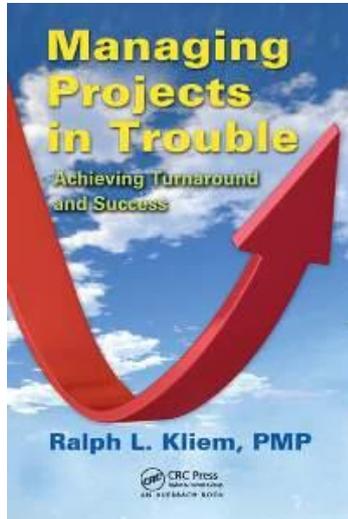


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW <sup>1</sup>



Book Title: ***Managing Projects in Trouble: Achieving Turnaround and Success***

Author: **Ralph L. Kliem, PMP**

Publisher: CRC Press

List Price: \$74.95 (currently discounted)

Format: Hard Cover, 210 pages

Publication Date: May 2011

ISBN: 978-1-4398-5246-0

Reviewer: **Amey Kulkarni, PMP**

Review Date: November 2022

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### Introduction

Despite managing budget, schedule, scope, quality, and other constraints, sometimes projects fail. In this book, the author talks about identifying signs of a 'troubled projects' early on and acting to turn the project away from the risks. The author, Ralph L Kliem, PMP, has 25+ years of experience managing projects. From his experience, he shares 5 key secrets to effectively turnaround difficult projects.

*“In this book, you will learn to take action in a way that will increase the likelihood of success and minimize the possibility of failure for you and your project. Specifically, you will be able to*

- *Recognize the symptoms of troubled projects.*
- *Make the necessary changes to turn around projects in trouble.*
- *Revisit a project's vision, and develop a new or revised vision.*
- *Look at all the options to turn a project into reality.*
- *Choose the most appropriate option.*
- *Execute the new or revised vision.”* (Kliem, Introduction p1-2)

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<sup>1</sup> How to cite this review: Kulkarni, A. (2020). *Managing Projects in Trouble*, book review, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XI, Issue XII, December.

## Overview of Book's Structure

Managing Projects in Trouble has 7 chapters. The author primarily speaks about 5 key actions or 5 E's as the author calls them viz. Energize, Envision, Explore, Evaluate and Execute.

The author sets the stage with an introduction in chapter 1 by giving us an overview of the symptoms of a troubled project, the patterns to look for and 5 key actions a project manager can take. The next five chapters are dedicated to each key action and a deeper dive into the specifics. The author's experience reflects the organized thoughts for each action and the case studies baked into them. Lastly, the author shares a few final thoughts in chapter 7. He talks about 5 Es in prior chapters and leaves with 5 Cs in addition to that. The 5Cs include Communication, Collaboration, Commitment, Concentration, and Change management.

The book contains case studies to go over the concepts, ample diagrams and tables to structure the thoughts. Overall, the book is written in simple, easy-to-understand language.

## Highlights

The book emphasizes the 5Es to guide the project manager to get the project into 'green' from the 'red' zone. 5 Es are Energize, Envision, Explore, Evaluate and Execute. The author has dedicated one chapter per 'E' to unpack the concept, case study, and a starting pack for the managers.

The project manager is uniquely positioned to 'energize' or provide a 'spark' to the team as they interact with all the key stakeholders. The author talks about identifying the key people, communicating the need to revisit the vision, and emphasizing the need for concentrated action. He stresses the importance of having a meaningful plan to make the project a success.

Envisioning the project outcome with the right stakeholders is the key. With qualitative and quantitative analysis, one should review past progress and re-evaluate the next course of action. The author speaks about how to conduct the gap analysis planned project path vs the actual path. This could lead to resource management decisions and adjustments to the project charter.

Connecting with everyone as people and recognizing their interests is important. Reviewing options with the team to remove non-essential work could lead to managing the budget and risks. "One of the biggest dangers of recovering a project in trouble is the failure to maintain objectivity" (Kliem, Explore, 4.7, pg 116). Exploring is connecting with the team, ensuring the interests are aligned, and setting the foundation to execute effective change.

The analysis to evaluate options methodically requires resources, and for troubled projects finding time and budget could be challenging. However, the author stresses

the importance of 'Evaluate' action, and not doing so will decrease the credibility of the decisions. The author provides tools to perform risk analysis effectively. He also gives tips and advice on presenting and negotiating the options.

The revised vision, techniques, and analysis are used to develop a realistic recovery plan. As a part of 'Execute,' the project manager gets participation and commitment from the stakeholder after considering their abilities and limitations. "Project management is about achieving results efficiently and effectively" (Kliem, Execute, 6.6, Pg 166).

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

In this book, one can see that author's experience and expertise reflects in his writing. I liked that the author provided case studies along with the 5Es. Those case studies help visualize the concept with a context. Another point I loved about this book is that, after each chapter, there is a Getting Started Checklist. Usually, 'where to begin' is a common challenge for many readers, in general, after reading any new concept. The author saw this and provided a checklist, which is gold in my view.

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

This book is written for everyone who manages projects in a capacity as the project manager. That said, I recommend this book for project managers new to mid-level PMs to learn from the author's experience.

### **Conclusion**

In this book, the author Ralph L Kliem, PMP, shares the methodology to manage trouble projects, which he mastered during his 25+ years of experience. It is a concise book with a ton of actionable steps to manage project risks. Although risks are inevitable, this book does not guarantee a cookie-cutter approach to turnaround a troubled project. However, the ideas mentioned in the book are meant to lower risks and improve your chances of leading successful projects.

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For more about this book, go to: <https://www.routledge.com/Managing-Projects-in-Trouble-Achieving-Turnaround-and-Success/Kliem/p/book/9780367382759>

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the PM World Journal and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide books to the PM World Journal; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter where they are offered free to PMI members who agree to provide a review within 45 days; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library.*

*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



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**Amey Kulkarni, PMP**, is a professional with over ten years of experience in CRM consulting and technical project management. He has enabled customers to leverage CRM capabilities and provided IT-business alignment. Amey has led enterprise-level projects in a Fortune 8 company in the United States (2019) and implemented CRM solutions considering scalability and long-term vision.

Amey holds a masters in IT Management from the University of Texas at Dallas – School of Management. He is active in the PMI-Dallas Chapter and Salesforce Trailblazer Community Dallas Group.

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