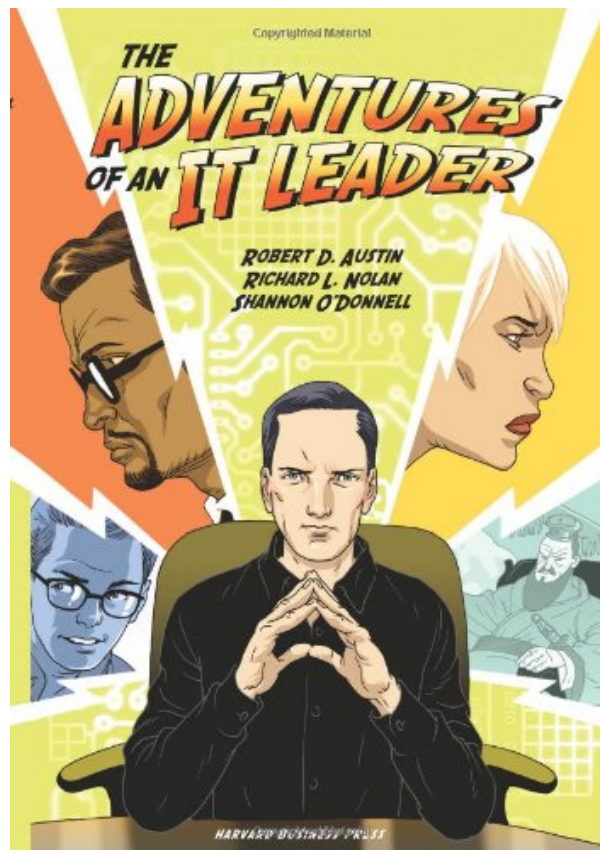
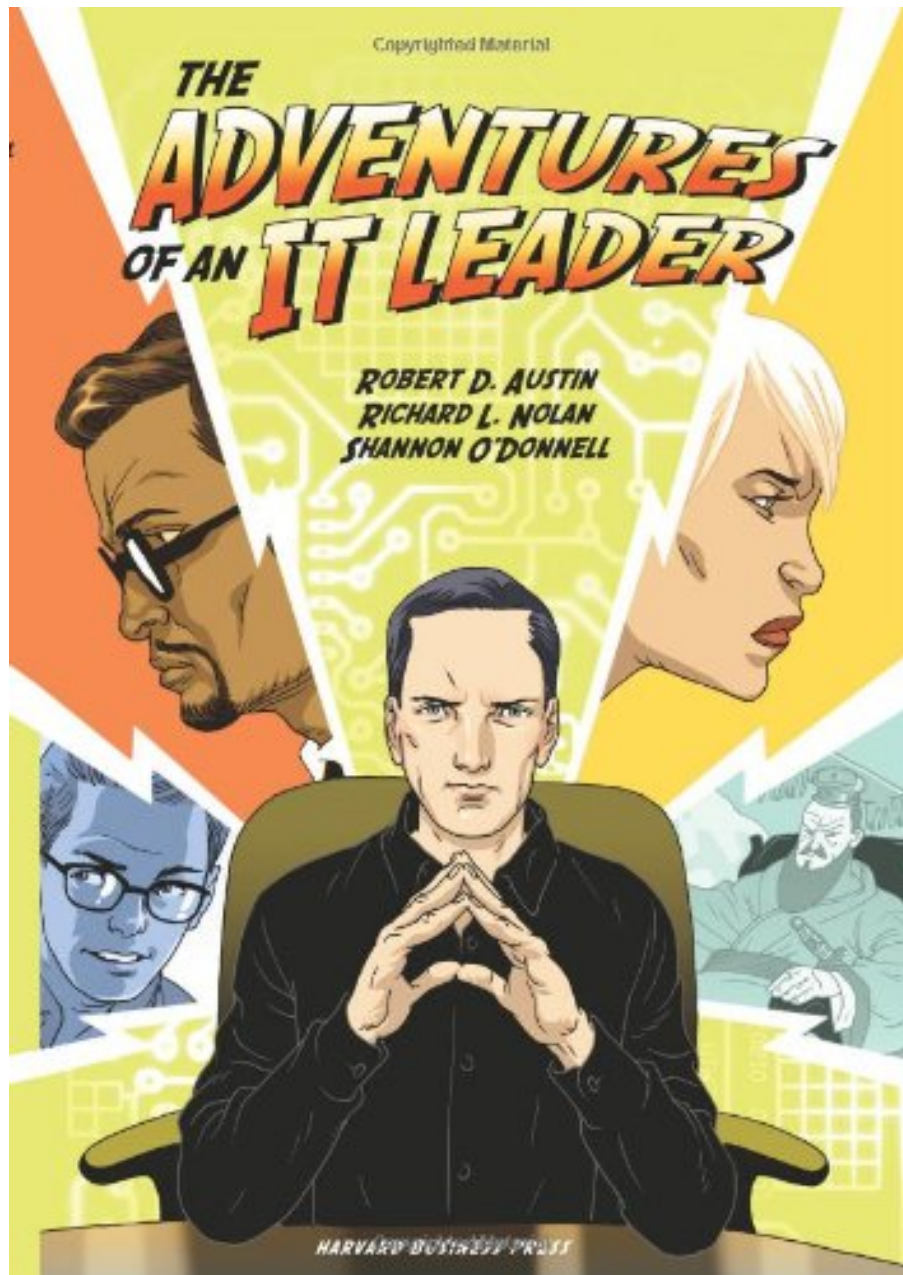


