

PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

Preparing the fifth edition of this book has reminded us that project management is not just a crucial element in successful software and IT development, but is also a fascinating topic in its own right. It is a intriguing mixture of the technical and the very human, of the rational and also the intuitive. Initially we offered this topic as an ancillary discipline for software engineers and IT practitioners. We have, however, become increasingly convinced that the discipline should have a more central role: that the question of *how* systems are implemented is a vital one to be asked at the same time as that of *what* a system is to do.

Not many software books have lasted as long as this one. Clearly the principles of project management are less transient than those of software design and implementation, which have gone through some very major developments over recent years. However, project management has not been immune from change. One development has been the growth in project management bodies of knowledge such as those of the Project Management Institute (PMI) in the United States and the Association for Project Management (APM) in the United Kingdom. There has also been the development of project management standards such as PRINCE2. These developments are to be welcomed as externalizing and codifying good practice—indeed we have included an appendix on PRINCE2. However, we have resisted becoming a ‘PMI’ book or a ‘PRINCE2’ book. Partly this is because we believe that software project management, while incorporating all the key elements of generic project management, also has to deal with the peculiar problems associated with creating software. These include the relative intangibility of software, its extreme malleability, the intimate relationship it has with the system within which it is embedded, and its sheer complexity. We also wanted to avoid means—end inversion where there was a focus on the recall of specific terminology and procedural detail at the expense of an understanding of underlying concepts and purpose.

One new development that has been taken on board has been the growing awareness that a project is rarely an isolated activity but is almost always part of a broader programme of work aimed at meeting organizational and business objectives. There are also agile approaches, such as extreme programming, which have been a timely reminder that software development is an intensely human activity. In contrast to this emphasis on the highly productive, highly interactive co-located team, there is also a growth of dispersed or virtual projects where all or part of the development team is in another country or even continent. We noted these

developments in previous editions but have expanded their treatment in this one—this greater emphasis on development team dynamics has led to the creation of a chapter devoted solely to these topics.

One major problem has been the conflict between a desire to include all the topics that our reviewers would like to see and the desire for a concise volume that avoids ‘bloating’. Sometimes there are topics and standards which appear to be current and of which one feels people should be aware. On closer inspection, the material for various reasons is less useful or relevant than one hoped. In this edition we have dropped an appendix on the British standard BS6079. This is because the new version of this has become what is essentially a general advisory guide on project management practice. As such it duplicates materials already covered in this book. Some individual topics have also been dropped because it was felt that they really needed a deeper treatment better conveyed by a more specialist publication than this one: the internal rate of return (IRR) in project evaluation and the Hofstede analysis of national cultural characteristics are examples. In general, though, we have erred on the side of caution in retaining topics.

It seems a long time since the first, rather slim, edition published in 1995. As novice authors, Cotterell and Hughes were very indebted to Dave Hatter and Martin Campbell Kelly who had a huge influence on the style of the book. Dave Hatter in particular emphasized the need for each chapter to have clear learning objectives: ideally the reader should finish the chapter feeling they had learnt a new skill. He also instilled the need to explain things clearly—to feel confident in using simple words to explain things that might at first appear complicated. We are aware that we have not always lived up to these values—and have been taken to task by our students and teachers from other institutions who have kindly acted as reviewers. Many of the changes we have made in the new edition are as a result of this process.

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