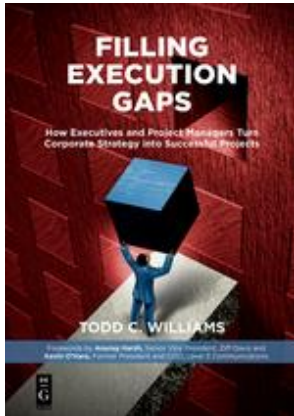


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Filling Execution Gaps: How Executives and Project Managers Turn Corporate Strategy into Successful Projects***

Author: **Todd C. Williams**

Publisher: De Gruyter Inc.

List Price: \$34.99 Format: Softcover, 356 pages

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Reviewer: **Denise Murray, PMP** Review Date: August 2018

Introduction

Filling Execution Gaps weaves together concepts that will benefit any organization engaged in projects—large or small. As a project management consultant Mr. Williams provides expert guidance on how to effectively analyze existing corporate conditions, mend broken management systems to improve project management performance. His writing style is engaging and it is evident that he understands how companies function—all types and sizes.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book structure is formed around the concept of a hexad – six components critical to project success. The figure of a hexad in the introduction illustrates the interdependency of the components—as a word picture, envision a Corinthian temple, the foundation is (1) common understanding; the columns rising from the foundation to the roof are (2) goal-and-project alignment, (3) executive sponsorship, (4) change management, (5) effective governance, and finally, the roof is (6) leadership. Each of these six components make up the discussion in each chapter.

Following the conclusion of each chapter narrative are takeaways geared to two audiences—(1) the project or middle manager and (2) the executive. Chapters close with a “concept application” section which is a list of questions posed to evaluate/analyze—(1) the organization, (2) project or middle managers, and (3) executives against chapter content. The takeaways and questions are valuable for practitioners and prompt the reader to evaluate their project-world circumstances in light of what was learned about the subject covered in the chapter.

Highlights

The book is a wealth of sage advice and practical concepts. The section on Common Understanding prompted me to evaluate how I, as a project manager, communicate project progress, and to reframe my communication into a business vernacular. The chapter on Change Management, as a general concept and in the project sphere has helped me navigate the change I experience in my own work environment.

Though I've only mentioned a couple of highlights, the book as a whole has benefited me as a project manager and enhanced my critical thinking abilities. The entire book is a highlight for me. My copy of *Filling Execution Gaps* is filled with notes and mark-ups and I keep it at my desk so I can refer to it for advice.

Highlights: What I liked!

Filling Execution Gaps was akin to sitting in a favored professor's classroom—thought-provoking, insightful, practical, and a great read!

For me, books like *Filling Execution Gaps*, become a navigation tool providing direction for my own course change. Current methods of project execution can always be improved. Leadership, the overarching theme, is essential in any attempt to bring about institutional change. As a project manager, when I think "change," I revert to monitoring and controlling processes. The author notes, however, that there is a difference between management and leadership. "Management is about control; leadership is about self-direction." Management focuses on blame and punishment while leaders seek truth and reconciliation; and ". . . finding fault and laying blame does absolutely nothing to get closer to a solution." Project managers need to be solution-focused and this book is *solution-oriented*.

I have many takeaways from this book, chief among them is honing my own leadership skills. Mr. Williams quotes Kathleen Schafer when he addresses leadership, "Leadership is not about men in suits. It is a way of life for those who know who they are and are willing to be their best to create the way of life they want to live." Leading change—both personally and professionally—are great marching orders. I've read many management books in my career and this ranks in the top five *all around* best.

Who might benefit from the Book?

I recommend *Filling Execution Gaps* to anyone who is a:

- leader wanting to improve their company and project performance,
- middle-manager who wants to strengthen their leadership skills,
- project manager looking for insight into project execution solutions,
- hard-charging project team member seeking to one day run the company.

Conclusion

Although the book addresses leadership (the roof of the hexad), it is not relegated to company officers, but, as the author states, “Anyone in the company can be a leader; hence, anyone can start change.” Change—a constant in life today—is a key concept throughout the book. Change management is specifically addressed as a component of Mr. Williams’ hexad, however, my reference to change as “key” is that this concept is in play whenever stakeholders engage in activity related to any of the other five hexad components.

Project participants need to change how they communicate in order to foster a common understanding—such as project managers developing their business acumen and executives adopting a systematic mindset to communicate the project’s value to corporate strategy. Corporations, as well as sponsors, need to change the way they view the project sponsor role if they are to improve project success rates.

The author recommends corporations examine their governance structure/processes, as this can gridlock project progress, and consider introducing lean forms of governance. Change impacts projects (always); and when companies engage in projects they become change agents. *Filling Execution Gaps* provides valuable concepts for corporate stakeholders who are interested in pursuing internal improvements to garner project success. As Mr. Williams points out at the outset, “Project success is based on a larger system.”

For more about this book, go to:

(www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/487015?rskey=YpiU8A)

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. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact publish@peworldjournal.net.

About the Reviewer



Denise Murray

Texas, USA



Denise Murray's professional experience includes thirteen years in defense as a project manager and an acquisition manager; and ten years in higher education as faculty, and senior administrator. She is a Project Management Professional and has a M.S. in Project Management from the George Washington University. She is currently a Program Management Analyst for the U.S. Air Force in Texas.

Denise can be reached at ndamurray@gmail.com or www.linkedin.com/in/dnmurray98