

## Welcome

Welcome to all our readers! In this issue of Tipoffs, we take a look inside the wonder that is the Holiday season. Summer is here, warmer climes beckon, but will you, Project or Programme Management professional that you are, be able to fully let go?

Tipoffs Editor Dan Strayer goes inside the Arras People' list of things to do to make your holiday not just a swell break, but a solid use of your management skills as well. Mick Hides tackles the issue of taking stock on holiday, a time you can use to re-assess what really matters on your life right now. Nicola Thorp pulls out her inner pastor and preaches the gospel of communicating and delegation of authority for your time away from the time-eating world created within your project.

In other articles, Lindsay Scott has some helpful tips and ways to find someone capable of handling your responsibilities while you use your well-deserved downtime. John Thorpe is back again too, delving into how hard it is for professionals to simply unwind and truly 'get out' of work-think mode.

We had a huge response to last month's Tipoffs edition, so strong that it allows our monthly Guest View article to make its triumphant return. The guest writer for June is Mark Harwood, a project manager who turned a series of holidays to Portugal into a holiday home and guest house for both his family and tourists. His use of project management skills may be seen as a testament to using your skills for the meantime to have something to take you away from those skills in your downtime.

We receive requests to write for Tipoffs all the time, just like Mark has. Do you want to contribute to a future issue? If so, we are always looking for contributions from the next great writer out there looking to share their knowledge, experience and expertise in the project management industry. For more information, drop us a line at [editor@arraspeople.co.uk](mailto:editor@arraspeople.co.uk).

## Listing: Great Ways to Make Effectively Use of Your Holiday

Collected  
by  
Dan  
Strayer,  
Tipoffs  
Editor



surprised at what this can lead to. The idea is that the project will survive without you - but it can be a sort of game to picking the one to be You, 2.0. For instance, ask the project sponsor to replace you as PM. Maybe they'll gain a new appreciation for what exactly it is you need to do your job. (For more, see the article by Lindsay Scott below)

- **The Busman's Holiday - Trying to leave the job behind** - The concept? Simple. Take a regular bus driver, put him or her on vacation, but watch them slowly morph into a backseat driver as his mode of transport is the very bus he was leaving behind. Same with project management - will you see a project undertaken en route to your destination, and morph into the tried-and-true, 'Here's how I would do it' mould. (Check out John Thorpe's article below)
- **Telling your team in detail about the holiday** - This is all about delegating the responsibilities for the time you're going to be away. Planning and/or scheduling is the emphasis here: Setting up meetings, finding out who is capable and who is culpable, involving

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### "Listing" links

For a full-length version of this article, check out this [link](#) on How to Manage a Camel.

sponsors and/or clients in the understanding of responsibility delegation, and setting comfortable parameters for people to operate within. While those people you put in charge may shine in a new way, what happens after you've given them enough rope to hang themselves? (Article by Nicola Thorp below)

- **Turning off Work, Turning on Memories** - Everyone can point to this moment: they saw the person on the beach with a phone to their ear, engaged in conversation that could only be described as 'work'. It all comes back to the famed saying: Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. Avoid the phone call to the office during your holiday, and it will illustrate just how well you've planned ahead. Then, when you need to pick up the work mobile again, you'll not only feel refreshed, but also successful.
- **Being communicative: Combining responsibility and authority to involve everybody** - Somebody else on your team may want to be a PM some day. This can be their opportunity: Keeping everyone involved during preparation for your time away from the project is the best way to build confidence in your team's key players. Of course, you have to set boundaries.
- **Time to reflect and re-assess priorities** - Holiday time is down time, after all. With all of the run-around, non-stop pressure and demands of the job, the holiday you are on may be the best time to take stock and realise why you do it, who you're doing it for, and what good may be waiting around the corner because of your effort and time. (Article by Mick Hides below)

**Dan Strayer is the Managing Editor of Tipoffs and a Marketing & Research Officer for Arras People.**

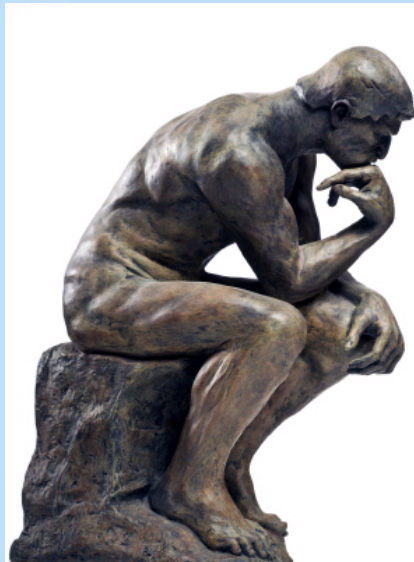
### "Time For Reflection" links

Mick Hides has written several articles for Tipoffs. For another look online at his take on work-life balance, click [here](#).

