Software Project Secrets is the first book to analyze and address the problems that project management’s best practices cause in software development projects. It shows how to integrate agile methodologies with project management to resolve these problems.

The book is aimed at managers, developers and customers who use industry standard methodologies, but whose projects still struggle to succeed. In 2000, only 28% of software projects succeeded outright. 23% were cancelled, and the remainders were substantially late and over budget. (In contrast, 94% of construction projects succeed.) No-one has yet found a satisfactory explanation for why so many software projects fail so badly.

The author analyzes a factor that has so far been overlooked—the project management methodology itself—to find out how it might create problems for software development projects. His experience has shown him that project management processes often take priority over software development best practices.

The book begins by describing twelve ways in which software projects are different from other kinds of projects. It then analyses the Project Management Body Of Knowledge to discover ten hidden assumptions that are not valid in the context of software projects. It describes the problems caused by these invalid assumptions.

One solution is to integrate project management with methodologies that do work for software development: the agile methodologies. The book describes and compares three of the most significant and widely-used agile methodologies: Crystal, Extreme Programming and the Rational Unified Process. It suggests new ways to combine these methodologies.
with project management to ensure that the best aspects of both are retained.

My Personal Review:
I work for a software company as a Senior Technical Writer, so when I reviewed this book, I expected it to hit close to home. It did.

In the second of two software development firms I have worked with, I realized that the issues which George Stepanek brings out in his book were the same challenges for each company. All parties involved had their own agendas but none of them followed the same methodologies for getting things done, or they found their methodologies did not exact work with Software Development projects.

This is especially true when it comes between the Software Developers and the Project Managers. The Project Managers tend to see only their schedules and not the challenges of the Developers, such as time, code requirements and adequate staffing. I think sometimes the Developers live, eat and sleep at the office to try to get the software to GA (General Availability).

At the end of a development project, many times you look back and try to figure out what went wrong, or what steps to avoid for next time. I think it is wonderful that Stepanek details the key factors which cause a project to fail. Many Project Managers look at the specifics of a software development project only to find they cant quite figure out the difference between this type of project and the others. Fortunately, for the reader the author identifies twelve facts that make software development so different from other projects. With these facts, clearly in hand, Project Managers and Developers can come closer together to make the project a success. Unique to this book as well, Stepanek also identifies ten wrong assumptions (in his analysis of the Project Management Body of Knowledge) that are made by managers and how to avoid them.

Stepanek also takes a look at three modern project management methods. This is a topic that many books on Software Development and Project Management fail to address. He details what parts of each methodology works to solve some of the issues of software development projects. Almost more importantly, Stepanek identifies the areas in which these tried-and-true methodologies fail to solve the unique problems of software development projects.

Going one step further, the author discusses seven different techniques that can be used by Project Managers to ensure that the projects come in on time and on budget. This should be music to Project Managers ears!
One thing I do like is the illustration of a point or an example. Stepanek includes a case study at the end of the book which shows what challenges can appear and how to cope with them successfully.

This book should be required reading and a great supplement for the Project Managers, Product Managers, Software Developers and even customer who have been trained to use the methodologies commonly used in the industry, but still have project that fail or are difficult to manage to completion.

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Software Project Secrets: Why Software Projects Fail (Experts Voice) by G. Stepanek - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!