The Standard for Project Management
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Introduction

This "book" *The Standard for Project Management* is in fact the first part of a dual publication – an all in one. The second part is a much larger "book" titled: *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge PMBOK Guide Seventh Edition*. How do I know they are separate "books"? Because even though they are both in the same publication, they have two separate "Table of Contents" and two sets of page numbers under two different "covers". For convenience in subsequent discussion, I will refer to the first book as the "Standard" and the second book as the "Guide".

To add further confusion for the first-time reader, the cover of the publication shouts PMBOK Guide first and the Standard second, while the next page displays the Standard first and the Guide second. And indeed, that is the way the two sets of content are presented. That makes referencing something of a challenge. I could prefix the page numbers of the first book with an "S" for "Standard" and the second with a "G" for "Guide" but I prefer to be more pragmatic using a simple [A] & [B].

I will discuss this second part in a separate review. Meantime, here are my Book Review comments on Book [A]: *The Standard for Project Management.*

The publication starts with a lengthy **Notice** that explains how the content has been assembled, but disavows any responsibility for the contents in these words:[1]
> "PMI disclaims and makes no guaranty or warrantee, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of any information published here in, and disclaims and makes no warranty that the information in this document will fulfill your particular purposes or needs."

In short, I would say that this publication is not authoritative.

There then follows several pages of *Preface* and *Conclusion* in which the significant changes in both books are explained, summarized and seemingly justified. In my view, it appears that the two original books have been completely re-crafted to appeal to management generally, with senior general management in mind in particular. Thus the publication becomes, or appears to be, more of a marketing document addressing the public at large rather than a comprehensive and useful reference document for individual project management members as was originally intended.

In a section titled *SUMMARY OF CHANGES*[2] we learn:
> "Since 1987, *The Standard for Project Management* has represented a process-based standard."

Stop right there! This statement is completely untrue!

The "Guide"[3] so called was first published in 1996. There was indeed a first document published in 1987, but it was simply titled "Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) of the Project Management Institute". To the contrary, it was a deliberate mapping of the knowledge territory claimed

by the Project Management Institute of the day with a view to establishing the basis of a profession. This was important because there were, at the time, other societies anxious to claim the same turf and, accordingly tried to attack PMI's legitimacy. The (original) "PMBOK" publication was, and still is, a statement of professional domain.[4] It was never a "Guide".

As I stated at the time:[5]
"A project management profession, united across the many industries and technologies that use the concepts documented in this PMBOK, has a tremendous potential for improving the efficiency with which resources are used and hence the quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of our society. This unity can only be achieved through effective communications based on a mutual understanding of a documented and accepted body of knowledge that serves as the basis for developing a profession."

About the authors

The contributors to this edition were no doubt many and various. However, the actual writers of this book [A] are not separately identified from the list of around 770 contributing volunteers and 7 staff responsible for the two books together.

Book [A] Structure

The contents of this book [A], *The Standard for Project Management,* is now set out under just three chapter headings, containing a total of 20 sub-headings plus its own Index. The chapter headings are as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION
    1.1   Purpose of *The Standard for Project Management*
    1.2   Key Terms and Concepts
    1.3   Audience for this Standard
2. A SYSTEM FOR VALUE DELIVERY
    2.1   Creating Value
    2.2   Organizational Governance Systems
    2.3   Functions Associated with Projects
    2.4   The Project Environment
    2.5   Product Management Considerations
3. PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES
    3.1   Be a Diligent, Respectful, and Caring Steward
    3.2   Create a Collaborative Project Team Environment
    3.3   Effectively Engage with Stakeholders
    3.4   Focus on Value
    3.5   Recognize, Evaluate, and Respond to System Interactions
    3.6   Demonstrate Leadership Behaviors
    3.7   Tailor Based on Context
    3.8   Build Quality into Processes and Deliverables
    3.9   Navigate Complexity
    3.10 Optimize Risk Responses
    3.11 Embrace Adaptability
    3.12 Enable Change to Achieve the Envisioned Future State
    References

INDEX (for book [A] only)

Excluding the publication's introductory pages, this book A by itself, but including its own Index, has a total of 67 pages. Appendices, list of Figures and Tables, a Glossary, Common Acronyms and Definitions are all included in Part [B] of the book: *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge PMBOK Guide Seventh Edition*.

