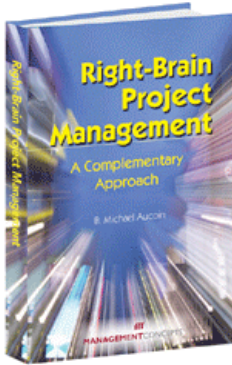


PM World Today Book Review



Book Title: *Right-Brain Project Management – A Complementary Approach*

Author: B. Michael Aucoin

Publisher: Management Concepts

List Price: US\$40.00

Publication Date: 2007

ISBN: 978-1-56726-206-3

Reviewer: Michael A. Sozio

Review Date: February 2007

Introduction to the Book

The title of this book, “Right-Brain Project Management – A Complementary Approach”, caught my attention immediately for two reasons: 1.) The number of books that are being written about the importance of creativity in gaining an advantage in business and 2.) the fact that this book looks at these right-brain techniques as a complement, not a replacement for established Project Management practices.

B. Michael Aucoin, the author, presents his case for using right-brain techniques in the first chapter where he discusses what is right with Project Management and more importantly, what is not working in projects and some of the reasons why. Mr. Aucoin takes a quote from authors Lauri Koskela and Gregory Howell, *The Theory of Project Management*, which succinctly summarizes the current situation: “It is no exaggeration to claim that Project Management as a discipline is in crisis...”.

Why is Project Management in crisis? The author uses this question to delve deeper into the topic and present his evidence why many of today’s complex, cutting edge projects are in trouble and prescribes a set of right-brain techniques that can be used with traditional Project Management practices to help solve this dilemma.

Overview of Book’s Structure

For a book about right-brain techniques, it has a very left-brain structure and is well organized, thought out and is a quick read. The book consists of 18 chapters that kept me interested by drawing from a wide variety of sources such as the movies “The Bourne Identity” and *Pretty Woman*, the real world projects of Lockheed Martin’s “Skunk Works”, the Apollo 13 Mission, the emergent style of folk singer Bob Dylan and the works of Steven Covey.

I believe the best way to provide the reader with a feel for the book's content is to list the chapter topics: 1.) What's Wrong with Project Management?, 2.) Child's Play and Maturity, 3.) Two Brains are Better than One, 4.) Motivation: The need to Act, 5.) Project Create Change and Change Needs Leadership, 6.) Tools of the Trade: Working with the Right Brain, 7.) Doing What Works: Contemporary Projects in an Accelerated World, 8.) Making the Complex Simple, 9.) That's Incredible: Case Studies of Phenomenal Projects, 10.) Principles of Right-Brain Project Management, 11.) Discovering Fire: Finding the Compelling Purpose, 12.) Solving the Mystery: Making Sense of the Project, 13.) A Trip to the Laboratory: Experimenting and Adapting, 14.) Painting without Numbers: Creating the New Reality, 15.) Doing Business with a Handshake: Exercising and Fulfilling Trust, 16.) All That Jazz: Hitting the Sweet Spot, 17.) Telling the Story: Leaving a Legacy, 18.) The Hero in Us All: The Moral of the Story.

In addition, four of the chapters have a section entitled "Right-Brain Toolkit" which provides a more focused application of the techniques discussed. To further enhance the understanding of his concepts, Mr. Aucoin includes articles from experts in the field, such as Doug DeCarlo, Colin Funk, Carl Pritchard and Jill Irwin.

Highlights: What I liked!

I liked many different aspects of this book; however, the two that I found most valuable and applicable are Chapter 3 – Two Brains are Better than One and Chapter 10 – Principles of Right-Brain Project Management.

In Chapter 3 the author does an excellent job of explaining how the different halves of the brain function and what advantages each provides to managing projects. For example, when facing situations of uncertainty and ambiguity, the right-brain is better suited. On the other hand, when situations deal with "know patterns" the left-brain is better adapted. The real synergy comes into play when both halves of the brain are used simultaneously. According to the author "The processing architecture and the extensive interconnectedness of the brain make it possible for us to simultaneously consider many pieces of information or constraints, each of which may be imperfectly specified and ambitious."

In Chapter 10, Principles of Right-Brain Project Management, the author provides a brief summarization of the foundations of project needs, the nature and value of right-brain approaches and ways to facilitate right-brain processes. The chapter concludes with seven principles of right-project management:

- Find the compelling purpose
- Make sense of the project
- Experiment and adapt
- Create the new reality
- Exercise and fulfill trust
- Hit the sweet spot
- Leave a legacy

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

Nothing!

Who might benefit from the Book

If you work on complex projects that struggle with traditional Project Management methods and are consistently coming up short in meeting your customer's requirements this book is for you. If you work on projects where your team members have the 1,000 yard stare or the deer in the headlights look, I believe this book can provide you with the right-brain concepts and techniques to re-ignite your team's passion and project performance.

Conclusion

I totally enjoyed the book from the first to the last page. The author has a very clear and engaging style of writing that takes the reader along with him on his journey of discovering right-brain techniques for Project Management. Many have heard the often quoted definition of insanity – doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. If your projects are struggling and traditional methods are not getting you the results you need, take the time to check this book out and put some new tools into your Project Management toolbox.

About the Reviewer:***Michael Sozio***

Michael Sozio, PMP, is a Senior Project Manager at the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, Information Technology Directorate, Dallas, Texas and an Adjunct Professor, Management and Management Information Systems, Northwood University, Texas-Ft. Worth Program Center. He

has a BA in Psychology from St. John Fisher College, Rochester, New York; a BS in Information Systems from University of Maryland; a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College; and an MS in Management and Administrative Sciences from the University of Texas at Dallas. Michael retired from the US Army Reserves in 2001 as a Lieutenant Colonel and lives in Dallas, with his wife Marquita and their two dogs and a cat.