The Right Projects Done Right!
(From business strategy to successful implementation)
By Paul C. Dinsmore and Terence J. Cooke-Davies
(A book review by R. Max Wideman)

Introduction

Authors Paul Dinsmore and Terry Cooke-Davies hail from opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean and consequently bring together in their book, *The Right Projects Done Right!*, an interesting meld of the viewpoints of Europeans and North Americans. Paul Dinsmore, as members of the Project Management Institute ("PMI") will know, is a prolific writer for PMI's publications and is also author or editor of numerous books. Not surprisingly, therefore, he espouses the PMI view of project management. However, his interest goes well beyond that of managing a single project and into the corporate world of coping with people managing multiple projects.

Terry Cooke-Davies, on the other hand, is obviously influenced by the perspective of his own project management community, the Association for Project Management (UK), a view that is quite distinct from that of PMI. More importantly, Terry has conducted valuable in-depth research based on observations of a number of major project management companies around the world. These are organizations that are active in a broad range of project management application areas but tend towards the European viewpoint.

Both authors are consultants in the project management field and are Fellows of their respective associations. Both bring tantalizing snippets of advice or recommendations from their respective international consultancy experiences.

Since Paul's home base is in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Terry's is in Folkestone, England, it is not surprising to learn that the preparation of this book required "sundry global encounters and lengthy transatlantic e-mail correspondence".[1] And further that "Our communications invariably converged on the common theme of conducting a multitude of projects simultaneously across an organization . . . The primary area of convergence in our exchanges, however, always reverted to enterprise-wide project management, the application of project principles to companies made up of multiple projects."[2]

It is evident from the text that this collaboration has led to some difficulty in the use of concepts and terminology that differ from one side of the world to the other. So the book speaks of managing multiple projects and multi-project management, whereas we think that "project portfolio management" is a more descriptive term of what the book is really all about. In essence, it provides the combined authors' views:

"Relating to each of the following questions:

1. Whether the right portfolio of projects has been chosen to ensure that company strategy is implemented successfully
2. Whether the right projects with the right scope are chosen as candidates for the portfolio, and
3. Whether the projects are managed well." [3]

Or, as the authors suggest, the complete picture of "enterprise-wide" project management is covered "from business strategy to portfolio management to project implementation and finally to benefits management."[4] This last statement alone gives rise to some terminology issues, but we'll come back to that later.

But let us not be misled by the book's title, *The Right Projects Done Right!* This is not a prescriptive book on how to correctly carry out the right selection of projects, so those looking for step-by-step instructions all the way will be disappointed. Rather, it is a philosophical discussion from an academic view point of what others presently do that have delivered apparently successful results. As such, it will be enjoyed by those readers who take a much broader view and wish to apprise themselves of the latest in project management thinking and better corporate practice.

Book Structure

Following a comprehensive *Introduction*, this book is divided into three parts. *Part One* is essentially aimed at providing an organizational view suited to CEO readership. *Part Two* is for top-level executives, especially potential project sponsors. *Part Three* is about making sure each project is done right and is for the benefit of project managers and their teams.

Details of the chapters are as follows:

1. Introduction: The Right Combination of the Right Projects Done Right

Part One: How to manage Multiple Projects Successfully Throughout the Enterprise

2. Organizational Project Success
3. Factors Critical to Achieving Organizational Project Success
4. Some Ways to achieve Organizational Project Success
5. The Management of Multiple Projects: Three Success Stories

Part Two: How to Make Sure Each Project Is the Right Project

6. The Project Sponsor
7. Selecting and Defining the Right Project
8. Aligning Projects with Strategy
9. Managing benefits
10. Project Governance and the Critical Role of the Sponsor
11. Organizational Change Projects and the Leadership Role of the Sponsor
12. Successful Sponsorship: Two Case Studies

Part Three: How to Make Sure Each Project Is Done Right

13. What Does It Take to Do the Project Right?
14. Stakeholders and the Complexity of the Human Dimension
15. Doing It Differently: Variations in Project Management Practice in Different Industries
16. Doing It Right: Development of a State-of-the-Art Methodology

The book concludes with a brief Glossary.

