Successful Project Management, 3rd Edition
By Trevor L. Young. Published by Kogan Page, 2010, (Paperback 201 pages, $14.95)

Book Review by James R. Brady, PhD, MPA, MEd

Target Audience: The author is a consultant on "programme management" in Great Britain. His book is "…aimed at managers who are concerned about getting better results from projects in their organizations <u>and</u> project managers who have already found themselves responsible for one or more projects." (Page 1) While the primary audience seems to be Project Managers, Mr. Young also stresses that successful project management depends upon the active and positive involvement of non-project managers and staff at **all levels of the organization** (e.g., "project sponsors", functional department heads, and top level general managers). The author then further broadens his approach to "project management" by indicating that senior executives in pursuit of broad or "strategic" organizational innovations should copy project management methods to be successful:

> **"Since projects are about change---creating something or a state we need but do not have, then it seems the natural management process to adopt." (Page 15).**

Organizations can apply a Project Management approach by integrating related projects into "suites of projects" or "programmes". Programmes can then be integrated into broader organizational "portfolios":

> **"Portfolio management is concerned with managing all active programmes and projects, along with future opportunities to ensure the resources of the organisation are deployed in the most effective manner to achieve strategic objectives."** (Page17).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Book: I think a positive element of the book is the many good ideas presented for assessing and improving the way that the organizational leadership uses projects. However, it does not provide enough information on who would do what to effect these innovation strategies at various levels of the organization. Most chapters tend to focus on the project manager's project-level tasks. They provide little information on how he or she would fit into a new effort to use a "project management" approach to achieving broader organizational goals.

For example, Mr. Young divides the main elements of project management into the following "Project Phases": Conception, Definition, Planning, Launch and Execution, Closure, and Post-Project Evaluation. He recommends that the organization not proceed from one "Phase" to the next without a comprehensive review of conditions and progress by a group of senior managers who would constitute the "Project Steering Team" (PST).

> **The PST "…meets at regular intervals to review the status of all active programmes and projects. The PST also approves opportunities to be investigated and sets the priorities." (Page 45).**

This Project Steering Team would apparently make key decisions relating to all projects. It would also supervise the Project Sponsor and the Project Sponsor would supervise the Project Manager. Given the very dominant role assigned to the PST, the typical Project Manager would probably be operating at a rather low level in the decision-making hierarchy. Creating a special team like the PST to make major decisions on all projects in a large, diversified company would also probably lead to a surge in turf protection battles?

Summing Up: The author seems confident that his recommended approach is applicable to all types and sizes of private or public organizations:

> **"Everything discussed here can be applied to any type of project irrespective of the nature of your business and regardless of whether your customer is internal or external to your organisation."**

As noted above, the book contains many good suggestions for project managers. However, Mr. Young's advice would have been more valuable if he had been clearer about the specific leadership and management tasks to be performed at the different organizational levels that he describes (i.e., "project", "programme", and "portfolio"). There are also loads of useful forms and formats throughout the book to help the reader "standardize data reporting". The author intended to include a general guide list of these materials at the end of the book, but this was somehow omitted. The book also lacks a regular subject index. The author has also included a list of books for "…some additional reading when project work has really attracted your attention for future development." (Page 3) This list contains 11 books on various management topics.

Editor's Note: Thanks Dr. Brady! Readers, if you would like to make a comment about this review, please <u>contact us!</u>

Overall Rating: 3.5 (out of 5): ✓✓✓✓ James R. Brady, PhD, MPA, MEd.