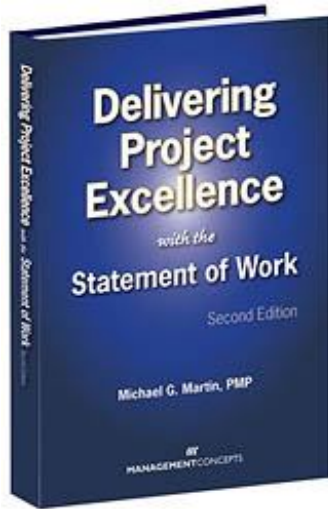


PM World Today Book Review



Book Title: ***Delivering Project Excellence with the Statement of Work, 2nd Revised Edition***

Authors: **Michael G. Martin, PMP**

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Reviewer: **Buck Field**

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Overview

Michael Martin's "*Delivering Project Excellence with the Statement of Work, Second Revised Edition*" presents experience and advice from an author who clearly knows his way around government contracting and managing projects under them. As is often the case when expectations are not met and a formal contract exists, the wording of the contract and related documentation becomes of paramount importance. This author describes the statement of work as the primary documentation for resolving such disputes, but wisely points out its greatest potential value lies in avoiding such disputes entirely and ensuring project success. This potential will be fulfilled if the SOW is developed in sufficient detail, communicated effectively, and evolves under proper monitoring, control, and communication as Mr. Martin describes.

Brief Thoughts

The structure of this edition is laid out in the preface, featuring Part 1 as "Understanding the Fundamentals of the Statement of Work", wherein examples of past analogs to the modern SOW are presented, and modern definitions from the U.S. federal government and the Project Management Institute are discussed in the first chapter. Subsequent chapters in Part 1 discuss the potential value of a detailed SOW, different flavors of SOW's, and from where new standards are emerging.

Part 2 "Building the Statement of Work", focuses on two underlying, preliminary components for the SOW beginning in Chapter 5: a due diligence analysis and a

work breakdown structure (WBS). Chapters 6 through 8 explain commonalities in structuring and drafting good SOW's. Part 3 is "Maintaining the SOW for Project Excellence", notable for its sample change request forms and explanation of the SOW's lesser known cousin: the statement of objectives (SOO). Part 4, "Changing the Paradigm", includes advice nearly every PM is likely to need at some point in their career: gaining support for investing the time and expense required for planning and developing a good, detailed SOW. Executives tend to loathe what they have good reason to believe is unproductive, bureaucratic paper shuffling.

While appendices are arguably not normally regarded as within the book's core material, the appendices are here grouped in Part 4, and the extraordinary value of these appendices makes them worthy of special notice, as is hinted toward in some of the Amazon reviews.

Highlights of what I liked include appreciation of Mr. Martin's argument in Chapter 1 that SOW's should, (as appropriate), include "products and services to be supplied to the client and the needs and requirements of the contractor to deliverable such products and services under the contract". At least one case illustrates where poor interpretation of the definition of an SOW led problems so severe, project stakeholders wound up in court, and throughout this book, the author argues correctly that the SOW underlies contractual obligations and understandings of contractual parties, as it certainly must. On the question of whether it is wise to replace the definition of SOW with one assuming existence of a "client", "contractor" and a "contract", my opinion is that best practices for both Mr. Martin's specialty (government contract projects) and the general PM will be best served by adopting a customized definition only as appropriate for the context of each project.

Similar to the argument for the value of robust SOW's, the strong case made in Chapter 4 for creating effective project teams with diverse, expert knowledge is compelling. Recommendations for dealing with the conflicting demands and interests of team members to achieve this valuable goal will aid project managers even more.

Some Flaws

My impression is generally favorable for the target audience, and I consider this edition worth purchasing if only for the excellent sample SOW's in the appendices and the pearls of wisdom scattered throughout – yet the book has regrettable, deep problems as well. While thrilled to see definitions of "Due Diligence" from Black's Law Dictionary in Chapter 5 applied to project analysis, I was dismayed some best practice approaches were not applied as rigorously to larger issues of context, such as how to approach PM. For example: Mr. Martin repeatedly references religious myths as real, whereas many members of the target audience may regard magic by supernatural beings and divine intervention as unreasonable claims which are best left out of project management discussions. Replacing them with illustrations and analogies from reality based history, science and actual discoveries is certain to improve perceptions of the text's trustworthiness. Not only are modern science and ethics more inspiring, exciting, strange, robust, wondrous and informative to real

world project management, and not only are they parts of the most reliable known processes, methods, and traditions for determining truth, but they are more easily taught, learned, and applied to 21st century work.

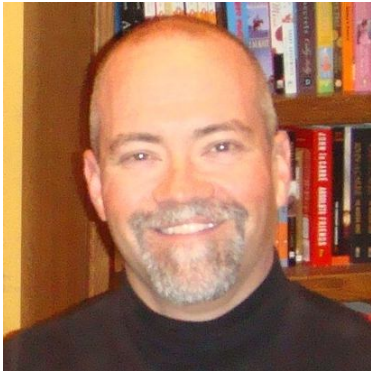
With those 2 caveats, the ideal audience for Michael Martin's work here would seem to be project managers involved in creating SOW's, and want those documents to have real value in keeping the team focused, preventing conflicts & other problems, and generally making it most likely the project will succeed. Those actively involved also in contract-based project planning seem a nearly perfect match for these ideas and recommendations. For these groups, recommending the \$69.00 retail price is a no-brainer.

Conclusion

For me, the real endorsement of my ideas is when they are put to good use. I will be reviewing the SOO sample contained in the appendix to generate ideas that may be useful in an upcoming National Science Foundation project. As mentioned above, the appendices provide good, ready-made templates for SOW's as well, showing evidence of careful development resulting in solid, robust capabilities and lots of good ideas built into them. My overall rating: 3 out of 5.

More Information about Delivering Project Excellence with the Statement of Work, Second Revised Edition, by Michael G. Martin, published by Management Concepts, can be found at http://www.managementconcepts.com/portal/mc/website/communities/publications/bookstore/view_all_publications

About the Reviewer:



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Buck Field has been a member of the Project Management Institute since 2001, serving PMI since 2002 as a contributor to the PMBOK® Guide and the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. He co-authored the first official Project Management Professional training program in China, created the California Department of Transportation's project management glossary, and currently researches project management of scientific research with the hope of supporting development of technology for faster than light transit.

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