PMBOK 7th Edition: A deep dive into modern project management

Bio
José Figueiredo is a retired professor at the Industrial Engineering Department of IST, University of Lisbon, and a researcher at Centro de Estudos de Gestão do Instituto Superior Técnico (CEG-IST), Engineering and Management Research Center. He has a background in electronics engineering, an MBA in information management, and a PhD in industrial engineering.

Having always been involved in university teaching, Figueiredo founded two small companies in the information technologies sector. He has taught project management and communication skills for many years and for the last 20 years, ‘Project’, a final project course for the students of the engineering and management master on energy. Lately, his research has expanded from project management and actor network theory (modes of existence) to ethics and engineering education.

Further reading
• Brabandere, LD, (2021) Be Logical, be Creative, Be Critical, Livre en Papier.
PMBOK 7\textsuperscript{th} Edition

A deep dive into modern project management

- The Project Management Institute’s 7\textsuperscript{th} edition of PMBOK introduces a transformative shift, emphasising value-driven approaches, storytelling, and tailored methodologies.
- José Figueiredo, retired professor at the Industrial Engineering Department of IST, University of Lisbon, and a researcher at CEG-IST, explores the significance of tacit knowledge, genuine exploration, and the stewardship attitude in modern project management practices.
- Principles, domains, and effective communication stand as pillars, urging a holistic understanding and continuous improvement in the evolving landscape of project management.

In the ever-evolving landscape of project management, the Project Management Institute (PMI) has orchestrated a paradigmatic transformation, transitioning from the 6\textsuperscript{th} to the 7\textsuperscript{th} edition of the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). While this change breathes fresh air into the field, it prompts us to delve into nuanced aspects, particularly in relation to value and tailoring, stewardship attitude, principles, and domains.

The crux of the paradigm shift lies in principles, values, and domains, urging a departure from prescriptive approaches for maximum effectiveness. The paper advocates for the use of stories, powerful metaphors, and conscientious practice to enhance comprehension and application. Tailoring, a concept endorsed by PMI for projects, should extend to the intrinsic approach and narrative of the guide itself, catering to a clearer and culturally contextual project management audience.

Amidst the transition from industrial to knowledge economies, the significance of project context in project management has surged. Tacit knowledge, crucial in this new era, is cultivated through experiences, reflections, and dynamic group interactions. In his latest paper, José Figueiredo, retired professor at the University of Lisbon and researcher at CEG-IST, Engineering and Management Research Center, encourages a debate-orientated approach, dismissing the politically correct attitude in favour of genuine exploration and learning.

A critical reflection is presented on the term ‘optimisation’, asserting its unsuitability for the project management realm, where the primary goal is effectiveness rather than proving superiority over other solutions. Figueiredo’s paper concludes by focusing on strengthening the stimulating paradigm shift from the 6\textsuperscript{th} to the 7\textsuperscript{th} edition of PMBOK, aiming to contribute to its success by providing clarity and understanding in this transformative journey.

What are ‘value’ and ‘tailoring’?

In Figueiredo’s exploration of PMBOK’s 7\textsuperscript{th} edition (2021), two standout concepts were extracted, value and tailoring. These concepts provide us with a deeper understanding of project management. Let’s weave Figueiredo’s concepts into a narrative that denotes a timeless language rooted in the evolution of mankind and communities. Picture
Figueiredo encourages the project management industry to immerse into the narrative of value and tailoring, unlocking a world where understanding transforms into internalisation and action – a realm where projects thrive.

**Figueiredo believes that ultimately, the integration of principles, aligned domains, and a commitment to continuous improvement stand as pillars for achieving excellence in project management.**

A spectrum: those who cannot read; those who read but don’t comprehend; and the majority who understand but might remain ineffectual. To empower project managers, we must transcend understanding and delve into internalisation, unlocking the realm of tacit, transformative knowledge. Yet, the pinnacle lies in the ability to translate information into action, the essence of value production.

Figueiredo presents a noteworthy transition, encouraging the project management industry to shift from a cost-centric to a value-driven approach. Value, unlike cost, encompasses sustainability, cultural and social dimensions, embodying a systemic behaviour. In his work, *The Basic Laws of Human Stupidity*, Carlo Cipolla, Italian professor specialising in Middle Ages Economics, presents a model that encapsulates the essence of value. As we navigate the pages of PMBOK’s latest edition, Figueiredo encourages us to immerse ourselves into the narrative of value and tailoring, unlocking a world where understanding transforms into internalisation and action – a realm where projects thrive.

Figueiredo uses Eliyahu M Goldratt, author of *Critical Chain*, known for proficiency in both project management and novel writing, as an aid to seamlessly blend inspiration and methodology. Furthermore, Goldratt’s exploration of value in *Necessary but not Sufficient* (2005) delves into emphasising the need for a comprehensive contextual understanding beyond metrics. The key opinion presented here is that in project management, the call is to create value, prioritising good outcomes while acknowledging exceptions. While cost, time, and performance remain crucial, the guiding principle should always be value.

**The right type of attitude**

As humanity traverses economic eras, our relationship with work has transformed (Sennet, 2008). The stewardship attitude emerges as a beacon in this transformative journey, where team members guide and support one another based on their varying levels of expertise. The project management team, through role-playing and collaborative circulation, can foster a stewardship culture, embodying responsibility, logic, creativity, and critical thinking (Brabandere, 2021). This redefined approach stands as a call to wake up, take charge, and collectively shape a more engaged and purposeful future.

**Principles – why are they needed?**

In the evolving landscape of project management, a critical perspective asserts that principles should not be inherently prescriptive but rather serve as gentle guidelines. Internalising these principles, a knowledge-creating activity, requires deep reflection mixed with practice. Despite the introduction of PMBOK 7th edition, processes remain integral to project management, emphasising the need for nuanced understanding. Principles, envisioned as general reference lines for behaviour, offer a unique way of aligning activities with overarching goals.

For example, Figueiredo presents the idea that the sustainability principle can steer a project toward environmentally conscious outcome. The interconnectedness of various domains in project management calls for a holistic understanding. Communication, identified as a crucial domain, necessitates specific skills, tools, and a constant focus on quality and excellence. Stakeholder negotiations and controversies, essential in this domain, aim to stabilise concerns and ensure value alignment. Figueiredo also stipulates how a team domain thrives when a common view of the problem is developed, treating problem formulation as a negotiation process. A systemic approach and critical thinking are emphasised in the planning domain, urging project managers to develop effective habits that can be scaled up during the project lifecycle.

Figueiredo believes that ultimately, the integration of principles, aligned domains, and a commitment to continuous improvement stand as pillars for achieving excellence in project management. As the landscape continues to evolve, embracing these challenges becomes a transformative journey towards a future where principles, values, and domains fuse into a harmonious symphony of excellence.
Complex science beautifully accessible

researchfeatures.com

Partnership enquiries: j.ross@researchfeatures.com
Careers and guest contributions: rachel@researchfeatures.com