

Book review

Project Sponsorship

David West. Gower, Farnham, UK, 2010, ISBN 978-0-566-08888-9, £25.00, 258 pp.

This book covers the role of project sponsorship, in particular the roles and skills that lie at the heart of effective sponsorship. Often the skills of a sponsor are assumed but the role is critical in large projects during the development of the business case, for governance and assurance. Getting the balance right in acting between the Board and the Project Manager is all important, which the author says is about ensuring the organisation does the right things as well as doing things right.

The sorts of people who would likely pick this up are project sponsors looking to reinforce knowledge in some areas; those about to become project sponsors needing to get up to speed quickly; those perhaps considering getting into such a role and interested in learning more; finally, those looking to improve the quality of project sponsorship within their organisations.

The book is split into three parts. Part one is a general section and deals with the nature of project sponsorship and sponsors. It will aid the understanding of the value that project sponsors add and how they should be selected. The four main roles of the project sponsor are covered which are essentially identifying the business need, problem or opportunity; owning the business case; hiring the project manager;

finally, translation, which includes the ability to communicate effectively in plain English. The project manager should ultimately be prepared to recommend the project is stopped if the project's business case turns negative.

Part two covers core project sponsor duties and skills. If the reader has a good grasp of project management then this will add what is needed for good project sponsorship. Important aspects of this are the project commissioning and close out stages, and the book helps understand the transition between capital investment and revenue generation.

Part three deals with understanding project management, detailing the interface between the project sponsor and the project manager. The emphasis importantly is the identification of what one expects to see from a good project manager. One of the topics is about change control and there is a very pertinent statement of 'whilst projects are designed to bring about change and that is a good thing, changes to a project are to be avoided like the plague if you wish to retain any hope of completion on time and budget'.

The book is very readable but also comprehensive. It is the sort of text one can refer to as and when required. This is a really useful reference book which should be of interest to a number of people from both a theoretical and practical level.

Robert Gerrard