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October 2004 Issue 8

Welcome back after the summer holidays - feeling refreshed? Yes, seems like an age ago. In this issue of tip-offs we announce two new areas to you from Arras People - both designed to benefit you - the project management professional - in your career. The aProfile and the Clinic - both new candidate services.

We also kick off the autumn with some new project manager interview questions - get prepared for the new job or just test yourself if you're staying put for a while. We share further reader's queries and also look at the new grievance/disciplinary procedure that may affect the people manager part of your roles.

For any feedback or comments please get in touch at: tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk
We've had a few responses about how to unsubscribe and/or change your email details - there is an unsubscribe part at the bottom but unfortunately it's white writing on a white background (we're trying to fix this problem) just highlight at the bottom of the page to view this.

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

Changing the face of project management recruitment



There are many agencies out there but very few, if many at all, that specialise in Project Management. As those of you who are familiar with us will know Arras® People Ltd specialise in this arena and have seasoned PM professionals manning the phones when you call or apply for a position.

Arras® People needed to enhance the service they provide to candidates while at the same time not diluting what we do or the level of service you receive. How do we do this...? Simply: through aProfile™. This is a new application launched by Arras® People in order to better help our candidates get ahead in their PM careers. What sets aProfile™ apart...?

Uniqueness: aProfile™ is a bespoke designed application dedicated to arras people and specifically focused on the PM sector.

Usability: Because aProfile™ is designed for use by PM professionals it asks those questions that you would expect. It takes far less time to complete than other on-line recruitment facilities and allows you to control when, where and how much information is input.

Knowledge: aProfile™ has been designed by PM professionals for PM professionals. This means that you, the candidate, have a facility unlike any other - dedicated to you and your career.

Arras® People recognised that there was this requirement and plugged the gap and have many other developments in the pipeline that will enable users of their service to reap the benefits. While most other agencies will role out applications that are focused on streamlining their own operations, Arras® People are committed to providing candidates with the best possible service they can receive - irrespective of the roles they are applying for.

So what's in it for you? Arras People believe we will be able to find you a role much quicker and efficiently than before - you login add or update your details and we see exactly when you're available, what role you're looking for, which sector you want to work in etc etc. Instantly!

Arras People continues to vet everyone's profile to ensure we only have the best project professionals registered, and this simply means we can carry on attracting the best clients with the best jobs.

So what now? aProfile is live now so take 10 minutes of your life to add your details to make sure you stay ahead in your project management career.

[Register with us](#)

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

By Lindsay Scott, Arras People

Arras People officially launches the Project Management Clinic today exclusively to Tip-Off readers first. In our last edition of tip-offs we shared with you the thinking behind this idea;

aProfile

Logon to arras profile at:
www.arrasprofile.co.uk

- Register your username and email
- Wait for email confirmation
- Enter your username and password
- Start getting ahead with aprofile

For further information please contact [Business Support @ Arras People](#)

Summer Blues Revisited - What's Happening in the PM Job Market this Month?

After covering the issue of summer holidays and the increased number of people who hand in their notice during and after the holiday season, we re-visit the phenomena now we're into October 2004.

One recent article from Personnel Today showed that nearly 60% of people **dread** going back to work after the holidays. See the [full article](#) to find out why.

JobServe - the popular job board site report a surge in people uploading and searching for new roles this month. On another note - they also have an

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. On three evenings - starting in October 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.

Scheduled dates are the 12th, 13th and 21st of October 2004 - see the site @ [PMC Clinic](#) for more information and book yourself an appointment today.

Project Management Interviews - Short and Sweet

You need to get in the mood fast, it could be several months or even years since you've had to face another round of interviews with new employers or on the phone with recruitment agencies so here's Arras People's short and sweet question samples to get you in the mood.

There are always going to be some basic questions that you get asked everytime you apply for a role through a recruitment agency and then you'll meet Arras and hopefully we'll ask a few different ones:

1. You applied for XXXX role - could you tell me what attracted you to apply for it in the first place?
2. What makes you the right person for this role?
3. What skills and experience do you want to highlight straight away in relation to this role?
4. What relevant experience do you have in - (a) could be a particular industry sector (b) a particular project subject matter
5. Tell me about the process knowledge you have - IT development lifecycles - project management methodology
6. I notice you have the PRINCE2 practitioners accreditation - do you have your candidate number to hand or would you be able to email it over to me later?
7. The role demands that the Project Manager has exceptional leadership skills and a good deal of assertiveness - how would convey this about yourself?
8. What would others in your team right now or previous role really say about you? What kind of feedback on people management skills?
9. Tell me why in five words your CV should be in front of the client today?
10. Having heard more about the role is there anything that makes you want this role even more than before?
11. The specification for the role is asking for a proactive, enthusiastic and ambitious individual - are you this?
12. Are you passionate about your project management role?
13. What elements of your role do you not like performing at present - why?
14. What was the last thing you learnt?
15. Describe your last conflict situation on a programme or project - how was it resolved?

