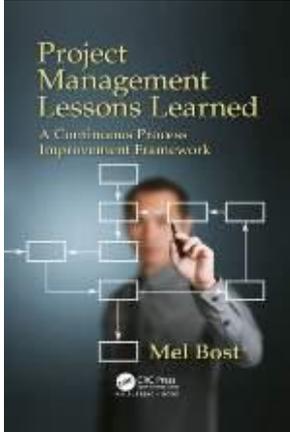


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Project Management Lessons Learned: A Continuous Process Improvement Framework***

Author: **Mel Bost**

Publisher: Taylor & Francis / Auerbach Publications

List Price: \$84.95                      Format: Hardcover, 236 pages

Publication Date: June 2018                      ISBN: 1498747779

Reviewer: **William H. Doernbach, PMP**

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### Introduction

As the author says in his introduction, this is a book about process, project, and lessons learned. He describes in the introduction how project managers can use this book successfully. This is a deep dive into the Lessons Learned process and provides a template for a continuous improvement framework.

PMI's sixth edition of the PMBOK defines Lessons Learned as "The knowledge gained during a project which shows how project events were addressed or should be addressed in the future for the purpose of improving future performance". Read this book and you will fully comprehend the magnitude of that one sentence.

### Overview of Book's Structure

The book is 207 pages and made up of the following contents, which will give you a good idea of the material covered:

List of Figures  
List of Tables  
Preface  
Acknowledgements  
Author

Chapter 1: Introduction to Processes and Projects as Key Facilitators of Modern Life  
Chapter 2: Understanding and Empowering the Program Management Office (PMO) and Its Influence on Project Lessons Learned  
Chapter 3: What Do I Do If My PMO Can't Execute?  
Chapter 4: Avoiding Disruption of the PMO by Accidental Adversaries

Chapter 5: Identifying and Applying Lessons Learned  
Chapter 6: What is “Leverage” and How Can Project Managers Use It to Their Advantage  
Chapter 7: The Importance of Reflection and Changing Attitudes in Lessons Learned  
Chapter 8: The Best Time to Document Project Lessons Learned  
Chapter 9: The Actual Cost to Your PMO for Not Capturing and Sharing Project Lessons Learned  
Chapter 10: Applying Project Lessons Learned as a Best Practice for Your Organization  
Chapter 11: Understanding and Using the New Project Framework  
Chapter 12: Recognizing and Using Different Perspectives  
Chapter 13: Dilemmas and Choices Faced by Project Managers  
Chapter 14: Identifying Valuable Candidates for Project Lessons Learned  
Chapter 15: Using the Project Framework to the Benefit of Enterprise Risk Management  
Chapter 16: The Tremendous Impact of Role Models on Project Management Leadership  
Chapter 17: Facilitating a Closer Connection: Lessons Learned, Risk Management, and Knowledge Management  
Chapter 18: Using the Project Framework to Facilitate Technology Development in Projects  
Chapter 19: Using Facilitation and Reframing toward Project Process Improvement  
Chapter 20: Avoiding Traps Where Structure Influences Behavior  
Chapter 21: Lessons Learned from the Application of Organizational Dynamics to the Business Continuation and Emergency Response Environment  
Chapter 22: The Sustainability Imperative  
Chapter 23: Conclusions  
Chapter 24: Summary

Appendix 1: Project Lessons Learned Template  
Appendix 2: A Layman’s Guide to Reinforcing and Balancing Loop Behavior and the Resulting Systems Archetypes  
Appendix 3: Systems Thinking and Organizational Dynamics Example-Teen Drivers  
Appendix 4: Project Lessons Learned from the Panama Canal Experiences  
Appendix 5: Capability Maturity Model Background and Levels of Maturity  
Appendix 6: Research as a Major Process  
Appendix 7: Scenarios Where Lessons Learned Can Positively Impact Performance and Outcomes

Epilogue  
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## Highlights

One highlight for me was the author Mel Bost's quote from Confucius. Who would imagine a quote from Confucius in a project management book.

By three methods, we may learn wisdom:

- First, by reflection, which is noblest;
- Second, by imitation, which is the easiest; and
- Third by experience, which is the bitterest.