What we liked

After getting past a confusing *Preface* discussed later, we are presented with a *Table of Contents*[6] that is specific to the *Standard* only, but which starts later with Chapter 1 on page A1.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter opens with:[7]
> "*The Standard for Project Management* identifies project management principles that guide the behaviors and actions of project professionals and other stakeholders who work on or are engaged with projects,"

So this book [A][8] is all about the behaviors of the project manager and project team being presented as a set of principles. This apparent change in focus compared to previous publications is subsequently referred to as a "progression of the profession". Then follows a list of ten terms and their respective definitions that are presented "to provide context for the content in this standard."[9]

I was pleased to see that by implication this list provides a clear picture of the ***full scope of project management.***[10] For the record, the essential "Delivery Components" on the list are presented here:[11]
> "Outcome; Portfolio; Product; Program; Project; Project management; Project manager; Project team: System for value delivery; and Value."

This list is followed by ***Audience for this standard***[12] that describes an impressive list of people who, as stakeholders,[13] are expected to pay attention and who are involved in project work[14] one way or another.

Chapter 2: A System for Value Delivery

This chapter introduces five Sections, the first of which is 2.1 *Creating value*. This section briefly describes how value for "organizations and their stakeholders" is created within various corporate organizational arrangements through the application of the larger scope of project management just discussed. What we have is a much larger vision of project management than hither-to-for. This larger project management scope is collectively referred to as the "delivery components". The section goes on to describe some various ways in which these delivery components may be arranged to enable "value delivery" as seen from the perspective of "Operations".[15]

It follows from this is that the idea of "a system for value delivery" is a reference to what is better known, amongst the project management population at large, as the "project life span". The authors go further by pointing out that this internal Value Delivery environment itself exists within a larger external environment, "which includes the economy, the competitive environment, legislative constraints, etc."[16] This is further elaborated in Section 2.4 – The Project Environment. I suspect that these explanations will provide many project managers with a much better understanding of their actual working environment, and the inevitable source of some of their frustrations in managing their projects.

It is probably worth noting that the delivery of value that we are talking about here is having a project deliver an outcome that has intrinsic value. In other words, most projects create a means to an end, and not an end in itself. Or even more specifically, if you are looking for the actual benefits, financial or otherwise, you have to use or apply the project's outcome or product to garner those benefits. The use of that product is the job of Operations and not the role of the project manager. It is true that some project managers go on to generate benefits from a project's outcome, but at that point they would be doing the job of an Operations Manager.

Why is this distinction important? Because the outlook, skill sets and temperaments required for the two types of work are quite different. Few people are suited to both. The former type soon get frustrated working in an operations environment while the latter get frustrated by the stress involved in managing a project – especially if it is fast moving and the actual work is changing all the time.

The Chapter concludes with some useful comments on "Product Management Considerations". Here, the authors state that:[17]

> "The disciplines of portfolio, program, project and product management are becoming more interlinked. While portfolio, program, and product[18] management are beyond the scope of this standard, understanding each discipline and the relationships between them provides a useful context for projects whose deliverables are products."

Chapter 3: PM Principles

Quite some time ago,[19] I wrote a paper on First Principles of Project Management[20] in which I lamented the absence thereof in the project management literature. In that paper, I set about repairing that omission by presenting, after much discussion amongst PMI colleagues, a set of seven "First Principles". These principles are identified as "first" because we believe that they are foundational to the practice of effective and successful project management, and each are carefully justified in the associated text of the day. Here they are for reference:

1. The Commitment Principle
2. The Success Principle
3. The Tetrad Trade-off Principle
4. The Strategy Principle
5. The Management Principle
6. The Single-Point Responsibility Principle
7. The Cultural Environment Principle.

So, with some excitement, I looked forward to reading Chapter 3, which is by far the largest chapter in the book [A]. Regrettably, I was sadly disappointed.

Downside

This whole publication starts out with a **Preface**[21] that presents a couple of paragraphs dedicated to the *Standard*, followed by a lengthy commentary on the *Guide*.[22] It ends with a brief reference to the *Standard* in its **Conclusion**.[23] This states in part:[24]

> "*The Standard for Project Management* and the *PMBOK Guide – Seventh Editio*n responds to all four elements that stakeholders have emphasized in their feedback."

These four elements are presented as:[25]

1. Maintain and enhance the credibility and relevance of the *PMBOK Guide*.
2. Improve the readability and usefulness of the *PMBOK Guide* while avoiding overstuffing it with new content.
3. Sense stakeholder information and content needs and provide vetted supplemental content supporting practical application.
4. Recognize that there is continued value for some stakeholders in the structure and content of previous editions so that any shifts enhance without negating value.

From this we may conclude that only elements 3 and 4 are relevant to the *Standard*.

Under a Summary of Changes we learn that:[26]

> "While effective in supporting good practice, process-based standards are prescriptive by their very nature. With project management evolving more rapidly than ever before, the process-based orientation of past editions cannot be maintained in a manner conducive to reflecting the full value delivery landscape. Therefore, this edition shifts to a principle-based standard to support effective project management and focus more on intended outcomes rather than deliverables."

