

Book Reviews #4: In brief

By R. Max Wideman, FPPI

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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. We also try to comment on the quality of writing and style, level of reading from "introductory" to in-depth to "academic" and how realistic and sound that we feel the content is, often with respect to the relevant area of project management application.

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

Books discussed in this Review

1. The Pocket Guide for Large Industrial Projects
2. Project Soft Power
3. A Compendium of PMO Case Studies



The Pocket Guide for Those Daring Enough to Take Responsibility for Large Industrial Projects By Jean-Pierre Capron, 2012

Introduction

This little book of only 120 pages is packed full of practical and pragmatic advice for (as the title says) "those daring enough to take responsibility for large industrial projects". Actually, it is a valuable read for anyone in the exciting world of construction project management, or any projects for that matter that are framed by, and conducted under, a *serious contractual relationship*. Think in terms not only of industrial plants, but of civil engineering infrastructure projects such as road, railways, bridges, docks and harbours, water ways and water works and so on. You can also include major building works like high-rise buildings, or malls and municipal buildings.

Yet, the book barely mentions any of these, since it is dedicated to the conduct and challenges of *project managing* such kinds of projects. That's because, as Tom M. Ehret¹ says in his Foreword:²

"The management of Large Industrial Projects is not a subject which is classically taught, as such, at college. Not only is it a very challenging subject in itself, but it is also one for which the available academic basis is quite limited, to non-existent. [That's because] the classical project management tools one can learn the use of, in themselves, do not begin to tell you how to run, successfully, a Large Industrial Project".

As author Jean-Pierre Capron puts it: "The tragedy is that those who discourse learnedly on industry often have little if any true experience in it."³ In short, both teachers and learners of the subject need to have several years of experience *directly involved* in such contracts, whether as the "order giver" or as the "contractor" on either side of the legal contracting arrangements.⁴

As will be noted from the Table of Contents, the scope of the book covers the whole gamut of construction management activity. That is, from "front end engineering design" (FEED) to the organizational structure that should be put in place, through the necessary management controls, to the final transfer of care, custody and control of the end facility. And that includes closing all contracts, and warrantee and deficiency obligations.

According to Jean-Pierre:⁵

"[Upon retirement] I felt the urge to reflect on the factors and circumstances that led sometimes to success, sometimes to failure. In the course of my readings, I chanced on a book by Derek Wood, published in 1975, titled '*Project Canceled*'. In it, the author examines the numerous programs launched and abandoned by the British aviation industry during the years after World War Two. The sense that this rather dry reading leaves you with is that, ultimately, ***nothing is more wasteful than turning a bunch of brilliant engineers loose on any number of ambitious challenges without first having defined the objectives. [And] set deadlines and milestones and put in place constraints to channel all that exuberant energy.***"

The emphasis here is ours, because it is equally applicable to any and every project, of whatever type, that we have ever come across. So, every good project manager should read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these valuable words! However, Jean-Pierre goes on to say:

"That said, based on my experience in the field, I am equally certain that an approach too focused on accounting and bureaucracy sterilizes talent and condemns ambitions as well as outcomes to mediocrity."

...

"This little book was born of these reflections and I dedicate it to all those who, wearing a variety of hats, take responsibility for achieving one-of-a-kind engineering feats, either by size or complexity."

As one who has had the best part of half a century on one side of the fence or the other in this multi-faceted major project industry, we thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. That's because it brought back memories of the things we did right, the things we did wrong or should not have done, and the things we could and should have done, but didn't.

About the author

Jean-Pierre Capron is French, and for most of his life has worked in France with major French organizations involved in large international projects and all the problems of communication, bizarre foreign laws and delivery challenges that this implies. He started his career as an underground engineer where he believes that he learnt his most important lessons about people behavior and management. Subsequently, he has led deep organizational changes and difficult turnarounds as COO, CEO or President of prominent organizations. Jean-Pierre may be reached at jeremie.averous@projectvaluedelivery.com

In case you are wondering, the book is written in impeccable English.

