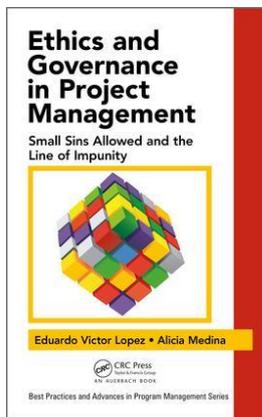


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Ethics and Governance in Project Management: Small Sins Allowed and the Line of Impunity***
Authors: **Eduardo Victor Lopez and Alicia Medina**
Publisher: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group
List Price: \$79.95 Format: Hard cover, 153 pages
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Reviewer: **John Shea**
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Introduction

Lopez and Medina build the case for ethics and governance starting from the basics of previous research, defining ethics, the context for ethics, and then how ethics is used in governance. From there they expand to outside the boundaries of ethics with Small Sins Allowed and the Line of Impunity, or what you can get away with depending on how high up the social order you are. They then take these elements and present dilemmas and the concept of the Ethics Cube, a way of presenting a variety of ethics and how they can be shuffled to create a personal ethical culture.

Overview of Book's Structure

Antecedents, Ethics, Context, and Governance: Rules are linked to the project manager's value judgment about what is suitable behavior to meet its goals. We live simultaneously in two worlds—one where social norms prevail and the other where market norms make the rules. Dishonesty can be the result of a process where people neutralize initial moral dissonance and find excuses to allow them to act against their own moral convictions. As rules separate acceptable from unacceptable behavior, they are typically regarded as easier to follow than principles. Behavior of employees becomes unnatural and biased by the context in which they are immersed or in which they think they are immersed. Corporate governance is related to economic efficiency and stakeholder welfare. Project governance is related to business ethics, process and procedures, and behaviors and practices.

Small Sins Allowed and Line of Impunity: Legality cannot involve all perceptions of morality. Deviant behaviors occurring at the project level are breaking the law, project property abuse, improper moral conduct, unsocial behaviors, and discrimination. Small Sins Allowed are updated socially accepted ethical standards, or minor deviant behaviors such as leaving early, taking excessive breaks, working slowly, wasting resources, showing favoritism, gossiping about co-workers, and blaming co-workers. Managers willing to justify ethically suspect behavior is a factor

to determine if it falls into Small Sins Allowed or felonies. Training can help set the bar. The Line of Impunity is the idea that certain ranks or positions in the hierarchy entitle advantages and power granted to those levels transcends the limits of control or law enforcement. The higher you get determines how much you can get away with.

Ethical Issues and Ethical Dilemmas, and The Ethics Cube: Does a Project Manager just follow orders or go beyond delivery when conflicts could affect project cost, schedule, risks, safety, and quality of deliverables? Project ethics and integrity challenges come into play. Small Sins can deny responsibility when the moral intensity is lessened. An ethical compliance officer can help establish project policies, processes, and procedures in implementing ethics training programs. Ethical dilemmas arise when PMs need to make decisions not aligned with their own values. Interaction between ethical behaviors and project governance is reciprocal and influenced by the context that surrounds it. The Ethics Cube is a cube with one face each for professional ethics, family ethics, general ethics, personal interests, allegiances, and opportunity. Shuffle the faces and you get a mixture of ethics that take different priorities depending on circumstances.

Final Words: Managers must overcome the Line of Impunity. No fear of punishment is related to the Line of Impunity. Project ethics must contain honesty, good faith, transparency, responsibility, respect and fairness. Subjective morality drives the Small Sins Allowed. Effective project governance is a fundamental requirement for project success. Create a company culture that rewards ethical behavior.

Highlights

Through various chapter case studies, the authors explore context and ethical dilemmas, then ask the reader to perform their own assessment of the situation.

Highlights: What I liked!

The continued emphasis on education and training/retraining that is needed to make sure ethics guidelines are complied with. “Ethics is not something that can be added at the end of a project like the icing on a cake. It needs to be embedded in the dough from the beginning and all through the end by continuous education, moral reminders, and support from the parent organization.”

Who might benefit from the Book

PMs and PMOs setting up continuing Ethics training programs for reinforcement.

Conclusion

A better understanding of ethics and the role it plays in project management for the PM, Sponsor, and all stakeholders is needed. Uncertainty prevails when ethics are not enforced or adhered to. Go outside the boundaries set and the Small Sins Allowed can quickly become felonies. All levels of the organization must be held

accountable and not let the Line of Impunity drift as you rise in the ranks. Reinforcement of ethical training is needed frequently to remind all stakeholders of the limits of deviant behavior and how such will affect the project.

For more about this book, go to: <https://www.crcpress.com/Ethics-and-Governance-in-Project-Management-Small-Sins-Allowed-and-the/Lopez-Medina/p/book/9781498743839>

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About the Reviewer



John Shea

North Texas, USA



John Shea is a newly certified PMP, having acquired it in June of 2016. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Communication from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a Master of Fine Arts in Motion Picture and Television Production from the University of Southern California. His work experience of more than thirty-seven years includes technical writing and instructional design for IBM, Nortel, contracting, and currently, Nokia. He is a member of the Dallas, TX, USA chapter of PMI.

Email address: johnlshea3@verizon.net

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnlshea3rd?trk=hp-identity-name>