Perfect Phrases for Project Management
by Helen S. Cooke and Karen Tate. McGraw-Hill, 2012. $12.00 paperback.
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Book Review by Stacy Goff

Background
Just off the press and given to me by Helen at the 2012 University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) PM Symposium last August, I have carted this small book all over the world as spare-time reading for the last year. Because Helen will be speaking at this year's UTD Symposium, I figured I should publish my review.

Audience
Beginners in project management can gain from this book. Even old dogs in pm practice can see new tricks. Professionals who work with project managers, such as proposal managers, engineers and architects can benefit. So can functional managers, project sponsors, construction project owners, clients of projects, and comedians. Just kidding about the comedians, but who knows? Maybe your spouse will get a kick out of it.

Structure
The book is organized according to Duncan's Process Groups. Some people mistakenly use these as project phases. Penalize this highly regarded team ten points for falling into that trap. In typical bodies of knowledge, these process groups are collections of process knowledge **that recur** in projects, phases or stages, or even in activities. That aside, within each the book's process groups, there is a series of relevant topics; for each topic you will find as many as a dozen tips, insights and communication sound-bites.

Usefulness
It can be fun to read the work of experienced project managers and consultants. One can see which parts of our discipline they focus upon, and where they add their value. Ms. Cook and Tate show great breadth and grasp of key issues that will serve as useful advice for new and intermediate project managers, and in some cases offer a different insight for advanced practitioners and senior consultants.

In some places the authors found the need to offer more than short phrases, so they could maintain their relevance and usefulness. With the exception of the process groups as phases concern raised above, this book is useful, a bit revealing (about the authors'areas of expertise), and fun. It might be especially useful to get the eBook version (the Kindle Edition is currently available on Amazon for $8.69, and the McGraw-Hill Publishing website offers a Digital Edition), just so you can do keyword searches in the content.

Limitations and Strengths
Of course, a book, by itself, cannot make you a competent project manager. And you have to buy into this team's favorite tools, such as the often-misused SMART Objectives. These were originally from Drucker, and used in general management, where the T stood for Timebound. However, in projects, malpractice occurs when the project manager or manager thinks Timebound means good objectives have deadlines.

Overall, this fun little book appears to combine as much as 40 years of success, insights and experience into an easily-accessible format. This $12 book is much cheaper than hiring a consultant to gude you. Oh wait! I didn't say that!

Overall, we like this book, and recommend it!

Editor's Note: Readers, if you would like to make a comment about this review, please contact us!

Overall Rating: 4 (out of 5): ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ Stacy Goff.