Book review

BUSINESS ORGANISATION FOR CONSTRUCTION

Chris March, Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, 2009,
ISBN 978-0-415-37010-3, £24.99, 224 pp.

In *Business Organisation for Construction*, Chris March sets out to provide construction students with a text that develops the management vocabulary and understanding they would need in order to approach broader management resources and specialist texts. The end result is a unique and very useful foundation-level text that proved enjoyable to read. March selectively explores a variety of widely adopted management theories and business practices in the context of the construction industry. He creates a solid base of reference needed to get a useful grasp of the theory, and gives detail on the processes performed by different organisational functions (e.g. human resources and marketing) and how they contribute to the wider organisation.

From the outset, March is very clear about the depth of the book's content and the limitations of the text. In this way he has avoided the trap of trying to create a single book that 'bridges the gap' between general management and management in the construction industry – a trap that other authors have previously fallen into. So, for example, while March describes leadership theories and provides comment on how they can be compared, he reminds the reader that they should go on to learn more and not rely on the book as an authoritative source. This means the text is relatively comprehensive but remains highly accessible for his chosen audience. March underpins this approach by providing an approachable amount of relevant suggested reading. Lists refer to only a few texts and clearly aim to give the reader a useful starting point to go beyond this text without being overwhelmed by choice.

At first glance, there was a perception that the contents seemed to be rather arbitrarily selected. On a thorough reading, however, it became clear that the author's decisions for the contents of the book were well informed and nicely balanced. At times the author seems to devote excessive attention to

subjects that seem to be beyond the general purpose or scope of the book – details on how to write a press release, for example.

Another issue with content worth mentioning is the use of case studies. Several are provided throughout the text, but the value of each to the reader appears inconsistent. The case study provided for human resources management shares a very useful personal insight from March, while others do little to add to the discussion as they lack virtually any analysis or tangible meaning beyond what has already been discussed.

While the book would not be suitable for academics or experienced managers, it is an excellent resource for students or junior managers who are approaching this sort of material for the first time. As well as offering a comprehensive overview of the theory, the reader is led through useful discussions on the practical or 'real' issues faced by businesses. After reading this book, the reader would have a good understanding of a whole organisation and the priorities of the functions around them, which they may not otherwise have encountered or understood.

One limitation with the way March applies management techniques to the construction industry without discussing the distinctiveness of the industry, is that readers may struggle to go on and apply more general thinking to the industry's distinctive environmental and cultural conditions. More case studies would be a useful addition to the text, especially if they were presented in a more structured or analytical way.

In sum, *Business Organisation for Construction* is an extremely informative resource for construction students looking to start building a knowledge of how effective organisations function within the construction industry. While not lending itself to being a reference text, those who do take the time to work through and digest this book's content will have a basic working knowledge of 'the organisation' and a solid foundation on which to learn more. This text is clear without being patronising and wholly delivers on its promises.

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