Book Reviews #5 – Part 1: In brief
By R. Max Wideman, FPMI

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Introduction

In these reviews, we examine the whole book to get a "feel" for its total scope, objective and our view of its most suited target audience according to the evident area of project management application. We also try to comment on the quality of writing and style, level of reading from "introductory" to in-depth to "academic" and so on. Finally, we make an assessment of how realistic and sound we feel the content is and add our comments and suggestions.

In this set, the first book is quite large while the second is relatively small. However, both are by the same author and, as you will see, the two books are related. That is why there are only two books in this set.

We hope that potential readers of these books will find these reviews helpful.

Books discussed in this Review

Book Reviews #5 – Part 1
  1. Project Management, Tenth Edition, by Dennis Lock, 2013

Project Management, Tenth Edition
By Dennis Lock, 2013

Introduction

Project Management by Dennis Lock, now in its 10th Edition, is a substantial, very thorough and practical book.

From the contents it becomes obvious that the author has a broad range of project experience not just in a wide variety of types of project,[1] but also from end to end – and then some. At first glance the book appears to be written for the British market because the author draws extensively on UK experience and uses budget and cost values in ££s. Some of the terminology used also has a UK flavor.

Nevertheless, in our view, with suitable adjustments of vocabulary, units and acronyms, the contents and examples are applicable to projects worldwide. This is not just another academic book on project management tools and techniques. It is a solid reference book born of first hand practical experience. It has been consistently updated and published for the benefit of practicing project managers, and their supporting teams, working "in the trenches"[2] of any industry involved with projects. For example, to illustrate the text, the book has more than 170 figures including many standard form templates covering active project work situations.

As a matter of content strategy, the author observes: "As with the ninth edition, I have clung as rigidly as possible to the project life cycle, so that the chapter subjects flow as far as possible in a logical

sequence."[3] In other words, the material follows the natural flow of a project through its matter-of-course life span. That means that after a brief introduction to project management and its history of evolution, the author covers the territory from the project's original concept through to handover of the product, and beyond through the product's economic life to disposal.

The author goes on to add: "But there are two principal additions [in this edition]. The first of these is seen in Chapter 27, which deals with the implementation of business change projects . . . The other new chapter (29) is written as an open letter to senior executives." In this open letter author Dennis Lock makes the urgent plea that: "in all cases where the project management function is run efficiently, it can only reduce total costs and add value to the project and its organization. Project management is not an unnecessary overhead expense: it is a vital management function."[4] Assuming there are projects to be managed, we heartily concur. Indeed, much of the book resonates with our own experience, not just as a project manager but also as a corporate executive.

If you purchase the Tutor's Edition, the book also includes a CD ROM with over 600 PowerPoint slides supporting all of the first 28 chapters as described in the next section. These timed slide presentations are well prepared and represent a valuable asset for instructors wishing to use the book as a basis for instruction. In addition there are a number of optional PowerPoint presentations on specific project management techniques, all as listed in a later section of this book review.

About the author

Dennis Lock is a freelance writer specializing in project management. His broad ranging experience includes heavy engineering, international mining, defense systems, and sub-miniature electronics. He has held a progression of successful management positions in all of these industries. He has also filled consultancy assignments in Britain and overseas and more recently has taught project management to master's degree students as an external lecturer at two British universities. We understand that he has written or edited over 50 management books mostly on project management.

Table of Contents

The contents of this book are set out in 29 chapters as follows:
1. Introduction to Project Management
2. Factors for Project Success or Failure
3. Defining the Project
4. Estimating the Project Costs
5. First Steps in Planning the Time Scale
6. Financial Appraisal and the Business Plan
7. Managing Project Risk
8. Project Authorization
9. Project Organization Structures
10. Organization and Initial Conduct of Management Change and IT Projects
11. The Project Manager and Associated Roles
12. Project Breakdown Structures
13. Detailed Planning: An Introduction to Critical Path Networks
14. Detailed Planning: Critical Path Networks in Practice
15. Scheduling Resources, Part 1: Principles

Most chapters conclude with References and suggested Further Reading. The book has a total of 550 pages that includes an extensive Bibliography and a detailed index. It does not, however, include a Glossary of Terms.

General observations: Overview and Techniques

This book by author Dennis Lock is very well written in plain straightforward easy-to-understand English. As we'll discuss shortly, it is comprehensive in its scope and covers many practical aspects of managing a project not normally covered in currently available project management texts. Further, the chapters are well illustrated with diagrams, illustrations and templates, not just to ensure the reader's understanding, but many suitable for immediate adoption in the course of an ongoing project. This is the sort of stuff you need when actually conducting a project.

Rather than dwell on the parts covering typical project management theory, instead we will highlight some of the extraordinary practical instruction that we came across as we worked through the list of chapters. For example, Chapter 1 reminds us that project management is not a new invention dreamed up by modern professional associations, but rather the codification of practices undoubtedly employed since prehistoric times. Chapter 2 draws attention to adverse factors (omissions) in the project formative phases, and the benefits of focus on performance (quality), time and cost during execution. These are complete with practical recommendations and words of wisdom in both cases.

