

Mohan Babu K (2006) Offshoring IT Services: A Framework for Managing Outsourced Projects, Tata McGraw-Hill, 274 Pages, ISBN: 0-07-059756-1.

Reviewed by Henry Lo

Offshoring is a hot topic which is attracting increasing attention to the IT industry as a whole. Cost advantages are undoubtedly the primary source of interest for many organisations considering offshoring, but less appreciated advantages can also be reaped, such as quality improvements involving efficiency gains and round the clock availability of services. This book is a valuable resource for managers who wish to learn how to conduct offshore outsourcing of IT services with particular reference to the Indian context.

The ten chapters in the book essentially constitute a step by step guide to help managers explore issues regarding offshoring. Through these chapters, a systematic analysis of the critical issues that are likely to be encountered in the course of managing offshoring IT services and other activities is presented. For instance, these issues include strategic considerations, human resource requirements, system integration between the main site and the offshore site, as well as communication issues involving cultural differences, language, and the appropriate use of modern Information and Communication Technologies.

Explanations of special terms are given in easy to understand conventional English, enabling readers with a less technical background to understand points quickly. Some models and more complex ideas are illustrated with figures, while for important concepts, a 'boxes' are used to provide further elaboration. Interviews with IT personnel who have experienced IT service offshoring are also 'boxed', adding further nuance to the text and evidence for the arguments made. There are also short cases describing the offshoring practices of companies such as Cisco India, Infosys and ABX Corporation. These are among the most useful components of the book, since they not only present a general picture of the concepts but also enable readers to achieve an in-depth understanding of offshoring scenarios.

Each chapter concludes with notes that provide additional information regarding some special terminology, citing critical references and URLs where further information can be found.

After reading through the book, I realized that the content tends to focus more on the offshoring of IT application development rather than other IT services. IT application development can be a service too, but the term "IT services" suggests that topics such as IT support services and IT consulting services will also be included. In this sense, the title is rather misleading. Indeed, the focus of the book is also primarily on the Indian context, so a more accurate title should probably include "India". Overall, this is certainly a worthwhile read, but readers are cautioned not to generalise the recommendations too widely, given the specific Indian context of the book.