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August 2004 Issue 7

Welcome to issue 7 of Tip-Offs. A more chilled out and laid back issue of tip-offs this month for everyone as we explore the urban myth that more people hand in their resignation during and after their summer break more than any other time of the year. As well as our regular contributors, we also take an initial look at home working - probably one of the best places to be working in the summer, and for those thinking about change, Arras introduces a new Clinic Service to provide individually tailored career and project advice.

Something we would like you to do is comment on what you read and value your opinions on the subjects we have written about over the past year. We encourage your comments and views, we also want to know what you would like to read more about in relation to the content of Tip-Offs into the future. Please send your comments, thoughts ideas to tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk

So whatever you're doing this summer we hope you find this an interesting and useful read, do you know what Arras and Shakespeare have in common?

For any feedback or comments please get in touch at: tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk

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



Time for a move?

The summer holidays are notoriously a time when many people seriously consider handing in their notice. The combination of winding down and settling into a slower pace of life for 2 weeks or so, gets many people thinking about their lives and asking themselves the question - am I happy in my job?

For many people dreaming about resigning whilst floating away on the lilo with ice cold beer in hand, remains just that, a dream. For others, this time of year can actually kickstart the process for real. For some, beginning to relax, smile alot more and feel unstressed for the first time in ages actually helps assess their jobs and roles alot more effectively - you're not in the middle of doing the role sat on that sunbed and actually when you stop and think for a minute, you can ask yourself, do I enjoy doing it anymore anyway!?

For some, this clearer perspective is all they need to hand in their resignation immediately on their return. One candidate speaking with Arras People recently got in touch following a holiday and subsequent resignation, they said, "I decided to hand in my notice and get out of my last role before having another job to go into. There were a couple of motivators really, one being that I realised I wasn't going to get that two-year promised pay rise no matter how much I worked to get noticed and the second, that I could feel myself getting more and more bitter about it. It's things like this that really affect your attitude and it's probably an attitude that gets noticed by future potential employers. It was definitely the right time to go"

Sometimes leaving a role can be a very difficult choice to make, there is so much to consider and take into account. For some the emotive decision comes easily and they act upon it, for others, careful and considered planning needs to take place. Here are just a few of the things to consider if you're thinking about leaving your job this summer.

- There really is a seasonal aspect to job-hunting - the times to avoid are pretty obvious - summer holidays, Christmas and Easter. Staff responsible for taking on new employees AND contractors are away from work and very little decision-making gets done.
- Job hunting can be a full-time job and it can dis-heartening so make the most of your personal network first - your next rewarding job could just as easily come through contacts of your friend, sister etc.
- Don't burn your bridges - again an obvious one but it has been known to happen. This can affect not only the outcome of references but you never know the how, where or when you might come into contact with the organisation again - they might end up being a client of yours!
- Really think about what you want out of your next role - just looking for something which uses your current skill sets or experience may not provide you with the challenges you want and you could end up in the same boat by the next holiday season!, also think about the kind of organisation you want to work within - a good place to start is the Sunday Times Top 100

We'll let you know what the job-seeker statistics look like in the next issue of tip-offs as people start returning from their summer holidays!

Want to talk to someone about your career? Arras People opens the doors to the Project Management Clinic

Useful links

[ACAS](#)

[Workplace Fairness](#)

[Sunday Times Top 100](#)

[BusinessBalls](#)

[TotalJobs](#)

[Just for fun](#)

[i-resign.com](#)

Public sector image problem

In a Totaljobs survey carried out with jobseekers, the results showed that willingness to consider posts within the public sector are being affected by the bureaucratic image the public sector has.

82% of those polled said the public sector was too bureaucratic.

[> Full news article](#)

Where do our project management professionals go on holiday?

Unfortunately an

By Lindsay Scott, Arras People

I like chatting to the people that call up everyday at Arras, whether it's someone enquiring about a role we have or just wanting to have a chat about their careers or whether we can potentially help them find their next job.

But like a lot of people, we're also busy talking to clients (to get those roles in the 1st place!), interviewing like mad (yep - we telescreen everyone we put in front of the client - see our [FAQ](#) for more information) and the other general day to day stuff. But, like I said, we enjoy talking to people about their careers, so we've decided to open up a clinic. For an initial period this clinic is only available to the tip-off readers. On three evenings - starting in September 2004 you'll be able to talk to an Arras People consultant about anything you want to. Split into three distinct areas: we're available to talk to you about your programme management career, project management career or project support career.