For example: "A project not started on time can hardly be expected to finish on time." Another example: "Consultation is always better than confrontation."[5] Such recommendations provide the essential ingredients for an ultimately successfully project in terms of realizing intended benefits and satisfying stakeholder interests. Yet advice like this is rarely found in standard project management instruction.

In a book this size, it is obviously not possible to pick out from every chapter all the comments – and humor – that we would like. However, the following are some highlights that we found particularly helpful and that resonated with our own past experience. Project management texts typically assume that successful project outcomes emanate from a carefully defined and justified original intent. But Chapter 3 (Defining the Project) includes a section: "Projects Which are Difficult or Impossible to Define".[6] The author recognizes that "there are projects that are so complex, or are surrounded by so much uncertainty,

that they cannot be defined adequately before work starts." The author illustrates in a bar chart how such projects are dealt with through "stage-gating", with funding released in corresponding "tranches".

Chapter 4 provides a good description and practical advice on "Estimating Project Costs" that will be of particular interest to the civil and building industries. Of special note is the range of "Above-the-line" costs that fall within the control of the project manager as compared to the considerable "Below-the-line" add-ons that are not.[7] Chapter 6 (Financial Appraisal and the Business Plan) takes the reader deeper into financial territory with "Different Viewing Platforms for the Project Investor and the Project Contractor", "Introduction to Project Financial Appraisal Methods", and "Project Funding".[8] While many people might say that these are not a normal part of the project manager's remit, nevertheless they represent essential knowledge for the project manager on larger projects. The book even demonstrates its usefulness by including a "Table of discount factors for calculating net present values".[9]

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 (Project Organization Structures; Organization and Initial Conduct of Management Change and IT Projects; and The Project Manager and Associated Roles, respectively) tackle the vital area of people management. After describing different types of project organization, we learn about "Which Type of Project organization is Best" and their consequential effects, obviously in a variety of environments.[10] As the author observes: "It is not possible to discuss organizational structures in any depth of detail without the aid of charts."[11] Seven widely different arrangements are shown in subsequent sections. Apparently, in some circles such charts are called "organigrams".[12] That's the first time we have come across this term, but we will take the author's word for it.

Chapter 10 highlights the tricky "Special Characteristics of Management Change Projects" with some of the following observations:[13]

> "Although management change projects and IT projects range from small internal ventures to multi-million pound projects, they share common characteristics.
> - They are usually high-risk projects, often with the potential to bring either valuable benefits or disaster to the project owner;
> - The successful outcome of a management change project depends particularly on the cooperation of staff in accepting changes that can sometimes profoundly affect their jobs or even their lifetime careers;
> - Research leading to project definition and a business plan must often be conducted confidentially. Leakage of information has to be prevented during the conceptual stages when some of the ideas under consideration might be only remote possibilities. If those discussions are leaked, unfounded rumors will soon take on a credibility of fact."

Author Dennis Lock adds: "Given a sound business plan, management change and IT projects will stand the greatest chance of success if project execution is entrusted to a task force."[14] These and other thoughts are supported by a substantial case example.

General observations: Managing People and Exercising Control

Managing people

In Chapter 11, the author observes: "Now I want to examine a little more closely the roles of some of the key people in those organizations, concentrating on the project manager. A visit to http://www.maxwideman.com/issacons2/1275.htm[15] reveals a list of nearly 60 different job titles, all

directly associated with project management. That's somewhat daunting. I shall describe the role of the project manager and the more common job titles that I have encountered in my industrial experience."[16]

After describing the series of management levels in the corporate environment, the author suggests, and project managers will be pleased to learn, that: "Although these top managers might not know one end of a project from the other, their support for the project management function is essential."[17] And further that: "the desirable organizational status for the project manager appears to be indicated on a level at least equivalent to the company's departmental managers."[18]

Chapters 12 to 18 deal with various aspects of project planning, but in Chapter 15 (Scheduling Resources, Part 1: Principles) we came across: "Summary: the Elements of a Practicable Schedule" that we feel is an example of the book's content that is worth repeating:[19]

"How it should be done

Here is a checklist for a practicable schedule:
1. Does the plan include all known major tasks
2. Is the plan drawn in enough detail to generate work-to lists?
3. Are all tasks placed in their logical chronological sequence?
4. Have task interdependencies been respected?
5. Is the plan easy to understand and is it visually effective?
6. Is the plan flexible and easy to adapt to take account of changes to project requirements or strategy?
7. Are the project milestones shown?
8. Are all the duration estimates feasible and achievable?
9. Are urgent and high-priority tasks clearly highlighted?
10. Have key managers and supervisors participated in the plan and accepted it is as their commitment?
11. Can the plan be used to check day-to-day progress?
12. Has the plan been made to take account of resources?
13. Have the resource needs of other projects been considered?
14. Will it satisfy all the stakeholders' expectations?

A point has now been reached in the text where most of the methods necessary to meet the above conditions have been described."

If you have digested all of that, you should become a pretty good planner!

