

## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Project Management Leadership, Building Creative Teams***

Authors: **Rory Burke and Steve Barron**

Publisher: **John Wiley and Sons**

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Reviewer: **Scott Lissit, PMP**

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**Purpose:** A comprehensive guide to the human side of project management, with a goal to help one master the fundamental knowledge needed to become a project leader.

**Audience:** Project managers who are interested in understanding and applying the principles of leadership on their projects in order to improve team performance and results; teachers of project management skills.

**Availability:** Widely distributed, also available as an e-book

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Are leaders born or made? This is one of the age-old questions still being debated today. While this book isn't going to give a definitive answer, it does provide a comprehensive introduction to the skills needed by project managers to lead projects effectively. So in that respect the book clearly takes a position that leadership can indeed be learned and eventually mastered in a project setting.

The book focuses on the personal skills needed to lead teams successfully. This topic is of particular interest to me because it goes beyond the basic PM tool box (schedules, project plans, etc.) and gets to the heart of what really matters on projects - inspiring team members to do their best. It also differentiates between leadership skills and management skills (Chapter 10), and discusses how to move between them to achieve the balance needed on projects.

One of the interesting facets of the book is the international flavor provided by the two authors, who have experience in Europe, South Africa, the Middle East and the USA. They include references and definitions throughout the book from the APM BoK (the Association of Project Managers Body of Knowledge) from the UK, in addition to the PMBOK. This adds new perspectives and definitions beyond those typically seen by project managers in the US.

For example, the PMBOK defines leadership as: "Developing a vision and strategy, and motivating people towards achieving it." But the APM BoK adds "to align others towards a common purpose, and to empower and inspire people towards achieving project success."

The book is organized into three sections. The first introduces leadership skills and styles such as governance, ethics, leadership behaviors, emotional intelligence, power to influence and working with stakeholders. The second addresses project teams including roles, development phases, coaching and mentoring. And the third covers key topics related to project management competence including negotiation skills, motivating, problem solving, conflict resolution and facilitation. I liked that each chapter begins with a list of learning objectives, similar to those found in training courses, which allows the reader to easily see whether or not the chapter will be of interest to them.

One of the topics which I liked the most was the extensive use of the project lifecycle introduced in Chapter 1. It goes beyond the lifecycle presented in the PMBOK to include Vision, Requirements and Feasibility phases in addition to the standard Planning and Execution phases. And I found it particularly effective that the authors explained several topics by overlaying them on the project lifecycle, showing what specific behaviors are needed during each project phase (ex: "Power and Influence vs The Project Lifecycle" in Chapter 7).

Another topic which I enjoyed was the discussion of transactional leaders vs transformational leaders introduced in Chapter 1. The former are concerned with setting objectives, responsibilities and developing a structure for the team to achieve the project goals. But the latter are visionary leaders who excite and convert potential followers, helping them to transform themselves and achieve more than what was intended or even thought possible.

The only downside I saw was that the book introduces so many different theories on leadership behaviors that I was sometimes left wondering which one to apply in actual project situations. For example, it discusses Emotional Intelligence (Goleman), 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey), the Change Transition Process (Ross), Action-Centered Leadership (Adair) and much more. While the authors do make an effort to tie many of these to project situations, some sections read more like a reference guide to popular techniques.

In conclusion, this is an excellent book for project managers who want to learn more about how to build project teams and motivate people to do their best. Many PMs realize at some point in their career that project success in today's complex world requires more than just mastering the basic tools such as schedules and budgets, but also involves understanding and applying the people skills which can be so challenging but also so rewarding.

*Project Management Leadership, Building Creative Teams, by Rory Burke and Steve Barron, published by John Wiley and Sons, ISBN 978-1-118-67401-7; \$40.00 USD; 384 pages, soft cover. More information at <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1118674014.html>*

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of cooperation between the publisher, PM World and the Portland, Oregon, USA Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI Portland Chapter – [www.pmi-portland.org](http://www.pmi-portland.org)). Publishers provide the books to the PMI Portland Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. Reviewers can keep the books and claim PDUs for PMP recertification. PMI Portland Chapter members are generally 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) or [asst\\_newsletter\\_dir@pmi-portland.org](mailto:asst_newsletter_dir@pmi-portland.org).*

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## About the Reviewer



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Scott Lissit, PMP is a Senior Project Manager at the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) in Oregon, USA, under contract from David Evans & Associates, where he manages large engineering projects. Scott has been a PMP since 2005.