

## Book review

**Paul D. Gardiner, *Project Management: A Strategic Planning Approach*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, ISBN 0 333982223, Price £28.99, Pages 322**

Mr. Gardiner has written this book for an eclectic audience that ranges from novice and student Project Manager, to Educationalist, and practised Business Managers who may be delivering or seeking theoretical, practical or contextual insights into Strategic Planning from a Project Management perspective. He has attempted to link existing bodies of knowledge with contemporary case studies demonstrating *Insights from Industry, Project Management in Action, Critical Considerations and Key Concepts* that underscore thematic chapter *Learning Objectives*. There is a companion website that, like the book, tests learning and application, provides links and has downloadable tools and templates.

Each chapter is complete in itself dealing with contextual, organisational, tactical and operational issues pertaining to the project life cycle, tools, techniques and methods. Chapters are sequential with a logical flow incorporating structural (organisational and hierarchical), process (methodology), procedural (documents, tools, and techniques) and output/outcomes. Mr. Gardiner is an educationalist and must be commended for identifying the Learning Objectives of each chapter and seeking evidence of learning through questions, comments, concept clarification, etc., throughout and in particular at the end of each chapter. However, the book reads as if a lecturer is delivering the material, it is not written with the reader or target audience in mind in structure or content.

Mr. Gardiner has good awareness of his Business, Project Management and Information Technology community and is generous and expansive in his links to other sources (texts and websites and organisations, etc.), where the reader can channel his learning. Some excellent references and citations have been used but sadly from a researcher's, practitioner's, student's and teacher's perspective some of these are not the most recent editions and some web addresses listed are personalised and subject to change. He is to be commended for his depth and breadth of contacts made available.

I found the case studies extremely interesting and well documented, and it would have been very interesting to apply these from a centralized base where each chapter is

supported by their lessons learned, other anecdotes, references, and bodies of knowledge, etc., with practice routinely and systematically leading and challenging theory.

Specifically, methods, tools and techniques are described as part of accepted practice yet are presented with little or no debate regarding their relevance; and on occasion appear stand alone and optional with life cycle aspects of integration and their multidimensional matrix management missing. Information and data follow formula that are neither innovative; nor are they presented in any real depth for the student seeking more, and at times are presented from the too superficial perspective that the reader unaccustomed to Project Management misses their intent and importance and cannot discriminate and discern their value.

A significant visual distraction to concentration concerns page layout. Inserts related to the contemporary theory and practice issues seem randomised, intrusive, some are inverted, some in grey shading, some on adjacent pages, font size varies as does margin justification. Perhaps the main issue is that the print is small, very little "white space" between segments is available giving an impression of clutter and cramped information leaving little visual respite for the reader and confusion as to where to direct visual attention. The text directs attention where relevant but sometimes that is overleaf.

If the book were intended to introduce Project Management as a method of doing Business Planning better it has merit, but should determine at what level to pitch this, etc., at concept or detail; it should understand its own limits and offer more detailed resources, information and references to the reader if he wishes. The title speaks of Strategic Planning but does not clearly define this or where Project Management sits in Strategic Planning with dynamic and systemic "bio psycho social" factors related to the geopolitical, cultural and socio-economic considerations and dynamics.

The price of £28.99 is value for money as there is a lot of pertinent and relevant commentary, case study and content within it that is enduring but it needs to determine its target audience and pitch its numerous and well sourced information to them. There is probably more value in the content than the price indicates but finding it is hard.

Sarah Ross

*PMP®*, *PRINCE2 Practitioner*, *ICC*, *MPM (UTS)*.