### Confucius

I am quite sure most project managers can relate to the third method.

Lessons learned is about improving the success of projects, the processes, and the quality of those projects. Reducing the mistakes and improving the results, this allows not only yourself but your PMO, organization and future project managers to learn not only by your mistakes but by your successes. Lessons learned should be an ongoing process through the life of the project, each phase and not just at the end of the project as a checklist item during the closing project phase.

One perspective that the author provided reflected on my own life. Dr. Mehmet Oz, who used to host a television program focused on health and wellness, provided a prospective on lessons learned, he stated that one in three second opinions that patients seek in their diagnosis of a condition results in the original diagnosis is overturned. My personal experience is that patients may seek a second opinion for a negative diagnosis, but who seeks a second opinion if the diagnosis is positive? My brother was diagnosed with a benign condition and did not seek a second opinion until it was too late and consequently, he passed early in life. Just a couple years later my sister was diagnosed with a different benign condition, and everyone was all too happy to accept the diagnosis. I could only shake my head in wonder, I had to remind them of the lesson learned.

### Highlights: What I liked!

I really enjoyed this book; it provided a lot of useful information and was very thought provoking. Most project managers, I believe, think of Lessons Learned as an exercise at the end of a project. More thought given to less successful projects than successful projects. Project managers want to move onto their next project and lessons learned often become a check list item when closing out a project. But I learned that lessons learned is a much broader process and can be integral in process improvement, can be the difference between a successful project and an unsuccessful project.

The lessons learned framework will aid in capturing those things that both worked and didn't work, throughout the project. This allows a project manager to apply lessons to the current project, applying correcting actions that would turn a potential unsuccessful

project into a successful project. Capturing that information for yourself, your PMO and your corporation or client, for future project managers.

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

I highly recommend this book to anyone who is involved with projects, project management, PMOs, quality and process improvement. This is a valuable resource for a PMO in setting up a process improvement framework as well, it is not a theoretical book, but a book that would help guide the project manager.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion I learned a great deal from this book and believe it will be an important addition to any Project manager's library. It has piqued my interest in learning more and exploring what others have written on the subject. I also want to inform the project managers in my organization as well as the project managers in the PMI chapters that I belong to.

I am glad I chose to read and review this book and hope I sparked your interest in learning more also. As an aside I began reading this book on vacation, not what some would consider a beach book, I actually took an Amtrak train to the home I grew up in to see my 94-year-old mother; being a project manager and traveling long distance on a train, I was constantly think of ways they could improve their services, especially in the café cars. Thank you for reading this review.

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For more about this book, go to: <https://www.routledge.com/Project-Management-Lessons-Learned-A-Continuous-Process-Improvement-Framework/Bost/p/book/9781032095271>

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Silver Spring Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Silver Spring 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 Silver Spring Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books.*

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

## About the Reviewer



### **William H. Doernbach**

Maryland, USA



I am married to a wonderful woman who is a mother, grandmother, and now a great grandmother. Though I have no children of my own I realize how important family is and enjoy the company of my wife's family and grandchildren. We live in Maryland, outside Washington DC. When we married, we became a blended family, my wife with her two rescue dogs and me with my two rescue cats, we have since subtracted and added from them passing and rescuing others to still having two dogs and three cats, all rescues. I enjoy an active lifestyle having run 38 marathons, as well as hiking, and martial arts. Before the pandemic I did standup comedy; I love to make people laugh, and hope to pursue standup again.

I have been supporting projects and project management most of my adult life. After graduating high school, I joined the U.S. Marine Corps who trained me not only to be a Marine but to also be an IBM System 360 computer operator. Thus began my career in IT that has lasted for almost 50 years. During my time in the Marines, I taught myself COBOL and became a COBOL programmer and developer, team lead and project manager as a COBOL SME. One of my last major COBOL projects was as the project manager for the successful Y2K project for a large Federal agency with millions of accounts.

During the 2008 downturn I successfully managed building out a new data center for another large Federal agency, then because of my success I was asked to manage their Network Operation Center. Now I find myself as a senior program manager in the cyber security area of that same Federal agency, managing contracts, contractors, subcontractors, and procurements. I also give back to the project management community by teaching PMP and CAPM certification courses for the local community college.

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