What we liked

The scope of the book

First and foremost, we liked the book's title: *The Right Projects Done Right!* Most book titles seem to have a main heading and then a sub title to explain the main title. But this title is simple, to the point, and comprehensive.

Second, we liked the book's comprehensive scope in that:

> "[The book] focuses on the growing trend towards broadening the scope of traditional project management. That broadened scope takes place in two different directions. The first expansion is stretching out the span of the traditional life cycle. A classic view would say

> that project management starts when the project is authorized and funds are provided and that it ends once the tasks outlined are completed and it's turned over to whoever is responsible for the next ongoing stage, such as operations. The broadened view extends the project life cycle both 'upstream' into 'mission and vision' and 'downstream' into 'total asset life cycle management.' This is a growing worldview . . ."[5]

Well, it may be a "growing world view" but we doubt it is yet "generally accepted". We also doubt that this span of activity will ever become the expanded domain of managing a project. This is for the simple reason that the management activities and necessary styles are quite different from those of corporate strategizing on the one hand and on-going business operations on the other. Moreover, project managers in particular are appointed only for the period of the project and their mandate is to deliver and they are reassigned once the product is properly transferred. To do otherwise would be a waste of their talent.

Nevertheless, essential project selection decisions are made "upstream" of the project. Only when benefits are actually harvested "downstream" of the project, is it possible for management to determine whether or not the project did what it was supposed to do and hence whether or not it was successful. As the book makes clear, the former is the prerogative of senior management and their project sponsors. In North America we call this Project Portfolio Management. (Not "portfolio management", that refers to financial investments and is not the same thing.) The latter, the downstream harvesting of the project's benefits, is the responsibility of the operations or "line management" who take the project's deliverables into their care, custody and control. An emerging name for this area of responsibility seems to be "Project Benefits Management".

For the record, this is only the second book that we've seen to date that encompasses and examines in some depth this complete project business spectrum.[6]

The book's premise

The authors observe that:

> "Most organizations have ongoing operations that produce products and services and at the same time are highly dependent on projects to increase production capacity, make technological upgrades, and launch new products and services in the marketplace."[7]

And:

> "Three insights about projects must be recognized by organizations if they are serious about achieving strategic objectives, realizing their vision, and accomplishing their mission:
>
> 1. Projects – discrete, unique, temporary undertakings designed to achieve beneficial change – are the essential means by which strategy and change are delivered
> 2. The management of projects is a 'whole organization' activity – something that needs to be looked at from an enterprise-wide viewpoint
> 3. The management of projects requires different capabilities, skills, processes, and practices from the management of ongoing operations, or business as usual."[8]

Mark that last item. "Business-as-usual" is an interesting description of "ongoing operations" and, either way, item 3 makes it clear that business-as-usual is the antithesis of project work. It follows that while the discussion may be extended upstream and downstream of mainstream project management, it does not make sense to extend the role and responsibilities of the project manager and his or her team upstream and downstream as well.

Nevertheless, as the authors explain:

"If the enterprise is to achieve organizational project success, each project will interact with the business unit and functional line management at six critical points during its life cycle:

1. *Portfolio management* is the means of dynamically allocating and adjusting budgets between business as usual and new projects and programs and then again between projects . . .
2. *Governance* is the means by which both the portfolio – and the individual – projects and programs are aligned with the organization's strategy . . .
3. *Stage gate reviews* are carried out on individual projects at critical decision points during their life cycles . . .
4. *Skilled resources* for allocation on projects are commonly provided by an organization's line management . . .
5. *Benefits* are generated by a project only after it is completed . . .
6. *Commissioning* (or *handover*) of the project [product] to operations strongly influences the benefits the organization will realize."[9]

Again, mark that last item. Item 6 tells us that the handover must be managed every bit as well as the main part of the project, so that the product is enthusiastically embraced by the on-going operations management and personnel. Otherwise, that main-project effort could all be for naught.

