

Lately, the art and science of leading international projects have become a surprisingly hot business subject. The simple reason: domestic project managers, those leading projects with all stakeholders in the same country and culture, are a dying breed. Today's project world is commonly comprised of project resources that are distributed around the globe. It often includes foreign vendors, subcontractors, and/or clients. In fact, it has almost become the norm for today's projects to involve stakeholders in not only more than one but indeed in several different countries.



This trend introduced a bundle of new challenges, including cultural, political, social, economical and legal differences, language pitfalls, logistical complexities, safety and security risks, and many others issues, none of which are particularly easy to master.

In light of this, *Leading Global Projects*, a book authored by two faculty members of one of the best Global Management schools, Thunderbird, has a rather narrow focus: with the exception of a brief overview of project management principles, it concentrates on the impact of (national/local) culture on the project environment and its implications on project leadership practices and behaviors.

The authors wrote it, as the book's subtitle states, a bit tongue-in-cheek, 'For Professional and Accidental Project Leaders.' Maybe they should have added 'who are new to the subject.' Unfortunately, all others might find little value in the several overview sections included in the book.

Project management fundamentals such as 'Clearly communicate key project milestones' or 'Focus on the critical path for time-saving opportunities' are far too mundane to offer much value to the seasoned and even the not-yet-so-seasoned professional. Sadly, this applies to other parts of the book as well. An introduction to cultural norms and differences largely remains anecdotal; a section on influencing and negotiating is long on principles but short on practical advice; a part focusing on change management offers very basic observations.

Both insightful and entertaining, the most valuable part of this work may be a section on *Leading Projects at the Edge of Chaos*, which discusses crucial aspects such as early warning indicators and the importance of simplicity, and warns of the risks of attempting to introduce great project management discipline to an unstable organization.

Someone lacking project management experience may find reading *Leading Global Projects* a useful way to get a few initial pointers. However, there are better project management introductions, better cultural overviews, and better global leadership books out there.

Leadership Crossroads™ 10865-B Hazelhurst Dr. #11793, Houston, TX 77043
469-522-3389

info@leadershipcrossroads.com www.leadershipcrossroads.com

This book review solely represents the opinions and conclusions of its author. It does not claim to be accurate, complete, or objective.

© Leadership Crossroads™, 2011



Lothar Katz is the founder of Leadership Crossroads. He has a wealth of experience in achieving productive cooperation across cultures and driving business success on a global scale.

A seasoned former executive of Fortune 500 company Texas Instruments, he regularly interacted with employees, customers, outsourcing partners, and third parties in numerous countries around the world, including many parts of Asia. Mr. Katz is the author of "Negotiating International Business – The Negotiator's Reference Guide to 50 Countries Around the World".

