

# Project Management

# Interview Questions

*arras* PEOPLE

# Contents

Introduction	3
Preparing for Your Interview	3
Specific Skill Areas	4
Preparing for a PSO Interview	4
Project Manager Interviews-Soft Skills	6
Preparing for Interview-Soft Skills	7
Project Manager Interviews - Short & Sweet	8
In Summary	9

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## INTRODUCTION

Arras People has been running it's highly successful "Project Management Careers Clinic" for the last 3 years providing guidance and advice to people at all levels of their programme and project management careers from a wide variety of backgrounds and sectors.

One area of focus has been assisting those people who are new to project management, whether at the beginning of their career from leaving college or university or from people looking to take their careers in a new direction.

The broadest and most frequently asked question we get asked is: How do I get into a project management role. This is one of the most difficult to answer; the shortest answer we can give is – "It depends!"

Here are some of our thoughts, opinions, guidance and advice we've given to people, including specific questions and answers directly from our careers clinics.

## PREPARING FOR A PM INTERVIEW

At Arras People we spend a lot of time preparing both project managers and project support professionals for their interviews. So much so, that we thought we'd share some of the best questions we have up our sleeves. We think both potential employees (yes, if you're getting ready for an imminent interview yourself, you could be someone's next employee!) and clients (looking for further generic questions to supplement their own) might find these examples quite useful.

In this 1st series we're looking at the project manager interview and specifically at those questions designed to find out about your project management skills and knowledge.

- Give an example of how you tackle the initiation of projects?
- Describe how you have undertaken the practical application of a project methodology for a programme or project?
- Please discuss with examples how you undertake managing a project on a day to day basis? What is project management?
- Briefly describe the project lifecycle.
- What has been the most significant project you have worked on?
- What was your actual role in that project? What is the most important thing in project management?

[Previously published Tipoffs article](#)

## SPECIFIC SKILL AREAS

**RISK:** How have you managed risks on a project you have run?

**CONTRACTS:** Given a situation when we are delivering a project without a contract but on a promise that the customer will pay (they have always paid before), what are the issues?

**FINANCES:** How do you start costing your projects? What experience do you have of building a change request for more money to complete your project?

**QUALITY:** Consider the statement 'inadequate quality management will result in project problems'. Give an example of why this should be.

**ISSUES:** What methods do you use to capture issues when initiating your projects?

**CHANGE CONTROL:** In terms of time quality and cost and time please give an example of how you have managed change? How did you identify and determine the impact of your change options? Give an example of where a requested change was refused and how you managed it?



## PREPARING FOR A PSO INTERVIEW?

So you've got the interview all lined up and now all you need to do is give yourself the best possible chance of winning the potential employer over. I'm making the assumption you've done all the general interview preparation expected if anyone (got the map, know where it is, know who's interviewing you & what they do, seen their website and know something about the organisation .....) Of course you have! But it's still difficult to try and guess what those interviewers might think about asking you, especially in a niche area role such as project support. Here are some to get you started...

What are your main reasons for applying for this role? / Why do you think you would be an ideal fit for this role?

**A simple question - so do your homework on the role specification and give a great answer.**

What do you think are the main tasks for an Project Co-ordinator / PMO Analyst / Project Admin and Why? **Interviewers are looking for keywords in your answers, too (competency-based interviews).**

Tell me how you would deal with a PM who constantly misses the deadline in sending reports to you?

**A classic question and you should be banking on one coming up like it.**

Which elements of the project co-ordination do you enjoy the most / the least?

**Again a question that often comes up and you need to have an answer ready including turning the negative into a positive.**

You're asked to prepare a document that outlines a process that you're not familiar with, how would you handle this request?

**Looking for some of the softer skills a project support possesses when dealing with unknown territory.**

What activities and tasks are expected to be completed by a Project Co-ordinator in the area of planning / risks / issues / reporting, etc?

**How well can you describe the role you perform, interviewers are looking at the depth of your knowledge.**

What level of expertise would you say you were using MS Project?

**Not just looking for a expert / intermediate answer here - give examples of where and how you have used it.**

When asked by friends and family about

your career - how do you describe what you do?

