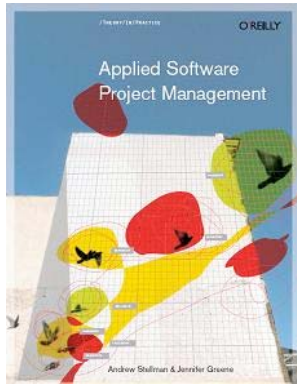


PM World Today Book Review



Book Title: *Applied Software Project Management*

Authors: Andrew Stellman & Jennifer Greene

Publisher: O'Reilly

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Reviewer: Mei-min Peng

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Introduction to the Book

The keyword 'Applied' itself, best describes this project management book. Among all professional services, IT project management plays a major role in the software development life cycle. In this book the authors explain tools and techniques along with easy to understand example, one could need to handle software projects and management skills to work with people, teams, and organizations. The main idea behind this book is to allow readers to pick one of these skills and solve problems one could be facing.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book is structured into two parts. The first part of the book emphasis on tools, techniques, and practices used in each phase of project management life cycle. E.g. How to conduct a project in right way and efficiently? 'How-to' guides offer multiple paths and not just one way to different knowledge areas of project management. The Scope of this book ranges from software project planning, estimation, schedules, reviews, software requirement and programming to testing. Each of areas contains the most important attributes underneath it. E.g. sub-sections of project schedules contain how to build the project schedules (create, relocate, optimize...), how to deal with multiple projects (understand dependencies, priorities, use schedule as a commitment technique) and earn values management. The authors are focused on practical practices. This common sense of project management approach empowers an individual reader.

The second part of the book focuses on how to lead a team and work with people and organizations. Each organization has its own reason to make changes and it may not belong to company's culture. This section of the book has good examples to illustrate how people response / resist to a change and shows how to overcome people's fearful feelings, and make changes workable in order to have a successful software project. Outsourcing is not a fancy PM word anymore. In this section author has discussed of how to manage outsourcing projects, prepare good estimates, manage issues, and build relationships as they are normal situation in IT

outsourced projects. These skills are very rich in knowledge and with experiences and can be helpful to expand management skills.

Highlights: What I liked!

There are numerous reasons why I like this book. The first is very practical. When the book title said 'applied', it needs to be useful, understandable and be able to take a small piece and can be used for big issues automatically. The book has delivered the same and follows basic software development project cycle to illustrate the tools and technologies.

Second is the book explains concepts by using many easy to understand examples. I had a laugh when I read an example to explain the relationship between project managers and stakeholders, their relationship is more like a relationship between a car mechanic (pm) and a customer (stakeholder). Customer wants to fix her car as soon as possible and she won't understand why it costs too much. She (customer) is always suspicious that the car mechanic is doing more work than necessary. That's how the stakeholders view for pm and team. Spaghetti code!!! Yes. It's a long and messy code that might need re-factoring. It's very close to our real life, right?

Third, the tool and technologies themselves are used as standard approach in many companies. We may not know the term 'Wideband Delphi Estimation'. But, we know 'kick-off meeting'. It's one of meetings in Delphi process. We may not know 'subversion'. But, we know 'Version control'. It's one of version control tools to bring control of project's source code. And, the most important tool to check cost and schedule, EVM (earn values management)

For all these reasons, readers can find themselves managing projects by picking one or more skills from this book whether she is a lead or team players.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

The book mentions CPI (cost performance index) to estimate whether project is on track with respect to budget or not. It would be better if it can also mention SPI (schedule performance index) to complete EVM. Both cost and schedule go hand in hand and have dependable trade-offs for a project.

The book mention CMM/CMMI, ISO 9000 and Six Sigma models related process improvement. Since the book mentions maturity models, it would be better if the book had a topic on project management maturity models such OPM3 (Organizational Project Management Maturity Model introduced by PMI) or PRINCE2 (introduced by UK's Office of Government Commerce). These assessment tools can also serve better project practices.

Who might benefit from the Book

For people who are struggling to manage projects or willing to seek improvements for projects are the best candidates to read this book and benefit from it. The development team can use this book as an entry to understand project management world or find a way to improve project. For non-technical people, one may find a reason as to why a project can be delay or an emergency to

fix an issue. The book is easy to understand and solutions can be implemented right away without knowing PM's PMBOK bible.

Conclusion

In this era of information overload and everyone swimming in sea of messages, these two authors take academic out of project management and lays out clear, practical and understandable tools and techniques. There are only few PM books that can be called an 'applied' book especially focus on software development and this book is one of them. I strongly recommend this book as a handbook and an essential kit to solid project management practices. It's one of the best practical PM books ever written.

To purchase the book, visit www.oreilly.com.

About the Reviewer:



Mei-min Peng



Mei-min Peng is a founding partner of Joyto Inc., a venture capital firm focuses on investments in digital media and supply chain services as well as small business companies initiatives on the Internet. She helps establish business development capabilities through strong, strategic relationships across the supply value chain, particularly in US and China. Specifically, she is responsible for leading capital on investment trends and opportunities for innovation and growth. She has six years software project experiences in ATX Group, Inc. She is also a freelance photographer. Her photo works have been published among newspaper and magazines. Most recently, her work is used in December 2007, Prestige magazine, Singapore. She was on North Texas Asian Photography Association board of directors. She holds an MBA from University of Dallas and a certification from project management EMBA program at University of Texas at Dallas.