

The Fast Forward MBA in Project Management, 3rd Ed.

Writer: Eric Verzuh (President, The Versatile Company).
John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2008. Paperback, 462 pages, \$21.95

Reviewed By: James R. Brady, PhD, MPA, MEd.
International Development Consultant (Org. Systems)

Target Audience:

Eric Verzuh consults with business and government organizations on improving project management training and practices. His book is directed toward people with various levels of PM experience who wish to get a comprehensive and practical overview of current developments in the field. The book should be useful to both project leaders and other managers who are concerned with the success of their organization's projects.

Point of View:

Verzuh and his company are certified suppliers of training blessed by the Project Management Institute (PMI®). The book stresses the role of PMI in the development of PM professionalism and contains little or no treatment of alternative professional entities, such as IPMA or its American affiliate: *asapm*. For readers interested in taking the PMI certification test, "Exam Prep Questions" appear after most chapters in the book. However, you must go to Verzuh's company website (www.versatilecompany.com) to retrieve the answers. The book includes copies of many PM forms and owners of the book may access free PM forms and short video tutorials at the same website.

Summary Comments:

The book gives a good overview of the rapid growth of the PM profession during the past forty years and the current importance of projects and competent Project Managers to most modern companies. Verzuh praises the progress made in developing PM knowledge and professionalism and the expansion of training and certification programs. In an introductory chapter, he discusses the three basic attributes of project success: delivery of the client's product on schedule, within budget, and of high quality. He notes that "Quality is often more difficult to define and far more difficult to measure than *on time* or *on budget*." (page 20). Later chapters provide more detail on these and other general leadership tasks in the life cycle of a project.

Verzuh acknowledges that effective approaches to quality and other issues will depend on the particular type of project. Nonetheless, many of the suggestions he disburses on quality and other issues appear to be relevant to a wide range of projects. In discussing how to ensure a high quality project product, Verzuh observes: (1) the earlier in the project life cycle that an error can be detected, the less costly it will be to make corrections and (2) the effort devoted to such quality assurance activities as early "design reviews" will usually take far less time than doing these later in the project design phase.

The Project Manager also needs to be clear about the standards or "completion criteria" to be used to ultimately decide whether the project has been successful. Assistance on this task can be obtained via such means as:

1. peer reviews at earlier design stages,
2. checklists reflecting successful approaches in other relevant projects ["State of the Art" baseline?], or
3. systematic testing or simulation exercises to help ensure that the final product will meet the defined requirement. (pages 138-139).

Most chapters in the book contain brief and informative case studies of actual projects by "Stellar Performers". The book also includes a chapter on guidelines for effectively using *Microsoft Project*.

Reviewer's Conclusions:

This is a well-organized and readable review of Project Management. It should be of interest to newcomers to the field, as well as old-timers who want a good summary of trends. And, given the high cost of most PM tomes today, the book is a great buy at \$21.95! (More thrifty souls can get it for less at www.Amazon.com.)

Reviewer Rating of this book (4.5 out of 5):  James R. Brady, PhD, MPA, MEd.