Launch dates are September and we'll inform everyone when the doors are officially open!

Is homeworking all its cracked up to be?

In our summer chilled out edition of tip-offs we take a look at the widely held belief that at the pinnacle of work/life balance the ideal place to be working is at home. The newest member to the team at Arras, Mick Mason tells it as it is.

Your friends and neighbours will probably think you have a great job if you get the opportunity to work from home. Those of you who already do will know the reality is a little different. Words like isolation, lack of resources and motivation spring to mind. But enough with the negatives, you can peruse those at your leisure, let's look at the positives. Now home working isn't for everyone, you need to be self motivated, enthusiastic and capable of working under your own direction without going off at a tangent. You need to be aware that although that 10 second commute from the bedroom to the office is a killer you still have to be available on-time and on-demand. You need to understand that although you're "on your own" you're still part of a team.

Although working from home isn't for everybody it can be extremely rewarding. You'll find that you get to spend more time with your cats, or your PC's (for those developers out there). You'll find that with the right support you'll be just as effective if not more so than working out of an office.

As with any job it requires resources and some of the fundamentals are a desktop PC of-course, or a laptop. A good Internet connection, preferably broadband but if you only need to send and receive mail then a modem will suffice. An office, or some dedicated space so you feel like you are working and you can focus. Don't be tempted to drop a table in the front room and expect the TV to just sit there. If you have family they will be around also. You're also going to need good technical support also because without it you really are on your own if anything goes wrong.

The benefits though are great. You get to work at your own pace, which for those of you who are self motivated won't be a problem. You get to work flexible hours - and yes, that means a 12 hour day is part time...! You'll get all the support you need providing you procure it yourself and most of all: you'll find that you enjoy it.

Are projects just a sum of their parts?

By John Gough, Diabolo

Why IT projects go wrong, is a question posed many times, just this month following an eight month investigation, the influential Work and Pensions Committee described the Child Support Agency system due for delivery later this year as, "over-spec, over budget and overdue" and generally their view was that the development of government computer systems was an "appalling waste of public money". Meanwhile in the United States, the Standish Group estimate that only 28% of all IT projects hit their targets in terms of time, budget, and functionality. So the issue is not just confined to the UK or just government projects.

The usual reasons are quoted: poor communication, poor project management, unrealistic requirements, lack of stakeholder involvement, scope creep etc, etc.

All these reasons are valid, but they ignore the very nature of projects. IT projects are designed to self-destruct. The role of the project manager is not so much to guide the project through to a successful conclusion, but more to prevent the inevitable crash from happening. For the project manager it's like sitting on time bomb, the clock can be heard ticking, but how do we prevent the project blowing sky high?

All projects start with a big idea, and based on the big idea the stakeholders & IT project team create the big picture describing what the system is and what it will do. The benefits are articulated, the scope is outlined, the business case developed, and the functions are described. This is all big picture activity, the team are cool and relaxed, they understand what is required, and are confident how to deliver.

The time bomb has not yet started ticking, but a faint tick is just audible as

overwhelming 37% go nowhere! (chance would be a fine thing). Here's hoping they utilise their planning skills and remember to plan it into their workloads for next year!

Spain - 12.5%
Rest of Europe - 12.5%
Australia/NZ - 25%
Rest of the World - 12%

Complaints against recruitment agencies up 58%

The REC calls on HR to be more discerning in their choices of which recruitment agencies to use

> [Full news article](#)

NIKU - the free Project Planning Tool

NIKU just went OpenSource - a free alternative to MS Project

[Download it and try it out today](#)

When good projects go bad



The next PPSO SIG event for programme & project office support professionals take place in September 2004. Places still available and the full agenda available. Places cost £220 for the overnight stay, conference, networking etc etc

[Go here](#)

[Agenda](#)



"The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Steven Covey

Free Project Management Tutorial

the project manager begins to plan and break down the work. Milestones, phases, chunks, work packages, and streams start to feature. The clock however really starts to tick loudly as we add complexity and delegate the chunks to different teams: business, IT, software, outsourced, offshore, onshore, third party, vendor, strategic partner, infrastructure, and network teams, all take a slice of the action. The project manager has taken the jigsaw out of the box, given the pieces away, and expects everyone to meet again sometime in the future to rebuild the big picture from the sum of the parts.

