

PM World Today Book Review



Book Title: *From Ratholes to Rainbows – Managing Project Recovery*

Authors: Dhanu M Kothari and Romeo Mitchell

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Reviewer: Rolanda Gregory

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Introduction to the Book

From Ratholes to Rainbows, Managing Project Recovery is an appealing book for any project management professional who wants to learn more about solutions for making troubled projects successful. The book distinguishes between a challenging project, and one that is genuinely troubled and may need the intervention of a Recovery Manager. Kothari and Mitchell make it a point to describe the differences in roles for the assigned Project Manager and the interim Recovery Manager. Throughout the book, they also provide explicit detail in the fundamentals of project recovery management, best practices, and step-by-step process for implementing.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book initially provides an overview of talking points, and provides a high-level description of project recovery management. It moves on to layout the foundation of project recovery management, its basis, roles, conditions, purpose, and possible outcomes. It concludes with a real-world case study in which the principles discussed in the work were used.

Highlights: What I liked!

The work is interesting in the fact that it distinguishes that the best way to truly turnaround a project is to bring in an outside, impartial resource; rather than relying on the current project manager to navigate through the various issues and problems that have wreaked havoc on the project.

For any experienced project manager, the plans of action, described are invaluable. Especially in the case of the Recovery Decision Matrix, which aids to evaluate the value of a project to determine next steps. Kothari and Mitchell also developed a Project Recovery Process which provides an intense and detailed methodology for implementing a successfully project recovery plan. The Project Recovery Process breaks down essentially into 10 main areas: accept, assess, adapt, assign, achieve, act, advance, accomplish, alter and align. With each area, there are specific tasks and objectives to be met before proceeding to the next.

The list of Lessons Learned – Best Practices is composed of common sense ideas and tasks that project managers often omit in their day-to-day activities. The availability of the list serves as a great refresher.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

In spite of providing a detailed approach to project recovery management, I do believe that the complexity or level of steps to take to implement the approach may hinder a project manager from fully doing so. For instance, I like the idea of the A10 Model, but I think that it should be shortened to be more concise. Especially if the intent is for Recovery Managers to remember, recall and implement each of these steps. I think it may also lead to Recovery Managers cherry-picking the items they want to move forward with, while omitting others.

Who might benefit from the Book

Project Management professionals at any level can benefit from the book. It enables a project manager to know what type of issues and circumstances to be leery of, and also provides strong tools for project managers to use and implement prior to their projects landing in a rathole.

Conclusion

From Ratholes to Rainbows, Managing Project Recovery is effective in its goal of outlining a new discipline for handling projects that have been derailed regardless of the reason. The establishment of a concrete methodology provides step-by-step direction for Recovery Managers to follow and gauge their progress.

I believe the book is effective in teaching the basis for project recovery management, describing its use and impact, and providing a pathway for implementation.

About the Reviewer:***Rolanda Gregory***

Rolanda Gregory is Director, Project Management at MangoMOBILE, a wireless technology organization. She has successfully managed numerous, multi-million dollar initiatives which were integral to her clients' success. With over 10 years experience in project management, Rolanda's goal is to formalize and enhance the project management practices at MangoMOBILE. Prior to joining Mango, Rolanda was a Senior Project Manager for imc² and Agency.com, where she led interactive web development programs for clients such as The Coca-Cola Company, Marriott Vacation Club, The Art Institutes and Sara Lee Foodservice. Rolanda Gregory holds both a Master of Project Management and Master of Business Administration, along with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. She also has obtained the Project Management Professional, PMP, designation from the Project Management Institute.