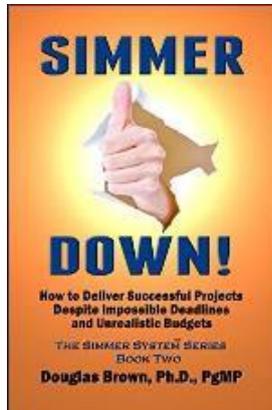


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***SIMMER DOWN: How to Deliver Successful Projects Despite Impossible Deadlines and Unrealistic Budgets***

Author: **Douglas Brown**

Publisher: CALTROP Press

List Price: \$6.99 Format: Soft Cover, 141 pages

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Reviewer: **Betsey Katiti, PMP** Review Date: July 2018

Introduction

As a newly certified PMP, I am still trying to get my feet wet, figure out my way in the world of Project Management. While I have had success in managing/organizing projects in my Community – my most favorite of which was promoting and facilitating fund-raising Concerts for a group of orphaned children from Uganda – I am well aware of much larger corporate/federal projects that are harder to manage let alone complete successfully. When I came across ‘SIMMER DOWN’ by Douglas Brown, I felt that this is a book that could help me to take a deep breath, calm down and learn how one can deliver “Successful Projects Despite Impossible Deadlines and Unrealistic Budgets”.

Overview of Book’s Structure

In 8 Chapters, Douglas Brown starts out in the 1st chapter titled “**We’ve Been There Too!**” telling the reader that she or he is not alone in trying to manage a project that has the odds stacked against them, others have been there too. He wants the reader to know that there are ways and means that can help a project complete successfully in spite of the hurdles along the way. When faced with a project that is not exactly progressing nicely like we were taught in the PMBOK GUIDE, a discouraged Project Manager may feel there is no way out but Mr. Brown wants to equip the Project Manager with the tools that will help him or her deliver a successful project in spite of all the odds. The author from early on and throughout the book emphasizes the importance of looking at the Big Picture. How does your project fit in the overall organization structure’s needs and objectives? The better your solution aligns with the direction of the organization, the more support you are likely to get.

In the following 6 chapters, Mr. Douglas goes out of his way to point out what the Project Manager needs to be aware of. He covers topics that the average Project Manager especially one new to the field of Project Management may not be aware

of. Topics such as Capabilities, Baselines and Dependency Reviews. Capabilities are what an organization is able to do and how well they can do it; they drive the organization's strategy. Find out how your project contributes to building an essential capability. Baselines are the project's delivery commitments. While it may seem that these are written in stone, the reality is that most people are looking for a solution and this gives a Project Manager an opportunity to succeed. Dependency reviews should be carried out early on in the project so the managers of different projects can review tasks that may create cross-project dependencies and how to best deal with them.

In the 8th and final chapter, **Closing Out**, Mr. Douglas talks about the importance of conducting a closeout. Your project may have completed successfully but the organization will be poorer in the long run if there is no useful closeout process. Future project teams need to be able to build from the experience your team has spent so much time and effort to gain. Pay it forward; provide the people who come after you with decent records and hints. You owe it to the Project Managers who will come after you to document what worked and what did not, expose the issues and drivers your project had to contend with. It may not be convenient for you or the organization to round up the resources needed to conduct the retrospective but the benefit is well worth it.

Highlights

In **SIMMER DOWN**, the author stresses that a Project Manager must understand that his or her project is part of an organization's end objective. Understanding the Big Picture is very important. It helps the Project Manager to see the reality that his or her project is one of multiple projects an organization is sponsoring and they all cannot be number one. It also means that your particular project delivers a piece of the larger objective and will have to adjust to Scope, Cost and Schedule – "The Iron Triangle" as Mr. Brown calls it. You cannot change one without impacting the other two.

The Project Manager also needs to know that it is not an all or nothing situation. As long as the customer is getting the best possible result given the resources and the customer deems your project satisfactory, you will have a successful project. As a Project Manager, watch out for changes throughout your project, it is a lot less expensive to monitor them early than to be surprised later in the process. You will also be much more likely to be prepared when opportunity knocks such as when unexpected resources are available and the organization needs to know who is ready to use them.

It is also important to get to know the major decision makers – the project's sponsor, the stakeholder and the program manager. Meet with them and get to understand what and where they really want to get to. The closer your project aligns with their vision, the more likely you are to get a fair share of whatever resources are available. If you can, come with up with incremental solutions that meet their expectations.

Highlights: What I liked!

I liked how Mr. Brown wants the reader to know that yes, the reality of having to deliver a successful project is not easy but it can be done. When life hands you lemons, make lemonade. You need to understand the context within which you have to operate, then how to maneuver within that space to get the best results you can with the resources that are or might become available.

Successful delivery of something useful gets you a lot more credibility than waiting or promising to deliver something great at a later date that may not become reality. What you really want as a Project Manager is a good business outcome and a satisfied customer. The customer doesn't usually have an all-or-nothing mentality. If you give them what they need the most, they will probably give you some slack on the rest. As the author states, life isn't always fair, **Roll with it!**

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book is for both the experienced and the inexperienced Project Manager who is trying to cope with or understand how to manage the frustration of inadequate time and resources while managing a project. It is for anyone who realizes that projects do not run "by the book". For those like me who are fairly new to Project Management on a corporate level, this book will surely give you a head start. It will arm you with tools, techniques and the know how that will greatly help you when you are actually face to face with the reality of managing a project, the outcome of which will most likely impact your career as a Project Manager.

Conclusion

Taking the time to read "SIMMER DOWN" was well worth my time as I feel more empowered and equipped to deal with the realities of managing a project that more likely than not will run into unexpected budget cuts and competing for resources, Thank you Mr. Douglas Brown! To all who are looking to deliver successful Projects, read "SIMMER DOWN" and let Mr. Brown help you along. To those who are new to Project Management, **Welcome to the world of Project Management – WATCH OUT for CURVES in the road ahead. Let Mr. Brown help you maneuver the curves!**

For more about this book, go to: (<https://caltrop-press.co.business/books-and-products/simmer-down/>)

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Betsey Katiti, PMP is a Business Analyst for The Buffalo Group in Reston, Virginia. Betsey holds a B.S. in Mathematics and Computer Science from Pace University, New York and M.S. in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Hartford, CT. She earned her PMP in March 2018 and is a member of the Silver Spring PMI Chapter in Silver Spring, Maryland.