Table of Contents

Interestingly, this book is written in unnumbered "Sections", the most significant of which are:

1. Introduction
2. Main Steps in the Life of a Project
3. On Organizational Matters
4. About tendering
5. On Negotiating Fixed-Price Turnkey Contracts
6. Launching a Project
7. In the Heat of Battle
8. Knowing How to Conclude a Project
9. Project Control Basic Principles and Tools
10. Some General Thoughts by Way of Conclusion

The total number of pages in this book is 122. There is no Glossary of Terms.

General observations and recommendations

This book is well written in a very clear style on content that does not require illustrations. It is not a comprehensive textbook on the subject – rather, it is all the things to look out for that the author has learned from experience. Essentially, it contains a career-full of lessons-learned from a long and exciting vocation in managing the project elements of large, challenging and legally framed projects. For those with knowledge of the construction industry, field experience, and a little sense of humor, this book will be enjoyable reading while learning a lot of the tricks-of-the-trade.

With valuable advice on every page, it is difficult to pick out examples, but perhaps two stand out early on. In the first, the author observes:⁶ "A project's life is punctuated by multiple interfaces." The author then follows with a number of examples and then goes on to say:

"Like passing a baton, each interface is fraught with risk – in this case, risk of misunderstanding, loss of information tracking and clashing of interests, if not disputes. In effect, an interface is a frontier, so to speak, a power game and, latently, an ideal place for expressing antagonisms. Human nature being what it is, someone will inevitably seek to evade responsibility when there is a problem by dragging in those who precede or who follow in the sequence of tasks."

In our second example, after describing the traditional organization chart of an industrial manufacturing company and its lack of suitability for managing a large project, the author observes:⁷

"To fix this mess, the enterprise needs to be organized around the projects it undertakes requiring three major reforms. First, every project the company undertakes must be entrusted to an integrated team endowed with all the skills that will be needed to complete it.

"[Further] all these people must be located in a single place, forming a 'project set' (or in more picturesque language: 'all put in the same jar'."

"If justified by the project's size, these participants are seconded full time; if not then on a part time basis. Regardless, in all cases – and this is the second reform to implement – **they report to the project manager only.**" (*Emphasis added.*)

"Finally, and here we have the third reform, the departments' roles has to be redefined. They lose their authority over the project's conduct, while retaining responsibility for their respective disciplines: recruitment, training and long term development."

For those in the business described, in our opinion this book provides sound advice, timely cautions, and constitutes a realistic and valuable read. Because of Jean-Pierre's wry sense of humor this pocket guide is enjoyable reading for anyone involved with, or has some experience of, managing contract work on any significant project.

R. Max Wideman
Fellow, PMI



Project Soft Power – Learn the Secrets of the Great Project Leaders **By Jeremie Averous, 2012**

Introduction

Let us be quite clear – you want to be a great project leader and not just an "ordinary" project manager, right? Well, this book, *Learn the Secrets of the Great Project Leaders* by Jeremie Averous is firmly advocating the adoption of project "soft power" over project "hard power".⁸ The point is, this is something you should strive for if you want to be a project **leader** on a higher plane than a mere project **manager**.

But let us be equally clear that in the project management domain there are, broadly speaking, two types of people. That is, the generally introvert types that encompass the imaginative explorer as well as the catalyst/coordinators who tend to be inward looking "problem solvers" – thoughtful, analytical and knowledgeable facilitators. On the other side, there are the generally extrovert types that include assertive drivers as well as the professional by-the-book administrators who are people-as-a-resource oriented – frank, demonstrative, outspoken and get-it-done types.⁹ Of these two, the former are generally more amenable to the use of "soft power" while the latter are wedded to "hard power".

Finally, for the record, this writer is firmly in the first camp holding great respect for those in the opposite camp, but with little time for those in the middle of the Myers-Brigs Type Indicator Grid.¹⁰

To make his case, author Jeremie Averous has adopted an interesting approach. More than 40% of his book is taken up with an entirely fictitious tear-jerking but remarkably realistic case study. The essence of the case study is that two adjacent countries on opposite side of a great waterway wish to be united by a long under-sea tunnel. After much politicking, with its own particular lessons, agreement is reached for each side to tunnel from their respective countries and the team that arrives at the middle first will be the winner of a ridiculous but high profile prize.

