

# Fundamentals of Project Management, 3rd edition, J. Lewis, AMACOM, 2007

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## ***Book Review by John Guarniere***

***John wrote this review for Dr. Gary Klein's Project Management class at UCCS University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado.***

In *Fundamentals of Project Management*, James Lewis introduces some interesting concepts that add value to project management and to the goal of making projects successful. I will briefly review a few of these concepts to provide a feel for the book's value. James Lewis founded The Lewis Institute project management consulting firm, and his book is published by a division of the American Management Association.

In one chapter, Lewis discusses the concepts of project control and evaluation. He subscribes to the accepted definition of control, in which actual project progress is compared to the project plan for determining when to take corrective action. Lewis stresses that information is the essence of project control, rather than management power. In this regard, information is critical for identifying when project deviations occur and for analyzing the effectiveness of project control actions. The importance of a management information system thus becomes self evident.

Lewis believes that individual team member control is necessary for achieving project control. However, he stresses that control at the individual level does not equate with micromanagement. Rather, enabling team members to perform their duties independently (self control) creates the foundation for project control provided that certain conditions are met. Some of these conditions include clear task definitions and adequate resources for the team members, regular progress feedback, and the provision for team members to take corrective action.

In another chapter, Lewis discusses the concepts of team management. He starts the discussion by addressing best practices for team building, since effective teams must be built from the ground up. The members working on a project first perform as a group, rather than as a team. The difference between group and team performance is that of commitment to the project. Group members are certainly involved in the project activities, but they are not committed. When the members start acting as a cohesive unit and demonstrate a solid commitment to the project, a highly effective team is formed. Such team performance is essential to the realization of successful projects.

Lewis also talks about the issues that teams face during the course of their projects. He states that these issues fall into four classifications: goals, roles and responsibilities, procedures, and relationships. When it comes to goals, roles and responsibilities, open communication without intimidation is the key to alleviating problems. Lewis makes an interesting point, that project managers should express their project questions and concerns to the team. By projecting a sense of fallibility, open communication is fostered between project managers and team members. Procedural issues are related to the problems that teams face with work processes. Lewis states that as teams become absorbed on simply completing the work at hand, they do not consider how the work is being performed. Regular process review is necessary to improve established processes and project performance. Relationship conflicts round out the issues that project teams face. Lewis believes that such team member conflicts typically result from the lack of interpersonal skills. He suggests that training team members in interpersonal skills can reduce relationship conflict and improve the likelihood of project success.

Furthering the discussion of project team management, Lewis discusses the process of team development. Lewis first described the basics of the most popular development definition as covered in Gray/Larson (forming, storming, norming, and performing). He did not include adjourning in this description. Lewis then shared his thoughts on the leadership qualities required to guide teams through the development stages. In the forming stage the team members look for structure and solid leadership, whether this leadership comes from the program manager or from someone else. It is therefore important for the leader to exhibit a directive style of leadership in this stage. In the storming stage, the team members become somewhat anxious about their responsibilities. During this stage, the program manager must exhibit an influential leadership style to persuade the team that it is heading down the right path. The members start to perform more as a team rather than as individuals in the norming stage. This allows the program manager to lead in a participative style by becoming involved in activities and decisions. Finally, in the performing stage the team acts as a cohesive unit and becomes highly effective in its tasks. The team's independence at this stage enables a delegative style of leadership, as the program manager can concentrate on project analysis and future plans.

In the final chapter of *Fundamentals of Project Management*, Lewis suggests ways for improving project management effectiveness at any company. One interesting suggestion is that problems should not be tackled in their order of difficulty (Pareto principle), but instead in an order that guarantees small victories. Since the most difficult problems are likely quite complex and require much time to resolve, a team can quickly become pessimistic without any successes. Another interesting suggestion is that participants involved on critical tasks should be physically located together. This concept can increase team efficiency by improving communication and by minimizing the extent of non-critical task distractions. Another suggestion is to select individuals to perform as champions in particular project management areas, such as scheduling input or earned value calculations. Finally, Lewis suggests pushing toward the project team management structure and notifying functional managers that their primary purpose is to serve projects. Further supporting this structure, Lewis suggests establishing a project management function that would be dedicated to project management improvement throughout the organization. These suggestions, plus many others, are aimed at improving the chance of success in any managed project.

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Editor's Note: Thanks John! Readers, if you would like to make a comment to review author John Guarniere, or add a comment to this page in the website, [contact us!](#)