PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW [1]

Book Title: **The Persuasive Project Manager**

Author: **Dr. Bill Brantley, PMP, PMI-ACP**

Publisher: Bill Brantley

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Reviewer: **Betsey Katiti**

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Introduction

In his book, The Persuasive Project Manager, Dr. Bill Brantley stresses how it is vital for Project Managers to establish good communication practices that will help and increase their projects' prospects to succeed. Good practices such as establishing regular meetings with stakeholders and the project team where the project's status is communicated will help the Project to succeed. It is also important to formulate and communicate the project's goals early on. Failure in this stage can negatively impact the rest of the decision-making process. Project Managers are the information hubs of their projects, it is important that they have effective and efficient ways to receive and transmit project information. They need to develop effective ways to manage communication to ensure that information flows freely and to where the information can be very helpful.

Overview of Book's Structure

The Persuasive Project Manager stresses the importance of Good Communication in delivering successful projects. It explores different ways that will help improve communication on a Project in the following areas:

- Information transfer model. It is important for project managers to have effective and clear ways of transmitting information that reduce noise in the channel that can affect the message.

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- Aristotle's persuasion triangle of Ethos - the speakers credibility and stage presence, Pathos - the emotional part of the message, and Logos - logic that appeals to the audience's reason and helps them to make decisions.
- Emergent communication model. Effective communication is more than information transfer. Effective Project Management communication is creating understanding between the Project Team, the Stakeholders and Corporate Sponsors.
- Communication should suit the information needs of the receiver, stakeholders and project teams. Participants co-create meaning and understanding through communication.
- Emotional vs. Cultural Intelligence. Understanding cultural differences helps project managers to better communicate with stakeholders and project teams.
- Cognitive biases, errors in thinking when we allow judgments to be influenced by personal preferences, beliefs or feelings.
- Effective communication with remote project team members and stakeholders. As more and more people work remotely, it is important the project manager communicates with remote team members effectively.
- Moving from traditional leadership of command and control to Situational leadership, Coaching leadership and Servant leadership.

Highlights

Effective project management communication occurs when the Project Manager and his/her audience co-create understanding. To be an effective communicator, the project manager must have credibility and trust (ethos). The message must have both logical arguments (logos) and emotional impact (pathos). Project Managers should be aware that the number of Communication Channels – $n(n-1)/2$ increase exponentially as you add team members. For example, when you have a project of 10 members the number of communication channels is 45. When you add 5 members, the number of communication channels rises to 105, which are more than double of what the channels were.

Culture is another example of "noise" in the communication channel. We are shaped by the societies we grew up in or live, their beliefs, traditions, understanding, assumptions and goals that are learned from previous generations. Culture determines how people encode messages, the mediums they choose to transmit them and they way the message is interpreted. A Project Manager should be aware of the different cultures on his/her project and explore ways to communicate with them effectively. Ask questions and seek to understand whether communication was received as it was intended.

Project Managers should also be aware of cognitive biases. Cognitive biases are erroneous ways we receive and/or process information. They can arise from the heuristics/rules of thumb that have become reasoning shortcuts. A culture that encourages leaders to make quick decisions without examining their biases and then imposing these decisions onto teams will produce a greater number of untapped conditions that may delay project progress as they are revealed to be ineffective.

Instead, Project Managers should take time to reflect and examine their decisions and allow team members to feel secure enough to question decisions being made.

Using Situational Leadership, Servant Leadership and Coaching Leadership will help Project Managers to improve their teams' success by shifting leadership from command and control to develop and support. Situational leadership is leadership that recognizes there is no single "best" style of leadership. Leaders adapt their leadership style to the performance readiness of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influence. Coaching leadership style is defined by the leader's ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of individual team members so that the leader can help each individual grow and succeed. Servant Leadership in particular flips the old model of command-and-control leader. Instead of using commands and control where the leader is the center of attention, the servant leader guides from behind. Employees are given maximum freedom to determine how to accomplish their work assigned by the leader. High levels of trust between the leader and the team must exist for servant leadership to be effective.

Highlights: What I liked!

The author stresses the importance of understanding in communication. There are 3 main ways of understanding.

- Know-what in which one has an understanding of a concept, physical object or process but does not really know how the object is created or operates.

- Know-how is when one can create an object, understands the concept of the object and can draw conclusions from the object.

- Know-why is when one knows the object, the concept and knows when and why to use it.

Different members of a team may not all possess all 3 ways of understanding. An important decision for a communicator/Project Manager is to determine the level of understanding that different members of his/her audience/team need for successful communication. Understanding social worlds is also important, each one of us lives in several social worlds – our work life, family life, religion, political beliefs. Recognizing and understanding each other's social worlds is key to effective communication.

As project work becomes more virtual and digitized in the post pandemic era, more and more leaders are dealing with teams that work remotely part of the time or full-time. More and more of a Project Manager's communication is through emails, phone, text messages. Technology filters out both the information being received and the communication cues necessary for better understanding. Feelings of remoteness will require the leader to change his/her leadership approach to establish a sense of connection with project team. Leaders should use opportunities such as virtual meetings strategically highlighting the great work a person has done. Let people ask

each other for help during meetings. Build in time for people to get to know each other as this may be the only time they interact with each other.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Project Managers who are looking for ways to improve the performance of their teams as well as Project Team Members, Stakeholders who are interested in learning about ways that can make their projects more productive and help them to grow in ways that make them better and more productive team members will benefit from reading this book.

I would also recommend this book to leaders/people who work with groups of people in other settings such as community groups, religious organizations where better communication in their meetings, dealing with each other would help them to achieve their goals.

Conclusion

The Persuasive Project Manager is a great tool for Project Managers and leaders who are looking to improve the performance of their teams and projects. Dr. Bill Brantley captures your attention by highlighting ways that leaders can improve the performance of their teams and opens the reader's eyes to how communication can help us even in our daily communication. He also shares many tools and technologies that can help Project Managers and other leaders to improve their communication skills. I would recommend Dr. Brantley's book to anyone who is looking to improve performance and understanding with team members on a project and to anyone who would like to see the flow of information in their circles improve.

For more about this book, go to: https://www.amazon.com/Persuasive-Project-Manager-Communicating-Understanding-ebook/dp/B07NCC7KFN

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About the Reviewer

Betsey Katiti

Maryland, USA

Betsey Katiti, PMP works as a Business Analyst and has worked on many projects on Federal Contracts. With a background in Information Technology, a Master's Degree in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, she enjoys bringing her technology skills to the projects she works on. Betsey is a member of the PMI Silver Spring Chapter in Maryland and acquired her PMP Certification in 2018.

Betsey Katiti can be reached at bkatiti@gmail.com.