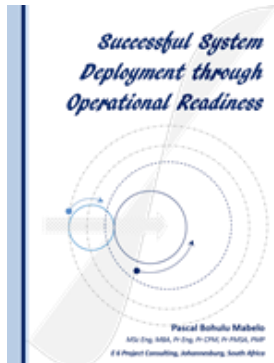


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## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: **Successful System Deployment through Operational Readiness**

Author: **Pascal Bohulu Mabelo**

Publisher: E 6 Project Consulting (Pty) Ltd (South Africa)

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Reviewer: **Ivan Kotcher, PMP**

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### Introduction

Many project management books focus on the day-in and day-out of project management—usually focusing on how to keep projects on track in terms of scope, quality, budget. Very few focus on how best to start a project or how to ensure ongoing success once the immediate objective of the project has been reached and the outcomes delivered. This book is a welcome addition to the art of thinking holistically about why even well-executed projects can result in outcomes that do not succeed in helping the business or governmental organization executing them, and addressing what critical success factors are involved in guiding positive integration with the preexisting environment.

Just as a project and program team has to be prepared through the organizational and structured management strategies of good practice, customer organizations also have to be prepared to receive project results. Requirements understanding in terms of customer goals is critical, but so is analysis about how the benefits of the project or program will be maintained over time. Acceptance of changes resulting from, or even intended by, the project usually requires attention to both the environment surrounding the project (e.g., physical environment in the case of construction projects, legal or regulatory policies) and to what is driving the behaviors the people who make up an organization (e.g., skills level, performance indicators, or even cultural mores).

### Overview of Book's Structure

The book is structured as a broad overview of planning for Operational Readiness, the term used for preparing for ongoing operations. The author focuses primarily on Large Infrastructure Projects (LIPs), but information technology (IT) infrastructure projects also receive some attention. The book begins by defining operational readiness by reference to systems engineering and systems thinking, considering it in terms of maintenance, ongoing operations, and retirement as aspects of the ongoing lifecycle

of project deliverables. The book has multiple references to available literature from the International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE) and several individual authors, providing a coherent explanation and approach to exploring the subject.

While arguments for the scope of the necessity of operational readiness are welcome, the book also provides some good concrete examples to prove the point. The most effective one revolves around the design, delivery, and operations of Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport (just outside London, one of the largest airports in the world)—a clear failure on delivery due to the lack of attention on service transition to operations. Lessons learned and applied in later airport expansion are covered, which drives the point home.

The book then goes through a structure for consideration of extrinsic factors driving project outcomes, highlighting legal and statutory issues, human resources, processes and systems, and commercial agreements with potential customers of the project objectives. Systems engineering language provides a guide, differentiating between the “solution-system” (i.e., the system provided by the project) and the “context-system” (i.e., the system in which the project will operate). Context systems are further broken down into collaborating, sustaining, and competing systems to the solution system. The scope of operational readiness is really to address the possible ways in which these systems interact—to ensure there is an ongoing concept of operations which will be sustained over time and continue to provide positive outcomes.

The remaining portion of the book covers ways to think about implementation of operational readiness strategies, whether through evaluating and training personnel or through reengineering business processes by which the people work with each other. The primary recommendation is around utilizing Lean Thinking principles around minimizing wasteful practices through incremental improvement. Five types of adjustments are required—strategic business plans and supporting performance measurement systems; resourcing to match demands; operational environments; organizational design (a variation of process); and change management initiatives to maintain organizational alignment. Implementation and post-implementation review are the final educational section of the book, with a final overall section clearly around teaching the principles through guided discussion—probably in a classroom/seminar setting or similar delivery environment.

## Highlights

The best parts of the book revolve around providing a structure for integration of operational principles into project management methodologies. Although systems and holistic thinking often come up in project and program planning—particularly in large scale projects and programs—specifics around how to approach integration are not generally a topic unless they are a particular objective (e.g., application programming interfaces in software development), certainly not integration with an overall deliverable’s environment or the organization itself.

Another highlight is the discussion of business process reengineering as a critical success factor for operational readiness. Many organizations claim business process reengineering as an explicit objective, but as the book mentions these projects fail at an estimated 70% rate. The risk is high, particularly when treated as a “big bang” rather than incremental changes resulting from attention to how the various system elements comprising the organization operate in conjunction with each other. Operational readiness implementation planning is critical in both project planning and business case development if executives want to achieve desired benefits.

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

I really liked the systematic approach to operational readiness in the book, particularly the emphasis on establishing, as a critical and parallel track to successful project implementation, an organizational culture of incremental improvement associated with integration of project objectives. Many organizations lose track of operations as both a focus area and as a critical stakeholder in project and program success, and it was refreshing to see a well-articulated approach to the topic.

The other attractive element to me was the literature and bibliography. There are some great gems in the book that show the application of these same principles across a wide variety of projects and demonstrate the broad importance in a variety of fields.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

While any project or program manager would probably benefit from the information in this book, the focus is really on large infrastructure projects and IT projects involving ongoing operations organizations. Project managers involved with or preparing for service transition processes (to use IT Infrastructure Library terminology) can definitely use the tools described in the book.

### **Conclusion**

For experienced project and program managers, much of the material may seem obvious but the fact remains operational readiness is a neglected topic in most environments. Business cases generally assume organizational friction associated with solution adoption will be minimal—this is almost never the case. Outsourcing is a particular area where operational readiness is usually not properly considered—many times because the outsourcing customer assumes it is “buying” a preintegrated process, and the outsourcing supplier assumes it is “taking over” a preexisting working process. Neither is usually the case...building operational readiness is a joint activity by both customer and supplier, and the success depends on the active participation by both as well as the joint realization that a completely new organization consisting of the two is being formed.

Most projects are no different. Solution integration to the environment is an important critical success factor, and this book is a solid introduction to the topic.

For more about this book, go to: <https://www.e6pc.com/>

To download a free copy, [click here](#).

*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](mailto:editor@peworldjournal.net).*

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## About the Reviewer



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**Ivan Kotcher**, PMP, is a project and program manager with strategic and operational consulting experience across the full breadth of data center infrastructure management. He has over 20 years of experience working with telecommunications and application hosting companies ranging in size from global carriers to startups. He currently works as a Principal Consultant with Infosys, helping customers to evolve business processes and associated supporting technologies to improve cost profiles and service delivery.

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