The German philosopher Max Scheler pointed out that when you take a living creature, dissect it, label its parts, what you end up with may reveal very little about the nature of the original living creature in question. What Scheler suggested was that there may be something in the way the parts interact, that is key to understanding how the whole functions. From biology to technology, but if individuals and project teams only understand a part of a project, how can they properly understand how the whole functions.

So how do we stop the clock and manage the outcome, well by doggedly keeping hold of the big picture and not letting go:

- Begin with the end in mind, its one of Steven Covey's seven habits of highly effective people, and it works for projects too.
- Don't just communicate the big picture, over communicate, and when you think you are going over the top its probably ten times too little.
- We are often good at communicating to the client and the stakeholders, its called managing expectations, but it is equally important if not more so, to continually present the big picture to the teams.
- Talk face to face with individuals, and check their understanding.
- Start every meeting with an overview of the big picture and link the objective of the meeting to the overall objective.
- Keep the stakeholders involved, ask them to meet, talk and enthuse with the teams.
- Create a project office where the big picture is displayed, build exhibits, paint pictures, draw diagrams but make the end result come alive.

In this way you can make everyone and everything part of the big picture and not just a bit part.

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."

John Gough is a Director of Diabolo

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

Readers Query: Wanna be a PM?

Advice I have been asked for...

Quite often I get into discussions with people who are asking for advice. More likely than not it is a question around;

How do I get into project management?
Should I do the prince exams?

I am flattered to be asked for this advice, but there is no single answer, each person has a different background of experience and needs to be listened to.

I never get asked questions about how I would handle this particular project situation.

Such as how do I get a stakeholder to believe what I am saying?
What techniques can I use to crash this element of a project?

I guess that's because I am now a recruiter, just around the second hand car salesman or estate agents in the trusted stakes!

Actually I am a very experienced programme and project manager and consultant who with a set of ex colleagues decided to go out on their own and prove they could build a business. Now that is an experience!

Anyway back to the subject, yes often the question I get asked "how do I get into project management?" good question - how do you? The exams clearly don't make you a project manager, just look at all the late, cancelled government projects that are often cut with large overspends. They must have SARs, PRINCE and OGC Gateway people by the dozen. Don't get me wrong, I am not knocking training and qualifications, I'm all for a common method and language (where a checkpoint means the same to the whole team) and making project management more professional!

Anyway if you want to know how you as an individual might become a project manager give us at Arras a call for a discussion, trust me you won't be wasting your time.

> [See the new clinic article](#)

Great online guide on the management of software projects. New to Software Project Management? Get in the fast track with this great course!

> [Go Here](#)

Rules for creating a successful PM career

Article from [ContractorMag.com](#) by H Kent Craig.

Exerpt; " Your career path in project management is just that, a path, not a high jump or pole vault attempt. Acknowledge to yourself on an emotional as well as intellectual level that, your considerable abilities as a project manager aside, it will probably be years before you get enough age and experience on you to be trusted with the really marquee jobs."

[Read the full article](#)

IT recruitment picks up

" The number of job vacancies advertised for IT professionals has grown rapidly over the past three months, as the recovery in the jobs market accelerates."

Report from [PersonnelToday.com](#)

> [Go Here](#)

Arras Exhibition

cipd | annual conference & exhibition
27-29 October 2004 **Enter >**

visit Arras People at the CIPD Conference and Exhibition on the 27-29th October if you happen to be in Harrogate.

[See us on Stand M34!](#)

Arras Corner

From project management to william shakespeare in two easy steps!

Did you know that the definition of arras is "a wall hanging; a tapestry."

"Arras tapestries were fashionable in the lavish Burgundian court, and became coveted throughout Europe in the castles of the wealthy from about 1350 to 1460 . In [Shakespeare's](#) "Hamlet", characters "hid behind the arras" to overhear secrets"

New Roles from Arras People

Taken from the
theotherside.co.uk

For all our current live vacancies see the website at
www.arraspeople.co.uk/vacancies/jobs.php

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About Arras People:

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

Arras People has been busy working away developing the candidate side of the business - bringing better tools and interfaces which will ultimately make managing your information, CV and profiles much easier for everyone. We listened to the many candidates feedback we've received about the ability to update your own data & status and being better informed about new vacancies. We're also listening to our clients needs - and will be developing new tools to allow our clients find their next project management professional faster.

All will be revealed in September 2004! In the meantime, we hope you're all having a great summer and look forward to issuing the next tip-offs in September 2004

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