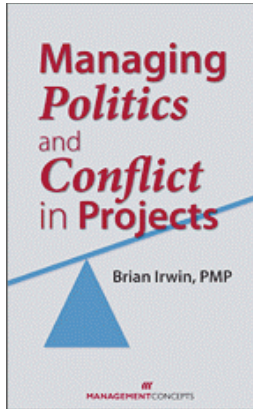


## PM World Today Book Review



**Book Title:** *Managing Politics and Conflicts in Projects*

**Authors:** Brian Irwin PMP

**Publisher:** Management Concepts

**List Price:** US\$29.00, softcover

**Size:** 210 pages

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**Info:** [www.managementconcepts.com](http://www.managementconcepts.com)

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### Introduction to the Book

Most courses and books on the project/program management focus on the tools and skills to set schedule, budget and plan for resources. The soft skills of project management are glossed over because they are hard to capture and address. The focus of *Managing Politics and Conflict in Projects* is the soft skills that are critical to any successful project manager. I was interested in reviewing this book because in my opinion the soft skills are what identifies a great project manager from an average project manager.

### Overview of Book's Structure

The book has 10 chapters and two appendices. The chapters address the topics of project environment, politics, conflict, stakeholders, communication, negotiation, managing relationships, political strategy and leadership. The author presents the information for each of these topics in several methods. The general discussion of the topics is the bulk of each chapter. At the end of the chapter there is a summary defined in the Key Points section and a story that is used to emphasize the chapter's topic. There are also pointed tips that every PM should have in their communication strategy.

### Highlights: What I liked!

The author has presented the information in various methods to address differing learning styles of readers. Some readers will quickly zoom to the Key Point and Take Action summaries at the end of each chapter while others will use the tips and the story to understand the issue. The Tips sections are key methods that each project manager should have in their toolbox. The author has clearly taken to heart is his own point -- communication, communication, communication.

The author also addresses the issues of the global projects and need for sponsor support. He provides methods and techniques for stepping through the multi site, multi cultural, and multi time zone environment that these projects exist in. The power struggle between the functional manager and the project manager and the need to understand the motivations of both roles is covered.

### **Shortfalls: What was Missing!**

In attempting to communicate the solutions in several learning styles, the author has somewhat short changed the details of the solutions. The story approach has become popular in recent years since the publication of the "The Goal" but my personal opinion is the story needs more focus on the examples and less on the coffee shop discussions. Also the book needs more emphasize and examples of understanding the motivations of project stakeholders. This topic is covered in the chapters, but requires a separate chapter on its own.

### **Who might benefit from the Book**

While all project/program managers will benefit from being reminding of the key soft skills needed to run any project, the junior project manager would benefit the most from this book. The topics covered focus on a few key actions that most successful project managers should have already adopted. The book does serve as a reminder that these skills are critical to running projects.

### **Conclusion**

I would recommend the purchase of the book to all new and middle level project managers. For senior project managers, the book will refocus and re-emphasize the need for communication and the development of the soft skills needed to run successful projects but most of the information will already be in the senior managers . In short, the most successful project managers are the ones that can handle and address both conflict and the politics both inside and outside their teams.

**About the Reviewer:**



*Susan Hewitt*



**Susan Hewitt** is the Senior Manager of Program Management in the DTV Division, Consumer Electronics Group at AMD Markham in Ontario, Canada. She leads the program management team in the development of ICs

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