

Project Management

Job Applications

arras PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Arras People have been running careers clinics for over 4 years. They are aimed at assisting project professionals in finding new roles, providing guidance on the current PM market, offering advice on training and CV writing—essentially how to best position yourself when looking for that next job.

As project professionals ourselves who have retrained to specialise in recruitment we have sat on both sides of the fence, as such we can bring a wealth of experience to assist candidates. First impressions are everything—job applications are often the first contact you will have with recruiters and employers: therefore it is important you maximize this opportunity as many times there is no second chance.

This document is designed to assist you in taking the right steps when pursuing your next role—from a personal stock-taking to completing application forms.

There are a number of supporting documents referenced in this booklet which can be found on the Arras People website.

- CV Writing
- CV Template
- Interviews
- Researching a new role
- Job Applications
- Project Management CV Advice
- Knowing Where to Look for a New Role
- Succeed in Getting the New Role
- Project Management Qualifications
- Career Change

PERSONAL STOCK TAKE

Your personal stock take is as simple as it sounds—put in a store context, when the weekly stock take arrives the manager takes their clipboard into the store cupboard and counts up what is in the back as well as what is on the shelves. When performing a personal stock take, you should do the same. Take a piece of paper and list all your skills and experience.

No matter how obvious some skills may seem and you feel would be assumed, these could be the ones your potential employer is looking for, and if they are not included, you can easily be placed into the reject pile. On the other hand how you present these skills will be tackled on page 6, too much detail can make for a 15 page document, another NO-NO! At this point you should list everything from writing emails to producing financial reports.

There are a number of ways to help you list your skills, here are some suggestions:

1. Think through scenarios in your current / previous role from point A to point B listing everything that YOU do.
2. Read through your own job description and fill in any gaps.
3. Research other role descriptions related to your position and pull out areas you can marry your experience / skills up to.

Examples of skills:

Complex diary management, CRM database use, Visio, Excel, MS Project, Access, Powerpoint, Word, Outlook, internet explorer, ACT, Lotus notes, Sharepoint, EPM, Report writing, planning, risk & issue management, portfolio management, programme management, project management, Gap analysis, financial reporting, Gantt charts, milestone, interdependencies, forecasting, benefits realisation, lessons learned, highlight reports, dashboard reports, MI reporting, PMO set up, mentoring, training, workshop facilitation, chairing meetings, organising meetings, minute taking, project initiation document (PID) initiation / creation etc, assumptions analysis, audit, performing baseline reviews, updating / managing benefits log, benefit/coast analysis, promoting best practice, producing / assisting on business case, change management, configuration librarian, conflict management, critical path analysis, earned value management, feasibility studies, gateway reviews, performing quality control / assurance, product scoping, project closure, project control, RAG reporting, quantitative risk analysis, highlight reporting, SWOT analysis, tendering etc...



SPECULATIVE LETTERS



Not all companies use recruiters, or advertise in the papers. Some run internal systems and some may not even realise they need that subject matter expert until something prompts them such as a letter and CV on their desk.

Speculative letters have often been very successful for candidates. However you must do your homework—know your target audience by researching them in the media and on their websites to see how your experience could add value to their organisation.

Set out what it is you have to offer—a generic letter is not good enough. Make sure you find out the name of the HR person and spell it correctly. Keep a record of all the places you have written to. A good way to do this is to create a simple excel spreadsheet stating who, when, how you contacted these people to ensure you do not duplicate and you can also set reminders to follow up.

Avoid gimmicky pictures, fonts and scented or coloured paper. Your letter should read like a professional communication.

There is also the option of emailing your letter. An email is an electronic letter, you can write the “letter” in the email body, or you can attach as a word document. Either way, ensure it is formatted and presented in a professional layout.

EXAMPLE SPECULATIVE LETTER

220 Earl St
London
EC1

29th April 2009

Mrs Nicky Smith
HR Manager
XXXXX Ltd
12 Park Rd
London, WE20

Dear Mrs Smith

I would like to express an interest in XXXXX Limited as I have read with great interest your participation with the XXXXX programme and feel this is an area I could add significant value to.