In the next issue of tip-offs we look at interviews again, providing more sample questions in relation to PRINCE2. More and more interviewers want to test your specific knowledge and sometimes even asking these questions to try and catch you out - are you really an accredited project management professional?

Practical Tip-Off: How to create a RAG report

By Mick Mason - Business Support, Arras People

Microsoft Excel Conditional Formatting....OK, I know - traffic lights...! Well, that's what everyone calls them anyway...!

The concept is really quite simple and many people use this system because looking at a spreadsheet full of data doesn't immediately grab you. Take the fact that you have deadlines for example, rather than looking at the values wouldn't it be better if a deadline turned yellow when it was two weeks away and maybe red if it had been passed...? RAG reports have become increasingly popular on projects not just because it obviously represents project deadlines but also because it's easy to do in MS Excel.

Here's a simple example to get you started:

1. Open Excel and insert 01/01/2004 in cell A1. Excel will automatically recognise this as a date.
2. Now insert 01/01/2005 in cell A2
3. In cell D1 enter the following formula:
4. =TODAY()

Note: A better way of presenting this would be (but this does not work with conditional formatting): =TEXT(NOW(),"mmmm dd, yyyy")

5. Now select cells A1 & A2 and select "Format | Conditional Formatting" from the menu

interesting article on employers views of candidates C.V's - see the [full article](#)

And Arras can report that there has been a reduction in Project Managers registering for roles during the months of July & August but we're starting to see a rise yet again as we move into the autumn.

So what's hot this month in the PM job market?

- Healthcare
- Insurance
- Banking

Healthcare project management roles seem to be very popular at the moment - a direct correlation with the government's initiatives in the health sector and the springing up of new departments perhaps?. Insurance and banking PM roles are also increasingly common - a direct result of the Searbanes Oxley Act?

There are also significantly more contractor roles this month than permanent

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

Arras People will be meeting existing and new clients at the CIPD exhibition in Harrogate at the end of the month.

Arras will not only be actively promoting the business but also spending time talking about the project management profession, careers, feedback from candidates on how agencies are perceived.

Got a question or comment you want to put to a HR Professional?*

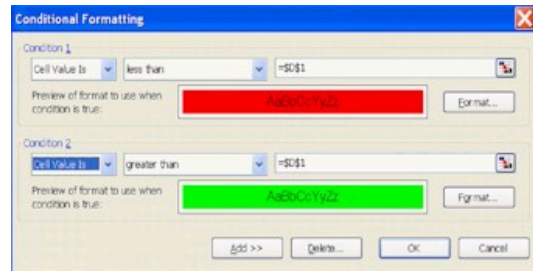
hrcomment@arraspeople.co.uk

*in strictest confidence

We'll let you know how it went in the November issue

6. complete the dialog box as follows:

Note: Select the "Patterns" tab when you've selected the "Format" button and this will give you the option to change the cell background colour



Cells A1 and A2 should now be red and green respectively.

You could just as easily have inserted =>today()-30 for the colour to change 30 days before today's date or +30 for 30 days after today's date.

For those of you who already know how to use this system and even those who don't I'll post a little something in the next issue or so about using VBA with MS Excel.

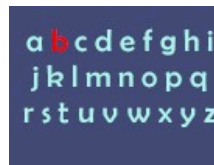
Mick can be contacted at: business_support@arraspeople.co.uk

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

Employment A-Z: B=Bad Behaviour

A new change in Employment Act 2002: Disciplinary & Grievance Procedure comes into force in October 2004, making it more difficult for people managers to sack employees*



As many project management professionals also have some people management responsibilities - their project team members or other employees if working within a matrix management environment, it's vital that the procedure is understood and adhered to.

