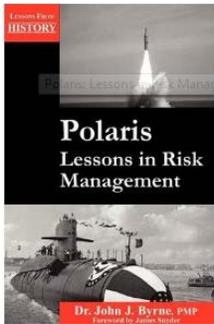


FWPMI Book Review by: Bob Putnam
"Polaris – Lessons in Risk Management"
by Dr. John J. Byrne, PMP

Publisher:	Multi-Media Publications, Inc.
Date of Publication:	2011
Number of pages:	206
Book Club rating:	3.3

Plot Summary:



Risk management is one of the most important practices that a manager can employ to help drive a successful outcome from a project. Good risk management allows organizations to proactively respond to risks. Unfortunately, many managers believe risk management to be too time consuming or too complicated. Some find it to be shrouded in mystery.

This book is designed to demystify risk management, explaining introductory and advanced risk management approaches in simple language. To illustrate the risk management concepts and techniques, this book uses real-life examples from a very influential project that helped change the course of world history -- the project that designed and built the Polaris missile and accompanying submarine launch system that became a key deterrent to a Soviet nuclear attack during the Cold War. The Polaris design and construction project employed many risk management approaches, inventing one that is still widely used today. Containing a foreword by James R. Snyder, one of the founders of the Project Management Institute (PMI), this book is structured to align with the risk management approach described in PMI's the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide)[®].

Book Club Meeting Discussion:

There was much discussion about the Polaris project itself and the scope of how important risk management was. Some thought it lacked plot and reminded them of preparing for the PMP exam. Comparisons were drawn to other projects that are planned or occurred in the past where risk management played an important role (i.e. nuclear power plants, the Big Dig tunnel project in Boston, MA, NASA space projects, etc.). Many never realized how the Polaris Project and the overall importance of the United States Navy Fleet Ballistic Missile fleet played in American history. It was thought that the best method of developing a risk

management plan is by using a small team of major stake holders and outsiders as well to avoid 'groupthink'.

Personal Comments:

A formal well thought out risk management plan is well worth the effort. During my holiday trip back home to Boston, I was reading the book and my uncle walked in and asked what I was reading. When I told him, he informed me that as a young naval officer stationed in Groton, CN in December 1957, he was called into a meeting and was informed that the Submarine they were building the U.S.S. Scorpion was selected for this project and was to be renamed the U.S.S. George Washington. He was on deck when the U.S.S. George Washington was christened and launched in 1959. It was difficult to continue reading as I discovered a wealth of live experiences as we chatted about the project for several hours. He talked about the Risk Management Planning and his part in it.

In my experience, most large projects follow the best practices discussed in the book. I just can't imagine how difficult it must have been to management back in the 50s before there were tools like Microsoft Excel[®].