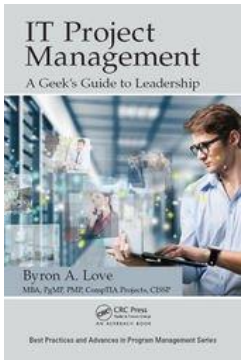
PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***IT Project Management: A Geek's Guide to Leadership***

Author: **Byron A. Love**

Publisher: CRC Press

List Price: US $49.95 Format: Hard cover, 230 pages

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Reviewer: **Johnny Gan** Review Date: 12/2016

Introduction

This book is an IT geek's guide to IT leadership, and it's written by a geek.

Geeks are some of the most brilliant people on the planet, so they can write the book totally different with others. This book is the one of them, which is full of attractive stories, and I could not stop it after I stepped into the first chapter.

The information in this book will help geeks progress in their careers by being aware of leadership expectations and adapting their styles accordingly. And the book author, Byron A. Love, who obtained top-tier IT certifications, such as the $(ISC)^2$ Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) certification, and top-tier management certification, such as the PMI program Management Professional (PgMP) certification. So Byron is definitely qualified to address the topic of IT leadership, and his book helps geeks in leadership roles better understand leadership and makes the transition to better leaders.

Byron wrote this book to address the leadership issues in the IT industry, unlike other leadership books that provide a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership. This book focuses on the unique challenges that IT practitioners face, especially some interesting topics, like why we need IT geeks to lead IT geeks.

As many other books discussed, IT projects are complex, risky, and more prone to failure. The IT geeks who attempt to develop, deliver, and maintain these solutions must be brave and emotionally resilient, they must be able to visualize a successful outcome and motivate their teams to fight through the setbacks and obstacles in order to achieve this success. All these require IT geeks to behave in ways outside of their comfort zone, and this book will equip IT geeks with leadership integration and stand out as leaders.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book provides geek leaders with resources to assist them to continually improve their leadership abilities, so all chapters are designed to coach an IT geek to learn to become a leader.

In Chapter 1, Initiation, described the characteristics required to succeed as a geek leader. And in Chapter 2, Why Geek Leadership is Different, defined leadership role, and gave a good example of Bill Gates, also included a leadership Assessment Questionnaire that can help reader analyze and understand their leadership strengths and weaknesses.

Then it leads to Chapter 3, Emotionally Intelligent Communications, which providing geek leaders with tools to improve their understanding of others and to help others understand them.

Transforming from a geek to a leader requires Self-Leadership, which is the subject of Chapter 4. Geek leaders must also be good followers, so in Chapter 5, Followership, it described the relationship between effective leadership and effective followership.

Personal Credibility is the importance of being an organized leader, this is the topic in Chapter 6. And next in Chapter 7, it introduced the Leadership Integration Plan, which provides guidance for defining, implementing, and assessing leadership within IT project management life cycle.

At the last, Chapter 8 Closeout, it's kind of like a soap opera script, explored three leadership models: the Exemplary Leadership Model, The Team Leadership Model, and the Situational Leadership Model in a full of challenges' company.

So, you can see this book is so interesting, and demonstrated the IT leadership basis step by step with stories, just like it happened around us.

Highlights

Many front-line leaders in IT have never obtained leadership training. IT personnel such as developers, network engineers and database administrators are accustomed to being evaluated on the quality of their individual contributions. Leadership is different, most IT geek leader are introverts and are more comfortable being "under the hood all day" and not talking to people. It's kind of like me and many other IT leaders. Yet, research indicated that 90% of project management is communications. The IT leader who does not know how to communicate with people will fail.

In Chapter 3, Emotionally Intelligent Communications, the author provided an in-depth discussion of the communications cycle and emotional intelligence. Communication is an emotional process, IT geek should not just convert their

thoughts into words, but also associate feelings to the conversation, that impact their audience understand and accept their thoughts.

Figure 1 The Self-Leadership Cycle

Figure 1 is designed by the author, which is called the Self-Leadership Cycle, through this process, the readers can learn to take initiative and to exercise a growth mindset, and enhance individual competence as a leader. Transforming from a geek to a geek leader requires Self-Leadership process.

