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## Welcome

Welcome to all our readers! In this issue we're looking at some of the snapshots of our report for 2008 - ahead of its publication later this month. We're also taking a look at the Construction Industry and project management skills. Ongoing and increasing numbers of new builds, refurbishments and major capital works in the UK means now more than ever project management expertise is in demand. In this issue of tipoffs we look a little closer at the industry to see what challenges the industry is facing. Win yourself a £25 Amazon voucher by taking part in our Construction Songs quiz - first entry with all the right answers will be sent the voucher!

Want to contribute to future issues of Tipoffs? - contact us at [Article Submissions](#)

## Work / Life Balance in the UK Project Management Industry

### Are we a happy balanced lot in the project management industry?

In the 2008 Report from Arras People, we polled over 1600 project management professionals in areas such as salary, benefits, training, accreditations and the working environment. The report - due out late February 2008 - also looked at the work / life balance aspects of the project management industry in the UK today. In this issue of Tipoffs we briefly look at some of the issues the industry is facing - why is it that some of us are not happy with our current circumstances.

### So what is work / life balance?

One definition is "control over when, where and how people work to achieve an optimal quality of life". This is interesting as it doesn't state who has the control; looking at our respondents we appear to have people who take that opportunity to create an acceptable work life balance and also those who do not feel in that position to do so, thus becoming victims? Maybe these people feel that striving to achieve an acceptable work life balance will brand them as "uncommitted and unmotivated" and thus be impacting their future opportunities within their organisations. "Main bread winners may see it as a kiss of death to their careers". On the other hand maybe they are martyrs to the cause and in reality don't want to take the opportunity to make things change because it is not in their nature?

### Younger Professionals are Happier as are Contractors and Women

The main areas of worklife which impact our respondents lives include;

- **Time spent away from home** - both in terms of the daily commute and the time spent away from home overnight. The greater amount of time this is the more unhappy we become - understandably!
- **Flexibility** - the ability to work when and where its needed - do we need to be in the office to write a report when it could be done at home
- **Hours of Work** - a bigger concern for female respondents with the feel that the hours of work in this profession are "excessive"
- **Workload** - Workload is an interesting issue especially when we are talking about a population of Project Professionals who by the very nature of their roles should be providing scheduling and control! Whilst we can all appreciate that programmes and project

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have peaks of activities, do they not also have troughs where the balance can be corrected? Or is the situation really worse than that, where we have a demand line that far outstrips the supply capability in terms of regular working hours? If so, how long is this sustainable for and what recompense should be made available?

- **Money** - surprising that this is one of the lowest motivators? Not really - we speak to people every day about their jobs - yes money is one of the motivators, we need to feel valued and compensated for the role we perform but actually the nature of the job, the challenge it gives us are far more important.

#### So what are the happy people doing?

So what about these people who "took that opportunity to create an acceptable work life balance"; **positive management of their workload** was the key followed by **flexible working** - with more women and younger professionals citing this - that maybe suggests that females are more aligned to flexible working and a new breed of professional in the under 34 age group who are embracing this concept? And if all else fails? **Change jobs** - working for an organisation nearer to home or that actually embraces work life balance solutions.

Comments from happy people:

- All non site or client site work is based at home which I find comfortable
- Freelance working lets me retain control over my work/life balance
- I have learned over the years that the work life balance is very important in order that I can be effective in all areas of my life.

Comments from the unhappy people include;

- I need to travel to find work and that means absence from home
- My demanding role; with many nights away from home each month; is placing great stresses on my personal life
- Commuting does not leave any time for life during the week and am too tired at weekends
- I spend too much time travelling to and from work; at least 20 hours a week.

