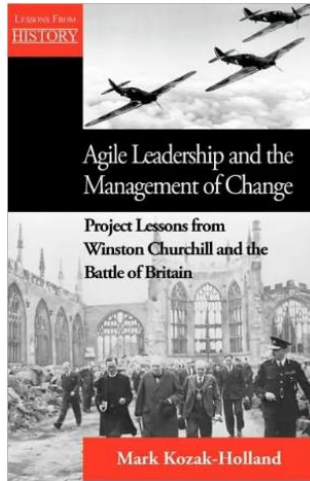


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW¹



Book Title: ***Agile Leadership and the Management of Change: Project Lessons from Winston Churchill and the Battle of Britain***

Author: **Mark Kozak-Holland**

Publisher: Multi-Media Publications, Inc.

List Price: \$34.95 Format: Paperback, 304 pages

Publication Date: 2009 ISBN: 9781554890354

Reviewer: **Michael J. Fellers, PMP**

Review Date: December 2022

Introduction

Congratulations! You are the new project manager, taking over responsibility for an ongoing project that is headed for failure. The stakeholders are in disarray, partners are giving up, procurement is at a standstill, the governance framework is dysfunctional, and a hostile takeover is about to commence. By the way, if you fail to get the project back on track and accomplish our goals, “then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age...” Better get to work.

This is the situation that Winston Churchill was thrust into when he was appointed Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in May 1940. This is not a book about Agile Methodology, rather it is about how leaders and organizations can transform themselves from static and stodgy to agile and adaptable. Author Mark Kozak-Holland uses Winston Churchill and his transformation of the United Kingdom during the Battle of Britain to illustrate the characteristics and behaviors of an “agile leader.” He cites specific examples from this perilous period of history to provide relevant lessons for leaders today.

Overview of Book’s Structure

The book is composed of twenty-five short, straightforward chapters. The first half of the book covers the period from September 1939 through June 1940. The author gives

¹ How to cite this work: Fellers, M. (2023). Agile Leadership and the Management of Change: Project Lessons from Winston Churchill and the Battle of Britain, book review, *PM World Journal*, Vol. XII, Issue I, January.

special attention to the circumstances of Winston Churchill's appointment as prime minister (PM) during the early stages of World War II and equates him to a project manager (PM) who takes over an exceptionally complex project that has been failing. Churchill's problems, decisions, and actions are described in their historical context and extrapolated to challenges and actions that project managers are faced with in "today's world."

The book's second half discusses and analyzes Churchill's four-pronged solution to his challenges amid an imminent invasion. It examines his implementation of these four "project areas" and then assesses his success or failure by detailing the historical events of each month from June through October 1940.

At the end of each chapter, the author provides key lessons and suggestions to educators for further consideration. The key lessons are a bulleted list of what we should comprehend from the chapter. They include descriptions of what the author calls an "agile leader" as well as connections to PMBOK Guide (3rd Edition) knowledge areas that are represented within the chapter. The final chapter contains twelve takeaways and a summary of the agile characteristics that Churchill exemplified.

Highlights

This is a self-described book about management and leadership, whereby Mr. Kozak-Holland uses his vast experience as an information technology consultant to identify the characteristics of an "agile leader" today in the historical context of the Battle of Britain. While the bulk of his examples relates to Churchill, he also highlights Air Marshal Hugh Dowding in his leadership of the Royal Air Force (RAF) Fighter Command and, to a lesser degree, Lord Beaverbrook for his role in improving fighter production. These leaders' individual actions and decisions, viewed through the lens of project management, form the bulk of the subject matter.

The second large subject area of the book is the integration of these four areas of Churchill's transformation project: The fighter supply chain (Beaverbrook building more spitfires), Intelligence and cryptography (Bletchley Park), RAF Fighter Command (emerging technologies and re-engineered processes), and Story's Gate (Churchill's command and control node). Mr. Kozak-Holland gives thorough treatment to the details of how these four areas related, how they communicated, and how they were automated to maximize the quality, efficiency, and synchronicity of decisions from all echelons of leadership.

Highlights: What I liked!

Without overtly stating it, this book clearly shows that the selection of the project manager may be the most important decision to make within a project. I knew that Winston Churchill was one of modern history's greatest leaders, but until now I never knew why. It seems that all of Churchill's adult life experiences, including his failures, were preparing him for the monumental challenges that he overcame to win the Battle of Britain and eventually turn the tide of the War. Even in the face of grave odds,

Churchill's unrelenting determination, optimism, and resolve gave absolute credence to his clear and simple vision: Survival of the British Empire; wage war by sea, land, and air; and be victorious. His example should give hope to any project manager stepping into a seemingly bleak situation.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Project managers and other leaders from any industry who have an interest in history would find this book both enlightening and enjoyable. The chapters are easy to absorb and can be completed in quick bites. Though there is minimal framework provided for the application of the author's concepts for an "agile leader," many of the lessons will remain with the reader as they are attached to real examples of courageous leaders making bold moves in a dire situation that most are familiar with.

Conclusion

The historical backdrop of this book about management and leadership made the subject matter much more colorful and applicable than the ordinary self-help title. The "agile leader" characteristics, when consolidated and analyzed, are a desirable list of traits that a leader at any level should possess. Churchill's sheer brilliance and his unwavering mettle are on display for us to aspire to, and this work does well to demonstrate his rightful place in history as the greatest Briton ever.

For more about this book, go to: <https://lessons-from-history.com/page/churchill-agile-pm>

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Mike Fellers is the Texas area Operations Manager for a global leader in healthy building technologies. He was awarded a B.S. in Electronics Engineering Technology from Texas A&M University and a project management M.B.A. from the University of Texas at Dallas. He spent twenty years in the Texas Army National Guard as an Engineer officer before retiring. He and his family reside in Dallas where he is a member of the PMI Dallas Chapter.

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