

PMF Book Review



Book Title: Managing Smaller Projects

Author: Mike Watson

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Reviewer: Catherine Vilaga

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Introduction to the Book:

Managing Smaller Projects is a practical guide to incorporating principles of Project Management to smaller projects simply and easily. When applied to smaller projects traditional project management methods and techniques often prove ill-suited and result in overkill. Watson sets out to devise a system that will help people control smaller projects in a logical and effective way without incurring the expensive overhead costs associated with traditional project management methods, tools and techniques. The result is his proposed Smaller Projects (SP) Method.

As a Human Resources (HR) professional, I find that project management is an important skill set in my profession. But because most HR projects are considered small to medium in size, the application of traditional Project Management is daunting and not always practical. The author's approach allows me to introduce the foundations of project management to human resources projects in a more efficient manner that is tailored to the smaller scale of most HR projects.

Overview of Book's Structure:

Managing Smaller Projects provides the what, why, and how of managing smaller projects; a series of standard forms to be used, copied or adapted to fit the reader's environment; and checklists that will remind the reader of the various techniques that could be applied at each stage of a project.

It is relatively easy to read and is divided into sixteen chapters covering the following topics: project initiation, roles and responsibilities, project planning, estimating and budgeting, managing risk, controlling the project, managing quality, managing change, reviewing the project, managing several projects, managing a crisis, using a computer for project management, implementing the SP method, managing stakeholders, and managing e-commerce projects.

Highlights: What I liked:

Watson holds true to his claim that this book is simple and easy. Anyone without project management experience can benefit from this book's simplicity. Special topics of interest include:

- managing several projects,
- using a computer (don't do it!),
- and implementing the SP method.

A major cause of project failure is the common effect of "over-optimistic dumping of work". For small projects, managers typically appoint a skilled and experienced person to the role of project manager to be responsible for achieving the project's objectives while maintaining his regular work responsibilities. Watson outlines techniques to assist the SP manager to document and manage competing priorities. When resources clash or the SP manager is overloaded, the SP manager can challenge and reaffirm the relative priorities of project work versus other work.

In Watson's chapter "Using a Computer (Don't Do It!)," he dispels the myths about project planning systems, sets guidelines for what to look for if it is necessary, and describe how to use one. Project planning systems can be of great assistance to a project manager, but these systems do not make that project manager into a skilled project planner because they are not helpful when making management decisions regarding initiation of a project, strategic project factors, shaping the project into phases, project definition, roles and responsibilities, estimating, budgeting, managing risk, controlling the project, measuring progress information, re-planning the project, planning for quality, measuring quality, managing change, review the project, managing several projects at once, and managing a crisis.

Implementing the SP method should be treated as its own project. Watson outlines Strategic Project Factors to be considered when implementing the SP method; how to organize the SP project; and how to prove the business benefits of SP methodology and its effectiveness with objective measurements. regulators.

Shortfalls: What was missing!

Watson introduces the concept of managing stakeholders toward the end of the book. He should have introduced this concept earlier. Managing stakeholders is about communication – a key for successful projects. Stakeholders are the champions for one's project but, if dissatisfied, will not remain so. By introducing the concept toward the end of the book, Watson minimizes the importance of the stakeholder and their role in project management.

Who might benefit from the Book:

Anyone that must manage smaller projects would benefit most from this book: layman, novice, and the seasoned project manager. A project has an agreed, well defined objectives and end products; a start and end point; must balance time, cost

and quality; many interrelated tasks, often grouped into phases; a temporary project team brought together for the project; a multi-disciplinary team; the involvement of people from other organizations; and it brings about change. We all have been challenged to move or take a vacation – small project. With no formal project management experience, the layman must plan, execute, monitor and control activities. The use of SP will provide the layman with more control and respond to potential barriers to the project's success. The novice is an individual that has limited experience managing projects and is interested in widening their horizon by exploring further the principles of project management. The seasoned project manager is the individual already utilizing project management methodologies to manage large projects but who wants to control smaller projects without needless bureaucracy.

Conclusion:

Because smaller projects are largely ignored, they are not subject to the regular controls that large project are; thus, their implementations remain largely uncontrolled and haphazard. These smaller projects taken together may represent certain financial risks; the only way to circumvent these risks is to apply the principles of project management – SP is just more effective with smaller projects.

Information about purchasing this book can be found at www.mmpubs.com.

Short bio of reviewer:



Cathy Vilaga



Cathy Vilaga is a client services team lead with the HR Services group in the Dallas office of Mercer Human Resources Consulting. She is responsible for helping clients accomplish their strategic human resources objectives and enhance their unique business culture by leveraging Mercer's expertise in HR, client knowledge, and its breadth and depth of outsourcing products and services. Before joining Mercer in 2006, Cathy has spent over seven years providing business analysis, project management, and applications development for the human resources functions for companies in the technology industry. Cathy holds a BA from Baylor University and is pursuing an MBA from the University of Texas at Dallas. She is a member of the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), the International Association for Human Resources Information Management (IHRIM) and the Project Management Institute (PMI). She is responsible for program development and communications for the DFW Chapter of IHRIM, and serves on their Board of Directors. Her commitment to the DFW chapter was recognized in 2006 when she received the DFW Member of the Year Award. In addition, she is responsible for the editing and the delivery of communications for the PMI HR SIG.