The Arras People 2008 Report gives more detail on the daily commute, nights away, home working and detailed analysis of the work / life balance in the project management industry today

> [For a limited time only, the full report will be available free of charge to Tipoff subscribers](#)

For more general information on the Work/Life Balance issue

> [View the Employers for Work/Life Balance site](#)

## Overcoming the Skills Shortage – Project Management Skills for the Future

**Project People specifically with "man and boy" construction experience are in short supply and it looks likely that this won't change in the immediate future.**

Arras People's exposure to providing the construction industry with project management resources has highlighted what many people have suspected for a while - a growing shortage of experienced programme and project management professionals. How will we keep constructing and refurbishing those buildings without the required expertise? Everyone is fishing in the same talent pool for their next employees, and the pool is

drying up – it's difficult to find those people with years of experience in capital builds or specific budget management in excess of £100M Other industry sectors have also faced these shortages in project management skills and experience; traditionally it has forced three outcomes;

- Salary inflation – Employers breaking pay scales to attract new employees using “package” as their differentiator.
- High turnover of staff and a low loyalty – as personnel are tempted to “make hay whilst the sun shines” on their sector and experience forcing use of expensive consultants and contractors.
- Unsettling of a previously happy workforce – typically existing employees do not share in the breaking of pay scales in their current environment as they are applied to “new hires” only! With a promise of parity over time.

Not only will the impact be felt in terms of the quality of programme and project delivery but also it will impact the traditional areas of time, budget and safety. Traditionally businesses within the close knit construction industry where demand is in a “normal cycle” could look at poaching staff from competitors, looking for ways to differentiate themselves to become the “employer of choice”. This could be done without negatively impacting their business and creating destructive pay inflation with all the associated issues. The question today is “is poaching a viable long term solution to grow the skill base?” In these challenging times as Arras People will tell you the onus is on businesses to look at new solutions; to challenge their existing recruitment and retention methods; to challenge their “man and boy” demands; to work with creative forward thinking organisations who can help overcome the current skills shortage within the construction industry. It's a question of making a compelling reason for candidates to consider a particular organisation. As the 2007 Arras People benchmark survey points out **“money is not the only reason for changing your job”**.



## Getting into the Construction Industry

### One Candidate's Story

Having worked in the telecoms industry for a while - first as a Project Co-ordinator and then moving up to the Assistant Project Manager position I decided after five years I wanted to move into the construction industry. I'd always had an interest - a lot of my family were builders, engineers and had started to get interested in property. I've since found out that a lot of people are pursuing this avenue due to private restoration / renovations and wanting to carry on project managing in this field after they've finished. It's not easy to make the transition - in some ways I've had to take a step back - going back to college in the evenings and taking a planner role as opposed to project manager role. There is a lack of people available with experience in applications like Primavera - which is often the planning tool of choice - so I took the opportunity to get skilled up with the tool. This was the easy part - as long as the principles of good planning are there it's quite easy to pick it up. As for getting my foot in the door - I used my personal network more than online ads or job ads in the paper. It was easier to make a good impression at the interview knowing that a friend of mine had already put a good word in. So I'm now 18 months still working very hard to fit in and gain respect from colleagues who have qualifications and years of experience in this field. I know that the qualifications are very important in this field and I'm going to carry on gaining everything I need which will not only improve my knowledge in this field but help me

gain respect amongst my peers. I'm constantly looking for a break - or opportunity to prove myself in areas other than planning but one thing I'm very sure about is that I made the right choice - it's been rewarding, challenging, stressful and fun - and it will pay off!

## Quiz - A few to think about

Can you name the artist and song - all construction related?

e.g., BTB - CWFI

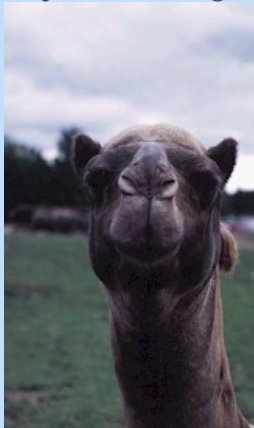
"Bob the Builder" - Can We Fix It

1. TH - B
2. TOH - SS
3. IIAH - PPAM
4. PF - ABITW
5. G - HUC
6. TRS - PIB
7. BM - CJ
8. BC - RSF
9. HLATN - BMU
10. TJ - BAM

> [Know the answers? Email us](#)

Answers will be provided in next month's tipoffs

## 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 **the construction industry or your own work/life balance woes!**

> [Visit the blog](#)