

Welcome

From the Editor:

Like the leaves, sun and temperatures falling by the minute, colour is a key to that which signifies autumn. Most often, we find that it relates to the arrival of significant change. Now bear this in mind: When we say 'colour = change', we mean the obvious occurrence of the alteration of the leaves as they drop from the reliable and dependable trees we ride past on the commute home. While the glass half-empty lot will view it as a harbinger of the cold, hard weather to come, the half-full brigade will detect a more positive vibe that signals a significant, unique beauty, and the reminder that nature and the procession of time cannot ultimately be stopped. The colours just won't allow it.

Colour is to be celebrated right here in our October newsletter, and we invite you to open the bubbly with us. Look for the themes of the changing leaf colours to appear throughout our various articles that seek to offer some insight into the project management recruitment business. Yes, there are the harsh winter-types of reality stories out there (and in this issue as well!), but there is also a desire from the Tipoffs team to shed light on the good sides of the business:

- What you can do to polish off that old CV
- Finding recruiters (wink, wink) who will adhere to REC guidelines, and then go farther
- What realities exist as opposed to popular myths, and what you can do improve upon them
- Find out if you have what it takes to become a contractor

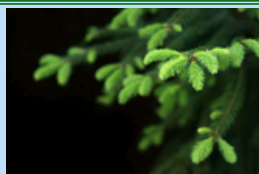
One thing to be on the lookout for (as it we've made it kind of hard to miss) is our optimisation of colour, specifically green, orange, yellow and red. There's no prize in identifying it, just a neat little way of changing our look for the sake of a theme.

We had a huge response to last month's Tipoffs, and we always look forward to your submissions and articles. As communications gurus will tell you, in order to become a stronger and more effective writer, you have to keep writing. And while you're at it, keep reading! We receive requests to write for our newsletters all the time, so your big break may come with a solid Tipoff...article. Shameless, I know!

As always, for more information about Tipoffs, I encourage to drop me a line at dan.strayer@arraspeople.co.uk. And remember: the beauty of the leaves in autumn might serve to some people as a reminder that winter is just around the corner. But amidst the beauty of these colours lies the optimism toward your own career that is as fresh, attractive and rewarding as a fine spring morning. It might be cold outside, baby, but the workplace can be warmer than you'd ever thought it to be.

Dan Strayer, Editor

Greener Pastures: A Primer to Becoming an Effective Contract Project Manager



By Steven Mulhall

In these times of crisis, we are reminded how unsecure our jobs

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New vacancies at Arras People

ARRAS
hot jobs

[Visit the Project Management Job board for more vacancies](#)

"Greener Pastures" links

Steven writes more about his experiences and knowledge of contract project management at his website [here](#).

can be. In such a market, would you consider contracting?

If the answer is yes, then you probably believe that you will not be able to get a role as a contractor, so let me dispel a few of the common myths surrounding this:

"I have to be very experienced before I become a contractor." - No, you don't - think of contractors as mercenaries or extras in a film, or even as temps. Businesses need personnel to fill resource gaps at all levels - junior, senior, etc.

"When times are hard and permanent staff are getting laid off - the contract market suffers." - Actually, this is not true. The reason contractors are so attractive to companies is they can be hired and released at short notice; even though contractors are more expensive, they do not come under headcount costs.

"Contracting will ruin my CV." - If you make the decision to become a contractor, 3 month roles and gaps in-between roles will not affect your chances of getting a role, so long as you explain them properly in your CV as well as in an interview.

"If I am a Contractor I won't be able to get back into a permanent role." - This is not necessarily true. In the modern age, employers are becoming wiser to different employment practices. Many people now realise that breaks for travelling, sabbaticals, postgraduate study breaks, or contracting for a number of years in between permanent roles are an acceptable part of people's careers.

"I have to have Industry Sector Experience to get a role in that Sector." - This is not necessarily true; however, the market is set up so that those who are a lower risk and better fit the brief will get the job. This means if you have any experience in the sector you are trying to join, you are more likely to be considered for a role than someone with none.

"If demand shifts I will not be able to get a contract - nobody will want me!" - If demand changes for your specialism, you can "drop" to related areas. For example, if investment banking fails, then I can try for retail banking or the financial sector in general.

If this changes your mind, you will need to market yourself with an up to date CV and register with the various job sites. The contractor market and contract Project Manager jobs are advertised on numerous job sites.