**A fun question that most project support people have faced at some point in their life... yeah, just what is it that you do!?**

In a project you've supported what did you learn in terms of the management of the project?

**This question is almost certainly about your understanding of the whole project framework and how project delivery does try to hit pre-determined costs, time and scope.**

Tell me about something new you've learnt in project support recently?

**You do make sure you're constantly learning and challenging yourself don't you?**

## PROJECT MANAGER INTERVIEWS - SOFT SKILLS

Continuing our Project Manager Interview series, in this issue we concentrate on the softer skills side of the Project Manager role and interview questions that may come up.

- What mechanisms do you employ to enable you to cope with a heavy workload?
- Can you give an example of when it has been difficult to maintain your own effectiveness due to external changes or pressures?
- How did you manage the situation? Will you describe your decision making processes with reference to a particular decision you have made recently?
- How do you manage the situation when your plan of work is upset by unforeseen circumstances?
- What aspects of your leadership style might positively or negatively influence members of a team? Can you give me an example of each?
- How do you make your opinion known when you disagree with the views of a colleague? How would you deal with a



direct report who is failing to meet their objectives?

- Can you give an example of where you have had to direct work through colleagues who were reluctant to participate? How did you deal with the situation?

## PROJECT MANAGER INTERVIEWS - PREPARING

Continuing the series of project manager interviews and in particular soft skills, in this edition we look at a recent real life scenario which recently occurred in preparation for an interview for a position of Project Manager.

[Read our article from Tipoffs on Soft Skills Interview Questions](#)

Arras People likes to spend time with its candidates going through interview preparation and here are some of the questions we've used.

- What is your style of management?
- When you see underperformance in a process or a person how do you handle it?
- How do you like to track your business progress? How do you develop, manage and communicate your businesses plans?
- How do you manage your customers and stakeholders expectations?
- How do you ensure communication has/is happening?
- Leadership, give examples of motivation, team work and where you have made a difference.
- How do you communicate your ideas, influence and persuasion what examples?
- How have you identified and resolved conflicts in your teams?
- What does diversity mean to you?
- How do you deal with sound business but sometimes annoying process, delegation, levels of authority, have ever managed to get and existing policy and practice changed?

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT INTERVIEWS - SHORT AND SWEET

You need to get in the mood fast, it could be several months or even years since you've had to face another round of interviews with new employers or on the phone with recruitment agencies. So here's Arras People's short and sweet question samples to get you in the mood.

There are always going to be some basic questions that you get asked every time you apply for a role through a recruitment agency and then you'll meet Arras and hopefully we'll ask a few different ones:

- You applied for XXXX role - could you tell me what attracted you to apply for it in the first place?
- What makes you the right person for this role?
- What skills and experience do you want to highlight straight away in relation to this role?
- What relevant experience do you have in - (a) could be a particular industry sector (b) a particular project subject matter
- Tell me about the process knowledge you have - IT development lifecycles - project management methodology
- I notice you have the PRINCE2 practitioner's accreditation - do you have your candidate number to hand or would you be able to email it over to me later?
- The role demands that the Project Manager has exceptional leadership skills and a good deal of assertiveness - how would convey this about yourself?
- What would others in your team right now or previous role really say about you? What kind of feedback on people management skills?
- Tell me why in five words your CV should be in front of the client today?
- Having heard more about the role is there anything that makes you want this role even more than before?
- The specification for the role is asking for a proactive, enthusiastic and ambitious individual - are you this?
- Are you passionate about your project management role?
- What elements of your role do you not like performing at present - why?
- What was the last thing you learnt? Describe your last conflict situation on a programme or project - how was it resolved?

[Read our article from Tipoffs about Short and Sweet Question Samples For Job interview Preparation](#)

**Additional Project Management Interview Question Sources:** [Project Smart](#)

## IN SUMMARY

You first employment role may not be directly in project management, however in most organisations there is change happening and companies are always looking for their staff to assist and lead in the implementation of change and new ideas that make a company more efficient and a better place to work. The focus here is your individual attitude, if you are willing to take on responsibility and make things happen you will be noticed for having seized the opportunity enabling you to demonstrate your capability and potential for project management.

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