

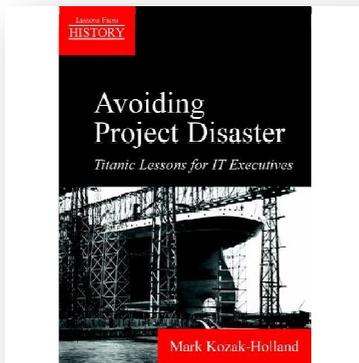
Avoiding Project Disasters “Titanic Lessons for IT Executives”, by Mark Kozak-Holland

A Book Review by René Le Bel

Avoiding Project Disasters parallels today’s hubris of IT practices against the hubris surrounding the building, marketing and operation of the cruise liner named Titanic.

The book is targeted at senior level management needing a resource to understand key IT project issues. The author Mark Kozak-Holland, a history buff and IT consultant in emerging technologies has written a user-friendly book with chapter objectives, conclusions and extensive appendices.

The author presents the market conditions for transatlantic travel, social environment at the beginning of the twentieth century and the tremendous impact the sinking of the Titanic had on people’s regard for the invincibility of technology. Today this tragedy is still a powerful metaphor for our civilization, as the author points out the sinking marked the end of an era. Many people today view the sinking as simply a case of bad luck or even bad technology. At the time of the tragedy, blame was laid on the brittle metal used for the hull. However the author makes a very strong case arguing the ship was flawed early in the planning stage by decisions to place the grandeur of the first class passengers’ experience above basic safety design. The author points out how the luxurious design compromised safety at several points in the planning stage.



Today’s IT industry has not had this kind of “Titanic-like” disaster. However there have been many serious accidents caused by faulty planning, programming and execution. In this book the examples of IT disaster fall more into the hiccup category as

opposed to “Titanesque”. The author documents the numerous mistakes made in planning and operating the vessel, all leading to make the collision with the iceberg and decisions made after the collision as truly catastrophic on the fateful night. On the IT side the author presents many valid arguments for looking ahead and what to watch out for in planning and testing IT projects. Risk prioritization is an integral part of IT, as something will inevitably go wrong. Those who believe technology is infallible, however frequently ignore this “given”.

The book is well organised. Throughout the nine chapters the author covers the project cycle from “initial big idea” to maiden voyage. The major topics are developing and mapping IT strategies, constructing your goods, planning and testing your plan, delivering goods, dealing with the unexpected when it happens and conducting the post-mortem. The appendices support the book with additional information and one IT case study.

Who might benefit from the Book:

The publisher has targeted the book at senior level IT management. However, readers with little IT experience gain insights into why IT projects get into trouble. It is an interesting and enjoyable read. Ordering information about this book can be found at www.mmpubs.com.

René Le Bel has over twenty years experience in educational publishing. He is the publisher for a secondary science schoolbook company in Texas.

The full review was first published in PM World Today - December 2006 (Vol. VIII, Issue 12) "Connecting the World of Project Management". PM World Today is a free monthly publication of [pmforum.org](http://www.pmforum.org) - <http://www.pmforum.org>

Published with the permission of PMForum in the March / April 2007 Edition of ProjectNet Magazine.

©This Book Review cannot be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the relevant authority at the original publisher, PMForum. Contact the Editor at editor@pmforum.org.

