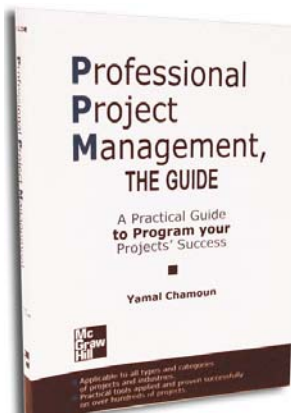


PM World Today Book Review



Book Title: *Professional Project Management, the Guide*
Author: Yamal Chamoun, PMP, MS, Civil Engineer
Publisher: McGraw-Hill/Interamericana Editores, S.A. de C.V. Corporativo Punta Santa Fe Prolongación Paseo de la Reforma 1015 Torre A, Piso 17, Colonia Desarrollo Santa Fe, Delegación Álvaro Obregón C.P. 01376, México, D.F.
Publication Date: 2006
ISBN: 970-93408-0-8
Reviewer: Earl W. Crisp, D. P. A
Review Date: November 2007

Introduction to the Book

This is a specialty guidebook of approximately 268 pages that enhances many of the key concepts presented in the PMBOK with the intent of amplifying the traditional elements of project development so that a project manager can surpass the client's expectations. The author describes the benefits of establishing long-term relationships with suppliers and other stakeholders. The book offers a systematic methodology that can be adapted to a variety of projects and details the author's innovative approach called the Escala Method that follows the guidelines of the Project Management Institute. The author writes in a flowing narrative style and creates word pictures to help the reader visualize the tools and techniques and their application to a project. His style of presentation includes a detailed table of contents that outlines the elements to be covered in seven chapters and four appendices.

His introduction provides a description of the reason for writing the book, his defense of the Escala Method and how each chapter relates to the PMBOK and especially the five process of initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing. Each chapter is comprised of definitions, a series thought provoking questions, numerous tables and charts and a unique visual approach using Mind Maps to reinforce the interaction of key processes. Each chapter is summarized and case studies are provided to help the reader see the importance of each concept. The book has a very good glossary written in layman's terms, a list of references and recommended readings and finishes out with an excellent topical index.

The focus of the book on managing project quality is based on the perspective of how to simultaneously manage *both* projects and quality output. The book describes a logical and systematic adaptation for the use of quality tools and knowledge to meet the unique needs of projects.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book begins with an opening section that includes the dedication and acknowledgements, introduction of the author and a brief preface followed by a six page book overview that provides the author's reasons for writing this book and also describes his support of the Escala Method and what it has to offer to the reader. The guidebook has been written in a way to mirror most projects beginning with the initiating process all the way through to the closing of a project. The author provides additional insight about his preferred approach to projects by describing his use of a step-by-step case study that is continuously developed as the reader moves from one chapter to the next. To maintain the focus of the reader the author uses four questions throughout so the reader can self-determine whether or not the project is progressing properly. These questions are part of the author's functional analysis for keeping the project schedule on time, on budget, and without loss of quality.

- What is it for?
- What does it include?
- How is it developed?
- When is it used?

The author then provides a structural overview of the book and describes the key points of each chapter and how the text flows in conjunction with the PMBOK. The author then describes the four appendices, the glossary, references and recommended readings and a topical index

The author's motivation for writing this book is based on his experience as a project manager where he is constantly dealing with projects not being completed on time and plagued by the lack of expected quality. His intent it to provide a methodology of what a successful project should look like and that is should meet and possibly surpass a client's expectations. He emphasizes closely monitoring the timeframe of the project, the budget, the meeting the expected quality standards and the importance of establishing relationships with stakeholder and suppliers and developing them into long term - almost family-like acquaintances.

Each chapter is laid out in a similar manner using a tabulator format. The objectives of the chapter are listed at the very beginning and provide rationale and than identifies the concepts to be covered. The author's intent is to make the book as functional and compact as possible without distorting the charts, tables and diagrams so that the reader can use the guidebook as quick reference or look up a concept or definition that is key to the project. The book's functionality targets portability and action and the design of the book makes it easy to carry onsite and therefore, providing the project manager with a concise ready reference.