Below are my tips on the most efficient process in applying for roles:

1. Send CV in response to job advert
2. Take a note of:
 - a. When you sent CV
 - b. Recruiter's contact name
 - c. Recruiter's contact details
 - d. Name of agency
 - e. Where you saw the advert
3. Call recruiter to confirm they received your CV
4. Get recruiter to check CV suitability for role
 - a. Make a note of whether you were suitable
5. Get recruiter feedback
 - a. Make a note of recruiter feedback
6. Chase the recruiter daily until shortlisted or rejected

Steven Mulhall is a Contract Project Manager and creator of www.contractorprojectmanager.com

Details on P30's Official Launch



By Lindsay Scott

The new guidance from OGC for Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices (P3O) was launched on the 28th October in London. The new guidance is the latest development in programme management offices and is a must for any PMO professional.

The P3O guidance manual is available through the [TSO shop](#) priced £45. To read about the new guidance, Arras People has been blogging about each chapter, see the [P3O blog for more information](#).

The next PPSOSIG (Programme and Project Support Office Specialist Interest Group) event is dedicated to P3O, specifically the reality of P3O and how organisations are intending to use the guidance, see the [PPSOSIG website](#) for more details on the event, taking place on Wednesday 18th March 2009.

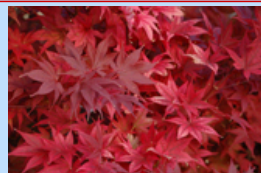
Read Lindsay's article about PMC Clinics and polishing the rust off your CV below.

"Red Alert" links

The REC lists its standards and policies [here](#).

The Arras People standards are located [here](#).

On Red Alert: The Best Ways and Manners to Conduct Professional Recruitment



By Nicola Thorp

Ah, best practice recruitment. Think of it like a PMO: as we are all project management professionals at Arras, we like to bring our experience to the business.

Having sat on the other side of recruitment agencies when looking for PM position in the past, we fully understand where you are coming from - applying for roles which don't exist, discovering your CV has been submitted previously for a role (without your permission), not receiving acknowledgement for applying for roles, being sent to interviews which are irrelevant to your experience. Don't get me started! I find it completely unacceptable to be treated in this way, as do my colleagues here at Arras People, which is why we do things differently. From day one, you are kept in the loop and are provided with regular updates regarding your applications. [Here's what we specifically do.](#)

At Arras People, not only do we run by our own code of conduct, which is to treat others how we would like to be treated - we are also corporate members of REC (Recruitment & Employment Federation), whose codes of practice are:

- Principle 1** - Respect for Laws
- Principle 2** - Respect for Honesty and Transparency
- Principle 3** - Respect for Work Relationships
- Principle 4** - Respect for Diversity
- Principle 5** - Respect for Safety
- Principle 6** - Respect for Professional Knowledge
- Principle 7** - Respect for Certainty of Engagement
- Principle 8** - Respect for Prompt and Accurate Payment
- Principle 9** - Respect for Ethical International Recruitment
- Principle 10** - Respect for Confidentiality and Privacy

Details on the REC code of practice can be found at [this REC web page](#).

When it comes to recruitment, most people out there have heard the horror stories, and we can't come so close to Halloween without mentioning at least one horror story of our own!

I was recently talking to a candidate about an experience he had had some years back with a recruitment agency that had sent him for an interview which turned out to be complete farce, and the actions the agency had taken were fraudulent. The recruiter had cut out a relevant section of the job description before passing it to the candidate, which led the candidate to believe he was well suited to the position. At the interview, the candidate was asked questions about specific skills and experience he didn't have. Having been asked three times, the candidate asked why they were persisting with this line of questioning, only to be presented with his CV which had been doctored with experience and skills he did not have. Needless to say the client was not happy and promptly dropped the agency and the candidate has not used the agency since.

I would like to think we are doing our bit to change people's perspectives of recruitment agencies and providing a more efficient service to all who deal with us.

Nicola Thorp is a Project Management Consultant for [Arras People](#). She has co-written another article directly below with fellow PM Consultant Zoe Jones, advising candidates how to get ahead in your job search.

It Was All Yellow: Getting Ahead of the Game with the Right Amount of Caution



By Nicola Thorp & Zoe Jones

The credit crunch has delivered doom and gloom over the past few months, prompting as many questions about the buoyancy

"All Yellow" links

For more information from Arras People about writing a CV, click [here](#).