**ADVENTURES OF AN IT LEADER BY
ROBERT D. AUSTIN, RICHARD L. NOLAN,
SHANNON O'DONNELL**



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Review

“...recommended reading...” The Wall Street Journal

About the Author

Robert Austin, author of many books, is Professor at Copenhagen Business School and Associate Professor at Harvard Business School, where he chairs the executive education program for CIOs.

Richard Nolan, also a prolific author, is Philip M. Condit Endowed Chair in Business Administration at the University of Washington and Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School, where he co-chairs the executive education program for CIOs

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ADVENTURES OF AN IT LEADER BY ROBERT D. AUSTIN, RICHARD L. NOLAN, SHANNON O'DONNELL PDF

Becoming an effective IT manager presents a host of challenges--from anticipating emerging technology to managing relationships with vendors, employees, and other managers. A good IT manager must also be a strong business leader.

This book invites you to accompany new CIO Jim Barton to better understand the role of IT in your organization. You'll see Jim struggle through a challenging first year, handling (and fumbling) situations that, although fictional, are based on true events.

You can read this book from beginning to end, or treat it as a series of cases. You can also skip around to address your most pressing needs. For example, need to learn about crisis management and security? Read chapters 10-12. You can formulate your own responses to a CIO's obstacles by reading the authors' regular "Reflection" questions.

You'll turn to this book many times as you face IT-related issues in your own career.

- Sales Rank: #14795 in Books
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- Published on: 2009-04-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 1.19" w x 6.30" l,
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Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

This is a great book for anybody considering becoming a Chief Information Officer

By Aaron

This is a great book for anybody considering becoming a Chief Information Officer, Chief Technology Officer, or Chief Security Officer. It provides great insights into many of the stakeholder and technical challenges you may face.

87 of 103 people found the following review helpful.

A laudable goal, but its execution sends the wrong message to business professionals

By Mark P. McDonald

It is hard to criticize a book dedicated to looking at the challenges facing IT leaders on a personal and professional level. The goal of Adventures of an IT Leader are admirable, present IT in a human light using a combination of techniques from Goldratt's business novel classic "The Goal" to the case studies that are featured monthly in the Harvard Business Review.

The authors clearly know their stuff. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the authors have not been able to translate that knowledge into an effective business/IT book. While this book is interesting, well written and flows pretty good it does not provide the business person -- particularly one with a jaundiced view of IT, or the IT professional with the insights needed to change their circumstances.

The book seems to be written for the business person to help them understand IT. The protagonist Jim Barton is a business leader asked to assume the role of CIO without any technical experience. This again is a great goal, however there are some significant issues in the book.

I do not recommend this book be given by an IT professional to a business executive. Particularly if you want to show a business person what life in IT is all about.

Furthermore I would not recommend a business person read this book in an attempt to learn what IT is all about.

While these recommendations are harsh here are my reasons:

1. A business reader can easily interpret the book as making IT look incompetent, from managers who do not understand what their staff do (Chapter 3) to their inability to control major projects (Chapter 7), to their inability to protect the company (Chapter 11).
2. From a business perspective, the book resolves every IT issue with spending more money. Sure the leader shuts down a project, only to pay \$3 million and get nothing, then have to start the project up all over again for more money. The solution pattern offered in the book could easily support business suspicions that IT is more about spending money than creating value.
3. IT people may play well with each other but play poorly with the business. The major project (Chapter 7) that was led by the business is cancelled and pulled back up under IT. The new CIO takes over responsibility for the IT budget across the enterprise - because they cannot get infrastructure projects funded. The business and IT cannot agree on the status of projects, turning a meeting into a finger pointing session led by the IT person (Chapter 6)
4. The book brushes past major concepts and challenges in IT with short and passing explanations. Terms like shared service, web 2.0, and infrastructure are discussed in passing which undercuts their importance to

the business and the future of IT.

5. That you only have to be a CIO for a year, one in which you handle a crisis but do not seem to deliver any major value, and that you will get your dream job and move up to COO at a bigger company. I know the authors had to end the book, but ending on such a triumphal note when the performance during the year was mediocre at best sends the wrong message to the business reader.

CIOs in real life who work hard, face real challenges, and make real progress. The book does not show much of this. They also have the job an average of 4 years not 365 day wonders. Its true that this is a business fable, but if you are trying to educate people even fables have significant grains of truth to them.

There are other books that describe IT better ranging from "IT Savvy" (Weill and Ross), "The New CIO Leader" (Broadbent and Kitzis), "Straight to the Top" (Smith) among others.