Exercising control

We found Chapters 20 (Introduction to Project Contracts and Purchase Orders) and 21 (Managing Procurement and the Supply Chain), particularly useful. Chapter 20 covers such things as: "Contracts; Purchase Orders; Pricing a Contract Proposal; [and] Contract Payment Structures", while Chapter 21 includes: "Roles in the purchasing Organization for a Large International Project".

The following chapters deal with various aspects of managing the execution of a project: Chapters 22 (Managing Progress); Chapter 23 (Managing Changes); Chapter 24 (Managing Project Costs); Chapter 26 (Managing Multiple Projects, Programmes and Portfolios) and Chapter 28 (Managing Project Closure). In these, we found the following topics of particular interest: "Collecting Progress Information"; "When the News is bad"; "Estimating the True Cost of a Change"; "Version Control for Modified Drawings and Specifications"; "Emergency Modifications"; "Principles of Cost Control";

"Controlling Variable Costs"; "Controlling Fixed Costs and Overhead Cost Recovery"; and "Additional Cost Control Factors"; and so on.

As we mentioned in the *Introduction*, Chapter 27 discusses the special case of Business Change Projects and Chapter 29 makes an impassioned plea to senior corporate managers and directors to support their project managers. As author Dennis Lock puts it:[20]
> "All projects have their risks and crises, but where there is good project management those episodes are minimized. Indeed, risk forecasting and assessment is a valuable part of the duties of many project support offices. When a project is running smoothly, its technical staff spends less of their effort in fighting fires and has more time to concentrate on delivering quality. Project management therefore facilitates completion within specification."

And as a final note to executives:[21]
> "Executive 'sponsorship and support' can be as simple as occasionally visiting project people in their workplaces, taking an interest in what they do and giving praise when a project is successful. Such praise and encouragement costs nothing. The return on this zero investment can be very valuable."

Final comment

Do we have any adverse observations to put forward? In a general sense – yes, we do. However, this is not the place, since our comments apply equally to the next book in this set that is by the same author. The next book is called *Naked Project Management* and covers the same territory but in a highly minimalistic way. Therefore, for our comments, see "Quibbles" at the end of the next review.

CD-ROM Contents

As we noted in our *Introduction*, if you purchase the Hardback *Tutor's* Edition of this book, it includes a CD ROM with over 600 PowerPoint slides covering all the first 28 chapters. In addition there are a number of optional PowerPoint presentations on specific project management techniques, as well as supplementary chapters from previous editions of the book, all as listed below.

The contents of the CD ROM enclosed with the book are as follows:

Core Lectures (PowerPoint Presentations)
1. Introduction to project management
2. Factors for project success or failure
3. Defining the project
4. Cost estimating
5. Introduction to time planning
6. Financial appraisal
7. Managing project risk
8. Project organization Part 1: organigrams and matrix structures
9. Project organization Part 2: project teams and the project manager
10. Project organization Part 3: contract matrix organizations
11. Work breakdown structures and coding

12. Project planning using critical path analysis
13. Scheduling resources: for a single project
14. Project start-up and progressing
15. An introduction to project contracts
16. Procurement and the supply chain
17. Managing project changes
18. Managing project costs
19. Managing project closure

Optional Lectures (PowerPoint Presentations)
A. Critical path methods: arrow networks
B. Multi-project resource scheduling
C. Scheduling project cash flows
D. Some more advanced methods
E. Standard network diagrams and templates

Supplementary Chapters (PDF)
This section on the CD-ROM comprises material from the ninth edition of this book that has no longer been included in the this tenth edition:
Chapter S1 Scheduling materials for manufacturing projects
Chapter S2 Line of balance charts in construction projects
Chapter S3 Rolling wave planning
Chapter S4 Hierarchical network breakdown
Chapter S5 PERT
Chapter S6 Standard networks and templates

The timed PowerPoint slide presentations are well prepared and are invaluable for instructors wishing to use the book as a basis for instruction. We find that this CD ROM material, together with the PDF files of Chapters S1 to S6, are all excellent sources of information for anyone wanting a quick brush up on any of the topics covered in the main text.

R. Max Wideman
Fellow, PMI

For Part 2 of this Book Reviews #5
2. Naked Project Management, The bare facts, by Dennis Lock, 2013

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[1] What we normally describe as "Areas of Project Management Application".
[2] An expression carried over from the First World War, similar to working "on the front lines".
[3] Lock, Dennis, *Project Management* (tenth edition), Gower Publishing Limited, UK, 2013, p xxi
[4] Ibid
[5] Ibid, p23
[6] Ibid, p33
[7] Ibid, pp56-57
[8] Ibid, pp91, 95 and 104 respectively

[9] Ibid, p99
[10] Ibid, p145
[11] Ibid, p131
[12] ibid
[13] Ibid, p155
[14] Ibid
[15] At least we are pleased to see that the author has obviously done his research homework!
[16] Ibid, p163
[17] Ibid, p164
[18] Ibid, p265
[19] Ibid, p260
[20] Ibid, p528
[21] Ibid, p534