Other things we liked

The authors have identified three factors that they consider are:

" . . . crucial to organizational project success:

1. The essential role of projects in corporate strategy
2. The management of projects as a 'whole organization' activity, and
3. The special skills and practices required for the management of projects.

As the authors observe:

"The project management profession may have obscured the centrality of these factors by adopting special jargon ('project scope', 'schedule float', 'work breakdown structure') and a specialized literature (focused on the 'bodies of knowledge' and the like) and forming professional associations with all the rites of an ancient religion into which people have to be initiated."[10]

The authors devote a chapter[11] to the importance of project sponsors and their influence on the success of a project by interacting effectively with other senior executives. In this high-level context, the chapter describes how:[12]

"Sponsors play a number of roles, including

- Owner of the Business Case
- Harvester of benefits
- Governor of the project
- 'Friend in high places' to the program or project manager, and
- Champion of the project"

To this list the authors might have added:

- Enable and facilitate all aspects of the project, especially in removing business-as-usual organizational roadblocks!

On the matter of project success based on time, cost and quality, at last two respected authors have had the courage to declare that:

"The fallacy of the project management triangle is that it's too simple. An additional factor

pushes the triangle into a four-cornered form, since the classic three points are strongly influences by a fourth factor: scope. [See Figure 1]"[13]

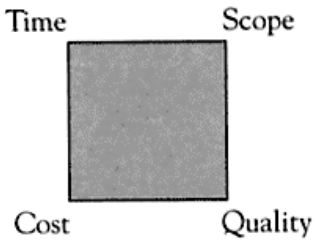

Figure 1: Four Criteria for Project Management Success

However, the authors go further and suggest that a fifth criterion should be added, namely:

". . . safety. For projects in which people's safety is at risk or the project poses a potential hazard to the environment, external standards are normally imposed for health, safety, and environmental reasons (HSE). [See Figure 2]"[14]

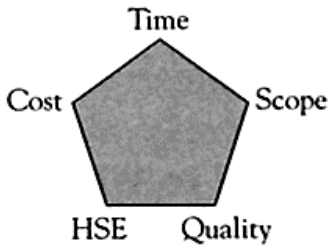

Figure 2: Five Criteria for Project management Success

However, we would argue that HSE is a technology management issue and not a project management issue and is therefore not present on a majority of projects. Or, alternatively, if HSE is to be added, then why not *configuration management*, which is also a technology management issue and is arguably present in more projects? We suspect that the reason for the choice is to be found in today's political sensitivities and "correctness". Still, if that is what it takes to dispose of that wretched triangle, so be it.

Research-based data

Terry's firm, Human Systems, has conducted or gathered valuable data from which the authors of this book derive some interesting insights. As they say:

" . . . some of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies undertook a study of the maturity of project management processes for thirty-three organizations operating in different industries.[15] An interesting finding is that even among the more mature industries, such as petrochemicals and defense, multi-project management is an area of relative weakness."[16]

Figure 3 shows how the book illustrates such findings as this. Here the relative maturity of the project management practices of organizations representing different industries is shown by an assessment of their strength in ten different domains.

The ten domains were identified as a result of structured discussions with a group of project managers from different industries. The purpose was to ascertain how project management practices might vary from industry to industry. The ten labels shown are characterized as follows:[17]

1. Projectization: Extent of project culture
2. Leadership: Organizational leadership
3. Business: Extent of business (not technical) culture
4. Multiprojects: Multi-project management
5. Systems: Project management structure, methods, and systems
6. Authorization: Degree of authorization held by a project
7. Information: Centralization of project information for each project
8. Team Types: Ability to match project team to the needs of the development (stage and type)
9. PM Capability: Capability of project management staff
10. Matrix: Strength of project versus functional management

