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### July 2004 Issue 6

In previous editions of Project Management Tip-Offs we've looked at a number of areas of project management career development. These have included;

What qualifications and accreditations are the best for professionals to take today.

Skills gaps and how you can identify where you need development the most through to specific subject areas such as planning and contracts.

They are specifically aimed to get you thinking about areas of project management where you need additional skills or knowledge.

Sometimes career development can mean looking for a new role - after all you may have gone as far as you can in your present role and making that move may be the best career development step you've ever taken. In this issue we look at the role selection process - how do you find that perfect next job and, more importantly, once you've found it how do

you ensure it becomes yours.

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](#)

### Transferable skills? \*\*

A recent Arras People applicant - Simon Roberts shares his thoughts on transferable skills in project management

After recently applying for a Project Manager role and being given the feedback that I didn't have the specific skills the client was looking for (in this case Billing, CRM and Utilities), I accept that some clients will be more choosy than others and will look for specific experience.

However, it is interesting to note that Chelsea Football Club have just appointed a new manager Jose Mourinho who (apparently) has never been a professional footballer. He has led Porto to the UEFA Cup & Champions League success and is consequently in demand. I believe that Project Management is about client satisfaction, the ability to manage a team of people, and achieving desired results. Specific technical input can always be drawn upon via the deployment of specific resources.

I believe that if you possess strong Project Management experience your skills are highly transferable. It's getting this message across to the more "flexible" clients that is the key as I believe that Project Managers can make a difference in most environments.

I would venture to say that sometimes it can be an advantage not to have a background in that specific field because it helps you as a PM to focus on the key things, and to see the wood beyond the trees.

In essence : I like to view a project in terms of; what do I have to deliver & to whom; what's the budget to work with; who are the available resources; and when do I have to deliver it. I prefer to see projects in those terms. Everything else is detail that sorts itself out during execution by drawing upon the right resources.

To contact Simon or to add a reply to the topic please contact:  
[tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk](mailto:tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk)

### When promotion is not an option - when getting a new job might be the best career development step you've ever taken

By Lindsay Scott, Senior Consultant Arras People

Different sources for different roles seem to be the flavour of the day when looking for a new role, which will give you the next challenge and development you need. In this article we discuss the key sources for finding roles and the pros and cons of each.

#### Employee Referral

Surveys carried out in the past have shown that up to 80% of all new jobs are found through referrals and direct contact with employers. Organisations tend to set up Employee Referral Schemes to entice their employees to talk to friends and family about a possible role within their organisation. Incentives

### Readers Views

From the Arras People survey carried out last month we asked;

**"What other reasons (other than lack of qualifications) do you perceive have led you to miss promotions / opportunities?"**

"not being good enough"

"not dancing to the masters tune"

"cutbacks and recruitment freezes"

"lack of diplomacy"

"workload"

"lack of practical experience"

"clients misunderstanding the difference between recruiting for a permanent employee and hiring skills that are transferable" \*\*

"ageism"

"crap bosses"

"bad interview"

"not being in the right place at the right time"

for the employee being a cash payment and the advantages to the organisation being a personal recommendation. People like to work with people they know and this is a great way to try and achieve that.

What can you do? The next time you're talking to friends, family and ex-colleagues that work within an organisation you're interested in, try to find out more about it and drop into conversation specifics like "I'd like to be a Project Manager at XXX" or "Do they have an employee referral scheme? I'd really like the opportunity to speak to someone about a role...". Being specific and direct with your friends will probably lead to them doing a little legwork for you internally within their organisation.

**Pros** - your best friend might find you your next job, a more "friendly" approach to an organisation

**Cons** - You might end up on more money or in some way compromise your relationship with friends or relations. Remember you can choose and loose you friends but not your relations, they are after all your relations.

#### **Direct contact with employers**

So the referral scheme might not be a door opener in this case, so ask yourself the question - when was the last time you tried to secure a role by contacting an organisation directly? Writing letters and picking up the phone can seem a little out of date especially when it seems that all recruitment for large organisations are carried out through newspaper or on-line media.

