Foreword by Ed Hoffman

The aim was to create a project and program management initiative. It was late 1990 and I was on the phone with Dave Hornestay. He was a senior executive at NASA Headquarters and in the process of explaining to me their strong interest in having me come downtown to start creating a learning initiative focused on increasing the likelihood of project success. This was a few years after Challenger and ideas were being explored about regaining capability and excellence.

It seemed like an absurd request. My organization psychology background was squarely about learning, team development, change management and leadership. Project management at the time was about methods, formulas, and disciplined execution. I picked up several books about project management and was astounded and turned off to note the lack of writing about people, leadership, and strategy. I vowed as a first action to start a curriculum without project books. No need to reinforce the mistaken.

In reading PROJECT.PROGRAM.CHANGE it has become clear of how significantly things have changed! This is not a surprise as I have known the authors for many years. They have been leading proponents of a practice of projects that squarely focus on the strategic, human, adaptive, and integrated.

The book you hold in your hand represents an integrated, systemic, and balanced view of programs and projects that incorporates strategic, social, and execution factors necessary for success. A simple review of the table of contents illustrates a holistic understanding of modern project work. The challenge is about addressing the dilemmas of management and leadership. There is emphasis on planning, phases, roles, coordination, as well as, team performance, culture, social competence, and developing necessary capabilities. There is recognition that project risk is within strategic, economic, technical, social platforms.

It is the right approach and one to be expected from experienced practitioners like Roland and Lorenz Gareis. My association with Team Gareis goes back to their successful and even joyful 'HAPPYPROJECTS' series of conferences. It is a stretch to call projects "happy," and yet through carefully orchestrated engagements that weave the thoughtful, with the disciplined, with the social they make it work, and have done so for a long time. These are events that I eagerly anticipated as the former NASA Director of NASA Academy, as they annually would bring together a thoughtful community of project professionals and explore a diverse, but relevant array of topics, in a setting of active conversation. The chance to participate in a stimulating Viennese environment only made the discussions better. Topics that would span the breadth of issues are now covered in this book. For me this book represents the captured and shared knowledge of those conversations. The book represents wisdom from authors who have experience, practice and dedication to excellence in program and project management.

This is a book that covers the necessities for program and project success. For any reader it is an excellent starting point. It also provides a foundation for asking difficult and provocative questions about leading a modern project. Such provocation is to be expected from natural rebels such as Roland and Lorenz. They are smart, deliberate, and smooth in their presentation, but any reading of the material will lead to the realization that leadership in this domain will require innovation, agility, and disruption.

Project Program Change and Success

This is a book intended to offer insights and learning on organizations, projects, and team success. The tools are focused around projects, programs, and change, yet the ultimate destination is organization success through business value. Many of the readers will be looking for answers. Some will come looking to learn as a starting point with hopes that the book will provide a strong foundation. What does the book say about success? Let me offer a few of the things that reinforced my personal experience.

1. Projects, Programs, Changes Require a Variety of Approaches

PROJECT.PROGRAM.CHANGE covers a lot of territory. There is a wide spectrum of disciplined methods that one would expect from a project management book. There is also a heavy emphasis on people, team, and social collaboration so that the human emphasis is strong. A third vital strand is about strategy, systems, culture, and process. These are often considered competing efforts, yet the strength of this work is that it demands the reader to understand modern work is about balancing apparently different approaches. You can be innovative, adaptive, concerned about people, and still use disciplined tools that support structure and method.

2. Strategic Management is Essential

Let's look at the message on the importance of strategic managing. The beginning of any successful execution is accuracy of strategic insight. It is crazy to think that separating strategy from execution can promote a successful outcome. Yet for decades the notion has been spread that they are two completely separate things, done by different levels of an organization.

As the authors discuss, "the objective of the strategic managing of an organization is to ensure the sustainable development of this organization within this context." This opening sentence leads to a full discussion about the strategic implications of a project and the methods that must be considered. It accurately leads to consideration of project, program, and portfolio factors. Ultimately, it portrays the challenge and dynamics of the interaction between strategic organization business drivers, with the reality of project implementation and real-time data. Projects are therefore best considered investments that are measured through value to an organization.

3. Culture, Change and the importance of Social Collaboration

The movement of a project is depicted in social, team, collaborative components. This is vital in that we know success comes from the leadership and collaborative elements. Project management is not a logical, process-driven machine. It is ultimately about people and this makes it dynamic, interpersonal, and messy. This is the most emblematic distinction of our current age of work. It is done across immense communities of discipline excellence and the challenge is not finding the talent (finding talent is no longer hard, hiring it and maintaining it on a team may be a different story) it is managing how people collaborate. Success is the residue of effective design emphasizing collaborative cultures.

4. Performance Happens at the Team Level

One of my biggest mistakes in the early years of building the NASA Program and Project Leadership Academy was an exclusive focus on individual training and development. This was a common bias in the past, and it required painful mission failures to Mars in the late 1990's to recognize that having capable, competent, and confident individuals was the key ingredient for project success. This should have been obvious since I had witnessed teams of exceptional talent stunningly fail due to dysfunctional interpersonal exchange. I had conversely noticed that some of our most effective teams were composed of solid (not great) individual talent that worked together extremely well. This led to my conclusion that performance happens at the team level. The sheer importance of project team design and development is perhaps the most common property of project outcome, and it is covered with thought.

Diversity of method, strategic connection to execution, social collaboration, and project team design are the broad factors that most resonate with my thinking about what makes projects, programs, change proceed toward success. The work of Gareis and Gareis in truth goes much further. It addresses the full complement of essentials for a leader and practitioner who endeavors the challenges of this work. You will undoubtedly recognize and value other critical ingredients of this book. I can say that if this were the book that I first read back in 1990, I would have easily embraced the field with excitement and passion.

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