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Welcome

From the Editor:

As the layout would clearly indicate, things needed shaking up around here. Not that Tipoffs is in full-fledged upheaval, indicative of an overhaul that would make a newly-appointed Premier League club manager envious. Far from it: All we wanted to do was bring you something that eradicated the 'sameness' of a forgettable 2008, and provide the spark for what we hope will be an unforgettable 2009.

There's never been a better time to Tipoff your project management knowledge, so keep reading.

Dan Strayer, Editor

Swimming Against The Economic Current: Is Project Management Recession-Proof?

By Dan Strayer

Gloom and doom, recession and depression, bread lines and hard times...but is this the case in the project management field? While the economic meltdown of 2008 may have struck the majority of worldwide industries, some of the respondents in the early returns on the Arras People 2009 Project Management Report would leave you wondering if the Project Management industry had been mostly passed over.

The comprehensive online survey – which seeks out the views of project management professionals nationwide on the state of project management – indicates that the widespread concern about the economic situation seems to be skipping past their profession both in and outside the workplace. Which begs the question: is project management recession-proof?

The survey asked PM professionals 'How would you describe your personal confidence moving into 2009?' Nearly three out of four respondents gave an answer that displayed a strong level of confidence in their sector. 63 percent of respondents stated they felt 'steady' in their current situation, while another 11.6 percent indicated their situation at the even higher status of 'buoyant'. Among the two featured lower confidence options, 18.6 percent of respondents listed themselves as having 'low' confidence, and those listing their confidence as 'gloomy' totalled a mere 6.8 percent in spite of recent economic turmoil worldwide.

Another question concerning living standards asked PM professionals, 'Compared with this time last year would you say you/your family are...?' Early results show that two-thirds (67.5 percent) of respondents found their standards to be anywhere from 'about the same' to 'much better'. The highest choice came among those putting themselves in the former category at a rate of 34.3 percent, while 25.5 percent felt they were 'slightly better', and 7.7 percent felt 'much better' about the position in life. On the other side of living standards coin, only 22.4 percent of respondents felt their living status had become 'slightly worse', while an even more scant 10.1 percent listed their status as being 'much worse'.

It goes to show you that if you heard a particular house on your block partying non-stop throughout the holidays, chances are the hosts included at least one project management professional. What recession, indeed!

But maybe those party hounds down your street and the next reader's street have another key intangible – they work as PM professionals in the public sector. Statistics pulled thus far from the Confidence Level section of the 2009 Report reinforced a time-honoured belief in the midst of all-out economic crises: If you do find yourself caught in an uncertain job market, your best bet is to be caught while working in the public sector.

Amongst our early respondents, confidence among public sector employees remains definitively higher than those working in either the private or charity/not-for-profit sector, though all three are in the clear majority of a neutral-to-positive response. In a telling response to our question "How you describe your current sectors confidence moving into 2009?", three quarters of public respondents (73.6 percent) expect anywhere from no growth to strong growth in spite of hard economic times. Charity respondents checked in at just 58.6 percent (note that more than half of that block – 34.5 percent – anticipated no growth at all), while only 55.9 percent of the private respondents had a neutral to positive vibe for the year ahead.

Perhaps even more telling is how much the neutral-to-positive public respondents heightened the mean curve for all three sections. Without public employees' relative good vibrations for 2009 in the report, the mean for private and charity employees would have averaged out at just over 57 percent. The actual mean response thanks to the public employees' 73.6 percent figure jumps 4.5 points to 61.5 percent, a sign of how much the discrepancies between the three (73.6, 58.6 and 55.9) in neutral-to-positive answers have enhanced the early returns into a more favourable direction

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New Vacancies
at Arras People

All listed vacancies from  this issue have lapsed, but for updated, current vacancies, [click here](#)

2009 PM Survey
Now Online

The survey that gets everyone talking is back for 2009, and time is running out. You still have time to complete it by 26 January:



[Sign up to take part in the 2009 Project Management Report today!](#)

How to
Manage a Camel

The hot PM topics this month at the



top among top blogs for the discerning project management professional:

[BCS Session: Skills Gap?](#)

[Snippet #1 From The Arras People Survey 2009](#)

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Comparatively with those 'glass half full' public employee statistics, 16.8 percent of private respondents admitted to being 'very worried' about redundancy, compared to 10.3 percent in charities and just 8.4 percent amongst public sector employees.

