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Welcome

Welcome to all our readers – a bumper edition of TipOffs this month, following on from the late summer early autumn trade shows we reflect on some of those shows and their value to project management. We also delve into “supporting you” in your project management role. What is the value of Interest Groups, Conferences, Seminars, Professional bodies and exhibitions from a project management perspective, what do you get from them and who is out there to support you!? You are not alone is perhaps the message as you struggle to implement a version of Prince that suits your organisations needs, or develop your own skills or look for ideas and tools to help you deliver.

Looking forward to next month's Christmas edition of Tipoffs, we'll be announcing the 2008 survey and a light hearted project management quiz

Project Management Professional Bodies



When was the last time you contributed to the professional body you're a member of?

Professional bodies exist to further our chosen professions and protect the interest of members (and occasional those of the public). Many of us belong to one or more professional body and there as many professional bodies as there are reasons for joining. This brings us to the question of “what are professional bodies there for and how should we use them to make sure we're getting the most out of them?”

The most popular reason to join a professional body is to gain accreditation that allows us to both demonstrate our competence and promote ourselves to prospective employers. But what about when you have attained professional status, beyond paying annual subscriptions (often to maintain accreditation) what else do you get from your professional body?

If we judge our professional bodies by their outward activity then we see at least three key streams. **Conferences** and **exhibitions** allow 'academic' debate around profession specific subjects. This might range from ethical discussion of the profession's values to sharing of a new technique or technology. **Best Practice Seminars** offer the opportunity for individuals or organisations to share innovative approaches to problems that have benefit to the wider community; the **Special Interest Groups** straddle both of these offering a programme of events that include informal discussions and sharing of best practice.

Tradeshows are pure selling devices, with each organisation bidding to promote their latest product or service. This is not to say that any one of these activities is better or worse, each has specific objectives and benefits. From my days as a professional engineer and project manager I have attended many events and always come away with something that I can use.

The purpose of events organised by professional bodies would seem to have the purpose of: encouraging new membership; raising awareness of a profession's aims/interests; sharing knowledge; selling services;

New roles

New Roles at
Arras People



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Listings

Association for Project Management
[> Website](#)

Project Management Institute
[> Website](#)

British Computer Society
[> Website](#)

Best Practice Showcase
[> Website](#)

Specialist Interest Groups

PPSOSIG
[> Website](#)

APM SIGs
[> Website](#)

Scottish Programme & Project Management Group
[> Website](#)

Organisations

Program Management Group
[> Website](#)

and supporting professional development. The common strand through many of the activities appears to be that they are usually member driven and supported. The schedule of events are based on suggestions from the membership; delivery is often by members with particular insight into a subject/or know a subject specialist they can call upon to deliver. The majority of events are therefore based on the voluntary contribution of the membership.

This suggests that the effectiveness of a Profession relies heavily on the active participation of its members. If this is true - when was the last time you contributed to a professional event or activity? Do you feel you get value for money from your profession? What are you going to do to change that?

Tradeshaw, Conference, Seminar, Workshop



With "lack of time" being cited as one of the biggest reasons professionals don't attend external organisation events, once you find time you want to spend it productively.

Finding events nearby ranks as one of the most important factors to delegates when choosing where they spend their time, the highest factor of all – will I gain something from this that I can use in my role back at work?

With numerous options to pick from – professional body related events, non-affiliated / voluntary staged events, staged exhibitions / roadshows, organisations pushing products or services, sector specific conferences and informal networking events – how do you choose?

In this article we look at some of the events held over the last 12 months – attended by people just like you – and find out more about what's on offer and where to spend your hard earned time

Professional Body Conference Vs Trade Show?

In the past month, I attended both the **Project Challenge Show** at Olympia and **The APM Annual Conference** with for the first time an associated exhibition.

Project Challenge October 2007 was larger than I remembered it from last year, more exhibitors and on the day I visited, definitely more punters. I prefer the autumn London show to the spring show in Birmingham not sure why, I dislike both Olympia and the NEC!

The key draw to me for Project Challenge apart from seeing who I know who is there are the seminars and to check out what new in the market place. The brilliant thing is the seminars are free and although many of them are promoting tools and methods, they are delivered as case studies with their customers. All the seminars I saw were well attended and had good project and programme related questions making the presenters have to think about their answers. One particular presentation, from a well-known management consultancy, on programme management and its relationship to projects and risk, provoked a number of lively conversations.

In my opinion, the show is mostly software and method companies, with nearly **80 Exhibitors** and with a successful seminar formula, the spring show at the NEC will run 12th – 13th March 2008. If you want to keep abreast of project management development, tools, methodologies and training and you plan the seminars you want to attend, it is well worth a visit.

I paid a flying visit to the APM conference and new for 2007 an

[Best Practice User Group](#)
>
[International Congress](#)
>
[BPUG](#)

[Unicom](#)
>
[Website](#)

[TradeShows](#)

[Public Sector Project Management](#)
>
[Website](#)

[Project Challenge](#)
>
[Website](#)

[BPPM](#)
>
[Website](#)

associated exhibition at [The Brewery Conference centre](#). The Brewery is good location and an interesting place with in the City of London Walls with many tube stations such as Moorgate easily accessible.

This is the first year the APM have run an exhibition alongside the conference and I personally believe it could be developed further in future years. The APM conference is a pay for event, however I am sure they could publicise the exhibition as accessible to all members and maybe beyond as a membership builder.

My guess there must have been at least **14 organisations** exhibiting including the APM. I attended the show over lunch on the first and most of the conference delegates appeared to be showing an active interest in the exhibitor wares. The exhibitors varied from training organisations, software supplier and consultancies offering project management services.