Of course, you guessed it. One side adopts a well organized, by-the-book, project management approach that we recognize as the "hard-power" style, while the other adopts a much looser approach, the "soft-power" style. Both sides encounter all sorts of practical difficulties in their efforts that ring quite true largely because of Jeremie's many years of real-work experience in tunneling projects. One particular problem was solved by tunneling in a different stratum at a different level, but that meant that the two tunneling teams met at two different levels. While it is not difficult to guess which team won the prize in the end, the author does not explain how the two of them solved that particular problem of arriving at different levels!¹¹

Helpful tip: To keep track of the actors in the case study, note that except for their leaders the first names of all the members of the "hard power" team begin with "H", while those of the "soft power" team begin with "S".¹²

About the author

Jeremie Averous is a senior executive, trainer and certified coach. With more than 15 years of experience in senior roles in the energy industry, he is the founding Senior Managing Partner of Project Value Delivery, a consulting company focused in the field of project management for large, complex projects.

Table of Contents

Similar to our previous book and published by the same company, this book is written in unnumbered "Sections", the most significant of which are:

1. Introduction
2. The Tunnel Competition Fable
3. The Project Soft Power framework: the 5 roles of Project Soft Power
4. Project Soft Power Self-Assessment Test
5. How to Improve your Project Soft Power
6. How Project Soft Power is Rooted in Emotional Work
7. Conclusion – Project Soft Power, the Ultimate Differentiator
8. Many Thanks

As we noted earlier, the Case Study takes over 40% of the book's 212 pages. The same amount again is then taken up with elaborating on the key lessons of the case study, namely five roles you should consider adopting:

- First Role: the SPIDER, Weaving its Cobweb
- Second Role: the KUNG FU MASTER, Maintaining Discipline and Focus
- Third Role: the ENTREPRENEUR, Building the Project toward a Purpose
- Fourth Role: the TEAM Coach, Unleashing Team Potential
- Fifth Role: the PEOPLE CATALYST, Releasing Each Individual's Talents, and
- Synthesis: the Holistic Project Soft Power Practitioner

General observations and recommendations

This book is written in a straightforward easy-to-read style, though we wish its editor had done a more thorough job in eliminating spelling and grammar errors. Undoubtedly, it contains sound advice though not necessarily the sort of advice that is accepted by some generally extrovert personality types. Nevertheless, the case study alone provides an excellent educational tool when relevant review questions are added to provoke thought and discussion.

The book does not include a Glossary of Terms.

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## A Compendium of PMO Case Studies: Reflecting Project Business Management Concepts By Dennis L. Bolles, PMP & Darrel G. Hubbard, P.E.

### Introduction

This book is a substantial work of over 400 pages. As well as its subtitle "Reflecting Project Business Management Concepts", the sub-sub-title on the cover advises the reader "A validation of Project Business Management (PBM) and the PBM Organizational Model for Driving Business and Value." In fact, for organizations conducting multiple projects of whatever kind on a continuous basis, the book extols the virtue of establishing the management of portfolios of projects by a permanent dedicated function at the executive level. In other words, a department at the same executive level as finance, accounting, human resources, and so on.

This is something that obviously makes sense and that we have been quietly advocating for some time. The difference is that authors Dennis Bolles and Darrel Hubbard have put a meaningful label on their concepts – "Project Business Management" (PBM) – and backed their concepts by more than a decade of observations and research covered in this book.<sup>13</sup> As the authors observe in their Preface:<sup>14</sup>

"The business pressures during the recent period of global expansion and the following recession resulted in a growing number of organizations performing enterprise-wide projects. The additional requirements necessary to handle these projects exacerbated the issues already associated with what has been the normal ways many enterprises<sup>15</sup> were conducting business. To put this into perspective, about twenty-five percent (25%) of all goods and services produced in human history were produced in the last ten years."

