

# A word with Professor Herman Steyn

## Author of *Project Management: a multi-disciplinary approach*

**I**n addition to the reviewed book on the previous page, Professor Herman Steyn also co-authored the third edition of another popular international book, *Project Management for Business, Engineering and Technology* by John Nicholas and Herman Steyn is suitable for graduate courses such as a Master's degree in project management, and is a prescribed work for business and engineering schools in several countries.

In fact, the second edition (published in 2005) is available in languages such as Chinese, and the latest edition is also likely to be translated.

Academic faculties offering project management tuition, business schools, and project managers seeking literature that makes use of practical, applicable examples to impart project management principles were pleased to see the fully revised versions of the two popular titles on the bookshelves last year.

*The Project Manager* spoke to Prof. Steyn about the labour of love that is book publishing.

### **TPM: What kind of research took place prior to updating the two books?**

HS: For the local book, we looked at feedback from questionnaires to users (who are mostly lecturers), information obtained from book reviews, and the experience of lecturers.

For the international book, the publisher, Butterworth-Heinemann did an international survey and as authors, we did extensive research to develop content, including literature searches and interviews on case studies, such as the Mandela Bridge (which graces the book's cover).

[This is rather a modest reply. Herman produced the book's manuscript during the interview, and the formidable stack of paper rose a good 20 centimetres from the table. He does admit that the work required to produce the new book made a PhD look like a small job, and involved working through around 700 pages of text in intricate detail.]

### **TPM: What did the research uncover?**

HS: With both books we identified the need for more teaching cases with questions that could be discussed by students, more short stories about real projects, and updating of tutor materials.

The local book required updating and expansion of most chapters – chapters on ISO 9001 certification and time-cost trade-off respectively – and inclusion of more references for further reading.

Research for the international book highlighted the need for: cross-border project information; project management methodologies; more on front-end topics such as RFPs [requests for proposal], proposals, charters and definition of needs; project procurement; project management maturity; the need to address TOC [Theory of Constraints] and Critical Chain; mapping of contents to PMBOK<sup>®</sup> knowledge areas; knowledge management; systems engineering and a chapter on project quality management, among others.

### **TPM: What made the team of local authors such a good combination?**

HS: The nine authors have complementary experience and qualifications. All have suitable academic backgrounds and between us, we have more than 150 years of practical professional experience.

### **TPM: How did you come to co-author with John Nicholas?**

HS: I used John Nicholas' book (the first edition) back in 1996 when I first joined the University of Pretoria. I had some criticisms of it. In 2001 I met him in his offices in Chicago and told him what I thought and the relationship developed from there.

The book, as it stood, was a lifetime job and not something I could consider starting from scratch, so it made sense to team up with him. In the process, we found there was much synergy between the two books.

### **TPM: The first edition of *Project Management: a multi-disciplinary approach* was well received (by December 2008, 17 000 copies had been sold) in academic engineering programmes and business schools like GIBS. What do you think makes it such a success story?**

HS: It is practical and applicable to the local market. And it is good value for money.

### **TPM: Is this book only applicable to the local market?**

HS: Although we address South African cases and also some topics that are specific to South Africa, such as labour law, the principles are universal and copies have been exported to the United States. ☑

*"Project Management for Business, Engineering and Technology", third edition, published by Butterworth-Heinemann, was launched in Europe and the United States in January 2008.*

*The first print of "Project Management: a multi-disciplinary approach" appeared in August 2003 and was printed seven times. The second edition was released in March 2008.*