

Handbook of Project Management – Fifth Edition
By Editor and Author Rodney Turner
(A book review by R. Max Wideman, FPMI)

The views expressed in this article are strictly those of Max Wideman.
 The contents of the book under review are the copyright property of the various authors.
 Published here August 2015

Introduction

Before launching into a review of this book, we must first declare our bias. This book is a compendium of chapters by a variety of authors, albeit generally well known by most people in the project management industry. In the past, we ourselves have been invited to contribute to other books in this way, typically being persuaded to do so on the grounds that it would give us extensive exposure if we presented something new, or at least of value. This would therefore enhance our exposure and recognition, and bring opportunities, etc., etc.

It never did. On the contrary, we learned that contributing a chapter to someone else's book was an easy way for an editor to spread the work load of assembling sufficient material to justify publishing a book, and garner the exposure and recognition for themselves. The contributing authors, for their part, tended to dig out some material that they had already drafted, most likely for riding one of their favorite hobbyhorses. The result was inevitably a compilation of disparate thoughts by different people, with different perspectives, and different motives. As an exercise in assembling entertaining commentary like an extended magazine, that's fine. As a useful reference book as a part of an individual's personal reference library, such books are virtually useless.

Having approached editor/author Rodney Turner's book with these thoughts in mind, we were pleasantly surprised to find that we were mostly wrong. On the contrary, Rodney sets out to provide a new handbook on project management with a clear structure and consistent thread covering the theory and practice of project management through a project's natural evolution or life span. That is, from the institution and merits of change within an organization as a matter of strategy, through commentary on performance of the well established components of project management, to delivery and start-up or deployment of the resulting products. Along the way, Rodney also incorporates highly relevant views on other topics of the day such as corporate management of projects and governance, sustainability, and the anatomy and implementation of Project Management Offices.

As Rodney observes in his Preface:¹

"This time [unlike previous editions] I should start with projects, and work outwards to corporate strategy."

However, he cautions that:²

"As before, I don't necessarily share the views of all the authors. I think it is healthy that a book like this should have a wide range of perspectives. Again there is nothing that I violently disagree with, and since I think Project Management is a social construct, I would not even say anything is 'wrong', just different perspectives of the same thing. A cylinder looks like a circle if you view it along one axis and a square if you view it from the side. So you can put a square peg in a round hole; it can look like a circle to some people and a square to others. Neither is wrong for expressing their views. Project Management is the same."

Well, that should quell any tide of criticism. In short, Buyer Beware! However, we do feel comfortable

with vouching for the cadre of many new authors that Rodney has assembled for his purpose.

As to Rodney's target audience, he says:³

"This book is intended as a handbook for project management practitioners. The aim is to give an introduction to and overview of the essential knowledge required for managing projects."

Note that this does not mean that the book provides the "information" a project manager needs to apply to a particular project, but rather just the "knowledge" that such information must exist. Therefore, with the extensive References and Further Readings provided at the end of each chapter, we suggest that it looks like those who are most likely to benefit are other authors and researchers. That is, those who are striving to develop a common understanding of what project management is and encompasses, and all that this implies.

About the author

Rodney Turner has an impressive academic background. He is Professor of Project Management at the Lille School of Management and the Centre for Project Management in the Kemmy Business /school, Limerick. He is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Technology Sydney, and visiting Professor at Henley Management College. He is editor of *The International Journal of Project Management*, and has written articles for journals, conferences and magazines.

Rodney was for twelve years a member of Council of the UK's Association for Project Management. He is now an Honorary Fellow and Vice President. He has also been President and Chairman of the International Project Management Association, the global federation of national associations in project management. He lectures on and teaches project management worldwide.