There is still a lot to be achieved by crafting an excellent letter which has just the right blend of marketing vs a good representation of your skills and experience. When approaching organisations in this way you are in effect marketing yourself to an organisation and showing what you have to offer, the achievement at the end is to get a response, interview and job offer.

Organisations are open to this approach, after all if they have the right people contacting them with a solution (your skills and experience) to a problem they have (recruitment issues like attracting the right people) it can save them £££ on advertising, recruitment agencies etc. Think direct marketing campaign when you start this process - letters/emails, following up with calls to each contact.

To get the contact details in the first place you need to brush up on your research skills. Start by thinking about where you want to work (Sunday Times Top 100 might be a good memory jogger) and start looking for information on their corporate website. Also start purchasing various newspapers for a period of time to gleam HR contact details. You just need a name, address and email address in the first instance. Think about brushing up on your letter writing and marketing skills by visiting a number of free resources as well as available books and publications (see the side bar). Networking is also another great way to gaining contacts within other organisations (plus valuable information on an organisation and how they work) When was the last time you attended a project management seminar for example?

**Pros** - improves your marketing, letter writing, communication and research skills. Good networking opportunities

**Cons** - time consuming, can be a disheartening process (ask any direct sales personnel)

#### **Corporate Websites**

A recent article in the Sunday Times Appointments Section (20th June 2004) highlighted the problems a lot of people face when using an organisations website to apply for a new role: no vacancies posted, minimal job specifications, poor systems and a continuous loop that never seems to achieve much. So should you bother with this approach? Yes, not all corporate websites are in such bad shape and if you are looking for a role which is not necessarily within a large blue-chip organisation you'll be surprised just how accessible their sites are.

Corporate websites can of course be used in two different ways:

- Applying for roles that are posted in the vacancies board
- Using the contact details that may be posted alongside the vacancies

If you're just interested in applying for a role which is posted on the site it can be a pretty straight forward process but often the aftercare for job seekers can feel like a "black hole". If you're right for the job they'll contact you and if you're not, you'll be left wondering what next! Be careful the jobs are often out of date. The corporates buy the systems but then forget you have to have someone managing the content....

The key to using corporate websites is to be a little more web savvy - use the details like HR contact details to send your own crafted letter (see Direct Contact with Employers), and send letters to organisations that don't necessarily have vacancies in your field. One example, a corporation advertising for a Software Tester will probably have Project Managers working within the organisation, there might not be a need today but there will probably be a need in the future and probably soon. Often an organisation is slow to place their new vacancies and you could be getting in there at just the right time

**Pros** - good research material, contact details for key people like HR Managers

**Cons** - applying for roles on-line can be painful with minimal returns

Assumption - Corporates think people want to work for them and are just spending their time surfing their boring sites

#### **Key success factors in interviews**

By Lindsay Scott, Senior Consultant Arras People

There's no doubt about the amount of competition that exists now when good roles come onto the job market but there is something you can do to increase your chances of being the successful applicant.

### Need help updating your CV?

We recommend probably the best book to use when revising or updating your CV



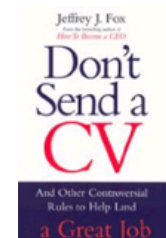
A recent candidate of ours - a seasoned Project Manager - purchased the book a few weeks ago a been writing and updating my CV for years and always without consulting any kind of advice. When I started getting fewer opportunities I thought I'd purchase the book and I was actually surprised by thought process it kicked off. Certainly worth buying and when I'm done with it I know a few friends wouldn't mind having a flick through too. Thanks for the advice on purchasing it in the first place"

[Go here](#)

### Useful resources

[Writing marketing copy](#)

[Writing letters of application](#)



Arras recommends that as much thought goes into interview preparation as possible and that means tailoring your approach to the interview just as you would with the cover letter and CV. Employers not only want to see good interview technique but they also rank perspective employees higher who have taken the time to find out as much as possible about them before the interview. One of the key thoughts an employer has is "will this applicant fit into our organisation and do a good job".