What you need to know

There is a minimum requirement/checklist on standard dismissal procedures, applies to all dismissals including redundancy, sickness, conduct or capability:

1. Employer to set down in writing nature of conduct, capability or circumstances which may result in dismissal.
2. Employer to send copy to employee.
3. Employer to inform employee basis of complaint.
4. Employer to invite employee to a meeting to discuss issue.
5. Employer to inform employee of decision after the meeting.
6. Employer to offer employee right of appeal.
7. Employer to invite employee to further meeting to discuss appeal.
8. Employer to have more senior manager to hear appeal.
9. Employer to communicate final decision to employee.
10. Employer not to delay unreasonably carrying out the actions.
11. Timing of all meetings to be reasonable.
12. Location of all meetings to be reasonable.
13. Employer to ensure they conduct meeting in such a way that employee can explain their cases.

You may have HR departments that deal with areas of employment law like this but the project management angle is also very interesting, just how will your project objectives and results suffer if a team member and you have to go through this whole procedure?

* Recent article from [Personnel Today](#)

Advice on any area of employment and consultancy see [John Stamford & Associates](#). Thanks to John Stamford for providing the information for this article.

Readers Query: It's taking ages...

Arras People takes a lot of calls during every working day from a variety of candidates all looking for advice on different things but with one common theme - project management of course!

We also get quite a few frustrated calls from people who have been looking for a new role for quite some time and starting to feel despondent about the whole thing. It's a fact that finding a new permanent role can sometimes take up to three months so it's no wonder people start to feel frustrated.

So why up to three months? There a few factors and here are some Arras talks about with its candidates:

News

Project management must be adequately funded, says inquiry into £1 billion hospital megaproject

[> Article from the Chartered Institute of Building](#)

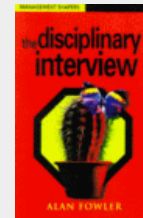
BCS address the "80% of large IT projects fail" issue

"British Computer Society (BCS) has published its highly relevant "Project Management for IT- Related Projects" textbook, to complement a new foundation certificate in IS project management from the Society's Information Systems Examination Board (ISEB)"

Taken from [PublicTechnology.net](#)

Further Info

[ACAS](#)



Just for fun

It could be worse... at least you won't see your disciplinary actions all over the Net - Show 'em the red card - [the FA Disciplinary Headlines](#)

6 steps to a clear project plan

See the recent on-line article from [Computer Weekly](#)

Arras Corner

From project management to the first sleuth ever

- Lots of clients like to take their time - they're looking to recruit someone to join their organisation so they want to make sure they're getting the right person
- Even clients sometimes underestimate the timescales involved - everyone has a day job to perform and sometimes the clients we deal with are the programme director or project manager not the human resources department - the project often demands more attention!
- Getting organised and co-ordinating the process - there are often big gaps between the initial screening calls - being called for an interview and then a second or third - getting references and finally getting a start date. If the decision makers are not on holiday, doing the day job or generally just having a life the process can get reduced dramatically
- People are much more specific when looking for a new permanent role - after all this is a permanent job and you, the candidate, need to make sure it's the right job for you. The only way to know this for sure is to follow the exact same process the client does - shop around and take your time.
- Too many factors involved - does the ideal role for you actually exist and will you ever find it? Being too specific - the right location, salary, benefits, culture, roles and responsibilities - may be blinkering you from looking at all the opportunities out there.

New Roles from Arras People

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

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About Arras People:

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

It's hard to believe that the summer holidays are over and we're now in the run up to Christmas, good news is that the months of October, November and early Christmas are notoriously busy times in recruitment.

Arras People have been busy preparing the launch of aProfile over the last few weeks so please try it out and let us know what you think. After our exhibition at the end of October we'll let you know what the HR professionals think of the concept (and the reality!)

We'd also love to hear from you via the clinic too, so if there is any question or query you have about your project management career - please book a slot. We might not have all the answers but we reckon it'll be fun finding out.

As ever, if you feel like contributing an article and sharing your thoughts, frustrations or grievances with the rest of the tip-offs community- please do so (we now have over 2000 subscribers!)

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Born in Arras in the early 19th century Eugene Francois Vidocq was regarded as the first person to employ techniques that made up the science of "criminal investigation".

A colourful character who at one time had been a criminal himself he was known as a "a detective who was larger in life than any fictional character could ever be. An ex-con, forger, thief, smuggler, bigamist and possible cross-dresser, Vidocq used his excellent criminal connections to become a police informer, and in a stunning example of poacher-turned-gamekeeper, rose to the exalted police rank of head of the Sûreté."

Taken from the [International Herald Tribune](#) and the [Crime Library](#)

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