In my current / previous role at XXXXX I was heavily involved in a similar programme of work which was closely connected to XXXXX. My position was Programme Office Analyst, in this role I was responsible for supporting the programme and project managers in the role out of the programme. My strengths lay in the stakeholder management arena as this was a sensitive programme of work it was essential to forge strong relations across the organisation and with our external partners.

I have attached a copy of my current CV for your perusal and I am happy to provide further detail, I am currently available to begin a new role immediately and would welcome an opportunity to discuss how I can add value to your organisation.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Brown

DEVELOPING YOUR CV

The purpose of a CV (Curriculum Vitae) is to provide a summary of academic and work history. It is also a personal marketing tool. Your CV should promote your skills & achievements, should make the reader (the employer) want to read on and confidently secure you an interview.

There are a variety of formats available for CVs: **functional** (emphasis on transferable skills not contextualised to any particular role), **targeted** (aimed at a specific role—highlighting skills and experience relative to the position) and **chronological** (the traditional format following work and education experience in order of year completed etc—most recent first).

A well-written 2 or 3 page chronological CV tends to be a more effective professional document, but it is an art not a science so ultimately there is no right or wrong format.

Key points to a good CV:

- **Be honest:** always be truthful and ensure you get all the dates correct, etc. Qualifications need to be correct, as most employers will ask you to provide certification in the offer process.
- **Clear and concise:** ensure you keep to the point, state the size and complexity of the project / programme / portfolio, as well as your involvement.
- **Grammar & spelling:** poor spelling and grammar is not acceptable these days when most word processing software has built-in spell check and grammar checkers. Proof-read your CV and ask a friend / partner / colleague to proofread it as well.
- **Make sense:** when asking someone to proofread your CV, also ask them the question, "What is it I do?". If their response is correct, then your CV is working if they don't understand or give a different response than expected, chances are the recruiter / employer will not understand or misread it, too.
- **Formatting:** as your CV is a professional document, you should ensure it looks like one! No pictures, coloured text, company logos, website addresses (unless you are a website designer / project manager and are showing an example). All too often, we see 6-page long CVs which could easily be re-formatted to 2 or 3 pages state "expert level MS Word user" - this is not meant as a good example; rather, it illustrates you are either lying or just lazy. Use a simple text format, no text boxes or significant details in headers, as these may be lost when processed by CV strippers! Be consistent, pick a style and stick with it throughout the entire document.

RECRUITMENT CHANNELS

There are a number of routes available via the internet for researching and obtaining your next role. It is important to create a record of how you are finding roles and the sources that are advertising the roles most relevant to you. This will help minimise duplicate applications; which ultimately shows a lack of attention to detail and sets a poor impression from the outset. Also answering calls, "Did I apply for that role?" implies you have been applying for a lot of roles which can also create the impression you are not sure what role to go for or can convey desperation. For example:

REF NO.	ROLE TITLE	EMPLOYER / AGENCY	DATE APPLIED	CONTACT DETAILS	SOURCE/ AGENT NAME	FOLLOW UP	FURTHER DETAILS
AP-PM-891	Project Manager	Arras People	24/03/09	01706 366 444	Monster / Arras People—John Smith	30/03/09	Financial sector, business transformation £10m budget
JS367892	Project Manager	Hays	25/03/09	020 1234 5678	Job serve IT / Hays—M. Jones	30/03/09	IT Change programme

By creating the above documentation you not only have a record of what you have applied for and can be on the ball when called by employers and recruiters but you can start to get a clear idea of which recruitment websites / agencies have the most relevant roles for you. Once you have this value data you can then target your search.

WWW.MONSTER.CO.UK

WWW.TOTALJOBS.CO.UK

WWW.JOBSERVE.CO.UK

WWW.ARRASPEOPLE.CO.UK

WWW.CVLIBRARY.CO.UK

WWW.THIRDSECTORJOBS.CO.UK

WWW.REED.CO.UK

WWW.HOTONLINE.CO.UK

WWW.JOBS.AC.UK

WWW.JOBSGOPUBLIC.COM

WWW.JOBSITE.CO.UK

Sources

You can register your CV with most of the above recruitment websites and you will also be given an option to sign up for "jobs by email". This way, you can be emailed as soon as a role is placed on the job board and be one of the first to see it. You will be asked for keywords—try to keep them open, such as; "Project AND London" as some role titles can be misleading. Keeping it basic will pick up more roles along with roles you may well have missed. Do not apply for every role! Only roles applicable to your skills and experience; i.e. if the advert asks for someone who has delivered projects in the NHS—they do not need a PM solely from construction—you will be rejected. Concentrate your efforts on the right roles for you. The downside to registering your CV to job sites and recruitment agencies is being submitted for roles without your knowledge which may disadvantage you later in the process.