Arras People's approach with all our candidates is to give as much information, guidance and materials as possible to ensure they're on the right track, but there's work to be done on the interviewees part.

1. We have a generic interview preparation document which includes pre-interview tips, do's and don't's of interviews etc
2. We give as much information as possible about the organisation, who's interviewing and anything we need about the person/people.
3. Direct the interviewee to the organisations website and ask that they do a little research on the net (in press releases, usergroups etc)

These are the basics, and any recruitment agency you use should be providing this service to you. Other things to consider in the preparation process include: ask around friends and family to see if anyone knows someone who works for the organisation you're going for the interview with. Gaining insider knowledge is one of the best ways to really start to understand an organisation which will give you the edge over other interviewees.

Talk to people in your wider community and networks, someone you know may have had contact with employees in the organisation - and ask the question what impression did they form of the organisation? Gathering information about an organisations culture and ethos will certainly help you in the interview, especially if you can get across to your interviewer that you've done your homework.

A well prepared interviewee will certainly send the message to the interviewer that they understand the organisation and that they're a natural fit, not just for the role but for the organisation too.

## Professional mentors - a useful resource in career development

*Lindsay Scott talking to an Arras People contractor*

"Faced with a realization that poor interview technique was probably the only reason I couldn't turn my numerous opportunities over the last few months into job offers, I set about seeking help.

Clearly, when out of work for a while, you're not going to have the resources to use one of the many excellent Career development companies out there (4 to 5 Grand package!). So I searched for those who could/would offer a 'menu' based service that maybe would better match my specific and very limited requirement.

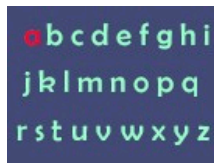
Imagine my surprise and delight when, after an email enquiry to a company not too far from home, I received a call from the MD, who after listening to my story arranged for and delivered personally an hour or so tuition by telephone followed up by considerable documentation on email and all without asking for a fee.

OK so there was no actual interview practice involved in this, but the material was useful and it gave me just the boost I needed. So I guess the moral is to be open and honest and yes be bold - what you don't asked for you won't get! You could probably apply this to other components of the job hunt process too."

*Ed - obviously our reader doesn't want to give out the name of the organisation - they'd be inundated with requests for free help! To find out more and search for reputable organisations - visit the [Association of Career Professionals](#) to find someone near you.*

## Employment A-Z: A=Agency

New laws came into effect for Recruitment Agencies and Businesses on the 6th April 2004 introducing changes and updates which affect anyone who uses agencies to find new contract roles. The key areas you should be aware of include:



### Opting In - Opting Out

The Conduct of Employment Agencies and Businesses Regulations 2003 apply to all work-seekers who provide services via their own personal service limited companies ("limited company contractors") or via umbrella companies. However, following substantial campaigning and lobbying by both the IT recruitment industry and the IT contracting community (including the Professional Contractors Group), the Department of Trade and Industry agreed a concession in the final form of the Regulations. Regulation 32(9) states that BOTH the personal service limited company AND the individual supplied by the company to carry out the work may agree, by giving the Employment Business notice, that they do not want the 2003 Regulations to apply to them. This has become known as 'opting out' of the 2003 Regulations

*Why would you opt-out?*

The 2003 Regulations contain a variety of provisions that are intended to protect vulnerable work seekers and temporary workers from being taken advantage of by unscrupulous employment bureaux. It has been successfully

## Lack of skills and experience caused recruitment problems

In a survey carried out by the CIPD, employers looked like they were in the position to employ people who lacked specific skills and experience with a view to developing people into roles

> [Full news article](#)

## Tipoff

Ever used Groove?