The APM had an excellent bookstall with up to date project related publications and flyers. Of particular note was the number of Special Interest Groups now associated with the APM something I had not been aware of much before with the APM.

With both these events, your audience for exhibitors and punters is 100% project related. My question to various stall holders "how is it for you" gleaned a usual variety of answers, only the first day, busier than yesterday, better than last year, probably won't come again – but then that's what they said last year. The shows are professionally well run, everyone works hard to enhance the punters experience and good word of project management is spreading – just need to start promoting programmes and other related project activities such as Project Offices and their value a little harder.

You Are Not Alone



**The Value of
Interest Groups,
Conferences and
Seminars**

**by Eddie Lamont,
Project Manager**

When your organisation first decides to address the manner in which it approaches the management of its programmes and projects, you can feel very isolated and alone.

Once you have identified a method that may work for you (most commonly Prince2) then you are faced with the challenge of how you acquire the knowledge to ensure that it suits your needs and embed it into your organisation. One quick option is to identify a qualified Prince2 consultant to work with you. This can be very costly and you have to consider what level of knowledge your organisation is actually building if an external consultant is doing all the work for you.

The thing is, you are not alone. Many organisations, in both the public and private sector, have been there before you. They have made mistakes and learnt from them as well as had successes. Interest Groups, such as the Best Practice User Group (BPUG) can be of great benefit. As well as the conferences and workshops that they organise having presentations and exercises based around the subject matters that will be relevant to you, the networking opportunities are invaluable.

At CEC we developed an internal project management approach based on Prince2 (the PMA) early in our development. This idea came through discussions with Manchester City Council who I first met at a BPUG event and were much further down the maturity path than us. You will also get to meet several consultants who will impart some free advice to you (usually after you have bought them a pint in the hotel bar!)

Once you have developed a plan for how you want to move forward, you may consider setting up a Project Support Office of some description. This is where specialist groups such as the PPSO become worthwhile. Again, conferences provide the opportunity to learn from experts and others who have went through what you have and faced the same problems and pitfalls.

Once you have a vision of where you want to be, the next challenge is identifying the most suitable partners to assist in getting you there. This can range from external consultants to IT service providers and training organisations. Visits to either the Best Practice Showcase or Project Challenge provide the opportunity to speak face to face with providers and to arrange follow up meetings if desired.

The networking theme continues through all of the above as does continual learning and soon, when attending events, you will recognise faces and call on them at different times for guidance and advice. You will then one day find that it is you who is being contacted for advice from another organisation starting out.

Since starting out, I have created links with many different organisations in both the public and private sector. I have presented to and passed the PMA to several other public organisations on request. Through membership of BPUG, I am now involved in the refresh of Prince2 as part of the Scoping and Review Group and recently participated in the review of the 'APMP Examination for Prince2 Practitioners'. This brings the feeling that I am not simply a user of a methodology, but a stakeholder and in a position to directly impact on the future of programme and project management throughout the United Kingdom and beyond.

Eddie Lamont
Project Manager
The City of Edinburgh Council

{CEC in partnership with NHS National Services Scotland recently created a new Interest Group in Scotland, the Scottish Programme and Project Management Group. Membership has grown from 8 original organisations to over 20 and we are currently working on a 5 year plan for the growth and development of this group. For details of SPPMG events or membership, please feel free to contact me on 0131 469 5383 or eddie.lamont@edinburgh.gov.uk}

Specialist Focus Needed



**Gaining Value from
Specialist Interest
Groups (SIGs)**

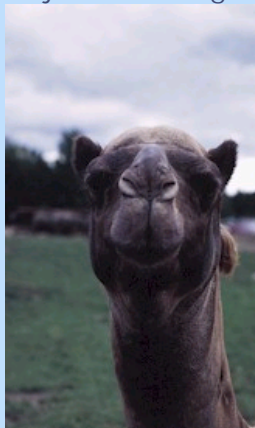
Arras has been actively involved in supporting and delivering the PPSOSIG (Programme and Project Support Office Specialist Interest Group) conferences over the last three years. No other professional body, organisation or company – that we know of – provides a specialised focus on the Programme and Project Management Office arm of project management.

And this is needed by the PMO community for a number of reasons:

- Topics are being chosen by people who are performing this role today which means the latest issues, current "hot topics", events and "bug-bears" are being discussed in a forum where real-life experiences can be shared and ultimately this can have much more value than picking up a book or even attending a structured training course

- There's likeminded people also attending –all PMO related professionals. This set-up means there are no topics which just cover general project management – there are other events available if PMO people want this – PMO related project management presentations, workshops and discussions means the focus stays specialised and targetted. Likewise, networking with a group of people where there is at least one common ground - PMO - is much easier regardless of your experience at effective networking.
- It works regardless of the level of PMO experience you have – topics which cover matured PMO organisations works equally well for organisations new to PMO. Experienced PMO practitioners gain something from a "back-to-basic" presentation as much as the newbies.
- As an unaffiliated specialist group it also has other benefits for its members – the subjects chosen and the best practice workshops are all driven by the need to exchange experiences between delegates – there's no selling of products and the PPSOSIG is not aligned to any professional body which has to "tow the line". Being contentious and pushing the boundaries
- Continuing Professional Development doesn't have to be expensive, costs are kept down – this is a voluntary group – with no expensive overheads the savings are passed on to delegates which means it's affordable even if your organisation won't or can't pay!

Project Management Blog



How to Manage a Camel

We set up this blog to share with you what we at Arras and you are thinking, reading and hearing.

We will post reviews and comments for you to consider and have your 2 penny worth to share with the Arras Community

Add your comments to existing posts or let us know about your thoughts on **Project Management Tradeshows, Exhibitions, Conferences and Specialist Interest Groups**

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