For more information about the Project Management Careers Clinic, see the Lindsay Scott article below, and click [here](#).

"Polishing Rust" links

of the job market and the property market. However, amidst the media frenzy of pending recession and unemployment on the rise, we at Tipoffs have some good news.

There are still project management-related roles appearing daily in the market, reflecting the fact that the lifecycle continues to roll along. It is, however, an employer's marketplace, and now more than ever, it is imperative for candidates keen to make a move to ensure they are playing the job market to the full.

Arras People's career clinics are becoming more popular with candidates looking for expert advice in regard to making their CV more attractive to a much fussier employer, and requiring advice on who/what to target and how.

Here are some tips to help you get ahead in the game:

- Tell a recruiter/potential employer who you are and why you are right for the role with a clear, concise CV reflecting your understanding of the individual job specification
- Cast your net as wide as possible by searching on internet job boards, posting your CV on internet job boards, setting up job alerts in addition to more traditional routes of trade press and direct applications
- Ensure your CV contains the keywords and 'lingo' of your profession. A recruiter may search a database looking for a specific skill i.e. 'milestone reporting' or 'UAT Testing'. Make sure you will not be overlooked due to a CV that chats to its reader rather than one that reports
- Rather than taking a scatter gun approach, only apply for roles to which you are sure you are suited. A high volume of ill-matched applications can undermine your credibility with recruiters
- Take the time to compile an individual cover note to accompany applications through which you address your suitability for the two or three key requirements of a role
- If you are in a role at present, you may be fortunate enough to have some training budget set aside. Make use of this to gain formal qualifications to back up your experience

The job market is tough at the best of times - recruitment agencies who don't respond, rejections for roles you thought were ideal and the overall feeling that you and your CV are adrift in a sea that you don't fully understand.

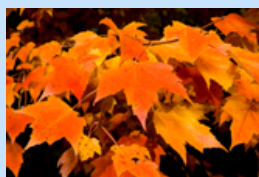
We here at Arras People try to make a small difference and have numerous resources to assist. Our website contains [copious information on CV writing](#), clinics are available in which 30 minutes is designated to go through [your individual job/CV concerns and queries](#) and we will always keep you updated on your progress with a role - even if this is an e-mail notification that we do not feel you are suitable.

So utilise all tools at your disposal to swot up on the mechanisms of the modern job market and ensure your job applications are as well aimed as possible. It will ultimately maximize your chance of success in an ever-tightening market place.

Nicola Thorp and Zoe Jones are Project Management Consultants for [Arras People](#).

Lindsay Scott is one of the more popular bloggers at [How to Manage a Camel](#). You can view all of her postings [here](#).

Feeling a Bit Rusty? Take a Look at Arras People's Project Management Careers Clinic



By Lindsay Scott

Following our autumnal theme, recent requests for advice from the Project Management Careers Clinic (PMC Clinic) participants have shown that people can get a little rusty (better known to the colour theme as "orange") sometimes in their project management career or knowledge areas. Soliciting an external

view can be just what is needed to get participants kick started in areas such as refreshing their CV, continuing their professional development or even getting ready for a performance appraisal.

Recent questions put to our consultants in PMC Clinics include;

"I would like to seek help and advice for Assistant Project Manager roles in areas such as qualifications and training"

With each clinic, the consultant spends time understanding what the participant has been doing in their career to date. They'll also ask questions about what the participant hopes to achieve in their career; which sector or business area they might be looking to specialise in; their project management role and the core competencies they've displayed. The consultants are also adept at seeing the skills gaps in a participant's career which means the advice received in the session is primarily targeted to that individual's needs. All these questions enable the consultant to give suggestions on the training and qualifications the participant should consider (and importantly the reasons why and what they will gain from it).

An important point to consider is the reasons why a participant is considering pursuing a qualification or specific training; are they just looking for a tick in the box? Many participants believe that the only way they can advance their career is to take the PRINCE2 exam! Our consultants are able to give clear, succinct and real advice based on what the project management marketplace is looking for and advise participants on a course of action that will produce real tangible benefits both in the short and long term.

"I am seeking new opportunities at the moment and am interested to know what my value in the market is at the moment and whether my CV is giving out the right message. Also recommendations on sectors which I should be targeting - I am looking to move into new industry sectors."

