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November 2004 Issue 9

Welcome to the 9th issue of tip-offs, in this issue we have a few guest writers sharing their experiences, thoughts, issues and in the case of Ackerman-Chase even help (see the C for CV article). We welcome articles from any of our readers - especially anything that provokes! The job market continues to be busy in the project management arena so if you're thinking about putting off a new role until the New Year - don't!

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](#)

I Don't Like Mondays.....or Tuesdays, Wednesdays

By John Gough, Diabolo



Has that Monday morning feeling extended to the rest of the week, it seems British workers are fed up with their lot, if current surveys are to be believed.

The latest OPP survey of over 1000 UK employees, 'Changing Times', found a plethora of unhappy employees, half of whom had considered quitting their jobs.

In another report, 'In Search of Meaning in the Workplace', from the education and research organisation Roffey Park in conjunction with Management Today it was found that 70% of employees are disenchanted, and are looking for more meaning in their work. "People need to, and want to work and belong to communities in which they can make a meaningful contribution" said Linda Holbeche the report's author, "work for many people provides a source of identity. People work such long hours that work is often their social outlet as well. Greater emphasis on the 'dog eat dog' work mentality, have made relationships more mistrustful and change more difficult to manage"

The issue central to both reports is change, 67% of HR managers interviewed in the OPP study felt that excessive change in the workplace had led to their workforce feeling demotivated and uncommitted.

Recently, I was working with an organisation that was running courses: 'Making Change Business as Usual', this may be the mantra of the executive board, but the way change is managed in organisations has an overriding impact on morale and motivation.

Change in organisations can be summed by Mark Thomson the incoming Director General of the BBC, "were going to have to change the BBC more rapidly, and more radically over the next three or four years than at any time in its history"

The dilemma at the top of organisations is that the pace of change is gathering pace, but at the same time their workforce is becoming more change averse.

This is not surprising as so often change means job losses. Justin King CEO of Sainsbury's has just announced a programme of 1000 management jobs, being replaced by 3000 shop floor jobs, as the retailer changes and gets back to basics and ensures the shelves are being filled. OK, so management may be partly responsible for the loss in profit, sales, and market share. Collectively 1000 management staff lose their job, but individually change which means losing your livelihood is anything but business as usual.

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

10 Steps of Project Management

Mistake #No.1

Who writes the requirements?

This tip explains why it might be a good idea to use your vendor to take ownership of writing the requirements for your project. If you write the requirements who will defend you and 'your requirements' when they are discovered incorrect or that you made too many assumptions.

If your organisation writes the entire requirements for a new project, then you make yourself contractually responsible for all of its mistakes. Guess who has to pay if something goes wrong? It's less risky to pay a vendor - or a few - to help.

Outline your business objectives, then pay the vendor to analyse how they could achieve them. That payment ensures that the vendor can't argue that they were given insufficient resources to scope your project. And it ensures that if your vendor misunderstands your requirements, you're not the one who's contractually bound to pay to put things right.

Sure now you can blame the vendor however, they will say the business objectives are inadequate, so make sure the right people in the business - the stakeholders, sign off the business objectives with you. One last tip, challenge any assumption you may have made, so that the stakeholders understand what they are signing off and the possible impacts on them. Experience says people

Amber is the Real Green

By Chris Grey, Project Management Professional

As project managers we are often asked to provide reports on the status of a project in simple, easy to understand, terms. The use of Red, Amber, Green (RAG) indicators has become the de facto standard for indicating if a project is slipping badly (Red), beginning to show signs of slippage (Amber) or is nicely on track (Green).

However, all Project Managers have a responsibility to their employer to ensure that the company is getting best value for its money. This includes getting good productivity from the staff. So it is entirely possible that in a project environment which is consistently showing green the members of the team are not being taxed in any way. While this is good for the project it does not meet the management requirements.

I would propose that if a project manager is going to meet the business objectives of the company (maximising profit) they should treat Amber as the real Green. This, if properly managed, would indicate that the team members are being stretched to complete their tasks in the time allotted.

There is a hidden benefit in adopting this strategy that may surprise many managers (not good managers though). Morale in a department where everyone is being stretched to achieve deadlines is often very high. A fine balancing act I agree, make the deadlines impossible and morale drops but make them just difficult to achieve and the sense of achievement felt by those involved is nothing short of remarkable.

So, the next time you look at your project's RAG indicators give a thought to those tasks showing Green and ask yourself if they are really good news for your company or just good for you.

If you would like to contact Chris about the article please get in touch: tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk

How the Programme and Project Support Office (PPSO) Can Assist in a Runaway Project

By Lindsay Scott, Arras People



the programme & project support office
specialist interest group

The PPSO SIG (Programme and Project Support Office Specialist Interest Group) holds bi-annual conferences and conventions for professionals with an interest in this area. At the last event in September useful collateral and presentations were shared - all in the area of "When Projects Go Bad"

The Agenda

The [Convention](#) took place over two days and kicked off with "Starting The Programme Or Project Off On The Right Foot"

A [presentation](#) led by John Zacher on some of the things that can be done to ensure project management professionals minimise the chances of problems later - i.e... things to do at the at the start of the programme or project.