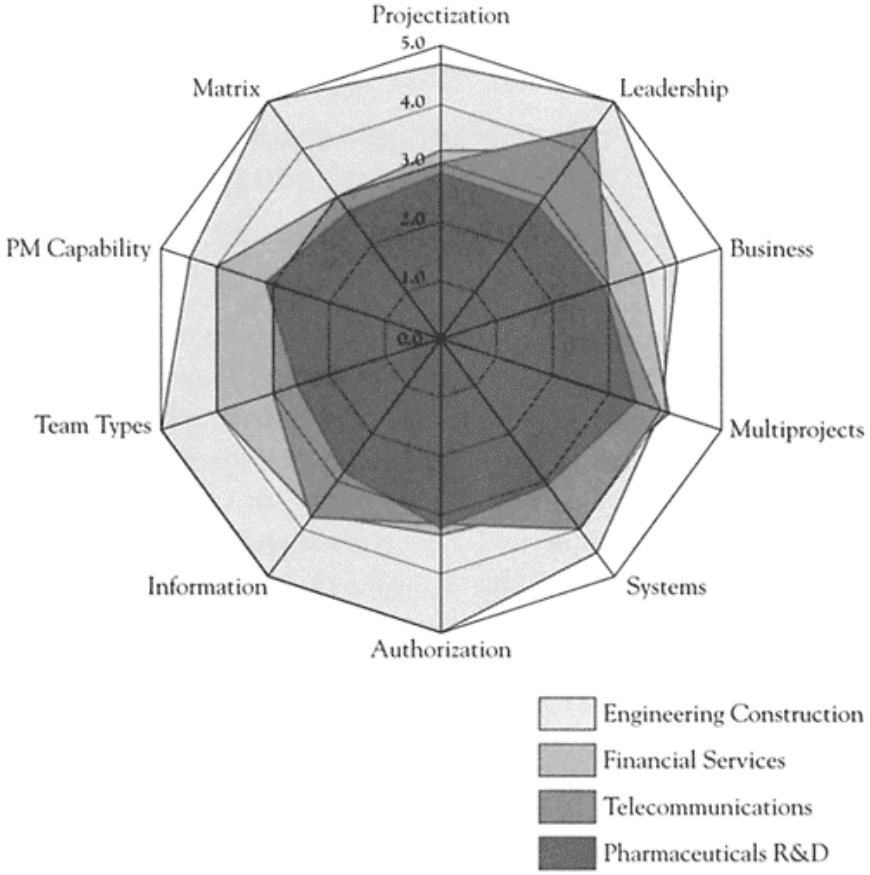

Figure 3: Relative project management domain strength in four representative industries[18]

Other similar charts show, not unexpectedly, how considerable variation exists in project management practices between industry sectors. They show where weaknesses exist in *Leadership*, or in selecting *Team Types* appropriate to the job, or where project portfolio management (*Multiprojects*) is relative strong compared to where it is weak, and so on. All of this tends to debunk the idea that it is possible to define a project management body of knowledge on the basis of material that is "generally recognized as good practice on most projects most of the time".[19] While there do appear to be areas of consensus, perhaps at a more technical and detailed level, there are other broader areas where there clearly is not.

Case Studies

The book contains six case studies. Since each is dealt with in some detail, these alone make the book

valuable for study purposes. However, each tended to leave us with a different impression. Here are very brief outlines of each.

