

**contents**  
**the results are in**  
**chartered professionals**  
**black & white planning**  
**qualifications overview**  
**skills frameworks**  
**arras people**

February 2004 Issue 3

Welcome to Project Management Tip-Offs.

Welcome to the third issue of Project Management Tip-Offs. In this issue we take a novel look at the communication aspects of project objectives and also look at the issue of ageism on project management. We continue with our careers section, looking at qualifications, soft skills and lessons learnt from one job-hunter. For any feedback or comments please get in touch at:

[tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk](mailto:tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk)

Get the previous editions at: Project Management Tip-Offs [Click Here](#)

## Dinner date scandal - Communication and Understanding of Objectives

By Roger Doyle

You would be amazed at how objectives for a project can be misinterpreted. A meeting with 10 people will generate 10 different views on any one objective and how to achieve it.

At my local cricket club we hold an annual Dinner Dance with a guest speaker. We award trophies for bowling, batting, ducks (currently in my study a large yellow plastic one with wheels that glow) and dropped catches etc. for performances of note. (non-cricket fans bear with me!)

The date is selected a year in advance so all arrangements can be made and bookings confirmed. Over the years the date of the dinner has varied between the last Friday and the last Saturday in October (NB).....until this year.

The first point of note is the word booked and when, assumption one in any communication is challenge your assumptions. Was the hall booked a year in advance, er no, but we got passed that one on grandfather rights, the village hall diary owner had fortunately penciled something in.

Point two check for clear understanding, on calling the caterers to confirm booking, note, eight weeks before the dance date (because organiser had done it that way for years), guess what! "Oh I've got that in for the Friday" said the caterer to the club of twenty plus years "that's when you usually do it" no buts... we had guests, speaker, hall etc. all lined up for the Saturday; because that is what we published in the fixture card.

To carry on this saga, we finally rearranged the date when most people could make it, but not the original speaker so we had to go buy one, many people who had planned to come could not come, much disappointment and "never happened in my day" voiced loudly in local hosteleries.

So we rolled with the new date, time and price; on posters and tickets 7.00pm and £18; on letters directly inviting folk 8.00pm and £20. What do the minutes say, well that's not entirely clear and anyway we don't publish those until a couple of days before the next meeting. Why, because we have always done it that way.

Lessons learned- publish actions minutes ASAP, post-meeting check and confirm any actions and data. Look for positive affirmatives, i.e. get folk to acknowledge receipt and understanding.

Why did we not change caterers, we did not want to jeopardize the quality of the meals.

Impact - we now have to pay for a good speaker, 200 plus people affected, had to review their diaries, much muttering in the village, questions raised at Annual General Meeting by Senior Vice President and the Chairperson decided to resign.

We are now rebuilding trust with all of our supporters, sponsors and players (all stakeholders!). The combinatorial explosion caused by one assumption is amazing, should we run a risk analysis on a local dinner dance?

To the good points, new chairperson fresh views, and because the usual crowd could not all make the new diner date we managed to attract a few new attendees.

Next years dates are booked and confirmed in writing, so am told; I think I'll check that assumption, that's trust for you. My role I just pay the bills and am now a fully practiced spin doctor.

- Happy Project Management!

**The Agency View of the World**

### Free Whitepapers

#### From ProjectPerfect

New White Paper - The Project Office Checklist

Australian organisation - ProjectPerfect have a useful area on their site - [Free White Papers and Links](#) with a interesting paper on Setting up a Project Office. A downloadable PDF contains a checklist which PMO Managers and Co-ordinators may find useful in their roles > [Project Office](#)

### Latest from the PPSO Specialist Interest Group



The Programme and Project Support Office Specialist Interest Group's next event is taking place on the 31st March at the University of Aston Conference Centre. Details are available on their new website @ [www.ppsosig.co.uk](http://www.ppsosig.co.uk)

The conference will be centred around looking at ways in which the Programme and Project Support Office can help ensure that the organisation really does learn from its and others experiences

Arras People supports the efforts of this group - the only group dedicated to project office professionals- it's great to get together with other like-minded people and membership is free with low costs to attend the events. The events are like mini-training days, so in a world where there is currently only one PPSO qualification you'll be crazy not to attend.



By Ian McKenzie

A recent survey commissioned by Arras People set out to gain a snapshot of the recruitment market across the UK. Over a 100 REC registered agencies responded to our questions which were designed to ascertain their agency view of the market place for jobs and to show trends for the past 3 months. This survey was not aimed at any particular market sector, it included a mix of large high street agencies and discrete niche agencies specialising in specific job roles

The results show a clear indication that the number of candidates applying for each job over the past 3 month regardless of being permanent or contract has increased. It showed that the fees for the agency service are overall flat as was the case in the previous 3 months; however they are now firming up with some claiming that their fees are starting to edge upwards. The general view of the agencies is that activity in both the contractor and permanent market places has increased, i.e. there are now more jobs available through recruitment agencies in most sectors. In terms of the anticipated market trends for agencies, there is a resounding agreement of yes to expected growth over the next 12 months particularly in the contractor arena.

