Project Resilience: The Art of Noticing, Interpreting, Preparing, Containing and Recovering

New book by Elmar Kutsch (Cranfield University), Mark Hall (Birmingham Business School) and Neil Turner (Cranfield University) published by Gower in UK


The authors look at projects not simply from a ‘mechanistic’ approach in which work can be broken down, executed and controlled as a series of interlocking parts but rather as ‘organic’ constructs, living entities existing for a finite period of time, consisting of people, structures and processes. These entities are constantly challenged by environmental adversity - risk, uncertainty and complexity. Resilience involves finding ways to help project managers notice more, interpret adversity more realistically, prepare themselves better for it, contain and recover from it quicker and more appropriately.

The book has two purposes: it offers a glimpse into our tendencies to be irrational in the face of adversity: risk, uncertainty and complexity. The second purpose is to offer a new perspective to aid in managing risky, and in particular uncertain and complex projects. The authors go beyond commonly-accepted standards in project management with the aim of providing an understanding of how to implement project-wide resilience. The purpose is to guide, not to prescribe. It is best used as a trigger for a thinking process to define your own unique approach to managing uncertainty, not to replace your experience and judgement. Ultimately, it has been written to challenge traditional wisdom in project management, and to address the rationale for creative best practices.

Elmar Kutsch is a Senior Lecturer in Risk Management, Cranfield School of Management. As a passionate skydiver and former project manager, Elmar’s interests, both privately and professionally, revolve around the management of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity; the unexpected.

Mark Hall is a Senior Lecturer in Project and Operations Management at Birmingham University, previously he worked at the University of Bristol and University of Bath. Mark worked in the UK construction industry for several years as both a surveyor and a project manager.
Neil Turner is the Course Director of the MSc in Programme and Project Management at Cranfield University. His current research interests are around organisational learning in the context of complex projects and programmes, with a focus on how organisations (don't) learn to improve their project performance. He was previously an Engineering Manager in a large multinational telecommunications firm, and is a Fellow of the Institute of Engineering and Technology.

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