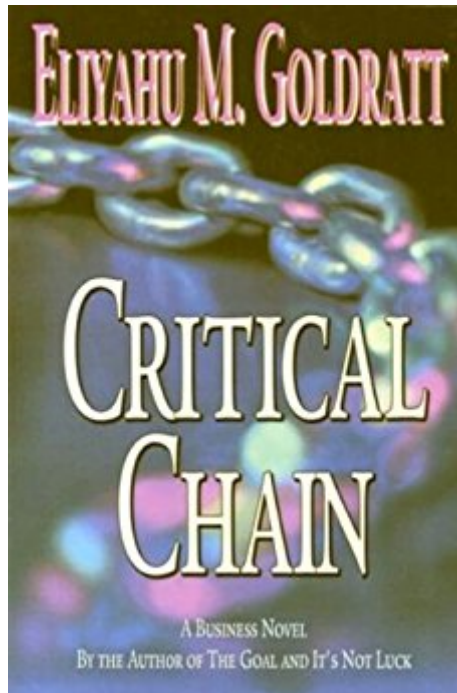




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Critical Chain: A Business Novel



Synopsis

Powerful yet simple techniques to solve project management's toughest problems. This book teaches companies to drastically cut project development times resulting in early completion within budget and without compromising quality or specifications.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Critical Chain is another of the well-known Goldratt business novels related to Theory of Constraints. This one is ToC applied to traditional project management. ToC-wise itself there isn't much news. The new thing is the application of critical chain thinking to project management. I found the new parts somewhat disappointing as it assumed that one person has a fixed amount of skill and didn't seem to be open for the possibility of cross-functional teams. That was kinda a big bummer on the book for me, even though the story was pretty good. The mentor in the story is Rick Silver, who is a lecturer at a university on the eMBA program. One difference in structure of this business novel compared to many others is that the mentor is still figuring things out himself and he doesn't have all the answers. He wants to understand it all and discover something so that he can

get tenure at the university. He gives a class on project management, and decides to focus on the real problems that people have. He discovers that projects have tasks that are sequenced and that each task is estimated with a buffer. The buffer is filled up (due to the scheduling) when it is estimated and thus adding a small buffer to every task will cause the total buffer to be small. Thus critical chain focuses on removing these small task buffers and put them at the end instead, to avoid the problem of many small buffers being eaten. Rick Silver helps his class in the eMBA through this thinking process and they try it out in their projects. Of course, it works and then... well I'll need to leave something for the reader still :) Eli Goldratt is a good author, so the story is nice and easy to follow. It keeps the reader engaged and it is an excellent way to explain the concepts of ToC and critical chain planning. For story, I'd give it a 4 or 5 stars. However, I was uncomfortable with the content and some of the ideas. It doesn't really discuss breaking constraints a lot, especially not breaking skill constraints through learning and teaming. But instead, it accepts all the supposed constraints and calculates buffers around them. Also, it doesn't really talk a lot about changes or about the fact that the tasks planned might not be the reality. All of that, made critical chain planning an interesting idea, but didn't trigger any wow moments and left me with more questions. These project assumptions and missing topics caused me to dislike the book at times, and thus I'll leave it with 3 stars. Not really recommended unless you are in very traditional projects with true constraints or you are a Goldratt fan.

Another socratic style of business novel by Eliyahu M. Goldratt. This one is not as attracting as The Goal. I definitely prefer Epiphanized by Bob Sproull and Bruce Nelson. Epiphanized has not focused on Critical Chain only but the novel structure is definitely better than this book. Moreover Epiphanized has a detailed appendix section for interested readers. Anyway there are good points still in this book: It starts with the rebel idea: "only a young and fresh mind can see something different than us!" Main problems of projects are summarized as overrun of either budget or delivery date or compromising the content. Main reasons have been identified as well: multi tasking, student syndrome, parkinson syndrome (implicitly described, not named, I bring the name from Epiphanized), inflated operation time estimates, poor methods of project progress monitoring, no resource dependency or contention issue in usual CPM, PERT methods... Usual 5 Focusing steps implemented and exemplified. At the end there is a rebel question: How do we rely on payback (time) or net present value (money) to assess a project? There is an analogy of mass and velocity and derived concept of momentum ($= \text{mass} \times \text{velocity}$) to assess the severity of a collision.

I bought this book because it was said to introduce some topics of interest to quality engineers. But this book is nothing but tripe: terrible and brutally obvious with horrible dialogue and clichéd characters. Simply dreadful writing.

This book approaches *The Goal* in terms of how many insights it provides, especially for those working in a project environment and seeking to apply TOC principles. It addresses many of the questions that come up: what are the equivalents to constraint, buffer, drum, and rope when it comes to projects? How do we measure progress in a way that provides clarity? How do we sequence constrained resources when they are working on multiple projects? It provides a model for thinking about even a project environment as a flow of work that needs to be maximized.

This is the book to start with on Critical Chain (i.e. Critical Path with resource considerations). Eliyahu Goldratt was one of the founders in this field and this book is the logical starting point for learning about Critical Chain project management. This is written like a novel so you can easily finish the book within a few hours if you are a normal reader. The concepts seem to be easier to grasp since they are repeated within the pages a few times and that most ideas are backed up by examples with projects examples from people in the bookPros:Easy read since it is written like a NovelCritical Chain is an interesting project management styleWell thought out and well executed with good examples.Cons:Critical Chain is shown as the ultimate savior to projects, even though there are issues that this method containsSometimes we spend a lot of time reading the story without any business insightsOverall this is great books and a good starting point for Critical Chain Management

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