Book Review by Don Reifer

Michael W. Evans, Pamela Piazza, and James B. Dolkes
Principles of Productive Software Management.
John Wiley & Sons, 1983.

This well written text attempts to resolve the software management problem by describing techniques that can be integrated together to help project leaders to plan and control the process and products of software development. The book begins by relating documentation and change control to the development process in order to focus on the issues, challenges, and alternatives facing the manager as he/she plans a software project. It then discusses the topic of test management and identifies techniques that can be practically used to reduce risk and achieve control over this time and manpower consuming activity. Next, it describes software's interface to program management. It again amplifies techniques that can be used to weave software into a framework that is understood and can be used throughout the corporation for control. Cost estimating techniques are described as the text homes in on the Software Development Plan as the key tool used in planning and controlling the software development activity. The final chapter deals with the issue and techniques associated with managing the process. The book is written by those who have been through "the wars" and know problems and solutions first-hand. It advocates good, solid systems management principles and provides readers with insight into how to make them work in the real world. Checklists and some "how-to" guidance is provided, but not enough to help the new team leader keep on the track.

The book falls down in two major areas. First it fails to adequately treat the people/management problems that plaque most firms. The techniques the book advocates just cannot be implicated in most organizations unless something is done to pre-condition management for change, solve staffing problems, and develop a professional workforce. Second, the book does not provide its readers with the help that they need to put the management planning framework they've established to work during project execution to monitor progress, statues budgets, and schedules, measure technical performance, manage risk, monitor quality status changes, and essentially control the project. All-in-all, it is a good book and should be recommended reading for those taking on project management responsibilities in a production environment.

25550 Hawthorne Blvd, Suite 208   Donald J. Reifer
Torrance CA 90505, 213-373-8728