Function Point Analysis: Measurement Practices for Successful Software Projects (Addison-Wesley Information Technology Series) by David Herron

Excel lent Guide To Function Point Analysis

(Pearson Education) Introduces the latest guidelines released in the International Function Point Users Group Counting Practices Manual 4.1. Fully explains the calculations and mechanics behind function point analysis as well as its most common uses. Also offers experience-based techniques for applying the methodology. Softcover. DLC: Computer software--Development.

My Personal Review:
Published in 2001, this is a very detailed book on Function Points that follows the guidelines in the 4.1 version of the International Function Point Users Group (IFPUG) standard. Function Point metrics originated in IBM back in the 1970's and spread slowly out to the rest of the world in the late 70's and early 80's. As with anything originating from IBM, it's a process that's heavy on detail and requires a lot of work to get it right. Over the years, FPA has got more and more technical, to the extent that you really need to get certified in it these days (when I first took an FPA course in the early 80's, it wasn't nearly as comprehensive as it is these days, 20 years on..). The authors of this book between them have published a number of articles on the subject and have more than a few years of experience under their respective belts.

The book kicks off with an overview that provides a useful introduction for those "new" to software estimation, although it's still pretty heavy going and it assumes a process-heavy background. If you've worked for a large organization with a comprehensive PMBOK-like methodology, it'll all make sense. If not, you're going to have a headache by the time you finish the
There's some good advice on preparing for IFPUG (International Function Point User Group) certification and the authors emphasize the fact that FP counting should only be performed by certified counters. IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO REITERATE - FP counting should only be performed by certified counters!!!! Keep this in your mind at all times. FPA is "Estimating-Heavy", not estimating-light. It don't come cheap in time or education.

The other reviewers have covered the content in enough detail that it's rather pointless to reiterate - suffice it to say I agree with their comments on the content. So, cutting to the chase, if you're looking at books on Function Point Analysis, you've obviously got a serious interest in estimating, and if so, and if FPA is where you want to go, this book is going to be very useful for you as a reference and as a guide. On the other hand, FPA is, while accurate if applied correctly (the nub of the matter......), both time and expertise intensive - I can't emphasis the expertise factor enough. You need a sizable project with a budget sufficient to fund the additional overhead to make it worthwhile - for your average development project, this is overkill. If you've got a $50-$100 million plus project within the grasp of our sticky little paws and you can get a certified FPA resource on board, using FPA may very well help you stay within your rather sizable budget. And if you're studying towards your FPA certification, by all means delve into this book - it'll help you no end.

But having been there and done that in my past, don't try this at home kids. This book is a great resource, you'll learn all about FPA from it, but reading the book is a completely different kettle of fish to actually doing it. As another reviewer has pointed out, FPA is accurate IF DONE CORRECTLY. To get accurate estimates, you need certified FP counters, and the data needs to be interpreted correctly. Easier said than done. If you want to use FPA yourself, go study and get yourself certified before you try it for real - otherwise, you may well send your career as an estimator down the tubes.

If you've got to come up with estimates and you've got no real estimating experience, DON'T START HERE. Go look at Steve McConnell's book on "Software Estimation: Demystifying the Black Art" to get yourself started. You could also look at Caper Jones' "Estimating Software Costs" although it's a little dated and not up to date with Agile estimating practices (my bias shows through......). (Subsequent update - apparently -the second edition (2007) of "Estimating Software Costs" by Capers Jones addresses Agile methods...).

On the third hand, I do give this book 5 stars for what it is. Well-written, understandable, effective - and it follows IFPUG guidelines. If you're after CFP certification, this book won't lead you astray (although it is a version or 2 out of date) and it will prove a useful study aid. I've got it on my bookshelf at work and although I now use Agile Estimating Practices a la Ken Schwaber (Agile Project Management with Scrum) and Mike Cohn...
(Agile Estimating and Planning), I do take a look at this one every now and then just to see what the FPA guidelines are. Mind you, every time I look thru this book and think of what I might have been doing, I bless Ken Schwaber for coming up with Scrum (OK, OK, I like smaller projects and I like the Agile approach.....).

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