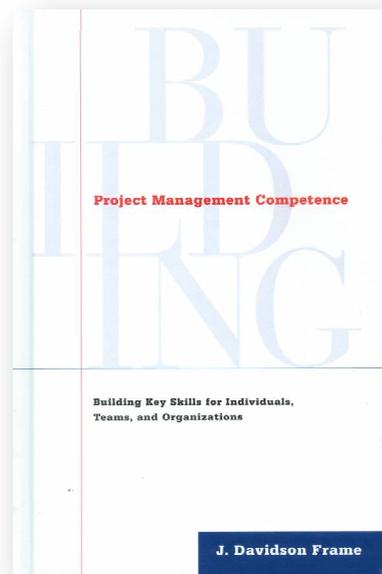


Project Management Competence, by J Davidson Frame

A Book Review by Ian Jay

An individual who is results oriented and a self starter is the profile for a capable project manager. To succeed the individual needs a cross functional team and a supportive organisation environment. These three elements are the theme of this book.

The problem with projects is improving their chance of success. Davidson Frame deals with this matter early in the book by stating that the work environment is critical. This leads into a chapter on organisation pathologies. These are defined as procedures or cultural behaviours that act against the best interest of the organisation. One of the examples relates to a team that put in abnormally high hours, the project was a 'success' but when complete, most of the engineers involved resigned.



There are four main parts to the book, the first sets the scene by examining what competence is. The solution to the competence problem is the subject of the remaining three main parts. These look at individual, team, and organisation competence.

Eleven traits of the competent project manager are identified. These were the outcome of research performed by the author. These traits can be grouped into knowledge based, socially rooted, and Business judgment competencies. The remainder of this part of the book deals with each group in turn. Knowledge can be tested directly; however the remaining two groups rely on more subjective measures.

Davidson Frame was director of the PMI certification process for six years; he states that the multi choice test for PMP status is not a way to identify if an individual can function effectively. The exam merely assesses the knowledge based competencies. This part of the book gives a good description

of the PMI Guide to the PM Body of Knowledge and finishes with a multi choice test similar to the PMI certification exam.

Social skills have a basis in self awareness. Such skills depend on emotional self control; this means an ability to delay gratification. People who are able to do this are the ones who accomplish their goals. Specific social competencies for the project manager include Communication, listening and political skills. These and others are described in this chapter.

Part three of the book describes the competent project team. It then proceeds to discuss means of assessing team competence. The point is made that this is more difficult to assess than either individual or organisation. There is no 'ideal' team structure; the nature of the team will reflect the task at hand. However a set of criteria are provided to identify the level of team competence. Examples of these are a proper skill mix, clear goals and well defined deliverables. Each criterion has a section devoted to describing it.

Measures of competency for the organisation are the subject of the last part of the book. These are linked directly to 'hygiene' factors in Herzberg's motivation theory. Each factor is discussed in some detail and related to the project life cycle where appropriate. For example; the provision of needed information to perform the work is one of the measures; accurate on time budget data is a specific instance of this.

Each of the three sections ends with a self assessment instrument. For the individual there is a test very similar to the PMP exam in structure. The author suggests interested people use this to assess their readiness to sit the real thing. The second section ends with a team competence assessment instrument. This has a set of instructions about how to gather the information in order to score the

team. The tool for organisation maturity is similar to the team tool in nature; it examines the project life cycle and then some of the supporting processes.

The last sentence of the book is instructive; it says 'Competence is not a gift passed down from heaven. It must be earned.'

'Project Management Competence building key skills for Individuals, Teams, and Organisations' by J Davidson Frame. Published by Jossey – Bass 1999 ISBN 0-7879-4662-1

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