

Book reviews

Implementing virtual teams: guide to organizational and human factors

Edwards, A., Wilson, J.R.; *Implementing virtual teams: guide to organizational and human factors*, vol. 1. (1st ed.) 2004, Gower Publishing Company, Hants, England p. 190. ISBN 0-566-08468-6, £49.95, US\$89.95

This first edition book by Edwards and Wilson is a valuable addition to the manager's, project manager's, or team lead's book shelf. It is a helpful guide for those interested in establishing or improving the process and practices used to support virtual teamwork. The book is divided into four main parts consisting of 14 chapters supplemented by four case studies. The case studies address the advantages and disadvantages of virtual teamwork and present the outcomes of the issues the companies faced. This places virtual team issues into the context of real life scenarios for readers. The four parts of the book follow:

- Part 1: When should we use virtual teams?
- Part 2: What teams need to know when implementing virtual teams?
- Part 3: Case studies of virtual teams in industry
- Part 4: Guidelines and tools for virtual team success

Edwards and Wilson take a socio-technical systems approach and emphasize the importance of human factors in virtual teamwork. For example, the authors stress that the technology should support virtual teams instead of the other way around. The book also emphasizes the importance of tacit knowledge sharing. In addition, the authors highlight the importance of management support for virtual teamwork and the need to develop virtual team practices gradually. The book is easy to follow and comprehensive in the material it covers, thus reflecting the extensive experience the authors have in this field.

A feature of the book that makes it very useful for those considering implementing virtual teamwork or those in the midst of virtual team work issues, is that Edwards and Wilson included a number of comprehensive tables that compare and contrast topics or provide the advantages and disadvantages of certain practices or tools. By skimming the list of tables in the Tables of

Contents, readers can quickly find the tables specific to their information needs.

I would suggest that readers begin by reading the conclusion first (pages 181–182) as it summarizes the eight concepts covered in the book. Second, I would suggest that readers review the diagram on page 152 as it depicts the technological, social, and knowledge infrastructures that support virtual teams. Third, readers may want to review the diagram on page 69 which depicts how managing a virtual team involves *sharing, caring, and daring*. In this interesting framework, Edwards and Wilson suggests that virtual teams should: share information, experiences and successes; create trust, team identity, and open communication; and take action by breaking boundaries and being different. This framework underscores the human factors approach which is vital for team success. Those who do not have the time to read the book from cover to cover may want to turn immediately to Part 4 (pages 151–178) next, as it addresses the 12 guidelines and tools for virtual team success.

The 12 guidelines cover basic management practices and involve:

1. Producing personal profiles
2. Developing virtual socialization skills
3. Agreeing on a code of conduct protocol
4. Agreeing on a communication protocol
5. Producing a meetings protocol
6. Generating a project implementation plan
7. Planning for training and competency
8. Producing a reporting and recording protocol
9. Designing a central knowledge base
10. Agreeing on a system for performance measurement
11. Setting a strategy for team evaluation
12. Developing recognition and reward policies and systems

In Chapter 14, Edwards and Wilson present the highlights of two surveys. One survey is on the extent of the use of virtual team working in the UK industry and the other survey is on the utilization and benefits of virtual teams. Although the results are presented in a reader friendly manner, it was disappointing that a

stronger association between the survey results and the specific concepts and practices provided in prior chapters was not evident. I would not recommend this book as an academic textbook or supplement, because it lacks current and classic citations on teamwork and virtual team work, e.g., Tuckman's team building stages. However, this does not detract from the wealth of information provided in the book. In fact, this makes the book easier to read. In addition, the book provides about 30 references to primarily practitioner books and Internet sites.

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Contracting for project management

J. Rodney Turner and others, Gower Publishing Limited, 2003, Price: Not stated, ISBN 0 566 08529 1, p. 143

Professor Rodney Turner is the editor of this book in which several authors who are well known to project managers have contributed chapters: Peter Bailey, Denise Bower, Peter Marsh, Stephen Simister, Fotis Skountzos, and Nigel Smith. They have mostly been involved in the development and teaching of modern project management, both within universities and in practice. Many of these authors were also contributors to the Gower Handbook of Project Management which was first published in 1987 and is now in its third edition. This present book is derived from the handbook, and is only about one sixth of its length, concentrating on the contracting issues.

The basic premise is that few clients of projects have the necessary in-house skills and resources to undertake the management of a project of any reasonable size and must therefore engage the services of consultants or other specialists to guide them (the client) through all the necessary stages from concept, through design and on to financing, planning or other consents, construction or implementation, and finally commissioning and contract settlement.

Basically this book is about many aspects of projects starting with setting up and operating a project management strategy for the project envisaged. The appointment and control of consultants and contractors who are responsible for all the technical aspects of the project form only part of the overall project management responsibility. It is also essential to design and implement the control systems and this may also be part of the remit

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To summarize, the book will have appeal primarily to management practitioners in various industries. The book is easy to read and it is well written. I would definitely recommend this book either to those considering implementing virtual team practices or to those in the process of doing so.

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and the subject of a specific contract with a specialist consultant. Various forms of contract are discussed, including "traditional" forms based on detailed drawings and bills of quantities, "design and build", "turnkey", "management contract", "cost plus", "concession", and "public-private partnership".

Chapters written by individual authors include contracts and payment systems, forms of contract, risk, contract law, partnering, benchmarking, incentive contracts, procurement, bidding, claims, and disputes.

The book is aimed at any industry which is concerned with the design, development and installation of projects of any reasonable size and complexity, usually but not necessarily one-off. Readers will be those individuals within a client, designer or other consultant, contractor or supplier, who are responsible for any aspects of the project. In the form that this book takes, i.e. sectionalised, specific and fairly brief, it will be welcomed by practising professionals and students as a means of achieving familiarity with the application of project management. It will be appropriate for both undergraduate and postgraduate students in any of the relevant subject areas. This book should follow the successful pattern established by its big brother the "Handbook of Project Management" and find its way on to the shelves of both college and company libraries.

Given that each of the main sections has been written by a different author there is not much cross-referencing between sections, and there is a little duplication but this is not important. The layout and style of the book is good, and clearly illustrated with 17 line diagrams and tables.

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