Groove is a great online virtual workspace tool - ideal for collaboration, document sharing etc. Also ideal for short-term projects as there is a 60 day free trial

[Go here](#)

## When good projects go bad



The next PPSO SIG event for programme & project office support professionals take place in September 2004

[Go here](#)

## Contractor Websites

[Contractor UK](#)

[NamesFacesPlaces](#)

[Contractors World](#)

[Computer Contractor](#)

[Shout 99](#)

## The Disciplinary Investigation

Many managers are confused about how the Disciplinary Investigation fits into the Disciplinary Procedure and how it should be undertaken.

argued that the 2003 Regulations are not necessarily appropriate for self-employed freelance contractors. If limited liability freelance contractors were to be bound by the legislation as originally drafted, with all the various rules and regulations to be adhered to, this could potentially prove a disincentive to clients who might otherwise consider engaging freelance contractors.

Freelance contractors are also extremely conscious of the need to demonstrate that they are operating on a true business-to-business (B2B) basis with the employment bureau in question. This is important in the context of the IR35 legislation. Many contractors believe the enforced imposition of regulations intended to protect temporary workers in general is damaging to their contention that they are operating as a 'business on their own account'; i.e. that they can take care of their own business affairs without the need for unwanted government intervention. Thus, opting out provides a discernible method for a limited company contractor to distance his/her B2B supply of professional services, from that of doing temporary work in general.

*How do you know you've opted out?*

You'll be asked to sign a form at the onset of your contact with the agency confirming your opt out status

### Identity

Also under the regulations there is a need for the agency to confirm the identity of any contractor. This can be done a number of ways and may include asking for a copy of your passport and a recent utility bill. The regulation also covers evidence of a contractors training and qualifications - and copies of certificates etc may be asked for. Opting out of the regulations may also exempt you from having to supply this information.

### Payment

Employment businesses will be unable to withhold pay in circumstances where either the client refuses to pay for work done, as a penalty for not completing an assignment or in circumstances where the worker does not produce a signed timesheet, provided the business can satisfy itself by other means that the work was done.

*See further information provided by the Recruitment Employment Confederation - [leaflet](#) (for temps) and [leaflet](#) (for Limited Company Contractors) and [website](#)*

## Are you an engineer or a leader?

By Chris Wood, Diabolo

Managing any project, programme, or business team requires a mix of skills that covers the big picture and the detail. On the one hand, an engineering mind set will accept a piece of work with a defined scope and zoom in to analyse the detail. This detailed level is required to answer questions like "how do we do it?". A common phrase that is often heard is that the Devil is in the detail. Engineers wrestle with the Devilish detail and logically design solutions. Leaders on the other hand take details, form views of this and operate at a level of generalisation. They manage the bigger picture and connect this work with others and drive the direction of the work to ensure maximum value is realised in relation to other activities. A leader will ask the "why?" question to chunk-up and explore the purpose and values behind activities. Engineers will ask the "so what?" question to zoom in and focus on building a more defined and accurate space to work within. All this supposes that some scope has been defined. What happens before the scope exists, and who is responsible for the extraction of value when the work is completed?

So to what do you aspire, leader or engineer, big picture or detail, both roles are vital but it is not always a career choice the career may choose you.

### About Diabolo

[Diabolo](#) promotes an innovative dynamic approach enabling change in organisations by connecting hard-headed business skills with the human spirit and values. Combining our collective knowledge and experience, we have created some powerful frameworks for business thinking. We call these Diabolo Journeys. We use a highly visual technique to guide clients through complex processes with clarity of thought. By combining tried and tested coaching and consulting practice with graphics, we have developed a suite of Diabolo Journeys covering many business issues."

Chris Wood is a Director of Diabolo

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[Survey - exploring the role of project co-ordinator and project support - take part today!](#)

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Readers Query: Overexperienced?

*"Each time I apply for a role I keep getting told I'm either over experienced for*

The Disciplinary Investigation is at the initial phase of the Disciplinary Procedure, with the objective of gathering the facts which are then passed on to the concerned manager who decides whether or not there should be a Disciplinary Hearing.

