PM World *Journal*
Vol. VI, Issue I – January 2017
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Social Project Manager
Author: Peter Taylor
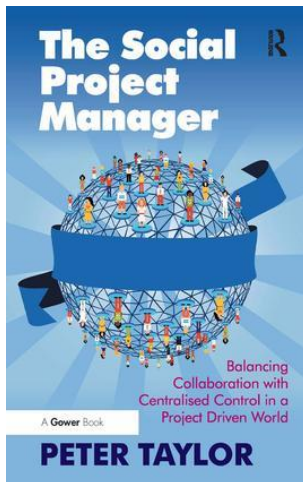Book Review   Reviewer: Heather Creer-Rygalski, PMP

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title: ***The Social Project Manager – Balancing Collaboration with Centralised Control in a Project Driven World***

Author: **Peter Taylor**

Publisher: Routledge, a Taylor and Francis Group

List Price: $47.96   Format: Hardback, 200 pages

Publication Date: 2015   ISBN: 978-1472452221

Reviewer: **Heather Creer-Rygalski, PMP**

Review Date: December 2016

Introduction

Do you tweet, post, chat or blog in your personal life? How about as part of your work life? As a Project Manager you know communication is one of the keys of a successful project outside of some of the obvious other key pieces of a successful project – its timely, within budget and scope without sacrificing quality of the product produced during the project but what about including the social aspect of project management?

Social Project Managers know 21st Century businesses need 21st Century tools to maintain effective communication channels among today's workforce. How many of you all work on projects with people solely within your country, state or even city? "It is predicted by 2020, the entire office setup will change dramatically." (pg. 19) Work will no longer be a place that you go to every day, it can happen wherever you are.

Overview of Book's Structure

Taylor does a great job of introducing the concept of a social project manager, sharing real life examples and expands further by acknowledging there must be a complete buy-in from the top down beginning with HR teaching the concepts to all new hires.

Have you ever worked for companies that claim to have effective open communication on projects? How many of those companies actually do? How many companies out there have too many tools and the employees don't know which ones to use for each project or some on the team use one of the tools while others on the team use the other tools? How can any project be considered a success when the communication plan has not been fully realized by all team members on the project?

PM World *Journal*
Vol. VI, Issue I – January 2017
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Social Project Manager
Author: Peter Taylor
Book Review   Reviewer: Heather Creer-Rygalski, PMP

"There is an expectation for Project Managers and their teams to be more accountable, productive and have collaboration when the combination often results in chaos." (pg. 23) Peter Taylor points out throughout his book that the Social Project Manager needs to get rid of the chaos by "achieving a balance of effective collaboration" (pg. 24). Achievement of the balance is in part from the social project manager refusing to be the roadblock or funnel through which all communication must take place. By agreeing on communication tools as a team, the social project manager encourages the team to collaborate and thereby actually gets more work done.

Some items to keep in mind as a social project manager are to not just trust the social communication only, constantly check on the project's progress to evaluate what is needed. In addition, organizations need to make the training of the tools part of the new hire orientation process thus promoting and creating a social collaborative culture that enables team members to be creative, productive and contribute to a project purpose. The social project manager builds upon the collaborative culture by "overseeing the progress and interaction of the various resources allocated to the project in such a way that is reduces the risk of overall failures, maximizes potential success and delivers the expected benefits, whilst managing costs and quality." (pg. 154)

Highlights

What are the elements of Social Project Communication?

- <u>Social within a Project</u> – the project components, everything having to do with the project.
- <u>Social about the Project</u> – making sure everything about the project is understood, expected, appreciated and supported.
- <u>Social around the Project</u> – project or business oriented social tools help bond a team and add the human aspect of communication (pp. 66-67)

The Social Project Manager and team could set online hours, times of day when all members of the team are online at the same time. It's all really about encouraging effective communication. What are some of the benefits of a social project management approach? "It reduces the time employees use to search for content by 35%," according to Taylor and "it can increase productivity by 20-25%." (pg. 77) While Social Project Management is not the ultimate solution at eradicating project failure, "it does offer an opportunity to reduce a negative outcome." (pg. 92)

There are multiple keys of success to social project management. "One is to ensure the visibility of purpose is always at the forefront of all team member's thoughts, no matter what their role." (pg. 51) Achievement of this is possible for businesses through social business software that provides constant small updates on items relating to the project. Using a social business software or agreed upon programs, helps with information overload. No longer do the team members need to wait until

PM World *Journal*
Vol. VI, Issue I – January 2017
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Social Project Manager
Author: Peter Taylor
Book Review   Reviewer: Heather Creer-Rygalski, PMP

the weekly meeting for project statuses, instead through the "social media activity stream everything is being shared in real time and corrected naturally." (pg. 54) Teams are always connected and communication is always open.

Highlights: What I liked!

Taylor's book is an thought provoking read with real world examples that any organization who is serious about doing what's best for the company can utilize. The shift in company norms must be embraced from the top down for success to occur and while change can and is uncomfortable at times, companies need to adapt how project management and communication are used within the organization and really ask themselves, are the methods we are using today effective still and do they meet the needs of today projects and what about tomorrow's? If a company cannot honestly say yes, then they need to rethink what they are doing a look into more 21st century tools.

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book is a must for any company or project managers looking at making modifications to current communication plans within a company as a whole. Utilizing the tools outlined in the book, consolidate the number of tools to a much smaller number so that everyone can communicate openly and effectively with all team members and not just wait for the weekly status meeting.

Conclusion

Through his book, Taylor sprinkles real world examples of missteps in team communication as well as successes. While he does mention some specific social business software, he does not endorse one method or product. He believes the organization as a whole needs to decide what tools are used, embrace them, communicate about them and train all groups on how to use the tools to best meet the needs of teams within the organization. By so doing, it builds teams, efficiency and trust between within the organization regardless of the time zone.

For more about this book, go to:
https://www.routledge.com/products/search?keywords=the+social+project+manager *for book's page on publisher's website.*

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.

PM World Journal
Vol. VI, Issue I – January 2017
www.pmworldjournal.net

The Social Project Manager
Author: Peter Taylor
Book Review   Reviewer: Heather Creer-Rygalski, PMP

About the Reviewer

Heather Creer-Rygalski

Texas, USA

Heather Creer-Rygalski, PMP has more than 20 years of experience working in training and development departments both in the corporate arena and within the public school system using her project management training for all of her projects. She has a BA in Psychology and a M.Ed., both from Southwest Texas State University.

Heather can be contacted at hcreerrygalski@yahoo.com.