## A Time For Reflection

By Mick Hides

Holidays for me offer an opportunity to reflect on my life without telephone or email interruptions and I am sure I am not alone. To help with the process this year I would like to share a story that came into my inbox recently.



*A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was. So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls.*

*He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.*

*The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full.*

*The students responded with a unanimous "yes."*

*The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.*

*"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things-your God, family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favorite [sic] passions - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, and your car. The sand is everything else-*

the small stuff.

*"If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal.*

*"Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."*

*One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled.*

*"I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend." - Anonymous*

I am sure some of you have noticed the spelling of certain words, as well as the sentiment of the story and have already dismissed the comments as something that would never catch on here. I would argue that this may be premature and misses the central message; the worth of reflecting on your priorities.

How many of us spend too long on the 'sand' and not enough on 'golf balls' and 'pebbles'. For a Project Manager is this tendency more likely? Does it have a greater impact? From my own experience, I would say yes.

Having a young family I have only recently realised the importance of spending time with them and not chasing the last minutes of each day. In the past I have worked excessively long hours on priority projects and on reflection, would say that too often my performance suffered from not stepping away. I know that by coming fresh to problems, answers have come more easily (but why always in the early hours of the morning?).

This may not work for everyone and in every situation, but why not give it a try? At the very least, question whether your current priorities are a necessity or merely habitual. Do you want to spend more time with family and friends? If you do and make it happen your family and friends will love you for being around more.

Can you tell the difference between the 'sand', 'golf balls' and 'pebbles'? What do these mean for you? Perhaps just reflecting on this would be a good start.

If all else fails, try having coffee with a friend. They may even have the answer.

***Mick Hides is a Consultant for Arras People.***

## Guest View: A Real Place in the Sun!



***By Mark Harwood***

*'3-4 bedrooms, near to beach, under one hour from airport, under £80,000. Must have land and need work doing on it. Especially interested in complete renovation projects.'*

Thus began our search for a place in the sun. First step - agree on a brief:

- Flight Time - under 2 hours flight time from Manchester or

## "Guest view" links

For more information on Casa Martina Branco, click [here](#).

- Liverpool airport,
- A low-cost airline servicing the route,
- Year-round flights,
- Travel time from airport to holiday home,
- Under one hour drive,
- Within 30 minutes of coast/beach,
- Financial envelope of £80,000 maximum to include all fees, stamp duties, local taxes, the lot.

Building specifications:

- Work needed on property,
- Land with property,
- Utilities already connected.

After failure in Galicia (Northwest Spain is beautiful, but very rainy!), I was Porto bound. Research had narrowed the search down to a triangle between Averoio, Figueria da Foz and Coimbra.

I returned property-less to the UK determined to undertake a number of PRINCE2 activities: Chief among them was completing a Business Case and drafting a risk register. This appeared shortly thereafter, including:

- Exchange rate fluctuations and affordability,
- Recession in Portugal/UK leading to lack of income and/or capital growth,
- Price comparator information for similar property - was the property good value?
- Security of property when empty,
- Our lack and grasp of the Portuguese language,
- How to procure and source reliable, honest trades persons to renovate the property,
- The continuity of cheap flights from England to Porto,
- Redundancy.

In December 2006, I viewed a solid house 18 years old located, set in the hamlet of Carvalhiera, 12km from the Coast. It had been empty for two years following a divorce. In some need of some TLC, a lick of paint, and all the rubbish and gardens clearing it was huge. It met our brief. The three bedrooms were good sizes, bathroom functional, upstairs needed some TLC. Downstairs was less immediate. Huge amounts of dirt, rubbish and scrap. "Have the vision," I kept repeating to myself.

On 8 February 2007, I signed for the house. Shortly thereafter, I began planning just what needed to be done on the house: a couple of hours later I had a reasonable assessment, internally and externally. Without my previous years of Project and Programme Management experience, I would have walked away from the project, as the house, surrounding buildings and grounds did tend to overwhelm me.

But how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time, and so I found myself using a Work Break-down structure, I broke the vast amount of required work into bite-sized chunks. After this came a new concern: Making the house habitable first was my main priority, so then at least those holidaying (while my wife and I were working) at the house would have all the useful home luxuries. The work breakdown structure focussed upon all those pieces of work that would deliver a habitable holiday house:

- So our family could holiday here,
- We could attempt to achieve rental income,
- Visible progress could be quickly realised (exceedingly effective as a motivational tool).