What Problems Do We Face

Delegates were divided into two groups - each group identified what problems and risk may happen in the proposed projects and developed risk response plans using one or more of a range of risk identification and assessment methods

Keeping a watching brief to make sure the project keeps on the right path

A [presentation](#) by David Marsh on how to keep an eye on the programme and project by the deployment of effective programme or project assurance. David looked at "What is Programme and Project Assurance and how can your PPSO support this activity?"

How Could The PPSO Help To Resolve This Particular Crisis

A highly focused workshop using brainstorming tools to come up with solutions to the crisis and define the role of the PPSO in helping to resolve the crisis that has occurred.

Materials and further reading - available from the [PPSO SIG site](#)

Project Management Interviews - PRINCE2

In the last issue of Project Management Tipoffs we looked at a few interview questions which covered the basics of your skills,

often don't know what they want until they get what they don't want.

Adapted from the little book of project mistakes
[Best Practice Group PLC](#)

Handling redundancy in an interview - excellent article

"...today's job interviewers have much less sympathy for managers who end up on the street after being blindsided by reorganizations, consolidations, and layoffs."

"...don't count on much mercy... It's human nature for a recruiter or hiring manager to wonder, "Why does this person always seem to end up on the short list when there's a layoff? Can he or she really be any good?" ... "

"How do you surmount potential employers' concern that you're unable to see what's going on around you?"

You have to develop a story that makes a virtue of your history of downsizing. Talk about what you learned in each situation. As you meet with a prospective employer, be able to speak authoritatively about its place in its industry, as well as about its competitors. You need to show that, despite what has happened in the past, you really do see the big picture... "

> [By Liz Ryan - CEO and Founder of WorldWIT](#)

> [Read the full article at BusinessWeek](#)

Let us know your thoughts - agree or disagree?

turn to PRINCE2, something which many employers ask for in their role specifications but would you be prepared to answer questions on it in an interview?

So you think you're all prepared for your interview but what about specific questions in PRINCE2, after all it could have been a few years ago that you passed your accreditation. More and more clients are looking for "proof" when it comes to employing project professionals so how would you tackle these?

1. What do you believe are the benefits derived from using PRINCE2?
2. Which stage of PRINCE do you believe is the most crucial if the project is to be a success?
3. Explain how PRINCE helps you as a project manager manage risk?
4. What is a stage?
5. Describe the role of the senior user?
6. How do you best use PRINCE2?
7. How do you best adapt PRINCE2 for some of your past projects?
8. What's a Project Mandate?
9. What control is closely related to configuration management?
10. In which process is the "Project Brief" finalised?

With many of the questions related to PRINCE2 there will be an element of how do you demonstrate or show your proven knowledge and experience. Using examples of where you've used the various elements of PRINCE2 or had to initiate some of the stages or processes in projects will stand you in good stead. Another angle is where PRINCE2 has had to be used on some of your projects in the past and where it was a hindrance rather than a help.



Practical Tip-Off: Introduction to VBA

By Mick Mason - Business Support, Arras People

Many project administrators out there will already be familiar with the term VBA or "Visual Basic for Applications" and you'd be surprised at how easy it is and also how no additional applications are required.

Everything from automating report generation and e-mail collocation to displaying input boxes or simple dialog boxes prompting the user or even user level tracking can be done using VBA. You can customise form navigation and queries in MS Access or completely customise MS Word so it doesn't even look like Word.

User level tracking is particularly useful in a large environment where many people have access to one file. Also, the ability to open multiple files sequentially when just one is requested can also be a benefit and save time selecting multiple dialog boxes to "OK" links to external files.

Although many of you will be familiar with input validation and conditional formatting VBA really comes into play when you want to control and track a user's input.

One other area you might be interested in which I will cover at a later stage is customised help files. Giving the user the ability to help themselves rather than asking you the questions and freeing up much more of your time. In the next issue we start off with something simple and easy just to get you started.

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: C=Curriculum Vitae

By Sarah Pearson
ACKERMAN CHASE CV SERVICES



CV writing can be an awesome task if you have not had to face competing for jobs for quite some time. Many project managers are fortunate enough to gain business by referral, without a CV ever having to change hands. But sooner or later, even they are likely to find themselves 'back out there'.

So what are you competing with?

Probably a great deal more than was the case even a year ago. Employers and recruiters are catching on fast to online recruitment. Because of this, job opportunities are being opened up to a much wider geographical area. Therefore, the need to sell yourself to the hilt, just to get a look in, has never been more vital.

What's happening in the PM Job market this month?

Healthcare and public sector roles continue to be hot roles during October and November.

A quick poll at Arras shows that permanent roles are still the leading type of role clients are currently looking to fill (57%)

Christmas Season

From previous years, Arras People notes that the job market will begin to slow down around mid-December, but there will also be some clients that like to have interviews lined up for the few weeks into January.

