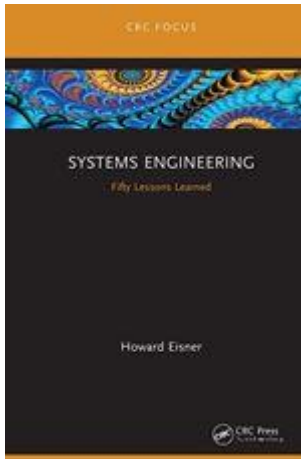


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW¹



Book Title: **SYSTEMS ENGINEERING Fifty Lessons Learned**

Author: **Howard Eisner**

Publisher: CRC Press Taylor & Francis Group

List Price: \$24.95 Format: Soft cover, 119 pages

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Reviewer: **Tracy Gilmore**

Review Date: March 2023

Introduction

Have you ever wanted to spend a few hours learning from a subject matter expert? Or wondered what nuggets of wisdom someone with 50 years of experience in systems engineering could share? If so, then this is the book for you. Reading SYSTEMS ENGINEERING Fifty Lessons Learned is like having lunch with a wise friend and lingering for the afternoon because he has so much knowledge to share about systems engineering and project management, and how the two are intertwined.

Overview of Book's Structure

The 50 lessons in this book are thoughtfully organized into 5 chapters: Technical, Management, Idea Based, People Oriented, and Miscellany. There is a bonus chapter with an additional Top Ten Lessons. In total, 60 great lessons from an expert in the field.

Each lesson is followed by a relevant story, a more in-depth explanation, or additional context to make the lesson more relevant. A "References and Recommended Reading" section is included in many of the lessons.

Highlights

This book is written in first person, and truly feels like you are having a conversation with the author to get his personal advice for your career. The author's depth of

¹ How to cite this work: Gilmore, T. (2023). Systems Engineering: Fifty Lessons Learned, book review, *PM World Journal*, Vol. VII, Issue IV, April.

knowledge and sense of humor are evident throughout the book. The way the book is organized, it's easy to pick up and read a few lessons at a time, or you can devour an entire chapter in one sitting.

Chapter 1 (Technical) sets the stage for the rest of the book, with lessons on fundamentals, cost effectiveness, and integration. These themes are re-visited throughout the book. The case studies and real-world examples included throughout the book make it more interesting, and easier to understand the applicability of each lesson. Even if you are not a rocket scientist, you can relate to the stories about the U.S. Space Shuttles.

The Chapter 2 (Management) lesson on measurement resonated with me. The section on Project Measurement, with a well-thought of list of what needs to be measured, expressed in layman's terms rather than in project management vocabulary, made it easy to see the business value of measurement. While some lessons in Chapter 3 (Idea Based) are quite technical, there are still valuable lessons for project managers such as Lesson 25 "Try to Master New Tools and Use Them as Needed".

Chapter 4 (People Oriented) and Chapter 5 (Miscellany) have much to offer in terms of general business practices, including Lesson 30 "Listen Your Elders" and Lesson 31 "Leadership". Lesson 46 "Risk Analysis and Mitigation" left me wanting to learn more, and did not disappoint with the included References and Recommended Reading.

The book concludes with the author's Top Ten Lessons. These lessons re-visit key themes from throughout the book with just enough detail to inspire the curious reader to read, explore, and never stop learning.

Highlights: What I liked!

My favorite lesson was Lesson 32 "New Boss". It gives a funny and accurate description of many of the bosses I've encountered during my career. Not only does the author identify 12 types of bosses, he provides practical suggestions for working with each type. The lesson concludes with an overall list for how to interact with all bosses that is good advice for anyone in the workforce.

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book would be beneficial for systems engineers, whether just starting a career in this field, or someone with experience who would like to take advantage of lessons learned by someone with a lifetime of knowledge to share.

Project managers within any industry can find plenty of wisdom that applies to all projects, not just systems engineering. Many of the lessons in the Management and

People Oriented chapters in particular have broad applicability to any industry or business.

Conclusion

SYSTEMS ENGINEERING Fifty Lessons Learned is a worthwhile read for systems engineers and project managers alike. It provides concise, well-organized advice with references on where to go for more in-depth reading on particular topics. While not all fifty lessons might be applicable to all readers, every reader is certain to walk away with some new insights and food for thought.

For more about this book, go to:

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.1201/9781003002505/systems-engineering-howard-eisner>

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Tracy Gilmore is a PMP®-certified Operations Director with more than 30 years of experience in Information Technology supporting clients in the financial and manufacturing industries for large IT companies in the United States. She has held a variety of roles including operations director, account manager, program manager, project manager, product manager, Y2K consultant, mainframe consultant, conversion manager, and mainframe developer. As a project manager and a developer, she has participated in all phases of application development and support, including estimating, analysis, design, construction, and implementation.

Tracy is a member of the Project Management Institute having acquired her PMP certification in 2002.