Ultimately, such data leaves us to wonder if it's possible that the project management industry can serve as a viable tool for re-energising the economy. When asked 'Do you believe Project Management Professionals have a significant role to play in helping the UK economy out of its difficulties?', 82.5 percent of our respondents answered 'Yes'. Notable in this affirmative majority opinion is that across the spectrum of respondents – ranging from project support officers to PMO managers – the responses showed remarkable consistency.

"An unprecedented crisis will require an unprecedented amount of well managed change to overcome it," said one respondent, while another stated: "Project management is seen as an overhead at times like economic downturn."

One respondent added: "Economically, we are in a totally new and dynamic environment. Managing the status quo is not the answer. In changing times, project managers will be excellently equipped because what we are trained to do is manage change."

Ultimately, the doom and gloom that has engulfed the economy is not necessarily applicable to project management industry, though no statistical evidence has been found to suggest project managers and the like are excluded from all economic crises. Industry-wide positive opinion and public works' projects, though, may be a lasting legacy of the financial downturn: As project management professionals see themselves as the agents of fortune for a desired economic turnaround, confidence in projects and the people behind those projects should rise, leading to more investment and ultimately more jobs. As one Arras People 2009 Project Management Report respondent said best: "Good Project Managers can implement change to make businesses more effective in the current climate."

Dan Strayer is Marketing Co-ordinator for [Arras People](#) and serves as Editor of [Tipoffs and PM News newsletters](#).

Programme and Project Offices – Increasing Value and Return on Investment

By Lindsay Scott

According to the latest research from Arras People, 60% of organisations in the UK have a Programme or Project Office function. Programme Offices have been gaining in popularity over the last decade and many in the industry are projecting 2009 as the year where they step up a gear, showing their true value and providing bigger returns on investment. However 57% of polled project management professionals believe their PMO function will be under more pressure this year due to the economic uncertainties.

So either way, 2009 will be a challenging year and my question is "how will the Programme / Project Offices increase their value and provide better benefits within organisations this coming year and beyond?"

I believe there are a number of areas Programme and Project Offices need to be focused on; where the PMO fits within the organisation, the model or framework it adopts, the services it provides and the skillset of its workforce;

The Fit Within the Organisation

ESI International, the project management training organisation published its top ten project management trends for 2009, on the PMO it stated that; "Although the project management office has gained wide acceptance, it still needs buy-in at the senior executive level". Only 41% of polled project management professionals stated that their PMO function reported into the board or senior management of their organisations. Many PMOs still only exist at the programme or project level (31%) which means their services and support lack visibility and support from the executive.

Much has been published about the need for PMOs to be implemented from the top down and the recent final public consultation Portfolio Management Guide from the OGC goes some way to highlighting the importance of such a PMO being installed at Board Management level. Many will have heard of the saying "Doing the right programmes and projects and doing the programmes and projects right", the PMO or Portfolio Management Office provides that structure for "Doing the Right Programmes and Projects". It is only until this front end of programme and project management becomes more formalised i.e., with strategic alignment to corporate goals in place, senior programme and project sponsors in place and with a vested interest, project prioritisation processes to ensure which programmes and projects are delivered first and a fully staffed and skilled office which supports the activities and reports the right metrics and information.

For more information on Portfolio Management from the OGC, [see the Final Public Consultation document](#).

