

Churchill's Adaptive Enterprise, Lessons for Business Today; by Mark Kozak-Holland

Book Review by Stacy Goff, PMP

This book is a great read for savvy Business Managers. No, it's a compelling history book. No, it is an excellent demonstration of Leadership Style. No, it is a complete Information Technology methodology, in the guise of a chameleon. I reviewed this book this Fall, and (full disclosure) provided some sound bites for the publisher. However, I would not have done so if I had not enjoyed this book so much.

This "Back to Our Future" book does a stellar job of mining the project intelligence from Lessons Learned. It cites not just common practice, not just best practice, but **First Practice** of methods underlying today's most successful projects.

Those methods include portfolio prioritization and management, and adaptive enterprise elements such as portals, content management methods, Business Intelligence, real-time modeling, advanced architectures (including the increasingly popular Service Oriented Architecture), supply chain management, and information security.

Let us look at this book from the four different perspectives mentioned in the first paragraph above.

As a Methodology

Author Mark Kozak-Holland appears to have begun writing this book using a facile (and well-documented in the Appendix) Component Design methodology as a framework. He then uses his vignettes about Churchill's challenges and accomplishments to provide examples of phases, results or tasks. Only rarely did the need to cover key parts of the methodology get in the way of the compelling story I followed.

I found Mark's use of Churchill examples to be a very interesting "back to the future" approach, that sometimes had me checking my calendar to verify the actual date. The book is a worthwhile investment just for the methodology ideas, especially if the author could provide the Work Breakdown Structure plus work package tasks in an electronic template.

A Study in Leadership Style

I thought I knew a lot about the beginnings of World War II, and the roles of the leaders of the involved countries. I had an appreciation for some of Churchill's contributions. But as my reading progressed, I found I had not even scratched the surface of the role Churchill played. As I read this book, I kept finding myself going out on the web to do broader research about certain assertions, such as America's isolationist tendencies, the debacle of Dunkirk, together with the heroic rescue of the remaining forces.

All through the book, I was frequently reminded of the strong visionary leader Tracy Kidder describes in the lead character in *Soul of a New Machine*. And I've used *Soul* since it was first published in my Project Leadership classes to analyze leadership styles and their effectiveness. I may need to update my role models!

Compelling History

I'm a history buff. And once or twice I got a bit frustrated when the next methodology steps interrupted the storyline about what really went on in the areas in and around London in 1940. And each time I found a new fact, I jumped again onto a separate research thread: The role of Polish scientists in breaking the code; the Enigma machine; why Dunkirk happened, and many other compelling threads.

[On the book's website](#) there are now resources that explain a bit more of this background. This can make it less time consuming to do the type of extra research I did, because you all know that one search can lead to many links, and we can lose whole days following them all!

For Savvy Business Managers

I did not appreciate the meaning of *Adaptive*, nor understand what support is needed to be such. But one key is access to Business Intelligence, plus all the support infrastructure needed to actively use it. Managers don't need to know the technology, but the book provides excellent examples of the combination of Strategies plus application of current Intelligence. Most of today's decision-makers operate with less information than Churchill employed with his Adaptive Enterprise. This book could be your first step in rectifying that.

Summary

The subtle PM analogy, Prime Minister as Program Manager, together with a fascinating blend of retrospective and perspective makes this book appealing and revealing to both our historic interests and our current-day challenges. Mark Kozak-Holland guides us through his comprehensive and historic case study as we learn the lessons of the past, so we may not be doomed to repeat them.

Reviewer Rating of this book (out of 5):  — Stacy A. Goff, PMP

Ed. Note: *Churchill's Adaptive Enterprise* is available at the [Amazon website](#), and is also available [through its publisher](#) with special pricing, that includes an ebook copy of Mark's prior book, *Titanic Lessons for IT Projects*.

About the Reviewer: Stacy Goff is *asapm* Vice President 2001-2007 and President of ProjectExperts, a Project Management Consulting and Training company. Stacy has written integrated Project Management and Systems Engineering methodologies that are used on (at least) four continents, and over 22 years has helped dozens of companies and consultancies to integrate his

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