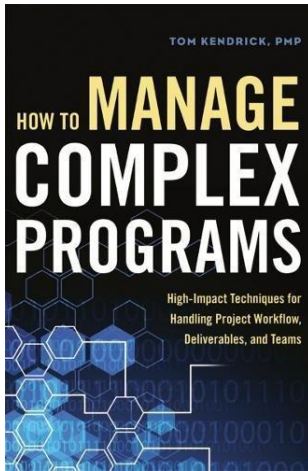


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***How to Manage Complex Programs: High-Impact Techniques for Handling Project Workflow, Deliverables, and Teams***

Author: **Tom Kendrick**

Publisher: AMACOM

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Reviewer: **Dr. Charles Y. Chen, PhD, PMP**

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Introduction

The effort needed to manage a program is no less challenging than conducting an orchestra. A program manager must oversee the projects, identify and acquire resources, manage the budget, ensure proper communication, foresee potential risks, manage stakeholder expectations, and meet deadlines. The list goes on and on. Indeed, while a program manager not only needs to unify all the projects within the program, uncertainties have to be managed. Because a program is composed of many projects, a successful program manager needs a fundamental understanding of the principles of project management and how projects can be managed in a unified fashion within a program construct. Indeed, this can sound very daunting, especially for a new program manager.

How to Manage Complex Programs provides a program manager a set of tools and strategies to manage the day-to-day program complexity. This book provides the reader basic program management skills and much more. Using diagrams, flowcharts, and real-life examples, the author helps a program manager establish transparent cross-functional communication, develop integrated planning, identify metrics & KPIs, navigate change management, align stakeholder expectations, and identify and acquire resources. While the realities of program management can be very challenging, *How to Manage Complex Programs* will put the program manager onto the path to success.

Overview of Book's Structure

The Program Management Institute decomposes project management into five processes: initiation, planning, executing, controlling, and closing*. *How to Manage Complex Programs* is written in a very similar fashion.

The book begins with a foundational discussion about what program management is and the complexity involved. The author then uses the following chapters to walk through the steps and strategies of Program Initiation, Program Deliverable Management, Program Planning and Organization, Program Execution and Control, and Program Closure. A chapter is specifically dedicated to Program Leadership because a key part of program management is overseeing and coordinating multiple project teams and people working the numerous activities.

[*] The definitions are

- Initiating. A description of the product of the project, initial documentation of project objectives, and assignment of a project manager.
- Planning. A documented project plan and documented updates to the plan as the project progresses.
- Executing. Verifiably completed project deliverables.
- Controlling. Periodic measurements of progress vs. plan, corrective action when needed, and identification of when the project is done.
- Closing. Documented acceptance of the results of the project.

Highlights

Managing a program is no easy feat. A program will usually involve many projects, even many more specific tasks, with multiple constraints and numerous stakeholders. It is incumbent upon the program manager to be accountable for and manage all the resources, workflow, deliverables, and stakeholder relationships, in addition to managing known risks and contain unknown ones.

The author of *How to Manage Complex Programs* provides a program manager with a dependable set of strategies and processes to manage the chaos that exists in the day-to-day management of a program. In this book, a program manager will find a set of recipes that deal with project workflows, deliverables, stakeholder, and teams. With these recipes, laid out in a step by step fashion, a program manager will be able to handle a program efficiently and effectively, from initiation to closure, no matter how complicated or complex the program may be.

The author is intentional in highlighting the role of the program manager as a leader that manages the teams that are responsible for the projects. The author presents specific processes that facilitate the governance of a program management office. Different strategies to establish and maintain a cohesive performant team are also discussed.

This book is especially helpful for someone who is new to program management, as it is a resource of strategies and tactics that helps one overcome the complexities of program management.

Highlights: What I liked!

While it is one thing to be familiar with publications such as *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* that provide the standard for project management, it is quite another to apply the standard to the real life. This book helps a new program manager translate the standards, which is more academic in nature, to tangible tools that can be applied to the challenges of the real life.

Via a step-by-step process, the book walks a new program manager through the program life cycle, from initiation to closure. I appreciate the set of handy references that are sprinkled in this book, such as program planning process, summary of risk categories, sample organizational chart, and organization change model. Indeed, this is a reference book that covers the program management tools at each stage of the program life cycle. A new program manager can use this book as a tutorial to what is program management is, i.e., Program Management 101. An experienced program manager can also use this book to diagnose the health of the program.

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book covers the basics of program management from start to finish. This is an essential reference for a new program manager. At the end of the day, project management is not program management. This book will prevent a new program manager from being intimidated by the daunting challenge of running a program. *How to Manage Complex Programs* gives this new manager the processes and tools to manage the challenges and complexity that the program and the program manager can be expected to face.

Conclusion

Programs are complex regardless of the industry. In my opinion, the complexity of a program does not originate from the size of the program, e.g., number of people or a dollar amount; to me, this just makes a program complicated. A program is complex because of all the dependencies: between the project teams, stakeholders, program sponsors, end user, supplier, and the dependencies that are not yet identified by the program management team. This is true in any industry, whether it be in management consulting, aerospace, or startup. *How to Manage Complex Programs* will help a project manager scale up his skill set to the program level.

For more about this book, go to:

<http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814436929&page=JacketCopy>

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About the Reviewer



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Dr. Charles Y. Chen, PMP has had the privilege of leading teams of engineers and scientists to transform ideas into viable products. His career began at Northrop Grumman, initially as a systems engineer and then as a program manager, he led matrixed teams of engineers to innovate, mature, and produce new electronic sensor technologies and algorithms. Energetics Incorporated introduced Charlie to the world of management consulting. Initially as a director then as the Chief Strategy Officer, he led teams to help clients transition ideas developed in the laboratory to the marketplace, overcoming the so-called valley of death. At Hover Energy, Dr. Chen led the key activities to build a new wind turbine designed for the urban environment. He is currently an Engineering Fellow at the Raytheon Company.

Dr. Chen received his B.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Electrical Engineering from Cornell University. He received his Executive Education from University of Chicago Booth School of Business. As a PMP, he looks forward to leading his next team to achieve the impossible.

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