If there was any hope of getting the house habitable for June 2007 - only 14 weeks away - I was going to need the help of local people. A local painter, Beto, agreed to start work the next day and help me re-decorate upstairs.

Over the next three months, Casa Martina Branco became a hive of activity every four weeks as I flew in from Liverpool on a Tuesday night and departed on a Saturday afternoon. I took full advantage of cheap flights, working eighteen hour days to get the site habitable, and progress work outside. I would also monitor and evaluate the work packages I had left with my Saturday builder Casio. The culture in rural areas in Portugal is that most men work Monday to Friday and then on Saturday they do building jobs.

By the end of June 2007, the house upstairs was complete and furnished

### "Get Them Told" links

It turns out there are many different acronyms for the 5W-How method, which is a common practice in writing and news coverage. For more background information on the process, click [here](#).

- the transformation was amazing. We had driven a van in early April with things to make this an attractive house for holidays. Lots of goodies from the free local newspaper - a table tennis table, pool table, hundreds of CDs and books, swing ball, board games of yesteryear - all gave the house a personality ready to receive visitors.

Feedback from visitors last summer inspired us during the winter to finish the back outbuildings. In May, I put the finishing touches on our summer kitchen and attached games rooms. Bookings for this summer are now full.

Our business case of buying and restoring a house abroad and then making it pay for itself have been truly achieved. Also we have had a fantastic adventure, met a multitude of people, and shared experiences together that have enriched our lives. We achieved all within our financial envelope. To that, I am eternally grateful to my wife, who held the purse strings, but who is also crazy enough to paint railings silver with me at 9 in the evening night after night. Our daughter, Lily, is just coming up to age 3. She loves our place in the sun: The space, the beaches, the food, the people and the culture.

My background in PM and PPM made me use a structured PRINCE2 Lite approach, which has delivered for us. If you want to see what we have done for ourselves have a look at [Casa Martina Branco](#).

Lessons learned? Hundreds of them too long to go into in this paper, but my main advice to anyone thinking of buying and restoring a property abroad, you can't talk to too many people. In addition to that, you must believe in and follow your dreams. Life is too short.

**Mark Harwood is a Programme and Project Management Specialist currently based at Cheshire County Council.**

## GET THEM TOLD! - Delegating Your Work Responsibilities Effectively



**By Nicola Thorp**

We've all been there - it's the holiday period and your partner has been pressuring you to book a holiday, in essence it's a great idea some well earned relaxing time away from the dreaded PDA. But that dark, dank feeling of all the effort which goes into preparing work for your absence is enough to make you want to stay at home, where you can be easily contactable if/when it all hits the fan.

Try taking a look at it from another angle. To assume you are the only person who could possibly manage your projects is both a little egotistical and also portrays the wrong message to your team. Have a little faith: any manager worth their salt knows who they can trust to make the right decisions and not to upset the stakeholders.

### Taking the first steps

Now you have decided to bite the bullet and delegate your responsibilities you need to take an informed approach to selecting the right people.

- First you should analyse the plan for tasks to delegate - take/ create your process flow chart and ensure you have covered all bases
- Next combine your training matrix with experience of knowing your team - just because someone is trained in a particular area doesn't always mean they know what they are doing

### "Who's the Boss?" links

For more details on the Back to the Floor television series, click [here](#).

- Meet with individuals and take time to explain the task you would like them to perform and also encourage a return in faith from them by telling them why they have been chosen (i.e. you get on particularly well with the stakeholders etc).
- Hold a team meeting; making it clear to everyone who will be taking responsibility for particular aspects and ensure you have made a well informed team member the main port of call for any general issues (who is your right hand person?)

Now it's time to pack your flip-flops and relax on the beach in the knowledge that your team is perfectly capable of dealing with all aspects of the project in your absence. By performing this exercise you are proving you recognise your team's abilities and trust they can run things in your absence - boosting individual's confidence and competencies.

By carefully planning out the 'Who? How?, What?, Why?, and When?' (commonly known as the 'Five W-How' approach) - you can cut out the 14-hour working days running up to your holiday, and the additional 14-hour days on your return from your holiday.

Now go - enjoy!

*Nicola Thorp is a Consultant for Arras People.*

## Who's the Boss? Tips to Remember When You Need to Put Someone in Charge

By Lindsay Scott

**The issue: Find an ideal candidate to provide cover in the project manager's absence**

Getting the project sponsor to take on your job whilst you're away catching those rays might seem like a hilarious suggestion, but don't dismiss it out of hand. If you're in an organisation where the project sponsor is someone who already has managerial responsibilities, the thought of stepping into your shoes might not actually be such a bad idea.



