

# Project management: a multi-disciplinary approach

Review by Ian Jay, PMP

**P**roject Management: a multi-disciplinary approach, is edited by Professor Herman Steyn and authored by the experienced local industry and an academic team comprising Herman Steyn, Gert Basson, Michael Carruthers, Yvonne du Plessis, Deon Kruger, Josua Pienaar, Birgit Prozesky-Kuschke, Stefan van Eck and Krige Visser. This second, revised edition is a comprehensive update of the first edition published in 2003.

Based on the latest trends and feedback from users of the first book, it introduces more local case studies, two new sections and an enhancement in readability.

The book is aimed at developing management skills essential for project managers in all sectors of business and government. It explores the 'hard' skills such as scheduling and risk analysis, as well as the softer, interpersonal skills required for effective management.

A perennial problem is the need for a book suited to the needs of the African project environment. This is a book that provides comprehensive coverage of project management for the local education and training community.

One difficulty in providing education and training in South Africa is the need for local cases and context to bring the topic to life for the local audience. Prof. Steyn has moved to address this problem with this textbook.

Another problem is the lack of coverage of areas specific to local conditions such as labour law and contract law. This book addresses both of these issues.

The bulk of the text provides coverage of all the areas indicated in the Project Management Institute's (PMI) *A Guide to*



*the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK®)*. This makes the book a good foundation text for anyone interested in doing the professional exam set by the PMI.

In addition, there are separate chapters dealing with local knowledge areas: labour law and contract law.

The labour law chapter provides insight into issues such as the employment contract, basic conditions of employment, empowerment and employment termination or dismissal legislation.

The chapter on contract law begins by providing a background to the need for properly formulated contracts. It then moves on to discuss what a contract should contain and finishes with contract termination and breach-of-contract matters.

There are also two special chapters on areas relevant to projects – ISO90001 and Work Authorisation. It serves as a good foundation text for anyone who wants to pick up the basics of project management across industry groups.

The chapter on time management is followed by one devoted to scheduling, which includes a sound introduction to the concept of Critical Chain scheduling.

The project control chapter takes up the subject of control process. This is followed by a good description of the Earned Value approach to project monitoring and control.

There is also a section on controls used in conjunction with critical chain schedules.

At the end of the chapter is a short discussion on explaining to team members the need for and use of control information.

Each chapter has a set of learning outcomes described at the start. These are worded in such a way as to make them tempting material for inclusion in exam questions. At the end of each chapter is a set of relevant references and further readings as well as study assignments for student follow-up.

A number of local case studies are also presented to illustrate points made in the main text; these include the Mozal smelter in Maputo, the Gautrain railway project, and the Injaka Bridge tragedy in KwaZulu-Natal.

The need for a comprehensive single text giving good coverage to all aspects of project management is addressed by this text.

Prof. Steyn has assembled a team of eight local experts to co-author a book that addresses the needs of local training and education providers.

This second edition has substantially been updated and revised. The style of writing is accessible to the lay reader and covers all aspects of generic project management and is an excellent introduction to the subject. ☑

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