In chapter 1, the author emphasizes the definition of success and provides a brief history before describing the Escala Method's definition of success which is as follows: *To meet the schedule, cost and quality objectives, to the client's*

*satisfaction and that of the **key stakeholders** while **developing long-term relationships** with contractors and the remaining members.*

Since most of the guidebooks format is stylized similar to a textbook, the author often provides personal comments and miniature diagrams in the outer margins of the guidebook where there is enough room for the reader to add personal comments as well.

Towards the middle of each chapter, the author describes the Tools and Techniques of the **Escala Method** and then explains how they relate to the four questions of *What is it for? What does it include? How is it developed? When is it used?* Here the author presents **36 tested and proven tools and techniques** that can be effectively uses by Professional Project Managers. The tools are defined and categorized by the five processes of **Initiating, Planning, Executing, Controlling and Closing**. The author then provides a case study in the following chapters along with the solutions demonstrate how each tool is used.

Of particular interest, the author uses a tool called **Mind Maps** that was originally developed by Tony Buzan with the purpose of optimizing the collaboration between the left and the right hemispheres of the brain. The left hemisphere is responsible for detailed-oriented, logical, organized, analytical, mathematical, structured and rational thought, where as the right is associated with artistic, creative, spontaneous, intuitive, emotional and visionary features.

When the author portrays a *mind map*, he typically places the mind map concept towards the top or in the center of the diagram and then branches out the subtopics in a radial fashion using icons, titles and remarks. These subtopics are aligned appropriately with the left and right brain hemispheres. Although not depicted in the guidebook, the author stresses the uses of color coding and marking (free strokes) on the mind map to increase the stimulation of the brain so the project manager can remember the concepts more effectively. Following the summary of each chapter the author provides a list of possible *questions* and refers each question to the resource chapter(s) of the guidebook.

Appendix 1 provides recommendations for applying the guidebook to projects that have different levels of complexity. The author describes the essentials requirements that are needed in all projects and leads up to examples of projects that would be part of company that have specific requirements for development and implementation. For the benefit fo the project manager he narrows the number steps from the original 36 down to 23 essential steps that presents in a table format along with section references. He provides the reader with a final table in the appendix with The Escala Method of application according to project complexity by creating a type of project and then listing three columns titled Simple Project, Medium Project and Elaborate project. The table identifies the tools needed for a sample project and under each of the three columns the notates whether the tool is required or should be simplified to meet the needs of project.

Appendix 2 provides the reader with a quick reference by identifying process, areas and tool by chapter that has been organized and developed for the Escala Method. The author provides two diagrams to help the reader further understand the order of chapters 2 through 6 and how they apply to projects and how the chapters link to one another.

Appendix 3 provides the reader with an resource list of software applications that are applicable to project management. The author lists the software, provider, a brief description of the software's capabilities and a contact person, phone number or website. He also list the software applications for specific uses such cost management or human resources. The author also references a more complete listing of software packages can be found on Project Management Software Survey at the Project Management Institute.

Appendix 4 is the history of the founding of Escala in 1990 and the author describes the company philosophy that focuses entirely on project management services. The company fervently promotes the **Escala PMM Method** and has linked with PMI through the formation of the Monterey Mexico Chapter. The appendix concludes with a description of Escala's business entities and the four areas of service that the Escala management provides to its clients. In addition, Escala supports continued education and offers in-house courses, seminars and workshops on Professional Project Management both businesses and to the public. Escala has provided a wonderful service to many clients as evidenced by the glowing testimonials resulting from the application of the Escala Method to hundreds of projects.

Highlights: What I liked!

There were several things I especially liked about the book starting with the 7 x 9 inch size of the publication. It is not too cumbersome to take along in a brief case or onto the project site to be used as a ready reference for checklists, processes and definitions. Although some of the Mind Maps are not large, they can be readily displayed for the benefit of a client who may have trouble visualizing a concept or understanding the directional approach of a project.

The guidebook is a definite help whenever the focus starts to be lost by frequently asking the four reoccurring questions: *What is it for? What does it include? How is it developed? and How is it used?* The author uses these questions as a reminder as well as a tool, especially when examining the parts of the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and during the Cost Estimates phase.