For participants who have been out of the job searching game for a while, it can be daunting. Using the careers clinic is an excellent first step - who better to advise you on the project management marketplace than Arras? Giving participants an insight to their "worth" in the job market can only be really (and realistically) carried out when a consultant really understand the participants background.

All the questions asked in the above example still apply, and it's only when the consultant really understands what the participant is bringing to the table in terms of project management skills, personal skills, technical competencies, industry knowledge, subject matter expertise, location, etc. , that a true value can be revealed. So how is Arras able to give a value in an individual? Each participant is able to tap into over six years of specialist recruitment in project management from our consultants - and that alone is worth £25 of anyone's money to charity, wouldn't you say?

It goes without saying that the consultant is able to give clear, practical advice on CV's and whether a particular individual's CV is hitting the mark. An external view of someone's CV is invaluable, try asking a family member or friend to review your own could be of vast help to you or you could just use a consultant who specialises in your choice of career and get very direct, honest constructive feedback and a plan of action to move forward.

Thinking of moving away from a particular industry? This is perceived to be one of the most difficult things to do by participants of our clinics, mainly because it opens up whole new avenues to explore (and agonise over). There are questions to be asked and discussed: Which sector do you want to move into? What projects do you want to manage? What kind of organization do you want to work for? And so on. Arras works across all sectors and business functions and brings this experience to each individual participant's case: We're able to find out their key strengths, their transferable skill sets, the potential options available and a plan of action for targeting those options.

In fact, the only issues our rusty participants face after a 30-minute consultation is a sore hand from all of the note taking, plus a

"Green Around" links

For more details on Arras People, click [here](#).

You can check out the blog managed by Arras People [here](#).

feeling that another session might be in order to answer all those other questions that have arisen after having their career laid out and their thoughts challenged.

Lindsay Scott is Director for [Arras People](#) and blogs at [How to Manage a Camel](#).

Green Around the Ears on Recruitment: Make Your Way Through the Recruitment Maze



By Gary Holmes

One of the most important aspects of looking for work successfully is being able to understand the recruitment process so as to be able to make the most of it. It is common for candidates to ruin their chances of securing an interview by simply having a lack of understanding and making obvious mistakes, often in the early stages of the process.

Therefore, I thought it might be useful to quash a few of the myths that surround the recruitment industry (and maybe help a few people with their job preparation while I'm at it). A lot of these common mistakes I am sure are made honestly and through lack of knowledge of a process that can at time be a bit of a minefield, so hopefully this will help.

1. *Applying for a job through multiple agencies will give you a greater chance of success* - This is simply not true. If you look at it from an employers' perspective, it is really just common sense. After all, they do not want to be peppered with the same CV over and over again, even if it is top class. As a candidate, it can also lead to the deterioration of your relationship with the other agencies. In some instances the potential employer, as they may begin to question your integrity.
2. *Lying on your CV will help your cause* - The amount of candidates that embellish their CVs (to put it mildly) is quite shocking. I'm not talking about saying you are the captain of your local football team when what you actually do is watch Sky Sports News on a Saturday afternoon, either. There are a lot of candidates out there that lie about their responsibilities within previous roles to get their foot in the door in positions that they are absolutely not suitable for. Luckily for you, we at Arras People interview potential candidates ourselves before risking our reputation and putting them before our clients, so the fiction authors are quickly separated from the Project Managers. But if candidates think they can get past a two-stage interview with an employer without knowing what they are talking about, they are very sorely mistaken.
3. *Using a job spec to update your CV is the way forward* - My colleague recently had a CV through for a role he was working on that looked strangely familiar. It turns out that what the candidate had done was basically cut the text from the job advert he was applying for and pasted it into his CV claiming the skills and experience as his own (not very clever!). This is worlds apart from tailoring your CV to match a job description using the skills and experience you have which is something I would always recommend doing. If you would like more advice on improving your CV, please take a look at the [CV writing guidelines](#) on our website and [our careers clinic page](#).
4. *Applying for roles after you have been rejected will show your persistence* - It may very well do that, but the recruitment agency likely will not see it that way. Applying for a job that you have been rejected for - even if it is still advertised - simply amounts to banging your head against a brick wall. Instead, you could be focusing your efforts into activities that will bring you the desired results. You may well think that you are the perfect candidate for a particular job, but if you are rejected from the process, there are two

'RAG Status' links

For those who want a look at what a RAG Status Report entails, the Imperial College London website [provides definitions and actions](#) for Red, Amber and Green statuses.