Book Structure

The contents of this book are set out in 33 chapters divided into 5 parts as follows:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. A Handbook for Project Management Practitioners | 14. Managing for Stakeholders |
| PART 1 PROJECTS | 15. Managing the Schedule |
| 2. Projects and Their Management | 16. Managing Cost and Earned Value |
| 3. Implementing Strategy through Projects | 17. Managing Resources |
| 4. The Value of Project Management: Rethinking Project Management Maturity and Fit | 18. Managing Risk |
| 5. Maturity Models in Project Management | 19. International Projects |
| 6. Auditing Projects and Programs | 20. Sustainable Development |
| PART 2 PERFORMANCE | PART 3 PROCESS |
| 7. Measuring Performance | 21. Managing the Process |
| 8. Benefits Realization Management | 22. Project Start-up |
| 9. Requirements Management | 23. Feasibility, Design and Planning |
| 10. Managing Scope and Configuration | 24. Managing Implementation |
| 11. Managing Value | 25. Project Close-out |
| 12. Managing Quality | PART 4 PORTFOLIO |
| 13. Organizing for Projects | 26. Complex Projects |
| | 27. Managing Programs and Projects |
| | 28. Managing Portfolios of Projects |
| | 29. Managing the Project-Oriented Organization |
| | 30. The Governance of Projects and |

Project Management
31. The Project Management Office:
Building a PMO for Performance

32. The Common Story of Great Projects
33. Project History: History Meets
Project

PART 5 PERSPECTIVES

Note that there are no chapters dedicated to People Management. That's because Rodney found this topic too large to incorporate in this latest version of his already large handbook. And besides, this subject is well covered in an associated book by Gower Publishing Limited.

This book has been assembled by a team of 30 authors as follows:⁴

Anantatmula, Vittal (1)	Mullaly, Mark (1)
Aubry, Monique (2)	Müller, Ralf (1)
Bradley, Gerals (1)	Patanakul, Peerasit (1)
Crawford, Lynn (1)	Schipper, Ron (1)
Dalcher, Darren (1)	Simister, Stephen (1)
Doloi, Hemanta (2)	Silvius, Gilbert (1)
Dvir, Dov (1)	Söderlund, Jonas (1)
Eskerod, Pernille (1)	Shenhar, Aaron (2)
Hertogh, Marcel (1)	Tan, Willie (1)
Hillson, David (1)	Thomas, Janice (1)
Hobbs, Brian (1)	Turner, Rodney (5)
Hueman, Martina (4)	Vanhoucke, Mario (1)
Khamooshi, Homayoun (1)	Ward, J. LeRoy (3)
Lenfle, Sylvain (1)	Westerfeld, Eddy (1)
Levin, Ginger (3)	Wright, Nevan (1)
Lock, Dennis (1)	

The numbers in brackets by each author indicate the number of chapters that this person either authored or co-authored.

Rodney Turner's book has a total of over 570 pages. It is well written and well illustrated with bulleted lists and over 180 figures, charts and tables. Every chapter concludes with a lengthy list of "References and Further Reading". The book does not include a Glossary of Terms.

What we liked

The reading content, embodying many novel ideas with which the reader may or may not agree, is intense, but generally not difficult to follow for those with Project Management experience. With so many authors involved subscribing only one or two chapters, we feel that it would be invidious to single out comments on only a few chapters and far too onerous to comment on every one. However, we do think the "Editor" is fair game!

We really liked the way Rodney introduces his book thus:⁵

"Projects and project management are now widely recognized by organizations as being essential to achieving their strategic objectives. [This] often involves change, and that change needs managing in a different way than managing the routine work of the organization. The change can take several forms:

- An engineering construct, [e.g.] a new building, new infrastructure or a new product or production machinery;
- An information [construct], [e.g. a] system involving new information and communication technology; or

- A social construct, [e.g.] new processes, new organization's structure or new skills in the workforce

In each case, the organization that wants the new asset creates a temporary organization, a project, to which resources are assigned to do the work to deliver that beneficial change."

That makes it clear what this Handbook is about — serious stuff. At one stroke Rodney rules out a whole range of projects such as research that is purely exploratory, theatre and entertainment, and that is to say nothing of simple one-man household maintenance projects.

