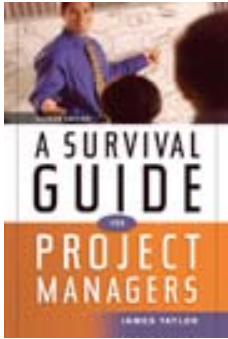


PMF Book Review



Book Title: A Survival Guide for Project Managers

Author: James Taylor

Publisher: AMACOM

List Price: \$ 19.95 USD

Publication Date: 2006

Reviewer: Karim Osman

Review Date: November 2006

Introduction to the Book:

This book is a practical guide for project managers. The writer uses his experience to map out the responsibilities of project managers and the corresponding skills required to successfully execute their responsibilities. The writer also includes technical and personal tools to polish these skills.

Overview of Book's Structure:

The book is structured in two sections based on the phases of project management. The writer chose to present in the first section skills that are unique to project managers and that differentiate them from line managers. In the second section the writer proceeds to identify the tools and techniques that project managers will use to plan, execute, monitor, control, and close the projects.

Highlights: What I liked:

The book provides a detailed methodology that project managers can use to improve their personal and behavioral skills. Most books on project management describe the personal and behavioral skills of a project manager. This book explains how to acquire these skills and improve them. For example, the importance of project managers to be good communicators is emphasized over and over again in most Project Management books and courses. This book goes one step further by providing tools and techniques to actually help those critical oral and written communication skills. The section dealing with active listening is invaluable, and is something we all can benefit from both in a professional and personal environment. As would be expected of any project management text, this book includes good, easy to follow, explanations of the basic technical tools such as WBS, Network Analysis, and Earned Value techniques, required to manage projects.

Taylor takes the time to discuss the process of selecting project managers. He rightfully mentions that the best project engineer does not necessarily make them a good project manager just as a top salesman does not necessarily make a good director of marketing. With this in mind Taylor discusses several other characteristics, skills, and behaviors that the ideal candidate to manage the project should have.

Taylor also describes the "non-organizational" organization, and its relation to managing projects. This is a concept I haven't read about before that appears to be quite common and relevant for people who work on projects in small entrepreneurial companies.

This book contains a trenchant discussion of the role of a Project Management Office in an organization. Taylor discusses in detail the activities a PMO should carry out, how they should be formed if there isn't one to begin with, what type of organizational structure it may take the form of, etc.

Some historical references to certain concepts make for interesting reading. For example, Taylor mentions how the concept of Earned Value originated from the Department of Defense and where the "functional" organization originated way back in the Roman army.

Shortfalls: What was missing!

The book could have included practical examples to explain the tools and techniques.

Who might benefit from the Book:

This book is helpful to project managers who have some experience in managing projects and want to improve their skills and even those that are new to the field and are looking for an easy to ready to read guide on managing projects.

Conclusion:

Along with the interesting topic, this book is written in a clear, concise, and easy style. This book is recommended as part of a handout to prospective project managers who are attending training programs as well as for MBA candidates.

Short bio of reviewer:



Karim Osman



Karim Osman is a Project Engineer in the Nuclear Projects Division of Ontario Power Generation, the Provincial Utility of Ontario, Canada. Prior to working at the utility, he worked with Stone and Webster, an international Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Management (EPCM) company. He has worked in various projects in the power sector first as a Mechanical Design Engineer, then as a Mechanical Design Lead, then as Design Team Leader, and now as a Project Engineer. The projects have ranged from new design/build projects to modifications to existing systems in the power station. Karim has earned a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Toronto and is currently enrolled in the Project Management MBA Program at the University of Texas at Dallas. He can be contacted at karim.osman@opg.com.