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empowering courses of action you can take:

- a. Ask the recruiter for feedback so that you have a better grasp as to why the role didn't work out for you, and/or;
- b. Accept it and move on to the next catch.

I think the key things to remember if you are looking for work at the moment are to make the most of your CV and act with integrity. In a competitive market such as we are now observing, these are the factors that will help to separate you from the rest.

Gary Holmes is a Project Management Consultant for [Arras People](#), and blogs at [How to Manage a Camel](#).

RAG Method: Does Red-Amber-Green Show Only a Pretty Picture or Meaningful Control?

By John Thorpe

Looking out of the window the autumn colours brought to mind the omnipresent method of reporting using RAG and got me wondering if they are a meaningful method of showing control or just a pretty picture?

Research shows we have many combinations on a theme RAG (red, amber, green): Add a little white and we get 'WRAG'; add some yellow and we get 'RAYG', but what does it really mean?

Sure we all get used to filling in the spreadsheets, or pulling reports from our management systems where the pretty colours are ready and waiting for us, green is good, red is bad but is this simplified method of reporting helping or hindering our true understanding of the state of our project or programme?

So for example, what does amber mean? Looking around the web I found a variety of definitions, as I would expect;

Amber: "Not on track, but in control."

AMBER: "Minor concern - being actively managed"
Slippage less than 10% of remaining time or budget, or quality impact is minor. Remedial plan in place.

Amber: "High concern."

AMBER: "The project should go forward with actions on recommendations to be carried out before the next review. The project may proceed to the next stage, but these recommendations must be actioned before the next review or before the next key decision point or an earlier specified date."

More importantly, what does amber mean in your environment? Does the quantification change depending upon what it is measuring, and do all stakeholders and users have the same level of knowledge and understanding?

Like many things in life, familiarity may breed contempt and in this particular case there is a potential trap in that we forget about the real detail of our measurement systems and go for the tick in the box, yeah it looks ok!

If RAG is being used to report progress and manage exceptions then we (and all stakeholders) must be aware of the metrics being used and the context in which they sit in reality. Taking the case of the WRAG, White in this instance means not started which may be fine. However if that not started becomes red tomorrow because it should have started 3 weeks ago are we in control?

John Thorpe is Managing Director of Arras People. He blogs for Arras People [here](#).

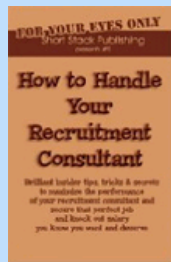
Suggested Readings and Links

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 recruitment 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

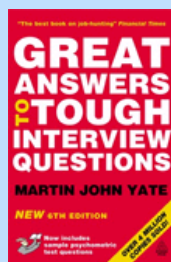


[How to Handle Your Recruitment Consultant](#)

Herbie Henderson and Oscar Dyson

Synopsis: "HTHYRC is perfect for graduates, first jobbers, new jobbers, career changers, in fact all 'jobbers'. In short everyone who's reluctantly realised that Recruitment Consultants are a fact of job hunting life." -

Available at amazon.co.uk



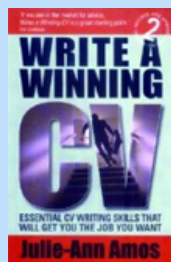
[Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions](#)

Martin John Yate

Reviews: 'An essential guide for the modern jobseeker.' *Evening Standard*

'A good investment... A comprehensive guide to the various ways of hunting jobs down, as well as how to make the right impression with employers.' *Daily Mirror* - Available at

amazon.co.uk



[Write a Winning CV](#)

Julie-Ann Amos

Review: 'There is no shortage of publications concerning CVs and covering letters; so what has this new contender got to offer? Quite a lot, as it turns out. For a start it is written not by a careers adviser, but by a recruitment specialist... it is up-to-date, written with authority and packed full of helpful advice.'

Nick Evans, Occupational Psychologist

'If you are in the market for advice, *Write a Winning CV* is a great starting point.' *The Guardian* - Available at amazon.co.uk

TIPOFFS' LINKS OF THE MONTH

CV Tips.com - Highly recommended CV advice web site that covers everything from the basics to the improvement of your curriculum vitae. Also addresses CV-related issues such as Gaps in Employment, Out of work, Career Moves and more.

