

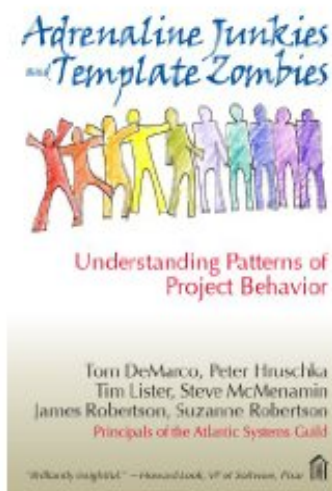


Adrenaline Junkies and Template Zombies

Understanding Patterns of Project Behavior

By Tom DeMarco, Peter Hruschka, Tim Lister, Steve McMenamin, James Robertson, Suzanne Robertson

***Very useful for programme and project managers.
A must-read for CXOs!***



There's no getting around the fact: whilst only some projects are officially declared a failure, a far too large number of projects fail to actually deliver their objectives and even more fail to provide real benefits to the organisation.

Tom DeMarco and his team have probably gained a better understanding of IT projects and their success factors than almost anybody else alive. In all their publications it becomes clear that tools and project guidelines are not the decisive elements in running a successful project, but that it's all about the people involved, their attitudes, mindsets, and culture and how they are managed.

There are certain environments and circumstances, where project teams prosper and deliver excellent results, while there are others, where any project is doomed before it even begins. Experienced project managers as well as team members often have a gut feeling early in the project without being able to point out the issue or to tell what needs to be changed or preserved to make the project a success.

This book aims at raising awareness and helping you to identify the real state of your project team or your whole organisation's capability in delivering projects. While language and examples are taken from the world of IT, the concepts can be applied to any kind of project, as long as it aims to deliver tangible results within a set period of time (which is, according to most textbooks, the very nature of a project).

The authors present 86 typical patterns of project behaviour in a succinct way, so you can easily identify those applying to your own team or organisation. Some of these patterns are virtuous ones. Such as the "Rattle yer dags" pattern, which describes an organisation, where a sensible level of planning is followed by immediate action, where procrastination is virtually unknown, and where importance prevails over urgency.

Other patterns are really negative and you need to stamp them out, wherever you find them. One example is the "Adrenaline Junkies" one, quoted in the title of the book. Although it might be mistaken for the afore mentioned positive behaviour, it actually means



action for action's sake doing always only things that have become critically urgent and then celebrating to have survived somehow by working through nights and weekends.

While much of the book just looks like common sense, it really helps you to look into the mirror without kidding yourself. If you read about a project-killing pattern and you think "Darn, I do that...", just as Howard Look (VP, Software, Pixar Animation Studios) did, you have to take action. Just never allow yourself to say "Yes, but..." followed by excuses why this particular project (or this organisation) needs to be different or why this is all true, but has to be dealt with another day (falling right into the "Mañana" pattern).

We highly recommend project managers and even more so project sponsors and CXOs to read this book and whenever a negative pattern sounds too familiar or a virtuous one too unfamiliar, get in front of the mirror and have an open discussion with yourself – followed by one with your colleagues.

Particularly on a top management level, ask yourself, whether the example you give, the constraints you set, and the resources you provide actually nurture the development of the patterns of project behaviour you would like to see. If not so, it's no use putting pressure on project teams and project managers to change their ways. Quite often, corporate culture dictates project behaviour and a fundamental change is required.

Here's your challenge:

read the pattern descriptions in this book (or some of them) and decide, which of them

- you would like to see in your organisation
- you actually encounter and how strong they are

Then use this insight and start driving your team or organisation towards a more healthy behaviour. If you apply any ideas from the book, we would love to hear from you at various stages of the process and – if you agree – discuss your experience (anonymous or open) in one of our next newsletters. Just drop us a line: contact@iprocon.co.uk

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