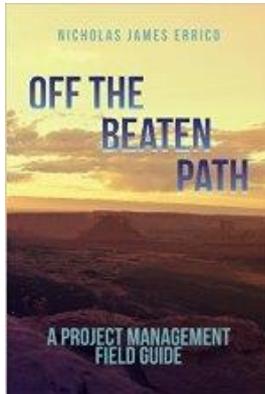


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Off the Beaten Path: A Project Management Field Guide***

Author: Nicholas James Errico

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Reviewer: Marta Santos

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Introduction

“Off the Beaten Path: A Project Management Field Guide” by Nicholas James Errico, is a book that draws you into the world of project managers. Project management is a beaten path by its nature and numbers. The realm of aligning customer’s needs, team dynamics and conflicting business interests is a challenging terrain which often brings no public recognition. It demands an unwavering moral character and the ability to gracefully recognize the need to improve and change. Errico, who successfully trod the path for almost 20 years, has incredible insights from his experiences, tools/methods used, and attitudes embraced. His concise and to-the-point book could set you on the course of consistent and outstanding project results.

Overview of Book’s Structure

The author shares interesting details about himself while presenting his reasons for writing the book. In his opinion, the overall state of the Project Management business is of concern. He challenges you to rate the profession’s success over the last 20 years and emphasizes the importance of adhering to a methodology. Whether it be the PMBOK or other valid method.

As you read the first few pages, if you still believe that Project Management is the role you want to enter or remain in, you are invited into self-analysis. Truly understanding who you are, your capabilities, aspirations, expectations, and limitations is key to success. Being able to self-manage and endure a “thankless job” are pre-requisites to getting started with typical project manager’s tasks. Learning to use a tool is as important as not using the right tool for the wrong purpose or using a great tool that brings no value to the settings.

Errico takes you through the often overlooked yet essential aspects of contract, WBS, and schedule. He shows how to create and track a Schedule Model that will

work for you and your customer. Managing what you have created is the next step. It will require experience, wisdom or a sixth sense, and even learning how to “play poker” with your customer. In essence, you gain knowledge on how to awaken your senses to cues and how to embrace the moment that will facilitate future exchanges between you and your clients. It takes being human and walking on customer’ shoes. The two subsequent book sections, “Food for Thought” and “Metrics and Reward Systems”, contain real-life examples and suggestions on proven success strategies for project managers and organizations. The author bids his readers farewell as he urges project managers to love the profession or move on to something else.

Highlights

Remember:

- As a project manager, you can make or break a project
- What can you do better? Know who you are - Project Managers are Master Facilitators
- Understand your value proposition before others value you - Project Managers are leverage
- Identify what drives people in your team - What motivates you may not to do the same for others
- Understand why, not how – Right questions offsets lack of technical knowledge
- Understand why projects fail and work on your planning
- Your customer also has required deliverables! Align customer deliverables & contract deliverables
- Align what your customer expects to receive to what you expect to deliver

Often overlooked:

- Read your Contract! Do it several times
- Confirm availability of resources. Both people and equipment. Don’t assume
- Confirm the accuracy of your project schedule. How-to details in the book
- Reports - Produce a 14-Day Project Outlook throughout the project
- Pinpoint where the project is not meeting the customer’s needs – This can be accomplished with project schedule status and baseline-forecast status. More details in the book.
- Use your scheduling tool to produce executive reports. Details in the book
- Ask the customer to define what does success for the project looks like
- Embrace Change Requests – Introduce Change management at the kickoff meeting

Highlights: What I liked!

Errico discusses critical attributes and answers essential questions that project managers should address very early on in their careers and projects. While

redefining my own career path, I examined and validated similar attributes and questions. Thus, reading this book serves as a reaffirmation of my calling. I am so pleased to have such a concise material, filled with real-life examples and guidelines that if implemented could effectively change the way we manage and deliver projects.

Who might benefit from the Book

Aspiring, mid-level and senior project managers could certainly benefit from this book's insights. Reading it multiple times is highly recommended, as reinforcement.

Conclusion

"Off the Beaten Path: A Project Management Field Guide" takes you through real-life examples and conveys the author's desire for the project management field. In his view, gifted project managers are those able to modify and design the future. They not only plan and predict but rather create the future through changes, off the beaten path.

For more about this book, go to:

https://books.google.com/books/about/Off_the_Beaten_Path.html?id=FbWAQAACAAJ

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About the Reviewer



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Marta Santos currently serves on a global Cybersecurity Transformation Program as a Project Coordinator - IT Security. Marta previously served on a global IT Infrastructure Refresh Project after transitioning from a productive career in the Life Sciences as a Research Scientist and author on major scientific journals. She is looking forward to growing in and contributing to the Project Management profession. This is her first book review for the *PM World Journal*.

Naturalized American from Brazil, Marta currently lives in the Dallas area.

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