To the question how do your clients (hiring companies) view the recruitment industry? It was positive to see that 42% indicated it to be "value added service", though a quarter responded suggesting that recruiters are seen as a necessary evil!

When asked about how the agencies believe their candidates' view them, perhaps surprisingly 42% believe candidates see agencies as a professional industry where quality of service is improving, with 17% seeing agencies as necessary evil.

With regards to which job sites agencies use to advertise opportunities nearly 60% of the agencies said they use Reed, with over a quarter using TotalJobs or Jobserve. Many agencies also responded saying that they use a combination of sites plus their own job boards. The preferred site taken from added comments is Reed because it's free!

In summary we are pleased to report the job market has picked up for many agencies (positive for candidates also) with sustained growth expected over the coming 12 months. The agencies view themselves as seeking to do a better quality job, improving their professionalism and value to both candidate and client.

## Is Project Management Ageist?

My thoughts in this world where PC (Political Correctness not Personal Computing :) is ever present I often wonder about this question!

Is this a profession where it is valid to have an ageist view on life? YES I boldly state, I believe it is.

My own belief is that no person can be an effective Project Management practitioner by just having read the books, passed the PRINCE or PMI exams, attended a project management course. No university course can create a Project Manager; the best practitioners have all been through the University of Life!

Don't get me wrong, I am not saying education isn't valid. What I am saying is that the real practitioners have a wealth of experience, battle scars and real life scenarios upon which they base their decisions, judgements and actions, generally balanced with formal education.

Most project managers I have worked with and more recently placed haven't started their professional life as a project manager but evolved into the role as their natural talent has shone whilst undertaking other project related roles. They have served an apprenticeship, delivering under the wings of other project managers, watching and learning, picking up on good practices, looking to eradicate or improve areas that they disliked.

This I believe is what makes the project manager the beast he/she is and at the age of 21 very few people can have had the relevant exposure to prepare them for this most crucial position! Don't you agree?

- A 43 year old ex-Project Manager

[| top |](#)

**Your help is needed! [Click here to take survey](#) on project management qualifications - takes 5 minutes!**

## Careers

In the last edition of Project Management Tip-Offs we asked the question; "**Do you think having a PRINCE2 or ISEB PPSO qualification is important in your career development?**".

We had placed a small survey on our site to get your opinion and 54% of you thought it was important. In this issue we decided to find out why clients like to see candidates with qualifications in Project Management (PRINCE2, APM, PMI etc) and ISEB qualifications (PPSO Foundation and Advanced).

When Arras People is working alongside clients to define their requirements for a role, one of the most important questions we ask is "what methodology does your project organisation use?". 9 times out of 10, the answer is PRINCE2, but often when you delve a little deeper, it's often a case of "well

[Go here](#)

## What is the REC?



The REC - Recruitment Employment Confederation - represents the private recruitment industry in the UK. Not every recruitment agency has to sign up to be a member but those that do have to adhere to certain Codes of Practice. Check to see if agencies you are using are members of the REC

> [Agency Search](#)

[Arras People's Standards - Go here](#)

## Recent findings about ageism in the workplace



Entitled "Too young at 35, too old at 40 - ageism in the British workplace " it makes interesting reading > [CIPD](#)

[Go here](#)

**survey project management qualifications take part**

we're suppose to follow PRINCE2 but we taken the principles and adapted it to suit our needs".

So many organisations are not actively using many of the principles of PRINCE2 but still they look for potential employees who have undertaken the exams and passed with flying colours. Something of a mismatch? No, not really, we talked to a number of clients recently to get their thoughts as to why they prefer to see this on CV's.

A Programme Office Manager responsible for a team of project co-ordinators said:

"It's often a good indicator of the type of person the candidate is. If they've attended and passed an exam in a subject related to their field it tells me a little about their competency levels. This qualification coupled with good work experience would often give them the edge over other candidates because it shows to me they're dedicated to their chosen role." The ISEB qualifications in Programme and Project Support Offices are currently the only qualifications for Project Co-ordinators etc, which is why many prefer to complete the PRINCE2 exams.