The authors do a good job of sequencing a set of events that IT leaders will recognize: runaway projects, demotivated staff, security issues, etc. While this book is ok for IT people to read, it does not put these challenges in a particularly interesting light or an environment where new concepts and approaches can be illustrated.

IT professionals will recognize this environment and say that is accurate. That is a good thing. However, the book is not the story of an IT turnaround - rather it is a descriptive story based on the new CIO lurching between IT topic areas (Cost/Value, Project Management, Runaway Projects, IT Priorities/governance, IT and the board) rather than discussing the combination of things that raise IT performance. The authors have drained the story of suspense, decisions, actions and results that are essential in using the business novel format.

IVK - the fictional loan/mortgage originating financial services company has all the characteristics of a poorly run IT shop: lack of standards, a hero culture focused around the CISO, good people in management roles who seemed outgunned. While Barton, the new CIO builds up a white board with key ideas; these ideas are more accumulated than implemented. The result is an IT shop that is more transformed by events than by management and leadership.

The book uses these circumstances to introduce and review concepts that were developed several years ago such as Death march projects, power maps, IT portfolios, etc. Many of these tools are self referential as coming from the Cutter Consortium - the home of one of the three authors. IT professionals will recognize these techniques as they are well established. They will learn little from them as they are not exercised in the text - merely catalogued and described with partial samples attached at the end of some chapters.

I kept reading this book, hoping that it would get better as I agree with the premise and the need to build bridges across IT and the rest of the enterprise. Unfortunately in my experience and from reading this book - I can see where it can do more harm than good -- particularly as a tool to help business people understand IT.

Sorry for such a critical review. I am not trying to bash the book, but when I look at it from a business perspective I see it doing more harm than help. I hope that I have explained the position behind this review and my rating.

15 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Necessity to read 2 books to close the gap between IT and the business

By comperr

I am not afraid to state that M. McDonald is right with some (not all!) of his criticism about "Adventures...", even at the risk of being the only one doing this. However, I rate the book with a 5-star as it has undoubtedly more than one merit. The sheer fact that there is a book explaining the world of IT in an easy-to-read style without using technical jargon is an achievement in itself. The major aspects of a CIO's life are covered and this has been summarized by other reviewers. But there are important shortcomings. At no place is there a word about the fact that a CIO is mainly managing dependency, due to the fact that he deals with an incredibly immature computer/software industry. Faulty software (leading to crashing projects and later to system instability) and unripe technology (with especially dramatic consequences when it comes to IT security) haven't found their way into this book. A corrupted database is not necessarily the consequence of a renaming of a table; a database can achieve corruption all by itself.

There's another recently published book (that I somehow prefer) with the similar intention to explain IT to the business: Roeltgen's "IT's hidden face". This one takes a different approach as it doesn't have a story-line but works a lot with descriptive examples. Both books have things in common though: the starting point is an IT department in the financial sector; N. Carr's ideas are widely rejected; "IT is different"; the CIO's job being the most volatile one in the business; a CIO can't do his staff's job by himself, just to name these.

"IT's..." proves that these days the IT world can by no means be managed entirely, whereas "Adventures..." makes the reader believe that IT is perfectly manageable by having the right communication, the right governance or by throwing more money at the problem. The example with the DoS is to my opinion described inaccurately (as a life-threatening event for the company) when we all know that these things are daily business and should be managed quite differently than described in the book.

Being myself a business executive in the financial industry, I don't think that it can be stated that Barton did an overwhelmingly good job. He was pushed much more than he was driving.

"Adventures..." presents an ideal world, taking a somewhat academic approach. But that's fine as long as the reader keeps this in mind, whereas the other book is written by a long-term experienced CIO who describes the day-to-day challenges with concrete examples.

It is undoubtedly true that we should head towards a better manageable world in IT, but as long as we have to deal with an immature software industry, this is a dream that will not be achieved soon. "Adventures..." describes exclusively from the perspective of the CIO and his interaction with the business, but leaves out the daily challenges of the ordinary IT staff. "IT's.." offers more details in this respect as it digs much more in the "dirt".

In any case, both books read very well; "IT's..." having on top a touch of humor and "Adventures..." offering a story-line.

Both books explain the IT-world to non-IT-experts and they have the intention to close the communication gap between those incompatible worlds. There's no excuse anymore now for anyone to say "I understand nothing about IT" or "IT is for me a grey monster I want to stay away from". I suggest reading both books. The picture of what IT is about these days should be rather clear after that.

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Spending the downtime by reading **Adventures Of An IT Leader By Robert D. Austin, Richard L. Nolan, Shannon O'Donnell** could supply such excellent encounter also you are just sitting on your chair in the workplace or in your bed. It will not curse your time. This **Adventures Of An IT Leader By Robert D. Austin, Richard L. Nolan, Shannon O'Donnell** will certainly guide you to have even more precious time while taking remainder. It is very delightful when at the midday, with a cup of coffee or tea and also an e-book **Adventures Of An IT Leader By Robert D. Austin, Richard L. Nolan, Shannon O'Donnell** in your gizmo or computer monitor. By delighting in the views around, right here you could start checking out.

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