical explanation of ethical theories and concepts and how they relate to decision-making is helpful in understanding of the subject matter. The need for ethical risk evaluation in project lifecycle clearly has merits. The application of outcome and process-oriented ethics and ethical risk analyses are concepts that require further investigation as to how well such themes can be practically inserted into the project lifecycle. A concerted effort on various fronts will require the incorporation of this element into the project charter.

Paucities: The Missing Elements!

The authors referred to project leader throughout the book, however, characteristics (soft-skills) of ethical project leaders that in fact contribute to their success are not addressed. It is recognized that ethical behavior of project leaders is a fundamental competence component that plays a vital role throughout the project lifecycle. Project executives/leaders must be cognizant and accept the fact that ethical impact of their behavior and actions impact the project. Their authority in serving as ethical leaders must be utilized to facilitate organizational culture within which positive self-regulation of

ethical behavior becomes not only compelling but norm across the board but act ethically as a routine in their operations.

As practicing project professionals, we recognize that leadership of ethical behavior during the entire project lifecycle can be accomplished and is sustainable. There are many examples of established programs in businesses that demonstrate corporate cultures in which principled actions and ethical norms dominate throughout the organizational culture.

The authors refer to more than 15 industries (aerospace to healthcare to software and every thing in between) throughout the book. The ethical challenges in the academic industry and misconduct of academia (including faculty, managers & administrators working on projects and other administrative functions), predominantly for monetary gains that have come to light in recent years, is not addressed and completely left out. The embezzlements and mismanagement related with research grant monies, training and capacity enhancement from government funding, and unethical business practices including manipulation and/or misrepresentation of facts by faculty and administrators for their positions, fringe benefits and lucrative bonuses (Atlanta Schools Cheating Scandal), are just a few to name.

With assumptions and preconceived notions, the authors claim to present ethical theories based on Western Intellectual History and thereby, in the process completely ignore the global market place leaving the cultural metacognitive competencies of ethical project leaders in global projects.

The academic oriented survey conducted in Iceland only represents that marketplace. In addition, sampling of a limited closed-ended questionnaire with 46% response rate does not adequately validate the authenticity particularly when the data results indicate only 48% of the respondents were between 41 to 50 years with only 1 to 5 years of experience in project management. Only 22% of the IPMA certified professionals in Iceland were between 50 to 60 years of age with basic knowledge of ethical theory, while only 2% had only 21 to 30 years of experience in project management. However, 95% (of the less than 50% respondents from age 21 to 60) responded strongly and agreed that knowledge of ethical theory should be part of project leader's skill-set, is indeed encouraging and most likely will reflect the same in other cultures.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Read in conjunction with the Project Management Institute's (PMI) Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (don't steal, don't cheat, and don't lie), this book serves as a basic guide for project professionals to understand the role of ethics in project management. Academia endeavoring research, training and capacity enhancement grants and project managers aspiring for supervisory roles in project management will benefit from the concepts described in the book.

The addition of ethical risk analyses in management plans and project lifecycle will particularly enable the project leaders in managing mega-projects (with diverse stakeholders), help deal with ethical dilemmas and take swift actions.

Conclusions & Discussion

Project management is driven by decisions and requires contemplations as they involve people and resources and therefore, very well come into conflict/s that create dilemmas and project risks. This book offers a fast-track learning of fundamental concepts of ethics in project management. The authors make the business case for utilizing ethical principles in conjunction with the Iron Triangle (triple constraints).

They also make the business case for the processes of ethically evaluating a project in the selection, identification of ethical challenges within the project, and need for action plans to meet such challenges. Moral capital must be recognized and aligned with the values of stakeholders and congruent with project objectives (and e.g., not for project leader's profits alone). Based on an-online academic survey, the book represents views of a few project professionals pertinent to awareness of ethics and its relevance in select industries in Iceland. Competence in ethical analyses/decision-making should be an integral part of skills of project executives/leaders. The book nevertheless, did not make the case for what makes an ethical leader in project management.

When project leaders behave unethically and make self-serving decisions, stakeholders as well as the project itself are adversely affected. Such short-term gains often lead to eventual demise of the project leader and the organization. Businesses that are managed by leaders who conduct themselves ethically and who reward their project associates for doing what is right are characterized by a positive ethical culture.

People join projects and work for companies, and they often leave supervisors not only due to incompatibility on how to do things but also due to work environment where either the supervising project leader is corrupt and/or manipulative or the top-down leadership is ethically bankrupt (Enron and many more!). The academic industry is big business and the same is true for this ever profitable and expanding business, specially the private university systems. As demand surges for university credentials around the world, the higher-education enterprise has been stronger. While many organizations have written formal codes of ethics, they are valuable only if their intent is reflected in the actions of the people who represent those organizations. Therefore, it is spot-on to say that people take their cues regarding their behaviors that are acceptable based on how they see the company's leaders acting and the behaviors that they see being rewarded in their peers.

The book promotes ethical awareness in project management and encourages project leaders to operate ethically in situations where conflicting values are prevalent and/or instigate during the project lifecycle. With its practical business case across industries, project professionals are encouraged to delve deeper into the subject matter and leadership role that is consistent with ethical behavior in project management. Superior leadership demands commitment and demonstration of ethical practices. They must walk-the-talk to earn the trust of their teams.

My experience on a variety of multidisciplinary projects dictates that success of a project largely depends on the character, meta-cognitive & emotional intelligence skills, and motivation (including control and monetary gains), of the project leader/director

responsible for the contract implementation. With lucidity of hindsight, a few spectacular failures were due to project people-related-issues, and the project director failed as a leader.

The ethical risk analyses is of relevance and particularly applicable in multidisciplinary and multicultural environment. In addition to technical competency evaluation of project teams, warning-signs and indicators of unethical project leadership should be an integral component of project lifecycle.

For more about this book, go to: <http://www.gowerpublishing.com/isbn/9781409410966>

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@pmworldjournal.net.

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Javed Azam has more than 25 years of technical/engineering and management experience in conducting and leading projects in more than 15 countries (U.S., W-Europe and SE-Asia). He served in progressively responsible positions as Regional Director, Program/Project Director and Chief Operating Officer of consulting engineering firms, and demonstrated his management, operations and leadership skills in the acquisition and implementation of complex and multidisciplinary projects (capacity enhancement, geotechnical, inspection/testing, environmental, infrastructure & water resources development) projects in often culturally challenging environments.

In addition to his technical certifications, Javed is a Licensed Professional Geoscientist (P.G., Geologist), Certified Professional Geologist (CPG), and a Certified Project Management Expert (PME). He is member of several professional organizations including the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) and the Project Management Institute (PMI). He is an alumnus of University of Texas, University of California-Berkeley, and Delft University of Technology/ITC.

Javed is driven by passion, integrity, high performance teamwork, and servant leadership to deliver successful project/program outcomes, and provides expertise to his clients and quantifiable value to his organization. He serves as a Principal Consultant with Development Group International in Dallas, TX and can be reached at JavedA@DevelopmentGroupIntl.com.