Change is Complicated Enough[20]

This is a good case study describing how the role of the sponsor is crucial to the success of transformation programs, i.e. to organizational change. It describes how the Abbey National plc, one of the largest banks in the UK had a mixed record of project delivery. High profile projects such as significant acquisitions were successful but delivery of lower-profile initiatives was less consistent. The high-profile successes occurred when the whole organization was mobilized behind a single goal. However, there was no internal culture of project management, the title of "project manager" appeared to be widely misused, and project management was not a serious career option within the organization. Worse still, there was no tracking of outcomes, and no post-delivery examination of whether the benefits envisaged had actually been delivered.[21] The narrative describes the difficulties encountered and the results achieved. As the authors observe:

> "In conclusion, it is worth noting that none of what was achieved would have happened without strong sponsorship at the highest level."[22]

Building an Effective Project Team in a Challenging Organizational Culture[23]

This is another good case study that describes the complexities of achieving systemic and cultural transformation in a US city government. The case in point is a software project in a medium-sized municipality experiencing an array of common challenges of a cross-functional, enterprise-wide effort, including significant organizational and interpersonal team challenges. The narrative describes the lack of project management expertise in assigned project teams; understanding the group dynamics; how long-standing systemic issues were revealed by mapping project team dynamics to organizational dynamics; how the project team support system was addressed; and how project team dynamics were leveraged. According to the writer, by expanding the focus of project management beyond the delivery of a software system to delivery of a holistic solution addressing team and group dynamics, this project achieved a level of success far beyond original expectations. In other words, the entire organizational culture had to be addressed.

A Global PMO at Hewlett-Packard[24]

As most people know, Hewlett-Packard (HP) is a leading manufacturer of computers and peripherals. HP operates in more than 170 countries around the world and their challenge is to apply new thinking and ideas to create a wide range of new or improved products and personal and business offerings. This means managing an extensive portfolio of technology projects. This called for a global project management office (PMO) to reap consistent benefits and foster continuous improvement. This case study describes how this PMO was established at the San Francisco HQ to provide central management and mentorship for the HP Services organization. The study description includes a listing of the ways in which the PMO provides support to project managers and claims an improvement of 70% of projects on or under budget compared to an industry average of 50%.[25]

Realizing Value from the Implementation of SAP Project System Module for Drug Development Projects[26]

This study comes from one of the world's leading pharmaceutical research and development companies, Eli Lilly, out of Indianapolis, Indiana. It describes a transformation project that was completed around year 2000 and involved the creation of a new information infrastructure and concomitant organizational and cultural changes. It is a glowing report – perhaps too much so. Given the difficulties normally encountered with this type of organizational change project, to say nothing of customizing such software

as the German SAP modular suite, it is difficult to imagine that this project proceeded without encountering serious risk event occurrences.

Ericsson and the Project Environment maturity Assessment[27]

Ericsson is a global manufacturer of telephone equipment headquartered in Sweden. This study describes how the company developed a means for assessing the delivery capability of each of its more than four hundred business units that are based all around the world and involved in projects, programs and portfolios. Terry's company, Human Systems Ltd., was directly involved in this case study and the narrative describes the challenge, the results, the players, the benefits gained and the lessons learned. As an example of the latter:

> "The benchmarking model needs to be simple. The number of assessments is high, and the time spent on each assessment should not be more than half-a-day for the individuals who locally participate in an assessment session and not more than a couple of days for the assessors."[28]

That sounds like good advice to us.

Doing it right: Development of a state-of-the-art methodology[29]

This case study, the concluding chapter of the book, is also from Ericsson and describes its project management framework known as "PROPS". PROPS is a model for project management and management of projects that supports managers at all levels in a multi-project organization, a methodology that Ericsson has spend decades developing. Ericsson has used this project work form since 1988 for developing competitive products in all types of projects and in different Ericsson companies all over the world. According to the writer, projects are now the primary way of working at Ericsson and PROPS is the common methodology. However, PROPS is now a proprietary product marketed by Semcon Project Management, a Swedish company to whom Ericsson has granted the sole right to offer it to customers worldwide.[30] Consequently, the narrative is short on useful content and reads like promotional material.

Downside

As we read the book, we could not help reacting in places with a certain feeling of vagueness, ambiguity or inconsistency.

