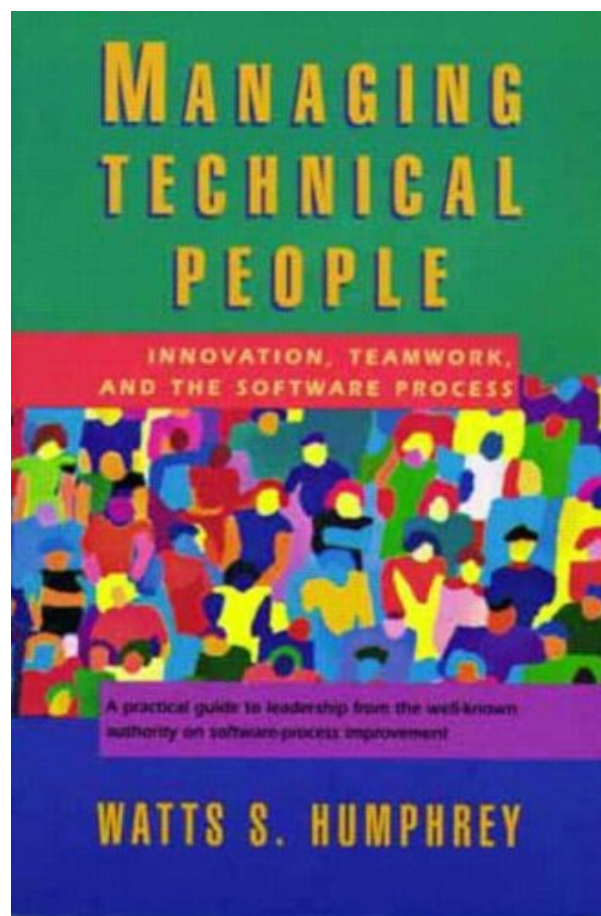
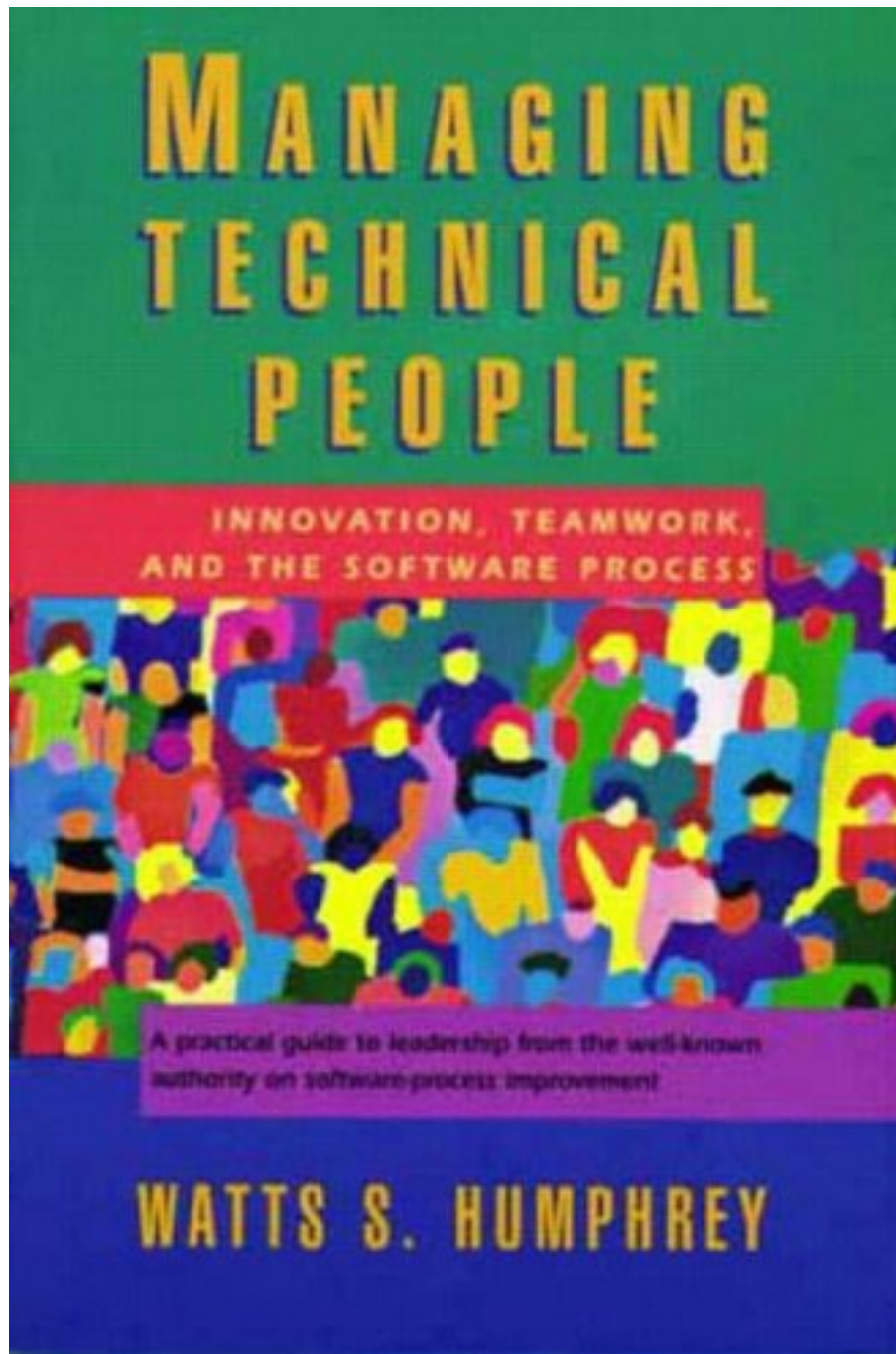