Think back to the popular BBC documentary series "[Back to the Floor](#)", where senior managers were literally sent back to the shop floor to perform the role of one of their employees. It's a technique that has become more popular for training purposes for senior managers. Just imagine your project sponsor taking the reins of the project they have a vested interest in - an opportunity to get to know the team, the stakeholders, and the customer just that little bit better. Imagine the benefits on your return? A newly invigorated sponsor? A sponsor who suddenly has a new found respect for your efforts?

Granted, this option is definitely not for the faint hearted. Firstly, getting the project sponsor to buy into the idea, and secondly, are you ready for your sponsor be poking around in your well laid-out plans, forecasts, status meetings and client meetings? Returning after a hard-earned break to face your stand-in could have you reaching for the travel agent's number to book a sabbatical out of there!

### Doing your bit as a people manager

So the project sponsor idea might not be the best. How about killing two birds with one stone - your next in command or another eager team member looking for an opportunity to step up and make a mark? The project manager's role is not all about the delivery of the project, but also the ability to get the best from your team - leading by example and instilling strong personal skills in your team to get the job done.

Identifying the potential candidate should start well in advance of the

### "Ready to Enjoy?" links

For more information from the Arras People Survey 2008, click [here](#).

### ESI International



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booked holiday, giving you ample time to start the coaching and mentoring process. With some simple forward planning and a little dedication to the cause, planning holidays and downtime in the future should become a lot easier.

### No one identified in time?

Last-minute holiday plans with no real time to plan? Doing a quick straw poll of some of my friends and colleagues within project management actually showed that for many (> 85%), this doesn't or hasn't really figured in anyway. Planning seems to be pretty much an in-built skill. So for the sake of an argument, when a last minute getaway crops up, are you a "you can take a project manager out of a project but you'll never take the project out of a project manager"? Do you find it hard to switch off, feel slightly panicked by the thought of leaving the project in the capable hands of your collective team?

Sometimes in the interest of health and sanity, you have to switch off and leave it in the capable hands of your team. They'll be fine, what's the worst that could happen - they never noticed you were gone?

*Lindsay Scott blogs about Project Management issues [here](#).*

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## Ready to Enjoy Your Holiday?

By John Thorpe

Personally defining the word 'holiday':

- Sometimes, holidays are chiefly British - a period of cessation from work or one of recreation; vacation.
- A period of exemption from work granted to an employee.
- A period spent away from home or business in travel or recreation ("I had a restful vacation at the beach.")

When we sat down for the planning meeting for this edition of Tipoffs, I couldn't help thinking back to the days when I wasn't very good at taking holidays. Like many people who responded to the [Arras People Survey](#), I was

keen and so wrapped up in my work that it was probably low on my personal priority list.



It's not that I

wasn't organised; I had planned it; it was in the project plan; I had a trusted colleague who would be standing in for me; my clients were aware that I would be away; and it didn't clash with any major milestone in the delivery. The bases were covered, but it still seemed to provide a level of stress that seemed inappropriate.

My holidays seemed to be in the following phases:

**Phase 0 - Preparation.** Yes, I can do that. I'm a Project Manager. OK, so something always goes wrong in the days before, I can deal with that! All the ducks lined up; final e-mails delivered; laptop closed; I am now on holiday!

**Phase 1 - Wind Down.** For the first three days, I am still in Project Manager Mode, or in the Busman's Holiday perspective. Not only do I have passing thoughts about what I have left behind, but my mind is questioning, analysing and looking for a better solution in this strange world that I can't influence!

**Phase 2 - Relaxed.** What a wonderful state! I could get used to this!

**Phase 3 - Wind Up.** The end is nigh! That Project Management feeling is returning. Stimulated by the need to start preparing for the return trip home, I just can't help myself. This in turn starts the thought processes about the impending return to work: *What do I need to address when I*

return? What are the next milestones? And so it goes on, back in the groove PM Man returns and I am still supposed to be on holiday!

So how did I change this? My personal Lessons Learned was that I would never schedule a holiday to commence the day I finished work. For my own sanity and that of my family, an extended break from work was the answer. The "vacation" was surrounded by some time to allow for my pre and post holiday conversion so that I could really enjoy that hard-earned break.

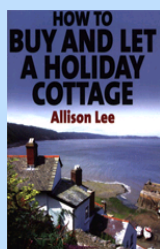
*John Thorpe is the Managing Director of [Arras People](#).*

## Suggested Readings and Links

*Edited by Dan Strayer*

With each issue of Tipoffs, we endeavour to find some web sites and relevant books for your perusal and study with the month's theme. With the holiday season as this month's theme, we point you to three books and several web sites that can address the issues surrounding the topic.

