

# Books

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**Succeeding with Objects: Decision Frameworks for Project Management**, Adele Goldberg and Kenneth S. Rubin, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, MA, 1995. 542 pp. (ISBN 0-201-62878-3).

For many years a favorite party game of IBM instructors has been to select a single book they would take on a ten-year teaching cruise, or wish to wash ashore with them onto a deserted island. In the 1970s and 1980s, the choice often was a book by Glenford Myers or James Martin. After 1995, the choice is likely to become *Succeeding with Objects: Decision Frameworks for Project Management* by Adele Goldberg and Kenneth S. Rubin.

The book contains more than 500 attractive pages that capture not only the authors' combined 35 years of creating and managing object technology at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center and ParcPlace Systems, Inc., but also their analyses of three-dozen additional object-oriented projects they surveyed at two dozen other organizations.

Early in the book they describe what worked for them, namely: plan so that incremental results will be delivered every three months; use Smalltalk as the programming language; limit team size to no more than eight developers, including a tester, documentor, and code librarian; and assign a corporate-funded reuse engineer to each team.

But instead of prescribing that as a pill for others to swallow, they make explicit the decisions that managers and team leaders have to make, considering not only the fundamentals of management plus the unique benefits of object technology, but also the special needs of their organizations. The result is a sound guide that reminds software team leaders, managers, and executives about software-engineering verities ("The recommendations made in 1968 echo throughout this book"), and also enlightens them about recent studies ("Some measurement advocates

provide erroneous or ill-defined guidelines for interpreting measurement data. For example, some advocates claim that the design of any system that has a class hierarchy deeper than four is 'suspect.' It is dangerous to make such general claims").

The chapter on "What Is Measurement" is my favorite, because it is informative, reasonable, and fresh to me. For the same reasons, other readers can champion any of the other chapters, or even the 15-page Glossary of Terms that shines with carefully consistent rigor.

The other chapters cover everything technical and human that the authors believe a manager needs to consider when planning, organizing, controlling, and leading an object-oriented project to success. Each chapter illustrates its ideas with introductory quotations, case studies, practical checklists, a well-written summary that often can stand alone, wise comments about two or three classic books, and helpful cartoon artwork by Rebecca Cannara, who happens to be Adele Goldberg's oldest daughter.

The cover cartoon shows a conductor leading a four-piece band, at once reminding its intended audience of knowledgeable software managers about Watts Humphrey's comparison of successful software organizations to a symphony orchestra, and yet contrasting that with the size of teams that have succeeded with objects.

However, the value of this book springs not from its organized and attractive form but mainly from the wisdom its authors have accumulated, preserved, and placed in that form. After this book was published last year, ParcPlace and Digitalk merged to become ParcPlace-Digitalk, Inc., Dr. Goldberg announced her retirement as an employee (although she remains chairman of the board), and Kenny Rubin joined

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IBM's Object Technology Practice. It would not be surprising if 1995 is remembered by software engineers not as the year ParcPlace disappeared into a merger with Digitalk, but rather as the year *Succeeding with Objects* was published.

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