Example 1

The Introduction tells us that there are "***Two*** related yet distinct groups [that] hold the key to business and organization success."[31] In a related graphic these are depicted as Senior Management and Project Management. Yet later we are told that it is an organization's line management that commonly provides the skilled resources for projects.[32] Indeed, "the sponsor acts as the bridge between three primary areas of management responsibility"[33] and the accompanying figure shows: Senior Management, Project and Program Management, and Functional (Line) Management. Hence, there are evidently ***three*** distinct groups, not two.

Example 2

Perhaps not entirely the fault of the authors, but we struggled with the distinction between project and processes also described in the *Introduction*: "The case can be argued that there are two different views on how we think about organizational work: processes (operations, transactions) and projects. Processes are about coordinating people who have specific work-related competencies and tend to be organized into functional departments [while] Projects by contrast, are about introducing beneficial change to an

organization."[34]

But "process" is clearly evident in project management, as the following overlapping definitions from the Wideman Glossary of Project Management Terms make clear:
Methodology: A documented process that contains procedures . . . [WST]; or: A collection of methods, procedures . . . [SA-CMM]
Project: A finite process with a defined start and end [PRINCE2, 2005, p47]
Process: That which must be done to bring about a particular result [PRINCE2, p334]
(Editor's Note: isn't that a project?)
Procedure: A prescribed method for performing specific work . . . [PMBOK guide, 1987]
(Editor's Note: Isn't that a methodology?)

It would be helpful if the project management industry would adopt uniform and distinctive labels representing the difference between on-going corporate operations management on the one hand and project management on the other. It would also be helpful if agreement could be reached on the different nuances and interrelationships of the four "process" labels listed above.

Example 3
The book's title "The Right Projects Done Right" sends the message that there are two steps: selecting the right projects and then doing them right. However, "doing them right" first requires good *effective* planning followed by *efficient* execution, that is, the operational period of the project life span in which the product or deliverable is actually created. Yet the text talks about projects being "effectively implemented"[35] so we are left a little unclear as to whether this refers to the whole project life span as envisaged in North America, or just the project execution phases that in the UK-PRINCE2 view is when the project actually starts.

It would have been useful if this contentious issue, the entire life spectrum of project involvement, i.e. project portfolio management, had been clarified for purposes of the book, perhaps along the following lines:[36]

1. Identification of needs and opportunities
2. Selection of best combinations of projects (the portfolios)
3. Planning and execution of the project (project management)
4. Product launch (acceptance and use of deliverables)
5. Realization [harvesting] of benefits

Example 4
In the text, the authors draw a distinction, and explain the differences, between (project) portfolio management, program management and multi-project management. However, the explanations of the first two are not reflected in the definitions in the Glossary, and multi-project management is not included. Since the authors use nuances that are not familiar to many readers, it would have been helpful to have them succinctly and consistently stated in the glossary. Other terms that it would have been useful to see in the Glossary include: Balanced scorecard; Business-as-usual; Chaordic organization; Communities of practice; Dashboard; Governorship; Heartbeat reviews; Hub system; Maturity; Operations management; Work scope; Change management versus management of change; Hard versus soft projects; Kickoff meetings versus kickoff workshops; technical versus technology; and so on. All of these terms appear to have particular meanings in the text.

Summary

To summarize, we can conveniently quote from the summaries of Chapter 9, *Managing Benefits*, and Chapter 13, *What Does It Take to do the Project Right.*

