

# **Better Practices of Project Management Based on IPMA competences**

**by John Hermarij; Van Haren Publishing, 2013. Hard cover, 660 pages, \$66.50 (in paperback)**

## **Book Review by Stacy Goff**

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*This is a review of the book and a "high five" to the publisher, Van Haren Publishing. Ivo Van Haren has been a long-time supporter of IPMA. For the 2013 IPMA World Congress, he served as a sponsor, with a booth; he also supported the Global Young Crew Workshop. He did so in part, by offering Young Crew members-in-attendance a copy of this book. Some of us older crew received copies as well. We hope to see Ivo Van Haren in the 2014 World Congress!*

### **Target Audience**

This book is targeted to the needs of anyone who a) Is interested in taking the advanced, competence-based project and program management certifications of IPMA, the International Project Management Associations, or one of its 50+ Member Associations; b) is involved with PM-related learning and development, whether as a Human Resources or Talent Manager, a line manager with project-involved staff, an Educator or trainer specializing in project management, or a new project manager (or team member) who needs a reference to all those terms others are throwing around. Note that this is not a beginner's book; and, it may be too much information for those who are considering the test-based IPMA Level D® certification.

Of course, one does not just sit down and read a 600 page book for fun. Author John Hermarij identifies four key audiences, and then cites the parts that are most relevant for each--a nice approach for dealing with a nearly overwhelming onslaught of information. One audience John misses is those who have already been certified in some other knowledge-based exam. For those, we suggest studying the sections on Behavioral and Contextual competence elements. This is what other professional associations have decided to do, to move beyond the technical areas and embrace, as IPMA always has, the factors that have the greatest impact on project and business success.

### **Organization of the Book**

The book is organized in the same structure as IPMA ICB®, the IPMA Competence Baseline. Note that asapm's National Competence Baseline is organized a bit differently--We placed the Contextual Elements first; otherwise, the structures are very similar. We did find the organization to be useful, because in many cases we had this book and the ICB open at the same time, to compare how the author built upon the efforts of the ICB3 development team.

### **About the Book**

With a subtitle, *Based on IPMA Competences*, this Best Practice series book from Van Haren Publishing is the perfect User Guide to the IPMA Competence Baseline, 3rd Edition. Beginning with a high-praise Foreword from our good friend and IPMA-NL President, Joop Schefferlie, the book then follows the structure of the IPMA ICB. Many of us in asapm participated in the development of ICB, and, while we feel it is a great selection of the factors that have the most impact on project, program and business success, it is primarily a structure: many of the high-level references needed more explanation. We have even discussed the need for a BOK, a Body of Knowledge, that expands on the topics needing more coverage.

John has done an incredible amount of research. One area where ICB3 is weak is in the depth of information for each of the Behavioral Skills elements. John provides more depth of information for each of these 15 elements, with references to additional information. One minor quibble here: For a American audiences, we sometimes will find the need to find American equivalents of a very few hard-to-find European citations. But many of the citations are from the USA, so Europeans (and those from other continents) may have similar challenges.

Another example of his thoroughness: Sensitive to the fact that his book might be used around the World, he engaged a Cultural reviewer, who brought in such insights as this: While most Westerners might view time as left-to-right, some, such as Arabs, tend to view it as a connected circle. So, given the role of schedules in projects, some cultural accommodations are needed.

For those who don't know, much of the exam and professional assessment revolves around the ICB's "Possible process steps." The book's "Process steps" for each element provide richer information about each of these. The ICB's "Topics addressed" are usually checklists for additional study--if one does not understand a term, you should research it. In this book, "Special topics" provides much more information about a few important topics related to the element--but there is not a match between these and the ICB's Topics addressed. This is not a flaw, just a consideration to note.

He does point out that each IPMA Member Association has cultural-specific and national-specific differences in their certifications, and that readers should use the local National Competence Baseline in conjunction with his book.

I will admit that I did not read every page of this book. Instead, I used it as intended--as a reference. In that format, it worked wonderfully. And for the acid test: When GPM, IPMA-Germany, wrote its 4-volume Kompetenzbasiertes Projektmanagement book, used as the baseline for all their PPM Certifications, I volunteered to write one section. I wrote the section on 1.18 Communication--a subject near and dear to my heart. I had, as my collaborator, Florian Dorrenberg. I selected Communication (my second choice was 2.01 Leadership) because it was, in my opinion, one of the least-well covered (and most important!) topics in ICB. Together we produce a 53 page section just on 1.18 Communication. Studying the 1.18 Communication topic in this book, I see that many of the same key points are touched upon, and in just 22 pages. I am very impressed!

**Bottom Line: Buy This Book!** My advice to you, after ten years of mapping books, courses, articles, congress streams and presentations, webinars and PM Community of Practice meetings to IPMA's ICB: Buy this book! We found it on Amazon.com in paperback format. Recall that in the January 2014 asapm newsletter we also published a way to get discounts on the Van Haren

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I also think we should add the author, John Hermarij, to the ICB4 team. See my overall rating below; only Rose Johnston has scored a book this high.

Editor's Note: Readers, if you would like to make a comment about this review, please [contact us!](#)

Overall Rating: 5 (out of 5):  Stacy Goff.