I like the way the author developed the tables where he lists the required tools, then describes how the tool helps and then lists the section references and page numbers where the detailed information can be easily found in the guide. I use color-coded index tabs help to divide the guidebook into sections for easier use and when combined with the author's information tables and references it enables me to move quickly from one section to another saving valuable minutes of time. When planning to start a smaller project, I find that appendix 2 is very handy

because it summarizes the 23 steps on one page. This streamlines the organizational process and allows me to quickly view all the necessary steps particularly in the areas of executing tasks, control and development of the jobs, and developing the final report in order to close the project.

This guidebook will be part of my project management toolbox library and will be a key reference because of its compactness, simplicity in the way it presents concepts, and because it stimulates conceptual thought through both word and visual means.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

The focus of the book is on managing quality and it specifically targets traditional projects that tend to be short in nature and not ongoing. The book does provide a roadmap and tools for managing project quality however, the author makes the assumption that the tools, techniques and concepts can be easily adapted to ongoing projects. This may be true in theory, however an ongoing case study template placed in the appendix section would provide the reader with greater confidence that the book does indeed meet the criteria for managing in the long term.

Also, it is my understanding that this book will be re-released by a major U. S. publisher in the near future. The editing process will most likely update some of the unusual grammatical phrases and eliminate some minor typos that were not identified when the guidebook was first translated into English.

Who might benefit from the Book

The author has designed this guidebook to appeal to project managers and stakeholders involved with small, medium and large projects. The targeted audiences for this book includes practicing project professionals managers, academic and consulting practitioners, practicing quality management professionals and students interested in managing high quality projects. I would like to add that professionals who work with strategic management projects and project management offices could benefit from this book as well. The bountiful number of concepts, diagrams, tables with checklists, mind maps and project management templates could readily be adapted to the works of authors such as Michael Porter's Five Forces Model, McKinsey's Consulting Model or Ansoff's Turbulence Matrix Model.

This compact guidebook with its step-by-step methodology would be a benefit to both academic and professional circles where managing project quality is a must. This guidebook provides ready support for effective application of PMM techniques, tools and methods to assist any project manager monitor a projects progress to ensure that it is *on time, on budget and that it meets or exceeds the quality requirements.*

Conclusion

The author has taken the time and energy to personalize the concepts, tools and techniques and organize them into a workable model that are meaningful to him, his project team and to the client and stakeholders. The book is packed with many of the author's insights and personal experiences that enlighten the reader to be sure and take the time to sufficiently plan the project no matter what the size or how many people are involved. The emphasis on keeping the client and stakeholders informed throughout the life of the project is stressed right from the beginning of the text. The author's approach is to make the project visual as much as possible through "mind map" diagrams, flow charts and reference lists in order to help establish a logical sequence of events. The author's goal is to be on time, on budget, and by meeting or exceeding the quality requirements and surpassing the clients overall expectations.

The author supports his successes with personal comments and testimonials from satisfied clients who extol congratulatory praise for the excellent results achieved by the author and by those who have employed his methodology. In addition, the author stresses the culture of the project and this insightful wisdom should be taken seriously especially since so many projects now cross borders. This sensitivity towards the client and also to the environment where the project will take place may make the difference in the overall success of the project and whether or not a follow-on project will be awarded. The author keenly stresses the importance of long-term relationships with clients, suppliers and employees with the goal of establishing stability and continuity with those who want to employ competent project management practitioners.

I would highly recommend this book for anyone who has an interest in improving their understanding of how to organize and manage a project and to enhance their communication skills with clients, stakeholders and employees through the use of visual diagrams, flow charts, a sequential stepwise approach. This book is small enough to fit in a brief case and large enough to keep a project manager at the front of his game. A very handy reference and a must read for all project management professionals.

To purchase the book, visit: http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_ss_gw/102-6848945-5734566?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=yamal+chamoun

About the Reviewer:



Earl W. Crisp



Earl W. Crisp, D. P. A., - is employed by the U. S. Department of Education, Post Secondary Education for Eligibility and Oversight of Guarantors, Lenders and Servicers. He is also an adjunct instructor for the Management Department at the University of Texas at Arlington and for the College of Business at Dallas Baptist University. He is a former Navy C-130 pilot and he enjoyed collateral assignments in Administration, Training, Quality Assurance, and Human Resources. His Doctorate in Public Administration is from the University of La Verne and his M. S. in Management is from Troy University. He is a certified mediator, private pilot and radio announcer. He completed his Project Management Professional training in the Executive Management Program at the University of Texas at Dallas and is a member of PMI.