However, there is more significance in the text just quoted. The perceptive reader will observe that the last line clearly indicates the similarity of approach across all three of the bullets listed, while those bullets all refer to markedly different outcomes. In other words, *project* management is *similar* across all three types of product quoted, whereas the processes for managing the development of the different types of *products* involved are all *different*. If only academics could recognize this distinction, a lot of conflicting opinions, confrontations and conflicts in the literature and actual project management application could be avoided. After all, arriving at this conclusion is only a matter of applying the well-established technique of work breakdown structure.

Following this introduction, Rodney then explains the purpose and content of each of his book's five parts: Projects; Performance; Process; Portfolio and Perspectives. Notice the alliteration here — good piece of salesmanship! Notice, too, that another very likely candidate for the string is "People". However, as we mentioned earlier, while found in previous editions, this time this topic proved too large to be included, and in any case is covered by another recent Gower publication.

Rodney goes on to postulate "five simple assumptions or premises, and from that develop an understanding of what we mean by projects and project management."⁶ From these five premises, Rodney manages to reach no less than 21 "Conclusions" that establish the scope of project management and underscore the structure of the whole book. Interestingly, it is not until Conclusion #18 that Rodney asserts that "The project life [span] is an inherent part of project management!"⁷

From these observations, Rodney concludes:⁸

"From just five premises, I have shown that all of the elements of Parts 2 to 4 of this book are inherent parts of Project Management. They do not need to be assumed as Cleland and King (1983) did. I have shown that the use of some common tools and techniques are inherent, and some can be derived from other management disciplines.

The concepts presented here do not preclude existing theories, such as the systems approach (Cleland and King, 1983), the process approach (Turner 2009) and the project as an information processing system (Winch, 2005). But they can be overlaid on this theory to provide additional insights. They do not need to be the primary focus of the theory, nor should they be. The concepts presented here set Project Management firmly as a part of Organizational and Management Theory, enabling the discipline to draw on insights from other management disciplines."

Downside

Well, I suppose it is useful for academia to know where the subject matter of project management belongs in the overall academic scheme of things. But we have to wonder how much does that help in

extending the knowledge of our subject? Or how does that help in improving the allegedly dismal rate of project success for example? Still, be that as it may, Rodney's careful analysis does provide an interesting structure for discussing the discipline.

So, philosophically there really is no downside to this book. It is what it is, a compendium of professorial opinions on a range of topics selected to fit a predetermined thread through a subject that we have come to know as project management.

We have only one regret as we hinted earlier. Time after time there is an opportunity to differentiate between the management of the challenges and demands of the *project*, and the management of the challenges and demands of the technologies required in the development of the evolving *product*. Distinguishing between these two sides of the project management divide would greatly simplify the educational challenge, and avoid a lot of misunderstanding in the literature. Perhaps this will be recognized in the next edition of Rodney's masterpiece.

Summary

For those familiar with previous editions, this Fifth Edition of the *Gower Handbook of Project Management* has been substantially restructured. The four sections in this book describe:⁹

1. **Projects**: their context, value and how they are connected to organizational strategy;
2. **Performance**: describes how to manage the delivery of the project, covering scope, quality, cost, time, resources, risk and sustainability;
3. **Process**: from start to closure
4. **Portfolio**: the project and its relationship to the parent organization

As the publishers suggest:¹⁰

"The discrete nature of each chapter makes this Handbook a wonderful source of advice and background theory that is easy to consult. *The Gower Handbook of Project Management* is an encyclopedia for the discipline and profession of project management; a bible for project clients, contractors and students."

If that is what you are looking for, this is it!

R. Max Wideman
Fellow, PMI

¹ Turner, Rodney, editor/author *Handbook of Project Management*, Fifth Edition, Gower Publishing Limited, Surrey, UK, 2014, p xx

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, p1

⁴ Ibid, pp xxi - xxviii

⁵ Ibid, p1

⁶ Ibid, p20

⁷ Ibid, p29

⁸ Ibid, p33

⁹ Ibid, back cover

¹⁰ Ibid