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**Clayton, Mike – How To Manage a Great Project**

Pearson, 2014, [Business] Grade ★★★★★

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This is what the title implies, a step-by-step guide on how to plan and execute a project. With flattening organizations and a quickly changing business environment more work is done in projects and the value of project management skills are increasing. The audience for the book is the prospective project manager.

Mike Clayton is a UK author and public speaker who spent the 1990's as a project manager at Deloitte and since 2002 gives coaching seminars for project managers. His books cover subjects like negotiation, influence, risk management, personal effectiveness, time and stress management, professional development and project management. The thesis is that "*when you have the right process and follow it diligently, you will put yourself in the best position to succeed.*" Clayton is obviously motivated by teaching and the book does its job with excellence but I think the reader should do more than just read it from cover to cover to benefit the most. More on that later.

The content is a "how to" manual on managing the four stages of a project; defining it, planning it, delivering on the plan and closing the project. After a preceding introduction that discusses projects and their management in more general terms, the stages form the basis for the 8 chapters of the book. A worry with the focus on strict adherence to a set process is that the content might feel ridged. This is not the case. With a long practical experience the author designs tools like contingency planning, risk management, change mechanisms, scheduled go/no go decisions and reviews into the process to allow for the complexities of a live project. With the book's heavy emphasis on planning the author also stresses the importance of structure in projects.

An introductory "how to" manual is hardly read for its intellectual stature and wit but for its practical use. With a long experience of leading projects and coaching of project managers Clayton has chiseled out what is really important for project management and he delivers a useful book. It is easily read as the language contains very little project jargon and there isn't too much text on each page. While the focus is on process the author is very open with that the main task of the project manager often is to juggle the tasks of the process with the feelings and wishes of people. *How To Manage a Great Project* was published in 2014 and even if this was somewhat before today's ridiculous hype around "agile" projects the book might still have commented on the concept.

Would I recommend the book? Yes, clearly. However, the plot of the book is chronological while in projects many processes run in parallel. At some places I felt that this simultaneousness could have been emphasized as the reader otherwise might question the order of the topics described. To put the contents of the book to its best use I would recommend the reader and soon-to-be project manager to re-write his own short version of it where he takes out the parts that is relevant to him and the type of project he is to lead, where he perhaps switches the order of topics so they feel natural to him and so on.

For the experienced project manager executing large scale projects involving large teams and multiple stakeholders there are other more in-depth texts on project management but as a start for anyone that is about to manage smaller projects this is an excellent introductory guide – especially if the reader takes control of the content and makes it his own.

Mats Larsson, July 15, 2017