

## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***THE POWER OF ONE: You're the Boss***

Author: **Kathleen Brush**

Publisher: Kathleen Brush

Format: Soft cover; 295 pages

Publication Date: 2012 ISBN: 978-1479380459

Reviewer: ***Nazanin Mehrooz, PMP***

Review Date: December 2013

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### Introduction to the Book

Being an effective boss requires the right balance of hard, soft and composite skills. The book shares how an imbalance of one or more of these skills can cause leadership failure and negatively impact the employees behaviorally. How to build sufficient skills around each of these key leadership areas to prevent negative impact is the goal of this book.

### Overview of Book's Structure

The book contains 3 sections:

1. Organizational Behavior/Motivation: addresses motivation from multiple views including unlocking the mysteries behind performance issues, leadership skills, wiring of employees, organizational factors, external forces, states and sources of power.
2. Strategy: focuses on the process and hierarchy, trends which are data driven based on the right parameters, focus on lifecycle phases for making timely strategy goals and also covers essentials topics which require attention when attempting to secure a global context.
3. The Other Skills: include topics such as finance and accounting, economics, marketing, laws/regulations, information technology and quality management. Developing process, corporate governance without losing focus on integrity were also useful topics covered in this section.

### **Highlights: What's New in this Book**

- The section covering other essential skills emphasized the importance of understanding economics, laws/regulations and also augmenting management skills to a more global context is a new area which often leaders fall short on understanding and adequately managing opportunity and treats risks. Some leaders operate without adequate investigation on these topics and learn the lessons too late in a project lifecycle to be able to correct the damage done.
- Diving into the global context requires understanding of trade-offs around decisions and impact on your organization success. Some areas where leaders should strive to better understanding are choices around using inexpensive labor versus unreliable logistics and labor laws, stability of banking and finances and differences in HR policies and variations of economic laws. Often these decisions are made without adequate analysis of the risks which also negatively impact projects.
- Key expectations of any leader to building necessary skills around are:
  - Guiding their teams
  - Motivating their teams
  - Leading through the present and towards a future which is more promising
  - Perpetually endeavoring to maximize stakeholder value
  - Developing marketable products
  - Persistently building, selling and supporting innovative products and processes
  - Identifying and targeting attractive markets
  - Continuously improving quality and productivity
  - Driving growth and profitability

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

Kathleen Brush does a great job of sharing several examples of how ineffective some leaders can be when missing one or more of the required traits. Weak leadership traits around these areas can lead to undesirable behavioral challenges in teams and impact productivity negatively. The suggestions provided may be minor, but when combined with the essential skills can provide significant results.

I also valued the coverage of other essential skills. Often a manager is promoted for being a good individual contributor in their own discipline and they struggle with other management tasks. Sufficient training to better address opportunities and threats associated with industry and environmental forces is essential and often costs less than having an ineffective leader who can't address these in their role.

The strategy section was also valuable because it raised areas where managers often fail to guide their teams effectively. Understanding industry and recent environmental forces in the market is necessary to capture the right vision. Some leaders skip the vision and mission definition steps of the strategy process which can result in focusing on the wrong goals. Doing a SWOT analysis using relevant and reliable data can improve the end-results and valuable insight into understanding strengths, weaknesses, environmental opportunities and threats early in the process.

The other skills section provides managers with key areas where improvements may be needed after reviewing and understanding financial accounting statements, budgets and accounting reports. Many managers struggle with understanding the differences between cash flow with net income, gross margins with profit margins and how to manage inventory, depreciation and budgets. This section covers these concepts adequately and provides directions on how to interpret the data on these financial statements without requiring an accounting degree.

### **Shortfalls: What was Missing?**

The first section seemed to provide more guidance a leader in ways to achieve better motivational behavior in teams. Section two seemed to cover a higher level view of strategic process and how to use tools like SWOT analysis and life cycles. While it's important to have the right data collected to drive effective results from utilizing these tools, the challenge is how to utilize the right market research and filter through these to capture the right focus topics. I would have liked to see more guidance around how to sort through this data to ensure the right focus areas with some sort of questionnaire as a supporting tool.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

Any leader who wishes to improve their skill set and be more effective at meeting expectations to successfully lead people, processes and strategic goals would benefit from reading this book.

As a PM, I benefited from reading this book by learning more about adding more positive behavioral motivators and comparing my own behavior against the good and bad leadership lists. Seeing how each of these traits impact team members is the first step in understanding how to drive changes to more positive behavior motivators.

The information on the wiring of employee motivation by understanding the motivational type, current needs, psychological preferences and cultural programming was very valuable to understand how to bring out the best in any team. This is valuable information for PM and functional managers to maximize productivity. The check list of questions to debug motivational problems improves the reader's ability to isolate and address the source of productivity issues more effectively.

## Conclusion

This book covers the necessary skills a boss requires to be effective in their role. These include the right balance of hard, soft and composite skills. Having great skills in one area and applying them consistently can result in promotions, but often newly promoted managers doesn't have adequate training to better address all the challenges in their role. These can range from behavioral aspects like motivating the staff, demonstrating positive leadership traits and eliminating undesirable ones. It also requires understanding of the industry, market trends and environment to formulate the right vision and strategy. These traits plus an understanding of financial indicators of your organizational performance provides the essential skill required to hold the power of one as an effective boss.

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*The Power of One*, by Kathleen Brush, published by Kathleen Brush; 2012, ISBN 978-1479380459; 295 pages, soft cover. More at <http://www.kathleenbrush.com>

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of cooperation between the publisher, PM World and the Dallas Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI Dallas Chapter – [www.pmidallas.org](http://www.pmidallas.org)). Publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published by PM World in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. In addition to the free book, PMI members can receive PDUs for PMP recertification. PMI Dallas Chapter members are all mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact [editor@pmworldjournal.net](mailto:editor@pmworldjournal.net).*

## About the Reviewer



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Nazanin Mehrooz studied software engineering and is a certified project manager. She is currently consulting as a program manager in the transportation industry and manages a suite of related software projects. She has extensive work experience in the defense, telecom and environmental industries with special focus on project development, delivery and operational phases. She has lead mid-sized teams as an IT Application Manager and Service Delivery Management in the telecom industry. Nazanin is an active volunteer for the PMI Dallas Chapter (Marketing group) and PMI Fort Worth Chapter as the email manager.

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