### TIPOFFS' BOOKS OF THE MONTH

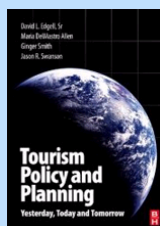


#### [How to Buy and Let a Holiday Cottage](#)

Allison Lee

#### Synopsis:

*"If you're interested in buying a holiday home for your own use and as an investment, this book will provide you with a step-by-step guide."* - Available now at [amazon.co.uk](#)

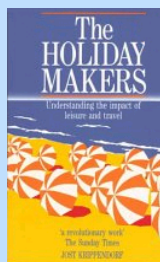


#### [Tourism Policy and Planning](#)

David L. Edgell, Snr, Maria DelMastro Allen, Ginger Smith and Jason R. Swanson

#### Synopsis:

*"The aim of this book is to provide government policy-makers (at all levels), business leaders, not-for-profit executives, university professors, students, tourism industry managers, and the general public with an introduction and examination of important policy and planning issues in tourism. It is the only book on the market to fully integrate tourism policy with strategic planning."* - Available at [amazon.co.uk](#)



#### [The Holiday Makers: Understanding the Impact of Leisure and Travel](#)

Author's name

#### Exterior review:

*"..a revolutionary work."* - The Times  
Available at [amazon.co.uk](#)

### TIPOFFS' LINKS OF THE MONTH

[Eco Holidaying](#) - Not just for the ecology-minded, as a conservationist Britain deserves a conservationist holiday planner. Eco Holidaying offers advice on using public transport, the effects of tourism, and innovative holiday ideas.

[Desktop Lawyer](#) - Sometimes things just don't come together, and holidays are not immune from such fate. This Desktop Lawyer page deals with recourse you are entitled to when a holiday goes awry. Something of an encyclopaedia on law web site.

[Travel Health](#) - Your holiday isn't the same if you're under the weather. Travelhealth.co.uk is a help and advice site that seeks to help holiday takers with information on vaccinations, clinic listings abroad, and the ability to understand diseases.

## Arras People Update

*Edited by Dan Strayer*

Arras People had the exclusive pleasure of enjoying the company of Mr Graham Woodward, Deputy Chairman of the [Association of Project](#)

[Management](#), Thursday 12 June, and learning about the process and status of APM's application for a charter for the project management profession.

With over 16,500 individual and 500 corporate members in APM, Woodward indicated the organisation would be the best project management-based entity to take such ambitions forward.

To date, the process of applying for the charter is a long, arduous one. Between April and June 2009, Woodward said a preliminary application for charter would be submitted to the Privy Council. A formal application would then be submitted in June, followed by an estimation of three months' deliberation by the Council to follow. The Privy Council's final decision, according to Woodward, would be delivered in October 2009.

#### In other news...

- The 14th PPSOSIG conference will be held on Wednesday 17th and Thursday 18th September at [Warwick Conferences](#) in Coventry. The full agenda for the conference revolves around using one's assets, including the Physical, Personal, Skills & Knowledge, Information and Future Assets. For more information on this event, including booking forms, guest speakers and full agenda details, click on the [PPSOSIG web site](#).
- If you wanted to find project management agencies in the UK on Google, and typed in 'project management agencies', you can't do any better [than us](#).
- Check out the [job board](#) and register to be informed of new opportunities.
- While vacancies on the Arras People job board come from all over the UK, one particular strong area of late has been a North West/West Yorkshire corridor. For those living in or near this region, have a look at [this vacancy in Salford](#). Or [this one in Bradford](#).
- It's never too late to brush up on your training and skills. If you need advice on your project management career with the added bonus of contributing to one of four newly selected charities, then [book a slot](#) at one of our clinics today.
- We've recently published a [Qualifications Brochure](#) (Adobe Acrobat required to download) for project managers. You can also get some of your questions about Project Management answered [here](#).

## Project Management Blog

### How to Manage a Camel

The comments are piling in, and traffic is growing steadily. The blog we at Arras People created is an online gathering spot for professionals in project management. It is a place for project managers, programme managers and other project-related professionals to address issues in this growing sector. We are raising questions and concerns about the field, and it is our hope to continue that trend. But we need something else - you!

Drop by How to Manage a Camel today, and add your comments to existing posts, or simply let us know about your thoughts on the issues surrounding the work-life dynamic for project managers. You are always welcome at the Camel!

> [Visit the blog](#)