Models and Frameworks

The Programme Management Office industry has waited a long time to see

good guidance published which helps support the implementation of a Programme Office or Project Office using best practice models. 2008 saw the launch of another OGC publication; Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices (P3O) which focuses not only on PMO set up but also “re-energizing” an existing PMO, different models to suit individual organisation’s requirements, service offerings, details on PMO tools and techniques and sample job descriptions. PMOs currently in existence which are struggling to provide value (13% of polled professionals said their PMO delivers no obvious benefits to the organisation) need to revisit the model or framework they have in place and quickly.

46% of respondents believed that their PMO provided the key benefit of “a common / consistent approach to programme/project management delivery and management”. The P3O guidance is a good place to start for any PMO Manager tasked with a new PMO set up or implementation of drastic changes to improve that value added rating, for many managers, a back-to-basics exercise could be at the top of the list this year.

For more information on Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices from the OGC, [see the P3O page](#).

Service Provision

Through many conversations and discussions with PMO professionals over the last year, a common theme started to emerge. Many organisations’ PMOs were moving away from the traditional project administrative support services (only 17% of PMO professionals polled said their PMO predominantly offered this service). PMOs today predominantly offer services such as best practice, standards, governance -a Centre of Excellence model (34% of professionals polled), closely followed by added value services such as MI, reporting, planning etc to programme and project managers (22%) and organizational support such as enabling strategy, senior management support – the portfolio management office model (22%). Interestingly, when asking the question; “What benefits does your PMO function deliver to you?”, 28% of respondents answered value added services (28%), closely followed by administrative support (27%).

The PMOs may want to move away from the view that “we’re not just project administrators who take minutes and update plans” but their target audience believes this is one of the main benefits of having a PMO in the first place. Danger bells should be ringing if your model or framework does not fit the needs of the organisation and provide services that meet the actual needs of all the customers. The PMO will be under increasing pressure if it re-invents itself to provide the services it just wants to provide rather than addressing the holistic business need.

For more information on maturing your PMO function, [see the P3M3 guidance](#) and set time aside to [complete the self assessment](#).

Skillset of the Workforce

Making it happen depends largely on the leadership of the PMO and the skillset and aptitude of the staff that work within the function. Interestingly there are only 5% of registered PMO professionals with Arras People who have experience of working in a portfolio management office. The majority of professionals have experience in programme/project office, providing services such as reporting and planning and within Centres of Excellence models, providing best practice and governance. If the portfolio management office framework is the key to adding value to an organisations programme and project activities there needs to be an up skilling focus for its key staff or even a new recruitment drive. The PMO Managers of tomorrow have to be able to provide not only the leadership for the function but bring a level of seniority to influence and negotiate at the executive level within the organisation. To date, a large number of PMO Manager posts concentrate on individuals with previous experience managing a PMO or having worked within a PMO previously. I suggest that managing a top flight portfolio office is going to demand previous hands on programme and project delivery experience, coupled with good business acumen and PMO knowledge. For many organisations this will mean the candidate profile for PMO Manager posts needs to change drastically along with the rewards and status of such roles.

Lindsay Scott is Co-Managing Director of Arras People. To read more of her work on project management, [click here](#).

Dear PM Bartender...

Dispensing the Finest in Ales and PM Advice Since 2009!

QUESTION: I want to become a project manager and I'm only 18 years old at my last year of college. I'm making my university options and I am in need of help from someone who is experienced within project management and could give me some advice.

I have been looking at Project Management degrees, there are currently only two Universities that do just Project Management these are Leeds Metropolitan and Greenwich Universities. I was told that it wouldn't help me much to become a project manager because it's not focused on much other than management. I was told this was because the course wouldn't look good on my CV. Somebody told me on a forum (The Student Room Forum) that I would be better doing a degree which is a management and computer science degree because it would look better on my CV and I would be more successful in finding a job within project management fields after university and various training days and

qualifications. Is this true?

I'm also going to be taking a MSc in Project Management once I finish the course that will best lead me towards a career in Project Management.

I would like your opinion on what would be better for me out of the Project Manager Degree at Greenwich or Leeds metropolitan, or a management and computing degree at a higher ranked university. If you could tell me which would help me more in finding a career in Project management and what would look better on the CV for somebody who was to take me on as an assistant Project management for example.