- The manager conducting the investigation should be different from the manager who carries out the Disciplinary Hearing
- The person conducting the investigation should have appropriate skills and experience to do so
- All potential witnesses should be seen and interviewed
- Witnesses should be advised that the interview is investigatory and fact finding (not a Disciplinary Hearing)
- Witnesses should be allowed to have a work colleague or Trade Union official accompany them
- Consider an adjournment if investigation is lengthy
- Either interviewee writes up own statements or investigator writes up statements
- Statements to be signed
- The result of the investigation could be interview notes, statements, documents, photographs or even CCTV evidence
- The investigator only produces a factual report, they do not draw conclusions

Whilst it is always preferable for witnesses to be named and disclosed, in cases where the witness fears retribution, case law has decided that it is sufficient that the employee have detailed notes of the charges against him/her.

If the concerned manager does decide that there is to be a disciplinary hearing the employee has to be properly advised of the hearing (in writing), stating the charges against him/her in sufficient detail and allowed adequate time to prepare. However, the investigation is a key stage in the disciplinary procedure.

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### The Arras People Career Clinic

Arras People will be launching its career clinic in August 2004. Registered candidates of Arras People will be able to talk directly with a dedicated consultant in a booked telephone consultation

Further news of our launch in next months tip-offs

*the role or underexperienced - is there anything I can do to change this?*

This query came from a recent registered candidate and Tipoffs reader with Arras People. Having worked within a Junior Project Manager role for the last two years, this candidate was suffering from a common problem; too experienced for co-ordination roles and too inexperienced for some of the project management roles appearing on job boards etc. Our advice in this situation is not to get too bogged down with job titles, we find that our clients often call roles certain names which don't often match the roles and responsibilities that go with it. So bear in mind when one advert is headed up with a Project Manager title, look closely at the spec it might be a Co-ordinator in disguise!

One way around this problem is to tailor your CV for each role you apply for, for example, an advertisement looking for a Project Co-ordinator could match our readers skills and experience therefore you send on the CV which shows your last role as a "Junior Project Manager / Senior Project Co-ordinator". In the next role you apply for which may be a Project Manager, use the CV which shows the last role as "Junior Project Manager" and so on. Changing the role title on your CV is not a problem as long as the facts remain true in your skills and experience within that role. You can even change some of the language or jargon used in your CV to match the flavour of a posted advertisement. Each active job seeker could have anything up to six different versions of their CV at any one time. Remember to make notes about which role you've applied for and which CV you've sent!

Our reader was also given some advice about the whole look and feel of their CV too because this might be the major cause of the feedback they were receiving. Arras gave them a few pointers and also recommended the "[Brilliant CV](#)" book.

## New Roles from Arras People

For all our current live vacancies see the website at [www.arraspeople.co.uk/vacancies/jobs.php](http://www.arraspeople.co.uk/vacancies/jobs.php)

### About Arras People:

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

Arras People still continues to attract major new clients looking for project management professionals. It's great news for us as we're also looking forward to the new office in July too. Arras is also busy planning for its first major exhibition - the CIPD conference in Harrogate which takes place in October. This attracts HR professionals from across the UK, and Arras People will be putting project management recruitment well and truly on the map.

Pass on the newsletter to any of your peers and colleagues and please consider penning an article yourself - Arras will be launching a new newsletter specifically aimed at our clients and this presents an excellent opportunity to "advertise" your knowledge.

The next edition of tip-offs will be out in August so until then, Happy Project Managing!

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### Tipoff

On-line project management method and templates from Method 123. The website ([www.method123.com](http://www.method123.com)) offers more than 50 document templates as well as a Project Management Guide to help managers undertake their projects

> [Link](#)

### Arras Corner



Fancy visiting the historical town of Arras?

Arras was featured on the Travel Telegraph section

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