

Understanding Project Management: Skills and Insights for Successful Project Delivery

Gary Straw

Kogan Page

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Projects are complex, but texts on project management need not be so. Gary Straw's new book *Understanding Project Management: Insights for Successful Project Delivery* is such an example; an uncomplicated yet detailed text covering the skills, techniques and processes required in the modern day and age to make projects successful. Set in clear, lucid style, it is detailed enough to satisfy an academic looking for a supplementary teaching text while practical enough to satisfy the novice practitioner.

What I like best about the book is Gary's structure: book sections start with "projects in the ideal world" (the theory), followed by "projects in a real world" (real-world complexities of successfully completing projects), leading onto "projects in a challenging world" (the actual challenges faced during the course of projects) and closing with "developing a capability" (i.e. project management capabilities). The structure is indicative of what Gary intends to impart in this text: not a focus on theory, but the use of existing theory as a foundation for introducing the practice of projects, the challenges and complexities inherent therein and subsequently the nature of leadership and capabilities required of project professionals to fulfill project objectives, satisfy stakeholders and make a lasting impact through their undertakings.

There are enough cases and snippets from practice to bring the real world into the classroom. The cases are varied (in terms of sectors, complexity, nature of decisions and geographical placement) and provide a great tool to bring contextual learnings from actual situations to the students. Learning outcomes from each chapter are clearly spelled out and supported through cases, insights and learning takeaways; an approach which most teachers will find extremely useful while using this as a teaching text. Given its applied focus, I think the text will prove to be useful in executive education as well as regular classroom teaching.

Overall, *Understanding Project Management: Insights for Successful Project* is a great, insightful text that allows the field of project management seem approachable and do-able. Yet, it is the width of concepts covered and the emphasis on application

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that sets it apart. Its canvas and the subjects it covers is surprisingly much wider than what one can assume a text of such a size and nature (with less dependency on theory) to present. The book is not too pricey either and is highly recommended for those teaching any aspect of project management; facilities management academics included.

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