The authors make the point that:<sup>16</sup>

"Many programs and projects fail because of poor coordination, limited resources, faulty assumptions, not being the right project at the right time, or mid-management in-fighting. These issues are generally resolved at the executive level, where strategies are set, business objectives are defined, and where direction, priorities, and resources are determined, and the final decisions are made."

Whether the PBM function is referred to as an organization or office (PBMO) the authors state that it includes "the three most common PMOs: Project Management Office, Program Management Office and Portfolio Management Office."<sup>17</sup> However, whereas the Project Management Institute generally defines these PMOs as adding *support* to their respective project managers, the authors see the PBMO being "created to *implement* the Project Business Management *methodology* to direct diverse and resource intensive, portfolios, programs and projects across the enterprise."<sup>18</sup> In other words, the PBMO's job is to establish the necessary *governance*.<sup>19</sup>

"Governance establishes the roles, responsibilities and authority of each [PBMO] position, institutes the rules of conduct, and management protocols. It sets policy, establishes the charter, and provides the organizational structure for the business management of projects programs and portfolios. Governance involves adapting the [PBMO] concept, which also requires changing the enterprise's culture, and affects every level of the enterprise – from the boardroom to the office or plant floor."<sup>20</sup>

The authors set out to support their recommendations with a large number of actual case study examples that occupy over 70% of the book.

## About the authors

Dennis L. Bolles, PMP is President of DLB Associates, LLC and has more than 40 years of experience in multiple industries providing business and project management professional services. He is author of many articles and books on project management and centers of excellence.

Darrel G. Hubbard, P.E. is President of D. G. Hubbard Enterprises, LLC providing executive consulting and assessment services. He has 45 years of experience in executive, consulting, line management, and technical positions. He is author of many articles and co-author of books.

## Table of Contents

The content of this book is set out in four sections of 18 chapters and an Appendix as follows:

### Section I Project Business Management Constructs and Models

1. Project Business Management (PBM) Organization
2. Element Components of PBM Organization Model
3. Project Business Management – The Construct and Model

### Section II Research Methodology and Instrument

4. Research Methodology
5. 2012 Research Instrument

### Section III Results and Conclusions

6. Research Results
7. Conclusions

### Section IV PMO Case Studies

[In this section the next eleven chapters are each dedicated to separate Case Studies]

- Epilogue – The future of the PMO and the Next Generation
- Appendix – 1997-2006 PMO Survey Instrument and Results

Section I covers the evolution of the authors thinking about their current PBMO model and its seven elements, see Figure 1.<sup>21</sup> Section II describes their researches 1997 through 2012. In particular, the 2012 research instrument solicited responses by invitation only "from those enterprises that have exhibited excellence and innovation in developing and maturing an organizational structure to support the effective management of projects, programs, and/or portfolios."<sup>22</sup>

This book has 403 pages including introductory material. It includes a good relevant Glossary of some 100 terms.



**Figure 1 Project Business Management Organizational Model**

## General observations and recommendations

The authors observe that:<sup>23</sup>

"The discipline of Project Management has grown and matured during the past 60 years. It now encompasses the project aspects of program management and portfolio management. . . . Therefore, project management and business management must be integrated within the enterprise, if all projects are to be planned and managed to provide

benefit and value to the enterprise."

In our view, for this to be true, "project management" has to be redefined. At present, the Project Management Institute ("PMI") defines Project Management as: "The application of knowledge, skills, tools, techniques to project activities to meet *the project* requirements." [Emphasis added.]<sup>24</sup> In other words, the management of a *single* project. On this basis, the authors are talking consistently about (project) *portfolio management*<sup>25</sup> and not just project management.

By means of a set of specific questions, the authors' final research instrument sought PMO information and data in nine major areas. These consisted of information on the enterprise as follows: PMO demographics and structure; background; innovations; best practices and future impact; governance; methodology; capability; business planning; business execution; as well as any other relevant information.<sup>26</sup>

Section III provides a general review of the authors' case study activities and their collective findings. In Section IV, the industries covered by the research case studies include: Finance and Banking; Health Care; Information and Communications Technology; Insurance; Mining and Metals; Transportation; and Utilities.

