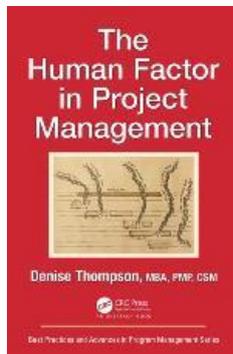


BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***The Human Factor in Project Management***

Author: **Denise Thompson, MBA, PMP, CSM**

Publisher: CRC Press / Taylor & Francis Group

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Reviewer: **Marie Noel Piekam, PMP**

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Introduction

“The Human Factor in Project Management” written by Denise Thompson is one of the kinds in the domain of human behavior and performance, particularly in project management. What are the true qualities of a leader? what are the appropriate behaviors for a leader? Why does a leader need to adapt to change and influence others? Every chapter within the book explores those questions in depth. The second chapter explores different situations which highlight real conflicts, misunderstanding and issues encountered while managing projects. As well stated, it is important to avoid the “hazards of the profession” which is key to gain real value of communication and successful stakeholder’s management and triple constraints.

Considering that human factor in project management can be viewed as the possibility to influence projects’ outcomes, it is detrimental that those outcomes be positive otherwise one may risk projects’ failure. Denise Thompson’s book meets these criteria as it provides readers with a global perspective. The biggest strength of the book is embedded in the practical examples and opportunities given to the readers to reflect on various scenarios.

Overview of Book’s Structure

The book is organized by topics as each chapter discusses different concepts. Divided in ten chapters, the book’s structure is well elaborated as the first chapter introduces readers to what is to come and the fundamental notion of leadership.

With the use of diverse examples across multiple industries, the author embarks readers through this journey of self-reflection/ critical analysis and understanding of human behaviors in projects. The outline and concepts discussed are sequential, as topics are aligned with one another. The connection between scenarios, stories, lesson learned, and the roles/ impact of human behaviors are well supported.

While the titles of chapters may seem unaccustomed at a glance, they represent well the idea and contents discussed within respective section. Starting with an introduction to the project management journey for change and true leadership, the book progresses to challenge readers in a special way. Herein, one is exposed to the hazards of project management profession and then called to explore the steps needed to be a “true” leader. Acknowledging that the ten steps of leadership discussed in chapter 3 are well put, they represent the starting point to becoming a leader who is able to understand his or her behavior - challenges and be a change agent for others at all times. The book also introduces some tools, processes, and techniques which are needed to better manage projects. Those are discussed in the third chapter “Creating the Freedom to Fly High.”

Overall, Denise Thompson does a great job at organizing the chapters in a way that truly permits readers to take notes of their personal challenges which come with embracing change and influencing others’ behaviors. More importantly, readers are called to evolve as the journey of self-discovery is endless. Every story represents a learning opportunity. The last chapter establishes the recapitulative point across all chapters and reemphasizes on why it is important to concentrate on people. Herein, readers are called to choose their path to success either to focus on human factor or not.

Highlights

The book presents various concepts of human behaviors and their importance on project’s success. These include the concepts of change agent, group dynamics and team motivation, team performance, link between project governance, trust and relationship building, emotional intelligence, culture, leadership, and more.

The discussion on the value of “Timbuktu” is very insightful. I agree with Denise Thompson to the idea that creating an environment of innovation and empowerment is paramount as one “strive for value.” The challenge questions at the end of each section are real checkpoints of understanding. I couldn't agree more with Denise Thompson on the idea that “often project managers are set up to fail because they are used as “cogs in the wheel” to speed up delivery of works as well as monitoring staffs’ performance. However, this is preventable if one is aware of his/her own challenges and determine to confront the status-quo and become an actor of change.

The author puts well this conclusion on how our own behavior is critical to the overall team’s behavior and performance as well. Noting that looking in the mirror is not easy, it is valuable “to find the courage to focus on a journey of self-discovery” giving ourselves opportunity to truly influence the behavior of others. Thus, adopting behaviors that are key foundation to project performance, and success (p.10).

Highlights: What I liked!

I liked the book’s structure and stories presented in each section as they undoubtedly help readers understand the ideas being developed. Further, the use of historical

events emphasizes some lessons learned in projects failures and aligns well with the concept presented.

I particularly enjoyed reading stories and questions, which present readers with practical cases to self-reflect. It is important to recognize that human behavior is not an easy subject because of the multiple concepts that it englobes. However, the author presents the main ideas in a way that it is easily understood by anyone.

Who might benefit from the Book?

While the book of “Human Factor in Project Management” is a great asset to project managers, anyone either in a position of leadership or not may benefit from it. Moreover, anyone working in any industry can also profit from it whether as a project manager or not.

The book explores critical concepts of human behavior and leadership which are intertwined in one’s success. To be a leader one needs not to be an expert in project management; however, to be a successful project manager and deliver success to all stakeholders, one needs to be aware of his/her behaviors, struggles, in order to better adjust to change and influence team’s behaviors. Therefore, I believe Denise Thompson does a great job at emphasizing on those leadership steps needed to succeed.

Conclusion

It is a great way to connect human’s needs and behaviors to the success of projects. The book highlights some important aspects which are required to achieve the goals of a project. However, exploring the complexity of human behaviors and how they influence the overall operational and strategies of project management cannot be found in one single book. Nevertheless, Denise Thompson does use clear and practical examples for which most people can identify themselves.

Through self- reflection, one is given the mean to evaluate the influence of his/her behaviors and thoughts on others and perhaps to critically think of how he/she can benefit from a change.

There is no doubt that “human factor” highlights the importance of individuals’ behaviors. More importantly, with today’s business environment and diversified workforce and groups’ projects, the book allows anyone of us to challenge our personal status-quo, assess our gaps and commit to develop the true leader we are called to be as project manager and individuals in general.

For more about this book, go to: <https://www.crcpress.com/The-Human-Factor-in-Project-Management/Thompson/p/book/9781138064195>

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About the Reviewer



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With over 15 years of experience in the healthcare industry in Cameroon and in the United States, Ms. Piekam has participated in the success of various projects. She led major communities' projects in Cameroon which include malaria campaign, Hepatitis B & C diagnostic and vaccination campaign in partnership with Roche laboratory.

Ms. Piekam earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Resource Management at the University of Dschang in Cameroon and a Bachelor of Science in Management of Health Systems as Summa Cum Laude at the University of Potomac. She also earned a Master of Business Administration degree in Enterprise Resource Planning and Healthcare Management at the University of Scranton. Ms. Piekam is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma.

Ms. Piekam is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and an active member of Project Management Institute (PMI), Silver Spring Chapter. She is consistently engaged in PMI activities and has participated in various project activities such as project management day of service (PMDOS), chapter symposium and more.

Dedicated to giving back to her community, Ms. Piekam is involved in several communities-sponsored activities and organizations where she served in a variety of leadership roles. Her most valuable includes developing effective youth programs at her Church where she serves as a Religious Education Teacher and program coordinator.

Marie currently works at Medstar Washington Hospital Center as a Financial Clearance Specialist and also serves as a reservist in the United States Navy. She can be contacted at Marienp2000@yahoo.fr