APPLICATION FORMS

Completing application forms has become popular again, this is due to candidates not putting a lot of effort into applying for roles (simply emailing their CV) and because so many applicants out there use professional CV writing services it is difficult to tell who can

Ensure you state the correct role title, reference number and where you found the vacancy listed—these are simple instructions set to ensure your attention to detail and ability to follow simple instruction are met.

Use your full legal name—nick names must not be used. Always provide your full postal address and contact telephone numbers, if you are under threat of redundancy ensure you use your personal mobile and home telephone numbers.

As with your CV it is essential to provide a clear profile of yourself in contact with the role you are applying for. Try to avoid "woolly" lines such as "Determined self starter with excellent communications skills." There are no project roles that do not require these attributes, do not become a "me too" - set yourself apart by stating a concise profile based around your technical skills. i.e. An APM qualified Project Manager with extensive experience of delivering off-shoring projects within the public sector. However do be more generic if applying for a role which isn't directly related. i.e. use "business transformation" as opposed to off-shoring etc.

Application for Employment
Please ensure all details are completed in black ink or type.

POST APPLIED FOR: _____
 JOB REFERENCE NO: _____

How did you find out about this vacancy? (Please list media or website)

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Surname/Family Name: _____ (First Name(s): _____) Title: _____
 Address: _____ Known as: _____

 Postcode: _____ Mobile No: _____
 National Insurance No: _____ Email address: _____
 Nationality: _____ Immigration Status: _____

2. PRESENT EMPLOYMENT

Name of Employer: _____ Address: _____
 Job Title: _____
 Start date: _____
 Current Salary: _____ Postcode: _____
 Benefits: _____
 Notice period: _____ Pension Scheme: _____

3. PROFILE

Please refer to the job description and person specification and provide an account of your skills and experience in relation to the set criteria. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Ensure you complete your right to work in the UK details as this information could be critical for some roles requiring security clearance and it is a legal requirement to prove eligibility; your NI number provision is an initial step. You will be asked to provide a passport or birth certificate and Visa (if applicable) later in the process.

It is important to complete all required details in your application—the part covering salary and benefits is for the HR function to be able to work out a competitive package for you should you be offered the role. It is also used as a gauge for the level of candidates applying for the role i.e. If it's a Project Director position paying £90k+ and you are a Project Administrator on £25k— you are likely to not have the budgetary management responsibility required for the level of role you are applying for.

Provide the correct notice period in this section—you may be applying for a role which is time critical i.e. Project deliverable within 2 months which would require an immediate start. If you have a notice period of 3 months you must manage your prospective employers expectations from the start of the process.

APPLICATION FORMS cont

Take note of all instruction on the application form—if it requests you fill out the form to accompany your CV, then send both. Also ensure all the information you state on your application rings true in your CV i.e. Dates etc. This is an opportunity to add further detail about your relevance to the role so do not just cut and paste from your CV.

As instructed, ensure you state the highest level qualification first i.e. PHD, Masters, Bachelors Degree, A levels, etc.—this relates to academia and professional qualifications, state your APM, Prince2, PMI, P3O, MSP, ISEB, etc qualifications here

4. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

In addition, candidates are asked to submit an additional statement or a CV which provides information on the following: (i) duties in present post, (ii) previous posts held with dates of employment for each, (iii) (if appropriate to the person specification) research interests, awards and publications (books and major publications should be listed first with details of all authors, titles, journals and dates), (iv) (if appropriate to the person specification) conference presentations; (v) any other additional relevant experience. CVs will not be accepted without a completed application form.

5. EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Starting with the highest, please list academic and professional qualifications, together with grades:

Qualification and grade:	Name of Institution:	Year of Graduation:

6. SKILLS, CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Please list any additional training or competencies that you would like us to consider in support of your application:

7. REFEREES

Please give the name and contact details of 3 people who have agreed to act as referees on your behalf, one of whom must be your present or most recent employer:

Name: _____ Address: _____

Telephone No: _____

Email: _____ Postcode: _____

Please indicate whether a reference may be obtained prior to interview. Yes/No Relationship to you:

Name: _____ Address: _____

Telephone No: _____

Email: _____ Postcode: _____

Please indicate whether a reference may be obtained prior to interview. Yes/No Relationship to you:

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Additional training may include: ECDL, MS Office training, H&S at work, Project management, Report writing, Effective planning, Financial Reporting etc—usually courses provided by current / previous employers or self funded.

Additional skills may include usage of tools such as Visio, MS Project, Access, Primavera, Sharepoint, Enterprise Project Management (EPM), Project in a Box etc.

As previously stated in this document, it is important to keep in touch with referees to keep abreast of movement to other companies / change in contact numbers, etc., and it is also important to give them a heads up on a reference request coming through. Do ensure you state "NO" to referees being contacted if you have not indicated to your present employer you are leaving.

TELEPHONE TECHNIQUES

When making a phone call to a prospective new employer or recruitment agency, you should be equipped with the following basic information: the name of the person you are calling, what you are calling for i.e. reference number of the role, the reason for your call, and the main points you wish to discuss. Preparing a crib sheet will help prompt you and keep to the point.

Ensure you identify yourself immediately at the beginning of the call—HR people and recruiters speak to dozens of prospective candidates daily, so it is important not to assume they will remember you—remind them how they know you.

Manners cost nothing and create the right impression—do not assume the person answering the phone is “just a call handler” - everyone deserves respect, regardless of who they are. Enquire as to whether it is a good time to call; if it isn't, arrange another mutually convenient time for you to call.

Call from a quiet room—ensure the TV or radio are not on and children are not running around screaming. Call from a landline if possible to avoid poor reception or being cut off. Take notes whilst on the call capturing any relevant information.

When receiving calls, make sure you have your role files in front of you—a simple document

containing role titles, company / recruiter name, role reference number, when you applied, etc., makes for a good resource allowing you to quickly recall which role the caller is calling you about.

Create professional answer phone and voicemail messages for your landline and mobile phone—silly messages or children's messages—although funny and endearing to you and your friends—your potential employer may find it off-putting.

Example calls to a recruiter:

The wrong way:

Caller, “Hello, I applied for a project manager position and I am chasing my application.”

Receptionist, “Do you know the name of the consultant or the reference number for the role?”

Caller, “No—it is a Project Manager position”

Receptionist, “Without a reference number I cannot put you through to the relevant consultant, can I take your name so I can check our records?”

Caller, “forget it!”

The right way:

Caller, “Good afternoon my name is Laura Craft, may I speak with Mick please?”

Receptionist, “Can I ask what the call is regarding?”

Caller, “Of course, I have applied for a Project Manager position based in Surrey and I am looking for an update on my application. I have the reference number, it is AP-PM-480.”

Receptionist, “Certainly, please hold the line whilst I try to put you through.”

Recruiter, “Good afternoon Mick speaking.”

Caller, “Hello Mick, my name is Laura Craft I applied for your Project Manager position AP-PM-480 yesterday and was wanting to have an update on my application?”

REFERENCES

References are an important part of securing your next role—all employers offer roles subject to reference checks, so it is important to keep in touch with previous employers and ensure you keep their contact details up to date. If you are still in your role but are about to be made redundant, ask your line manager for a reference on letter headed paper, get it signed and keep it in a safe place. Experience has shown it can be beneficial to take copies of references to interviews—inevitably the employer will want to contact the referees direct but in the first instance it could sway a decision.

Do not put your referee's contact details on your CV—recruiters are renowned for contacting them for leads on new roles. This not only annoys your referees, but also may ruin your chances of receiving a deserved reference when the time comes.

Upon leaving your place of work, you should ensure you note down the following details:

- Full name of referee
- Accurate role title
- Full company name
- Full company address
- Direct phone number
- Switchboard phone number
- Mobile number
- Email address

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