Your Help is greatly appreciated!

PM BARTENDER: Thanks for your email, here are my thoughts and opinions on the questions you've put to us.

Firstly project management is one of those roles where people can get into it through a number of routes – many of my peers and colleagues came through convoluted routes for example I studied Psychology at Manchester University, graduated and gained a role at Hewlett-Packard and then did training in project management (both external courses and on the job), a colleague of mine left school with no qualifications, worked in the manufacturing sector and was given an opportunity to work on projects (he gained his experience through trial and error in the early days with training coming later). Just two examples, but if you ask any project manager for their story, you'll probably hear something similar. The underlying similarities in all the stories has been experience gained whilst on the job and some would argue this is much more valuable than a qualification.

My own opinion would be to firstly understand what interests you – what projects you would like to be managing in the future? Business, IT, Construction? Choosing a degree based on the subject matter as opposed to project management at this stage in your education would be much more beneficial – especially as you are considering taking the MSc in Project Management later (you don't need to have prior project management training or education to take up this MSc). You mention a management or computer science degree as a possible option – my advice would be to look at the sandwich degree options i.e., the year out in industry and returning to University for the final year, taking the course length to 4 years. The reason I would opt for this is the importance of practical experience in industry when it comes to looking for a project management opportunity further down the line. Thinking back to my original comment – practical experience can often be seen to be more valuable than the qualification you end up with – choosing a course which allows practical, real world experience will definitely stand you in good stead when you graduate.

My advice would be to choose a degree course that motivates and interests you – has a good blend of academia and practical application – gain a good class of degree and then think about taking the MSc Project Management course if project management still interests you 3 or 4 years down the line. Like I said before, there are many paths into project management and the degree route is only one. Another route could be complete the BSc degree, join a graduate programme in an organisation which has a good reputation for project management and then work your way up the ranks taking on board training courses and good mentorship opportunities from other project managers.

E-mail careersadvice@arraspeople.co.uk with your questions for the PM Bartender.

Tipoffs Survey ?

Arras People are more than just PM recruiters. Each month, the people behind Tipoffs want to know what you, the PM professional, think about some of the issues concerning project management.

With this in mind, we introduce a new monthly feature: our own Arras People / Tipoffs Survey Questions of the Month, a short poll dedicated to Project Management.

[Take Our Survey Today!](#)

Suggested Reading

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. We've taken a quick look at P3O and the early returns on the Arras People 2009 Project Management Survey, so we now point you to three books and three web sites that can address the issues surrounding the topic.

TIPOFFS' BOOKS OF THE MONTH



[Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices: P3O](#)
Office of Government Commerce (OGC)

Product Description: "This new core guidance from OGC describes why, when and how to use portfolio, programme and project Offices (P3O) models. It describes what a P3O is, defining the two key types of P3O, and goes on to answer the question posed by Senior Management: 'Why have P3Os and what value-add do they bring to the organisation?' It also includes business cases, funding models for

set-up and ongoing costs and performance measures. The publication looks at the lifecycle of a P30 and describes the use of a project based approach to scoping and setting up a suitable P30 model within an organisation." - Available at amazon.co.uk



[Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices Pocketbook](#)
Office of Government Commerce (OGC)

Product Description: *"This is a quick reference guide for using P30 effectively, designed to be used alongside the core P30 guidance. This title is written by Sue Vowler, the lead Author of the Core Guidance. It features useful quick reference guide that is portable and easy to use. It can be used as a revision tool."* - Available at amazon.co.uk

P30 ON THE WEB

[PM Toolbox](#) - Short post about P30 Conference scheduled for March in Birmingham.

[PM4Girls](#) - Popular in the project management blogosphere, PM4Girls (aka 'A Girl's Guide to Project Management') gives its take on the OGC launch of the P30 Guidance in November.

[APM Group on P30 Qualification Scheme](#) - This link reveals APM Group's objective in establishing a clear and sensible qualification scheme for P30.