



## Industry Notes: What advice do you have for a PM who has lost his or her job?

**Keep positive;** not the easiest thing to do when you've recently lost your position, but it is vital that you keep your energy levels up and your outlook positive as you prepare yourself for the job searching process. In order to be effective, it's time to move away from the emotional upheaval and start thinking practicalities about the weeks (or possibly months) ahead. During this period, it is vital that you not only understand the market, but also your position within it. Keeping positive will be vital for all the meetings, interviews and networking activities you undertake, because first impressions really do count.

Your search for a new position **should be treated as a full-time job** in its own right, and the very first step should be a plan of action. There are plenty of tasks and activities to be planned and actions to be taken if we are going to achieve the desired outcome, specifically in areas such as;

- Conducting a skills audit
- Learning the skills of a great CV writer
- Researching the market and the different sectors open to you
- Thinking about your transferable skills within project management
- Setting up networking opportunities both personal and within the wider project management community
- Finding the right places to apply for the posts you're interested in
- Getting the administration center ready to keep a track of all your opportunities and activities

It is tempting to start applying for every role you can see with the word "project" in the title to feel that you are achieving something rather than doing the R&D. But there are two major steps that need carrying out which will give you better returns on the applications you make.

Firstly, undertake a **skills audit**. Quite simply, "looking at what you've got versus what the market is asking for". If you have been in employment for a while, it is quite common to find yourself in a situation where you're not quite sure what's going on in the outside project management world. It's time to start **researching current markets, sectors and vacancies** (from employer's websites or popular job boards) to find detailed job specifications that give an insight to the current "wants" from employers. The skills audit is useful in two ways; firstly, it serves as an opportunity for you to clearly see what skills you have to offer the market. And secondly, it serves as a skills gap analysis on which to focus on in the near future.

Following the skills audit and research of the market, **updating your CV** is the second most important area to focus on. Many people find CV writing a tough skill to master, and project management CVs are no exception. Remember: the CV is there to inform the reader about what you are bringing to the table; your key skills, key achievements and the core competencies that demonstrate your abilities as a successful project manager. Many fall into the trap of giving too much detail about the organization, the project and the deliverables associated with previous employment. This would be great if you are promoting your previous employer, but it's not good when this space should be used for showcasing yourself.

It's worth remembering that your next position as a project manager may be managing a project whose subject matter you have no prior experience with. The employing organization needs to know that you have the core competencies expected of a successful project manager who can deliver, no matter what the project is about.

One quick exercise which can help you start your CV; find all the core competencies of project management (i.e., planning, risk, change, team management, leadership etc.) Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it up, putting each of the competencies into the boxes. Next, in each box list your own corresponding skills, experiences, achievements, tasks, and activities for each of the competencies. This provides you with a framework on which to start your CV, ensuring that all the key competencies of what makes you a great project





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manager are covered. It can also be checked against your earlier research for terminology and currency.

Mastering the CV writing skills, coupled with a clear understanding of what you are bringing to the table for a new employer through the use of the skills audit, provides a solid foundation for moving forward in the job search process.

With the foundation work in place and a clear objective, you can now focus on searching out suitable opportunities. Make sure you use all the channels, including traditional print media, job boards and the internet to find organizations you would like to work for. In addition, use your own personal network and leverage from the project management community. Keeping busy by staying focused on the right activities should be second nature to project managers, so make sure you utilize these skills in your search for your next position.

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