PMI News

3rd Edition of PMI's Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBok):

"The Project Management Institute (PMI) has published the highly anticipated Third Edition of A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide).

Organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of project management to achieve repeatable, successful project outcomes. This new edition of the de-facto global standard for the project management profession is an indispensable business tool for any organization's quest for strategic success through projects."

> Taken from the PMI.org site.

News from the National Audit Office

The National Audit Office published a report on 25/10/04:

"Sir John Bourn, head of the National Audit Office, reported today on progress made by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) to improve the procurement of information technology (IT) systems by departments and agencies. He concluded that OGC has put structures in place to minimize the risk of future IT failure and that department and supplier behaviour is positively changing, but that the OGC

Make the CV work hard for you

Most clients that I talk to tell me that they have no problem at all selling themselves face-to-face. Interviews - bring it on! But CV writing is a different matter altogether. You can't change a recruiter's mind about you if they don't like the look of you on paper. So your task is to create maximum impact within concise, tightly written text. It's all a matter of good marketing. Create the mood for the reader - use as much white space as you can and use concise, informative sentences. Address the recruiters' needs, not your own.

It's all too easy to cram in every little thing you've ever done, fearing that if you omit anything, it might have been the one detail that would have swung it for you. In actual fact, recruiters won't read it all, they won't have time, so the chances are high that the point you were trying to get across will be missed anyway. Draw the reader's eye to the information you most want them to know about - technical skills, project types, professional accomplishments, etc. Give them context, so the recruiter understands the significance of your achievements.

Consider a situation or task you were faced with. What action did you take to resolve it or to deliver what was needed? What was the result of your actions? Was the project delivered to deadline and within budget? Did they get repeat business? Were you instrumental in their increased profits? Use industry-specific keywords whenever possible - it has a positive psychological effect on the reader. It implies you are on their wavelength.

Recruiters ask themselves 'What's in it for me?'. Make sure they know what value you can bring to their organisation.

CV writing can be tedious, but in order to get your application narrowed down from possibly a hundred to three, it has to be the one of the most crucial aspects of your job-hunt. Spend lots of time on getting it right, and it will pay dividends.

Sarah Pearson
ACKERMAN CHASE CV SERVICES
www.ackerman-chase.com

Ackerman Chase is a partnership with over twenty years' combined experience within management and recruitment. We have experienced the frustration of sifting through hundreds of poor CV's to find suitable candidates to fill our positions.

The main problem seems to be that applicants are not really aware of the quantity and quality of the competition for the jobs they want.

Our research of companies, large and small, shows that most don't invite people for interview because the CV does not differentiate them adequately from the other applicants, and therefore does not convey their unique qualities.

We want to take away the mystery. We want you to see yourself the way you really are. There is nobody else like you. Nobody can do your job the way you do it.

Ackerman Chase love to give applicants every chance to succeed by helping them understand their very real value to potential employers.

New Roles from Arras People

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

Project Management Careers Clinic Timings for November 2004

Career clinic timings over the coming month:

Project Managers - 23/11/04

Project Support / Project Office - 25/11/04

Programme Managers/Executives - 02/12/04

> [Book now](#)

Recent feedback - From a candidate wanting to discuss "testing my expectations of my market value" - Recommendation to others to use the service "**Absolutely - the session matched my expectations completely, and the format was practical.**"

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About Arras People:

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

Arras People had an extremely successful and excellent time at the CIPD Annual Conference and Exhibition, meeting many different and diverse organisations all interested in the use of project management and many of whom also responsible for recruiting into project management roles. The organisations they represented ranged from obscure public sector departments to airports, vegetable farms to charity shops!

and departments need to ensure that this momentum is maintained for improvements in IT procurement to be realised."

Taken from the [National Audit Office](#) website. See the [official press release](#) PDF

Further Info

[Ackerman Chase](#)

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Website - the about portal

New articles on a basic introduction to project management

> see the [about.com portal](#)

Article - Is Poor Project Management a Crime?

"Is poor project management a crime? The answer could be 'yes' now that the Sarbanes-Oxley Act makes senior executives criminally liable for misrepresenting financial information."

See the recent on-line article from [Line 56.com](#)

Arras Corner

From project management recruitment to marriages

Arras People's new project management clinic has been well received by our candidates but we also provide advice on specific project management issues you may be having other than just your career. Our three directors are all experienced project management practitioners and are happy to lend an ear (or shoulder to cry on!) too. See their profiles on the [website](#).

southern@arraspeople.co.uk
northern@arraspeople.co.uk

www.arraspeople.co.uk
Lancashire - 01706-366444
Bedfordshire - 01234-823532

Projects don't fail over night, they fail a day at a time....

"In one Catholic wedding tradition, the groom gives the bride an Arras - a container of 13 coins. In addition to being a sort of dowry, the Arras symbolized the groom's promise (and ability) to support his family. In wealthy families, the Arras consisted of 13 gold or silver coins."

Taken from [Forrest's Tokens](#). Available to purchase from www.mybarong.com

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