As well as developing and validating their current PBMO model, authors Dennis Bolles and Darrel Hubbard also reach an interesting conclusion.<sup>27</sup>

"Based upon all the available research to date, the authors *do not believe that PMOs can be, or should be, classified into some artificial types or groups by the project management profession in an attempt to create a guideline or a standard* [Our emphasis]. Some of the significant reasons are:

- Organizational and political contexts are enterprise specific;
- Political contexts vary by industry, geographical region, and country;
- Enterprise Environmental Assets are enterprise specific;
- Organizational Process Assets are enterprise specific;
- Product and service focus is both enterprise and industry specific;
- Enterprises intentionally establish a PMO as either temporary or permanent; and
- Project Support Offices and Project Administrative Offices do not manage and are not PMOs."

This conclusion surprises us because much the same could be said of the guidelines or standards that have already been developed by various project management (professional) associations around the world covering the management of programs and projects. We suggest that the specificities that the authors have observed have more to do with the consequences of the different technologies in which the various enterprises are engaged than it has to do with the *management* aspect.

Nevertheless, in our view, the book is well written in a clear style for those who have some background and experience in project management at a senior level. We also believe that it provides a valuable reference and credible vision of project portfolio management in the future.

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¹ Tom M. Ehret is a non-executive director in the oil and gas industry. He is also a Senior Advisor to Oak Tree Capital Management.

² Capron, Jean-Pierre, *The Pocket Guide for Those Daring Enough to Take Responsibility for Large Industrial Projects*, published by Fourth Revolution Publishing, Singapore, 2012, p1

³ Ibid, p115

⁴ Ibid, p29, Jean-Pierre explains that "order giver" covers "owner, client or company", while the "contractor" covers the supplier, engineer, manufacturer and the builder as well. But bear in mind that when the "contractor" lets out "sub-contracts" to those suppliers of goods and services, the so-called "main-contractor" then becomes the "order giver" — and so on down the chain!

⁵ Ibid, p5

⁶ Ibid, pp14-15

⁷ Ibid, pp20-22

⁸ Averous, Jeremie, *Learn the Secrets of the Great Project Leaders*, published by Fourth Revolution Publishing, Singapore, 2012, p5

⁹ For a more in-depth explanation of the different types of project people see this paper:

<http://www.maxwideman.com/papers/success/intro.htm>

¹⁰ For a explanation of this observation about Myers-Brigs Type Indicator (MBTI), see this paper:

<http://www.maxwideman.com/papers/profiles/observations.htm>

¹¹ We can just imagine the political anguish that would have been generated had that occurred to the "Chunnel" tunnel under the English Channel!

¹² Ibid, p14

¹³ Earlier versions of Bolles & Hubbard's work appear on this web site here:

<http://www.maxwideman.com/papers/enterprise/intro.htm> and

http://www.maxwideman.com/guests/high_level/intro.htm

¹⁴ Bolles, Dennis L., & Darrel G. Hubbard, *A Compendium of PMO Case Studies: Reflecting Project Business Management Concepts*, Preface, p xix

¹⁵ Ibid, p3 – The authors define an *Enterprise* as: "a company, business, firm, partnership, corporation, or government agency. This includes associations, societies, for-profit entities, and not-for-profit entities." Glossary, p356

¹⁶ Ibid, p4

¹⁷ Ibid, p3

¹⁸ Ibid, p4. Note that "implement" here does not mean **conduct**, which remains the responsibility of the respective project managers.

¹⁹ "governance" is the first of seven elements of the PBMO model, as described later.

²⁰ Ibid, p9

²¹ Ibid, scanned from the book's cover.

²² Ibid, p22

²³ Ibid, p17

²⁴ *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, Fifth Edition, Project Management Institute, PA, Glossary, p554

²⁵ PMI defines Portfolio Management as "The centralized management of one or more portfolios to achieve strategic objectives". It defines Portfolio as "Projects, programs, sub-portfolios, and operations managed as a group to achieve strategic objectives." Ibid, p551

²⁶ Bolles, et al., pp 57-58

²⁷ Ibid, p56