This statement leaves me highly confused as to whether the writer is referring to the *Standard* as written or to the *Guide*, or perhaps to both.

Chapter 3 – Project Management Principles

As noted on the previous page, none of the text in Chapter 3 comes anywhere close to my expectations of what a standard for the profession of project management should look like. In my view, a proper standard would reflect the essence of this profession that distinguishes it from any other profession. In fact, that was what the PMBOK was all about way back in the 1980s. I know because I invented the name "PMBOK".

And it was tough going because at the time other societies were trying to claim the same intellectual turf. But here in this book [A]'s chapter clearly titled *Project Management Principles*, the reader is treated to a long homily on the proper behavioral aspects of managing a team. As a ***Standard*** for our project profession, this is the very sort of thing we were trying to steer clear of, a half century ago.

The real basics of our project management profession are set out in the original PMBOK document. This document lists the Performance Domains as: Scope, Quality, Time, Cost, Risk, Human Resources, and Communications. Each of these Performance Domains requires specific intellectual knowledge and project experience that is different from one another.

With the exception of Risk, **none of these are described in Chapter 3: Project Management Principles.**

Summary

This book [A]: *The Standard for Project Management* is the first in a publication of two books, the second book [B] being **A PMBOK Guide Seventh Edition**.[27] The second book, Part [B], is much larger and will be reviewed at a later date. Hence, this review is a commentary only of the first book [A].

In the realm of creating good social relations amongst stakeholders, and especially within the project team, it is mostly all good advice that is presented in some detail.[28] Indeed, if you go back to **Book**

Structure discussed earlier, you will see that the itemized list of contents under Chapter 3 is really a list of self-evident obligatory behaviors. These are generally applicable to any sort of teamwork, not necessarily just ***project*** teamwork. Consequently, some of the content appears to be questionable if not actually misleading.

For example: a discourse on "Stewardship" includes a long list of responsibilities without even mentioning the project manager.[29] In another section on "Stakeholders", the text boldly declares: "Engage stakeholders proactively and to the degree needed etc., etc." without mentioning who should be responsible for this onerous task. I personally have experienced the unfortunate consequences of more than one team member doing the "engaging proactively" and consequently arriving at stakeholder interest requests entirely at cross purposes. That took a lot of embarrassing sorting out, including some project rework.

Certainly, there is a lot of good content in this first book of the publication that I have referenced as Book [A]. This is especially true as it recognizes all of *project governance*, *portfolio* and *program* management as a part of the (greater) project management domain. However, sadly it fails in that it overlooks the importance of including any reference to the project management basics of scope, quality, time, cost, contract/procurement and communications managements.

Clearly, the content of Chapter 3 is not the sort of material that needs to be embedded in a formal project management standard. This is especially true when the standard is being lauded as the essence of a professional occupation such as Project Management.

Aside from these serious missteps, the content of this book is well set out and well written in a clear style. It includes numerous call outs and illustrations for clarity. The advice is generally sound, even if inappropriate for the content claimed by book [A]'s title and Introduction, and the consequent confusion probably created by two books being cobbled together into one publication in this fashion.

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[1] *The PMBOK Guide and The Standard for Project Management*, page A-v.

[2] Ibid, page A x

[3] Ibid, under the title: "*A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*"

[4] Indeed, the original PMBOK is still available in PDF form – see this page on my web site: http://www.maxwideman.com/index2.htm

[5] Text abstracted from the FOREWORD.

[6] Ibid, p A-xv

[7] Ibid, pA3

[8] Ibid, i.e. This *Standard*

[9] Ibid, All on pA4

[10] My emphasis.

[11] Ibid, ppA4 & 5

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid, The stakeholders listed are: Project practitioners, consultants, educators, students, sponsors, stakeholders, and vendors.

[14] Ibid, This statement is followed by another list of nine categories ranging from those responsible or accountable for "delivering project outcomes" to anyone "involved in any aspect of the project value delivery chain" on pA5.

[15] Ibid, "Operations" is sometimes referred to as "Business as Usual".

[16] Ibid, p9

[17] Ibid, Section 2.5 on pA18

[18] Ibid, Note! The word is correct as "product" and NOT "project".

[19] Ibid, in November 2003.

[20] See http://www.maxwideman.com/papers/principles/intro.htm

[21] Publication Preface p A-vii

[22] Ibid, under the heading *Customer- and End-user-centered Design*

[23] Ibid, p A-xiv.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid, p A-viii

[26] Ibid, p A-x

[27] Ibid, I have labeled them as [A] and [B] for ease of reference.

[28] Ibid, There are certainly some issues with the contents of Chapter 3, but not relevant for comment here.

[29] Ibid, pA25