When talking to another client, a Senior Project Management Consultant about why PRINCE2 qualifications are important to him when selecting candidates for interviews, "it demonstrates a couple of things to me; a candidate has a good combination of the theoretical side of project management and the hard and fast experience and its important to our organisation as a whole. We're raising the project management maturity capability levels and to do this we need project management **professionals** - the qualifications are a good step in the right direction"

Slightly different reasons from different organisations, but the interesting thing here is that there is no mention of attracting new employees with PRINCE2 or ISEB qualifications purely because they want people qualified in the methodology that the organisation uses.

In the next issue we turn back to the original question and ask you - "**Why is it important to you to have a qualification like this?**". To take part in the short survey [Click here to take the survey now](#)

[| top |](#)

### Project Manager Interviews - Preparing for the interview - soft skills questions

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. Arras People likes to spend time with its candidates going through interview preparation and here's 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 an existing policy and practice changed?

### Further Information on Soft Skills

The PROMS-G group are also tackling the subject of Soft Skills in Project Management. Their Spring School on 'Soft Skills for Project Managers' will be taking place over four Tuesday evenings starting 2nd March 2004. The events will be at IBM South Bank in London. The four lectures are:

- Leadership and Coaching - Andrew Lees, Keay Consulting
- Communicating with your programme or project team - Patrick Mayfield, Pearce Mayfield
- Team Management - Paul Frost, Learning and Skills Council
- Stakeholder Management - Ron Rosenhead, The Project Agency

The cost of the series is £130 for BCS members, £175 for non-members, and £25 for students/unwaged.

You can register for the event on the PROMS-G website at [www.proms-g.bcs.org/events/ed-tv0308.htm](http://www.proms-g.bcs.org/events/ed-tv0308.htm)

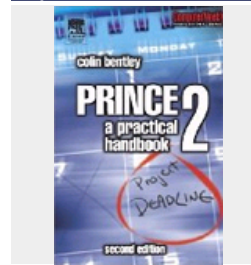
[| top |](#)

### About Arras People:

Latest update from Arras People - the project management and project office recruitment specialists.

**Breaking News....** Arras People were recently signed up as a niche supplier to one of the largest recruitment agencies in the UK serving a wide range of industry sectors - for us this is great news that we are being recognised in our niche area for providing the best candidates for project management related roles.

### Tip-offs recommend:



Prince 2 - A Practical Handbook - Bentley

A firm favourite and a book which has been well thumbed during our own careers as Project Managers. A good size which covers the essentials of PRINCE 2 and a good alternative buy to the large course issued versions

[Go here](#)

### PRINCE2 & PPSO links

- > [prince2.org](http://prince2.org)
- > [prince2.com](http://prince2.com)
- > [crazycolour.com](http://crazycolour.com)
- > [ogc.gov.uk](http://ogc.gov.uk)
- > [bcs.org.uk](http://bcs.org.uk)

### Did you know..?

Did you know?

The ISEB Programme and Project Support Office Foundation Exam can now be taken on-line and can cost from as little as £90 - take it today at:

> [www.prometric.com](http://www.prometric.com)

### 30 seconds and your time's up

A recent article published by JobServe

Showed that a recruiter is likely to spend no more than 30 seconds scanning a CV to decide "has this person got what it takes to do the job?"

The [article](#) offers advice on how to tailor your CV and cover note to make sure the answer's yes to the above question when you're applying for roles

### Free Business Skills

A free download facility gives you access to comprehensive information on:

1. Negotiating Skills
2. Time Management Skills
3. Presentation Skills
4. Job Search Skills
5. Interview Skills
6. Meetings Skills
7. Project Management Skills
8. Business Analysis Skills

[Available here](#)

We took a look at the Project

The majority of roles are for contract positions and we are required to meet a very competitive SLA for providing candidates. So if you are in the contract market, help us help you by visiting our updated contractor registration page. This page allows contractors to register / update relevant details so that we can react to the new roles as soon as they arise - please take the time to visit the new page at: [www.arraspeople.co.uk/contractor.html](http://www.arraspeople.co.uk/contractor.html) and register / update your details ASAP

Arras People has also given support to the Programme & Project Support Office Specialist Interest Group (PPSOSIG). The website creation and management of the site was picked up by Arras in January, with the site going live in February ([www.ppsosig.co.uk](http://www.ppsosig.co.uk)). Arras People also manages the PR for the group.

[southern@arraspeople.co.uk](mailto:southern@arraspeople.co.uk)  
[northern@arraspeople.co.uk](mailto:northern@arraspeople.co.uk)

[www.arraspeople.co.uk](http://www.arraspeople.co.uk)  
01706-366444  
01234-823532

Management skills download (these are downloads that accompany training courses from <http://www.getahead.uk.com>). 38 pages of pretty comprehensive material which is well written and a great introduction to some of the project management principles

[archives](#) | [comments/feedback](#) | [submit article](#)