Alec.co.uk - This popular job item advice site delves into a variety of job-related issues, such as CV improvement, ways to search for jobs effectively, and even ways to negotiate a better salary.

Monster.co.uk - It's tough to beat the big boys in job hunting, and they come no bigger than Monster. This link gives you an enhanced information page with articles and videos to help you in your search for career fulfillment.

Arras People Update

Edited by Dan Strayer

Our survey work doesn't just end with the Chartered Status application enquiries. Arras People acted recently on a letter sent to us by a graduate student hoping to discern more information about project sponsorship. We then wrote a survey on Project Sponsorship, hoping to find out about project managers' relationships with their sponsors.

Do you have an opinion, concern or a simple desire to praise project sponsorship?



Then take the Arras People Project Sponsorship Survey

The survey's time has come and gone, and the data suggests that the relationship between both parties is strong, but differences in perspective over a project's progress seem to remain a constant. In all, 67 percent of our respondents who had worked with a project sponsor answered 'Yes' to the poll question, 'Do you think the project sponsor understands/understood their role within the project?' One respondent who said 'yes' did offer reason for caution.

'Most sponsors carry an agenda that may or may not always fit easily or well with other agendas carried by Project Managers, IT, and other stakeholders,' they said.

Statistically speaking, most responses were relatively split 50-50. Half of our respondents stated that they had experienced problems with a project sponsor, with commenters specifically targetting elements such as a 'Sponsors non-timely release of funds... (and) sometimes having unrealistic expectations' or 'Absenteeism - fire and forget.'

Lessons learned from working with a project sponsor were numerous and varied, according to our project manager responders.

'I always look for the relationship to be a learning opportunity,' one respondent wrote. 'To know the sponsor as a person, a leader, and another business reference who has their own set of goals and objectives, as well as perceptions, mental models, and ideas.'

'Ensure they understand the role, responsibilities and the commitment involved,' wrote another.

Another PM stated: 'Be clear, Be concise and Brief them properly on their roles and responsibility.'

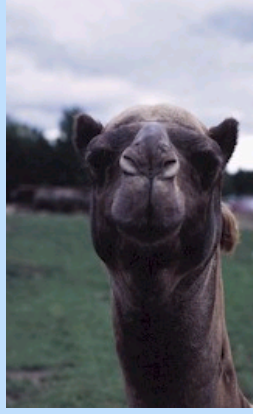
In other news...

- Arras People is now into the seventh week of a new Volunteering programme entitled Arras in the Community: The Groundwork Volunteer Project. More information is available [here](#). To bring readers up to speed: What we've done is sponsor a recent University graduate, Zoe, as she embarks on a 13-week volunteer project in conjunction with [Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale](#), that endeavours to teach other like-minded graduates the values and challenges involved in project management work. With weekly updates from Zoe about her project, and clarifications from an Arras People expert (okay, it's Lindsay Scott!) about what project managerial lessons Zoe can take away, we feel that readers will have a great opportunity to learn more about a great way to become a project manager, plus discover the terminology and vocabulary used in everyday PM life.
- 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 Arras People. You'd also find us to be quite solid on the search terms '[project management jobs](#)', '[programme office recruitment](#)', and '[IT project management vacancies](#)', among many others.
- If there truly were an economic downturn, you wouldn't know it with Arras People's continually-updated [job board](#). Give it a look, and also [register](#) with us to be informed of new opportunities and to take advantage of our highly popular [Project Management Careers Clinics](#). You might just be our 800th clinic, and win our lucky grand-prize!
- Vacancies on the Arras People job board come from all over Great Britain. Have a look at this Project Manager - Construction [vacancy in Oxford](#). Or [this one in Northern Ireland](#). And don't forget a pair of 12-month fixed term roles in York: namely, the [PMO Manager position](#) and the [Programme / Project Coordinator post](#).
- It's never too late to brush up on your training, skills, and that rusty old CV! 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.

Project Management Blog

How to Manage a Camel

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 this month's theme about project management recruitment. We'd love to hear your stories on public perception and the good stories that never get told about project management.

As always, you are always welcome at the Camel!

> [Visit the blog](#)