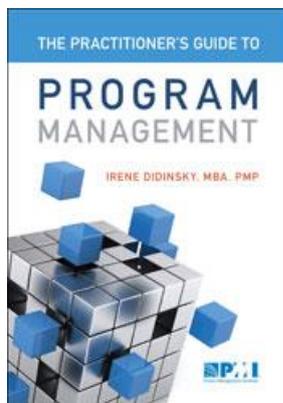


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***The Practitioner's Guide to Program Management***

Author: **Irene Didinsky, MBP, PMP**

Publisher: Project Management Institute, Inc.

List Price: \$39.95                      Format: Paperback, 235 pages

Publication Date: May 2017              ISBN: 978-1-62825-368-9

Reviewer: **Melissa Zahn, PMP**

Review Date: March 2018

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### Introduction

“A Practitioner’s Guide to Program Management” by Irene Didinsky is meant to be used as a desktop manual in the day-to-day work of practicing Program Managers. Irene states that she recognized that there weren’t many books published on program management so she set out to create a standard approach and user manual on the topic. This book is published by PMI and she aligns the concepts with PMI’s *The Standard for Program Management* published in 2006.

This book goes into detail about how to manage a program throughout the program’s life cycle and even has detailed tips for setting up a program, managing and reporting on the program status using Microsoft Project.

### Overview of Book’s Structure

The book contains an Executive Summary, 11 chapters and a glossary of terms and is 235 pages in length. Chapters 1 and 2 cover the history of program management, compares project versus program management, and defines what makes a successful Program Manager. Chapters 3 – 7 introduce the program management concepts of strategy alignment, benefits realization, stakeholder engagement, program governance, and the program life cycle. Chapters 8 (Program Management Infrastructure) and 9 (Effective Program Management) are very detailed chapters and are meant to be used as the practitioner’s guide portion of the book. Chapters 10 and 11 are the Future of Program Management and Program Management Community of Practice. Chapter 11 discusses the value of participating in an existing Program Management Community of Practice and if one doesn’t exist in your area, it explains how to set up and start a Community of Practice in your organization.

## Highlights

The two highlights for me were in Chapter 2. The first is when Irene introduced the concept of the program management continuum, which is referenced from the book, *Program Management for Improved Business Results* by James M. Waddell and Russ J. Martinelli. She explains that there are two types of organizations, project-oriented and program-oriented and then there are levels of proficiency within these two types and based on where your organization is on the continuum can determine the true benefits derived by program management.

The second highlight is when she introduced the program proficiency framework which included an illustration of this concept and breaks down the proficiency needed for a Program Manager into three categories: program leadership, program operational management, and interpersonal skills. Each of these categories is further divided into specific skills needed by the program manager. The program proficiency framework is described in an easy-to-understand format and illustrated with several diagrams and tables. When I was reading this portion of the book, I highlighted several skills and think that I can write a great job description for a program management role in my organization.

## Highlights: What I liked!

I liked that the author introduced one example of a program, using a call center program that contained several projects, and she continued to use this example throughout the book. Each time she introduced a new concept, she explained it using the call center program. And she went further to explain how that concept might work in your organization based on where your organization is operating on the program management continuum.

I also liked Chapter 9, *Effective Program Management*, which goes into great detail on tracking program results for work, schedule, resources and budget. There are several illustrated examples of Microsoft Project reports and how you might use these to manage your program. For tracking the budget, there's an illustrated example of how to use the monthly component budget formula to track progress of expenses to the budget and then calculate the budget variance.

## Who might benefit from the Book?

Because there are so few books written on program management, I feel that this book is perfect for all Program Managers. It serves as a good reminder for work processes in the field of program management. I realized while reading it, even if you're actively managing a program, there's always more you can learn.

Additionally, I think this would be a good book for Project Managers who are thinking about transitioning to a Program Management role since the author compares and contrasts project management to program management throughout the book.

## Conclusion

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. At 235 pages, it is written in an easy-to-read format and is a relatively quick read. It will become a handy reference guide or desktop manual for future programs that I manage. I would definitely recommend it to all Program and Project Managers.

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For more about this book, go to:

<http://marketplace.pmi.org/Pages/ProductDetail.aspx?GMProduct=00101599401>

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Alamo Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Alamo 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 Alamo 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@peworldjournal.net](mailto:editor@peworldjournal.net).*

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## About the Reviewer



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**Melissa Zahn, PMP** is a Marketing Technology Architect in the Financial Services industry. She has spent the last 18 months as a Program Manager managing a name change program for her organization. Melissa was certified as a PMP in January 2005 and has been an active member of the Alamo PMI organization ever since. She has worked in the Financial Services industry for 30 years and has experience in program and project management, software implementation projects, and IT management. She has a track record for successfully implementing large cross-functional projects.

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