**MANAGING TECHNICAL PEOPLE:
INNOVATION, TEAMWORK, AND THE
SOFTWARE PROCESS BY WATTS S.
HUMPHREY**



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Amazon.com Review

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From the Back Cover

"Suppose you needed a new computer program. You would want your programmers to give this work high priority and to dedicate their energies to its success. Although no simple procedure can ensure that they do this, there are some methods that usually work....The key is to understand and respect them as professionals and to follow sound management principles. This knowledge and these principles are the subjects of this book."

--from the Preface

This book contains best-selling author Watts Humphrey's practical insights on how to lead technical professionals. In previous books, Humphrey established process as a key factor in successful software development. His advice on how companies and individuals could improve their software process has since been widely adopted. In this new book, he demonstrates the overriding importance of people to the success of any software project. He focuses particularly on the critical role of innovative people, and gives concrete advice on how to identify, motivate, and organize these people into highly productive teams.

Drawing on experience as IBM's senior software-development executive, and expanding on an earlier work, *Managing for Innovation*, Humphrey presents here proven leadership practices and management techniques

that can work in any organization. Given the software industry's dependence on creative human resources, managers will welcome his sound advice on the special challenges encountered in leading technical professionals, and on specific steps managers can take to encourage greater innovation while attaining yet higher levels of efficiency and quality.

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Providing practical insights on how to best manage technical professionals, this text demonstrates that people are important in building software systems and suggests how to identify, motivate and organize innovative people. The work explains how teams can be used to solve difficult problems and underlines that successful software development has two basic requirements: a well-defined, quality-based process; and the best technical people.

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- 352 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

57 of 60 people found the following review helpful.

Not what I expected from a great man like Humphrey

By Ron

This book was not what I expected. Humphrey uses mostly anecdotal examples to illustrate his many points. Though this helps get his points across, it does not really prove his assertions.

Most of his advice is not practical, or even possible in the employment situations I've seen (and heard about) over the last ten years or so. I found a few interesting parts, much like I would find it interesting to listen to the tales of any old-timer about the ‘good old days’, and some of his insights about people in general are quite keen.

Some parts really hurt my will to read on. For example, he seems to believe that if a manager can get his team members to work lots of overtime, that higher productivity will automatically follow. Someone who has written books about the use of careful measurements during software development should know better. The evidence I've seen and read (in other books) indicates that regular overtime is a ‘bad smell’ of deeper problems, and a perfect recipe for low quality and ultimately failed projects.

He even claims that the manager's job is to put schedule pressure on the engineers, otherwise they'll take forever and never get anything done. Again, he includes a little anecdotal example. However, with very few exceptions all of the engineers I've worked with hold themselves to certain standards of quality and productivity. Usually management pressure (especially the old time-crunch game) just hurts more than it helps.

Overall, much of his advice doesn't fit with the reality I've been experiencing lately.

I recommend comparing and contrasting Humphrey's advice with that found in “*Peopleware*” (2nd ed.) by DeMarco & Lister.

Also, for even better book full of ‘management tips’ see “*201 Principles of Software Development*” by Davis.

25 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

Flawed but useful

By A Customer

This book is rich in detailed advice about managing teams of engineers. Furthermore Watts Humphrey uses many interesting examples --- some anecdotal, some from his experience at IBM, and some historical --- to illustrate this advice. My favorite example involved President Theodore Roosevelt and the introduction of continuous-aim firing in the US Navy.

However, there is a flaw that runs through this book from the beginning to the end. Humphrey assumes that the organizational context is a large vertically integrated company like IBM circa 1970. That kind of company has all but disappeared nowadays. It is rare for large companies to develop new products today --- instead they buy the startup that has already developed the product they want. Important champions aren't powerful executives; rather they are wealthy angels or powerful venture capitalists that fund the startups.

Interestingly, this flaw hurts some chapters and hardly affects others. For example, the chapter on the importance of the commitment ethic remains true even though the organizational context is very different nowadays.

10 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Really perceptive book

By Ramasubramanian Mahadevan

Keenly written book, shows the depth of Watts Humphrey's experience. Greatly rewarding for anyone who is willing to look at situations without applying oppressor/oppressed stereotypes. The book will sail cleanly over the heads of those who do not have at least 4-5 years of hands-on management experience, and will boink the others between the eyes. The sections where he talks about why technical people appear dissatisfied and how managers fail them were just amazingly useful once I forgot to fight the contents.

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