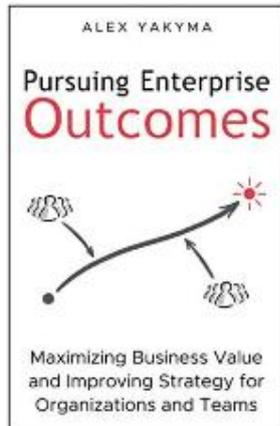

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Pursuing Enterprise Outcomes: Maximizing Business Value and Improving Strategy for Organizations and Teams***

Author: **Alex Yakyma**

Publisher: Self-published on Amazon

List Price: \$29.00 Format: Softcover, 290 pages & eBook

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Reviewer: Joseph Kuntz

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Introduction

In his book, *Pursuing Enterprise Outcomes*, Alex Yakyma does an excellent job of navigating the complex subject of organizational performance. I found the book to be quite helpful in identifying and understanding work flows and dependencies, with pertinent examples to help bring life to the concepts he was professing. The first 3 chapters were quite illuminating to me and provided real concepts that I put to use with my team right away!

The book did, at times though, get bogged down in over analysis, as I found in chapter 5 on the Mystery of Business Value. In portraying numerous concepts around value paths, and the scoring of such paths, he seemed to be engaging in an exercise in over-analysis. In attempting to address ambiguity and uncertainty, he only added to the same for me as I lost focus in a chapter that seemed to drag on.

Overview of Book's Structure

The first part of the book rightly identifies disconnects, aka bottlenecks, as the “killer” of organizational performance. It points out the challenge of identifying them and the wasted capacity caused by them. The author again accurately states that “Systemic disconnects in an organization prevent the organization from seeing systemic disconnects”. I’ve found this to be very true in my experience, especially in large organizations.

The author then introduces the pursuit of outcomes in the middle part of the book, along with the challenges around identifying outcomes in a business world that is obsessed with outputs. He spends a good deal of time pointing out the differences between the two and the challenges of overcoming output obsession. There is an

excellent overview of outcome chains and the importance of outcome ownership. He also introduces different types including collateral and preventative outcomes. In support of outcome analysis, the author provides an in depth overview of the art and science of probing including common mistakes and how to avoid them.

The last part of the book addresses the mystery of business value with the introduction of value paths along with the inherent connection between business value and business outcomes. The author provides an extensive look into the dynamic nature of value paths, different ways of identifying value and a means of quantifying (scoring) business value. The book then seems to loop back to the discussion on business outcomes by taking a deep dive into bottlenecks, including simple versus complex and how solutions to bottlenecks emerge. It closes with a look at business strategy, leverage points and how to diffuse strategy in the existing business culture.

Highlights

The book does an excellent job of answering the question “what is a good outcome analysis?” The author accurately identifies that in complex tasks that involve multiple people, interaction is a key enabler of high performance. Our challenge is that we have different backgrounds, work experience, requirements, goals and skill-sets than our peers from different departments within the organization. We speak different languages! Within outcome chains, this leads to disconnects, fragmentation and bottlenecks, which leads to extended effort and recycling of work= wasted capacity.

This is often due to the fact that most organizations, are obsessed with outputs because outputs are easier to think about, plan for, achieve, and measure, than the Outcomes of work effort. Good outcome analysis involves: a careful examination of who or what a complex task directly affects while determining exactly *how* they are affected by the task, it requires empathy and considers all points of view from multiple perspectives in order to mitigate confirmation bias, it’s a narrative, rather than a number and is not tied to outputs! Lastly, outcomes are emergent- not planned or based on legacy methods. However, they do need to be measured, not just defined.

The book also does a credible job in defining how to identify disconnects and how organizational fragmentation negatively influences a company’s ability to achieve outcomes. These discoveries are critical to the creation of real business value. There are multiple examples of pertinent complex bottlenecks that affect businesses today.

As importantly, the book proposes complex emergent solutions to the bottlenecks while simultaneously addressing the intricacies of human behavior and its effect on solution development. The author accurately states that “a lot of actual employee behavior is not truly known but has a big impact on the outcome of their effort.” He touts that observation, analytics instrumentation, self-observation and patient observation of behavior patterns over time might improve the ability to identify the true behavior of an individual or group.

Lastly, the book takes a poignant look at strategy, thus coming full circle to outcome achievement. Behavior identification is critical as: “Strategy is the way in which system behavior can be vectored toward a favorable outcome.” Strategy is often needed for tasks at any scale and are required at most interconnections of departments within a business. It is imperative to identify leverage points that “sit in the center of every strategy.” The author offers tools to identify those leverage points. Successful strategies are potent only when they are embraced in the existing culture, and are rarely successful when imposed.

Highlights: What I liked!

Although I consider myself an “outside the box” thinker, the content around focusing on outcomes versus outputs was a revelation to me! The cause of bottlenecks within my organization are so apparent in this light. But more importantly, the book provides creative ways to address and align fragmented organizations like mine.

I also enjoyed the chapter on The Science and the Art of Probing. It provided pertinent means of identifying and managing unknown unknowns, as well as some of the common pitfalls that prevent good outcome analysis.

Who might benefit from the Book?

I believe any department leader will benefit from this book, especially if they work within the same organization. I see clearly where a coalition or critical mass of embracing this approach would benefit most, if not all, fragmented organizations.

Also, as C-level executives often drive the output obsessions within organizations they would definitely benefit from the content of this book as it relates to pursuing outcomes, the strategies that drive them and the value that results for internal and external customers alike.

Conclusion

The author presents viable and relative business concepts around the pursuit of enterprise outcomes in the creation of business strategy and value. It provides an in depth look at the factors that inhibit, as well as accelerate, the above maxims. It is a highly instructive text on driving improvements in diverse business cultures, and provides ample usable examples and tools to accomplish the task.

For more about this book, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Pursuing-Enterprise-Outcomes-Maximizing-Organizations/dp/0998162922>

Editor’s note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Alamo Chapter](#).

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Joseph Kuntz, PMP is a proficient, versatile manager with proven success in building and developing technical project delivery teams. He is a creative thinker adept at leading cross-functional teams in a collaborative, results oriented environment and an effective communicator with a broad business perspective that consistently results in revenue and profit growth while enhancing the customer experience.

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