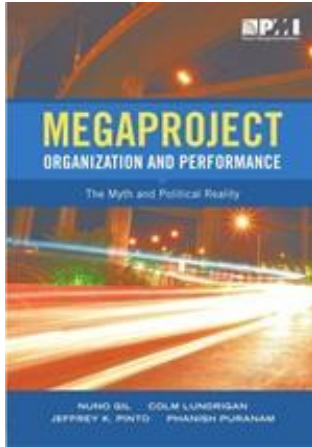


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Megaproject Organization and Performance: The Myth and Political Reality***

Author: **Professor Nuno Gil; Dr. Colm Lundrigan, PhD; Professor Jeffrey K. Pinto; Professor Phanish Puranam**

Publisher: Project Management Institute (PMI)

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Reviewer: **Sharon R Holland, PMP, PgMP**

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Introduction

Success for any project is measured by its performance and achieved outcomes. **Megaproject Organization and Performance** provides insight into the performance challenges encountered on megaprojects, primarily involving infrastructure builds where land acquisition is a component. The insights shared in this book can, however, give project and program managers, of any large undertaking, ideas and techniques for recognizing, adjusting to and counter acting performance challenges related to stakeholders, and the resources and influence they bring.

Overview of Book's Structure

Megaproject Organization and Performance consists of five case-study like chapters that attempt to apply mega-organization performance theory to megaproject organizations. Each chapter provides background on the megaproject being studied, the data collection process, the analytical approach taken by the study group, and a summary of their findings.

Chapters one, through four, focus on real megaprojects in the UK. It introduces the challenges and complexities of an environment with multiple strategic decision makers that bring their own perspectives of the design and long-term usability of the final product. It further considers their impact to strategic decisions, and the related performance measures, due to the addition of new members to this core group.

Chapter five switches focus to megaprojects in developing economies where governmental regulations and societal norms are very different from those of more developed nations. These norms include more opaqueness, and other core group complexities, that result in ever-shifting balances of power and attempts to gain

control over project outcomes. The impact of the absence of foundational rules of fairness is seen in the difficulty of gaining consensus on the product's scope, and the resulting significant slippages in completion dates and budget.

Highlights

The book introduces the concept of the Core (pluralistic strategic layer) vs. Peripheral stakeholders (implementation layer). *MegaProject Organization and Performance* discusses how the core is formed, and reformed; and how the process of formation can impact strategic decisions which in turn impact implementation. It considers how the need to obtain decision-making evidence, from the peripheral stakeholders, leads to entering contracts early in the strategic process which inherently locks in design choices that are likely to result in change orders later.

Megaproject Organization and Performance also shares insights on reasons performance slippages can occur in the planning or implementation phases. Performance expectations change during planning if new core members join, who have influence and/or resources critical to the project. (As they might bring additional requirements that result in revising the strategic design choices.) Slippages might also occur because the core group takes a longer time than planned to come to consensus, during which time, assumptions may be invalidated. In either scenario, the core group must, consent or decline to adjust performance targets. During implementation, slippages are typically controlled by contractual agreements, reducing the likelihood of changes affecting performance targets. This leads to a discussion on the debate about the pros, and cons of overlapping versus serial planning and implementation. Both approaches are viable alternatives based on the specific characteristics of the project and environment. Neither approach, however, is a promise of success.

The impact of uncertainty is a recurring theme in *Megaproject Organization and Performance*. While every project will experience uncertainty, megaprojects tend to do so more likely, more frequently, and more impactfully. Therefore, uncertainty, and the cost thereof, must be transparently discussed at every turn. The application of core group charters and operational agreements might be helpful, but irrespective of the guidelines under which the group agrees to operate, the likelihood of change is not lessened as the group struggles to balance long term usefulness with the originally agreed to scope, cost and time constraints.

Highlights: What I liked!

Megaproject Organization and Performance provoked the consideration of how to counteract complex issues in complex environments. Megaprojects and programs will have changes. Period! Project/program managers should expect them and gracefully manage them.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Megaproject Organization and Performance provides useful insight for project and program managers. It includes an enlightened view of the impact of uncertainty on programs and projects and provokes ideas for counteracting unavoidable uncertainty.

Conclusion

Megaprojects led by groups with competing interests are a reality. Project and program managers can prepare to respond thoughtfully to, and expect, changes in strategy, design, resources, and stakeholders. Leaders of megaprojects can use techniques such as building consensus, choosing an approach based on the resources available and environmental constraints, understanding the risks in environmental conditions and how they might limit options such as the approach, considering the problem-solving capabilities available to the group in the environment, identifying the risks inherent to non-substitutable stakeholders, contractors, and resources, and understanding and navigating the impact of political interference, internal or external, to the project/program/organization.

For more about this book, go to:

<https://marketplace.pmi.org/Pages/ProductDetail.aspx?GMProduct=00101602101>

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas 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 Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. 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.

About the Reviewer



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Sharon R Holland, PMP, PgMP has led projects and programs of all sizes. She began her career as a programmer with a small financial services software company, where she immediately began managing small projects. She received formal project management training and significant experience while with Cap Gemini. With her current employer where she has tenure for 15+ years, and has established PMOs and enterprise resource management, has managed multiple programs and numerous projects. Sharon has also facilitated the strategic planning process for two non-profit organizations. She currently serves on the board of directors for one of those non-profits.

Sharon earned a B.Sc. in Computer Science from the University of North Texas and an M.Sc. in Information Systems Management from Boston University. She earned the Project Management Professional (PMP) designation in May 2000 and the Program Management Professional (PgMP) designation in October 2017.

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