> "Managing benefits is central to any organization that seriously wishes to obtain value for the money it invests in projects. However, this isn't simply another activity to undertake. It involves three very important changes to the way the company plans and executes projects.
>
> > ***First***, project roles and responsibilities have to be redefined to make named individuals accountable for the measurable delivery of benefits to the business that is funding the project.
> > ***Second***, all decisions during project execution have to be driven by a robust business case.
> > ***Third***, processes for managing projects have to be extended through time, both earlier and later, and involve cooperation between the project team and business as usual to ensure that benefits are realized after the project [product] has been delivered."[37]
>
> "Managing projects requires more than focusing on the triangle of time, cost, and quality. The criteria for project success expand to include [all of] scope and health, safety, and environmental (HSE) issues. On closer examination, however, even these criteria do not provide an adequate guide to the most important focus of project the manager and team. They measure the results but don't guarantee to deliver them."
>
> "To deliver these results robustly, five key project management practices are crucial, in addition to the quintessential tasks of leading, managing, and motivating the project team. The five practices are:
>
> - Clarifying goals and objectives
> - Clarifying technical [technological] requirements
> - Planning and controlling the project effectively
> - Managing risk, and
> - Resourcing the project fully.
>
> To embed these practices in a project, it is essential to get started on the right foot, so an adequate project charter and kickoff event (meeting or workshop) are key success factors."
>
> "At the other end of the project, closeout is equally important. This is particularly so when it embraces not only the finishing and documenting of the work but also the lessons learned from the project. It also includes the pursuit of making final or complementary adjustments to fully achieve the [project's] established business goals."[38]

That is to say, to fully achieve the project's established business goals means harvesting the project's benefits. It is clear from this book that different industries still have a lot to learn from each other where projects are concerned.

R. Max Wideman
Fellow, PMI

[1] Dinsmore, P. C., & Terence J. Cooke-Davies, *The Right Projects Done Right!*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2006, (303 pages) p xiii
[2] Ibid, p xiv
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid, p xv
[5] Ibid, p1-2
[6] The first book we've seen to cover this entire product life cycle is *Project Portfolio Management: A Practical Guide to Selecting Projects, Managing Portfolios, and Maximizing Benefits* by Harvey A. Levine, also by Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2005 (538 pages)
[7] *The Right Projects Done Right!*, p21
[8] Ibid, p23
[9] Ibid, pp31-32
[10] Ibid, pp27-28
[11] Chapter 6
[12] Ibid, p123
[13] Ibid, pp221-222
[14] Ibid, p222
[15] The companies included Pfizer, Merck, GlaxoSmithKline, AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and many other members of the Human Systems Network. A more extensive description of the research can be found in Terence J. Cooke-Davies and Andrew Arzymanow: *The Maturity of Project Management in Different Industries: An Investigation into Variations Between Project Management Models*, International Journal of Project Management, 2003, 21, 471-478
[16] *The Right Projects Done Right!,* p46
[17] Ibid, p261
[18] Ibid, p263. Readers should note that the radar plot scales of 0-5 are not the standard scale for maturity models used in industry, but are separate scales representing relative strengths in each of the ten domains respectively. Readers of the book should also note that in the chart shown on its page 47, the items listed in the legend have inadvertently been transposed so that the two charts, pages 47 & 263 are similar and not radically different as implied.
[19] A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge, Preface to the Third Edition, PMI, PA, 2004, p vii
[20] By Tony Teague, Ibid, pp205-209
[21] Ibid, p205
[22] Ibid, p208
[23] By Meg Charter, VP, Project Corps, Ibid, pp209-215
[24] By Randall L. Englund & Ronald Kempf, Ibid, pp107-111
[25] Ibid, p108. Additional information on this project can be found in *Creating an Environment for Successful Projects: The Quest to Manage Project Management*, 2nd ed. by Randall Englund and Robert Graham, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2004. Also in *Creating the Project Office: A Manager's Guide to Leading Organizational Change* by Englund, Graham and Dinsmore, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2003
[26] By Martin D. Hynes III, *The Right Projects Done Right!*, pp97-107
[27] By Inger Bergman, Ibid, pp111-117
[28] Ibid, p116
[29] Also by Inger Bergman, Ibid, pp275-280
[30] You can find out more here: http://www.semcon.se/spm/eng/model/props.shtml (site accessed 5/24/06)
[31] *The Right Projects Done Right!,* p5
[32] Ibid, p31
[33] Ibid, p119
[34] Ibid, pp16-17
[35] Ibid, p39
[36] Levine, H.A., Project Portfolio Management, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2005, p21

[37] *The Right Projects Done Right!,* pp174-175
[38] Ibid, p243