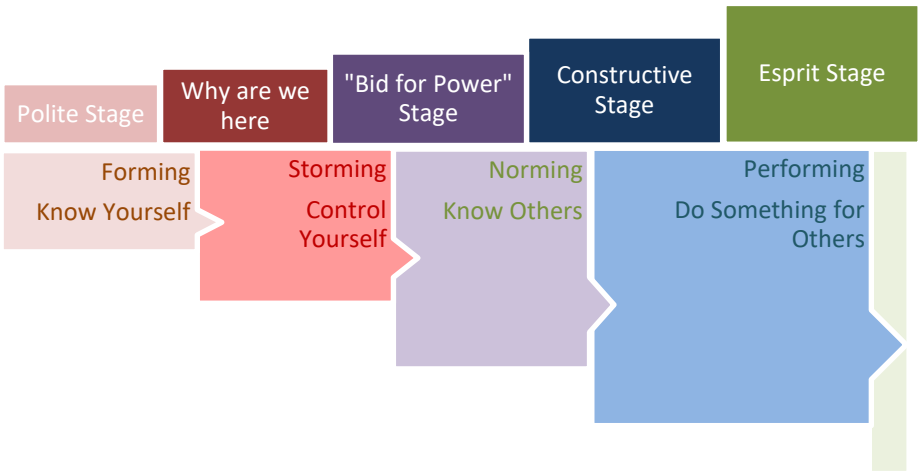

Figure 2 Cog's Ladder and the Tuckman Model

As an IT leader, you are not working alone. You need effective followership, followers are looking for leaders and causes they consider worthy of their commitment, and in this case, between leader and followers, they need a unifying purpose, vision, goal, or cause that can motivate them to contribute their best. Here is another highlight, that the author combined Cog's Ladder and Tuckman Model into one chart. See Figure 2. From this chart, you can understand a team maturity, and build a great team.

Highlights: What I liked!

In IT industry, we always think about "Technology" first, but the author brought up the component of "People, Process, and Technology", and put the "People" first. Although technology is created by people and is supported by people for the benefit of human interests, the innate "people" component of technology development and management is many times neglected.

Chapter 8 Closeout, no doubt, is my favorite in the whole book. The author used business fables to illustrate the positive and negative impacts of an IT leader's behavior on projects. Business fables and stories are useful for training and transmitting knowledge, boosting moral, and even resolving conflict (Neile, 2015) - *Neile, C. (2015) "Telling Tales at the Office." Toastmaster Magazine, (Feb), 26-27*

I think this is why the book is different with other books, you can find many meaningful parts in Chapter 8, like "You are no Steve Jobs" – "The Steve Jobs style of leadership may have produced some incredible products at Apple and may have made Jobs very wealthy, but you are no Steve Jobs." (from page 200)

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book provides IT professionals the tools they need to become more effective leaders. But they are not the only people who can benefit from this book:

- Project management professionals can use this book to provide IT leadership training supporting their projects
- Human resources professionals can use this book to create leadership development programs for IT professionals.
- Business leaders, working with IT professionals, can develop more effective technical solutions and services to meet their specific requirements, and help IT professionals advance in business fields.
- Also as an IT project manager or team leader, you will learn the ideas how to communicate with IT Geeks or IT professionals approach the decisions in process tailoring, and managing various problems during the project.

Conclusion

This is not another vapid and prosaic IT project management book. It covers diverse topics, providing transform from a geek to a geek leader. Yes, this book is about IT geek leadership! It is an excellent reference for IT practitioners challenged with the

complexities of leading teams and engaging stakeholders, it's not just joy to read, you also can do it, like the author, Byron A. Love, himself, and this book is here to help you along the way.

For more about this book, go to: https://www.crcpress.com/IT-Project-Management-A-Geeks-Guide-to-Leadership/Love/p/book/9781498736503

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About the Reviewer

Johnny Gan, PMP

Texas, USA

Johnny Gan had many years of software R&D experience at HRsmart.com (http://www.hrsmart.com/), and was working as consultant at Yoh (http://www.yoh.com/) Company, which helped industry leading companies get superior value from their investments. Mr. Gan received his MS degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, USA, and is also certified by the Project Management Institute as a Project Management Professional (PMP®). He has been an active member of PMI for several years. Johnny can be contacted at qianggan@gmail.com .