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Welcome

From the Editor:

To see the weather change to that which would suggest warmth, a beckoning of happiness in weather, is one of the great promises of April. But you don't need weather changes alone to find happy days with the people behind Project Management Tipoffs.

Happy days are here as always with Arras People. Competition is strong, but so is your hope of finding the next solid project management role you're vying for so diligently.

Remember: It's always a good time to ramp up your project management knowledge, so keep reading Project Management Tipoffs!

Dan Strayer, Editor

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"I keep six honest serving men...(They taught me all I knew);"

By Andy Clayton

*Their names are What and Why and When
 And How and Where and Who*



When Rudyard Kipling wrote this poem as part of "The Elephant's Child" in 1902, we're sure he wasn't thinking of "Project Management" when he penned it – we're even sure he wasn't aware of such a phenomenon. He probably just regarded it as a common sense approach to doing things, rather than establishing a project's terms of reference.

While Project Management certainly can't claim to be the oldest profession, it has certainly been around a long time – officially accredited or not.

But who can say when it did begin? Perhaps in the 1950's, when the US Navy invented Critical Path Method as a tool to help better organise the building of their submarines? Perhaps it was when Mr Gantt invented his chart in the 1910's? It may even have been about 4,000 years ago with the construction of the Great Pyramid of Giza. There is certainly evidence that the four faces of the pyramid were managed as different work elements. About the same time, Noah was busy building his ark – did he manage that as a project? His Project Mandate is certainly very well published.

The point we're attempting to put together here, is that as we all know, Project Management isn't this fabled art/science that is to be avoided at all costs, and indeed if followed, will guarantee projects runs over time & budget. We, the Project Management community, know and understand that the opposite is true. So perhaps next time you encounter some resistance to project management, you may want to point the source of that resistance to Kipling and his honest serving men.

So, where does Kipling come into this? We would imagine that in any survey, Kipling could be more accepted than Project Management – even if just for his cakes. The merits of Kipling have long since been debated, but whatever your thoughts, you have to accept that these words make great Project Management Sense. Let's take a look at his six honest serving men (Grandmothers who may already be sucking eggs may want to look away);

What

Pardon? Everyone understands what a project has to deliver. But do they really understand the true scope of the project; its entirety; its products; the deliverables? Heaven forbid there's a miscommunication on the scope of the project and it under delivers – or perhaps scope creep kills the project? Clear communication and a strong heart are needed.

Why

Why bother? Why indeed! Those of you who have or have had toddlers may cringe at that very word. Perhaps that's why we don't use it so much as adults. In the project environment, we need to use it all the time. Noah understood the why and was therefore committed. Not to mention dry. If everyone has a better understanding of the "why" behind the project, then perhaps we'll get a better buy-in, a more committed workforce & a successful project. Did we already mention communication?

When

Yesterday is invariably the answer. In the real world, however, we know

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, and the results are in. Do you want to be left behind in project management trends? If not, then it's time to show how serious you are about project management. Get the 2009 Benchmark Report:

[Sign up for your copy of 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:



[Happy Birthday to Us - And a Gift to You](#)

[Knowledgeshare 2009](#)

[The Month of Seven – Arras People's Seven Modern Projects of the World](#)

And there's always more to look at whenever you go to the camel. [More available at The Camel homepage.](#)

things take time. We know that if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. Or do we? If we don't communicate the when, will we ever know?

How

The method – the application – how are we going to get things done? Whether we're using PRINCE2 or an in-house method, there needs to be a common understanding of how things are going to happen. It's down to communication again.

Where

Not just the where are we going to "do things", but the where are we in the project? Where do we need to be? Where have we been? We need to know the journey; we need to recognise the destination.

Who

The team. PERT charts don't manage projects. No tool does. People manage projects, and those people need to understand who else is working on the project, what they're doing, when they're doing it, how they're going to do it and where they'll be doing it, and most importantly why. Sound familiar? Perhaps these are important things to communicate.

As a final thought, we'd like to take you to two important points. The first is the second line of the poem: - "They taught me all I knew". We never stop learning and we never stop learning by asking questions. If we're managing projects, we need to know the answers – but much in the same way as parenting a teenager, we need to know what questions to ask.

Perhaps Mr Kipling can help there.

The second point is perhaps the most important one that runs through all of his six honest serving men, and the one that Kipling himself was a master at, and that's communication. Announcing; contacting; getting the message across; statements; communiqué's. Effect communications begat successful projects and the reverse rings true.

As Bob Hoskins once said, "It's good to talk".

Andy Clayton & Ian Hamer are the founders, directors, trainers (not to mention Project Managers) at That Project Management Company. The company provides training and consultancy on Project Management, especially focused on the OGC Best Practices. For more information, please visit <http://www.thatprojectmanagementcompany.com>.

Getting Motivated To Find Your Next Project Management Job: The Importance of Grading Registrations

By Mick Hides

Anyone visiting the registration pages of **Arras People** in the last few months would have noticed a distinct change in our approach. The industry standard model for anyone wishing to join a recruitment database is to upload their details and wait for the calls to come.

Arras People have never been an organization to merely follow the herd (or is it flock?) and, as a result, decided that a more managed approach was called for. The problem with an 'open' database is that there tends to be no feedback; you, the candidate, may find that your expectations are not being managed.

Our own experience suggests that around half of CVs submitted are not up to high-level project management professional standards. To explore this further, it should be remembered that we are looking for project management experience commensurate with salary/rate expectations defined in a well-presented, professional CV.

Changing to a process where candidates 'Apply for Registration' immediately manages expectations. Assessment of applications is undertaken daily with all candidates being informed of our decision as to whether we can

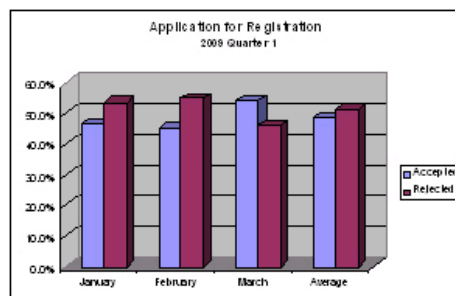
take you any further in the field of project management. The last quarter reinforced our perceived wisdom, with just less than half of all applicants being accepted onto the database. So, what of those being rejected?

A large percentage of these are categorized as grade 3, which is to say that the CV either does not adequately present project management abilities and/or salary expectations are not supported by the evidence (i.e. the details within the CV). The evidence suggests that more project management professionals are being attracted to register, but equally are less able to present a coherent case; this is an increasing trend judging by the evidence.

Something that candidates are frequently surprised about is that all Arras People consultants come from a project management background, as

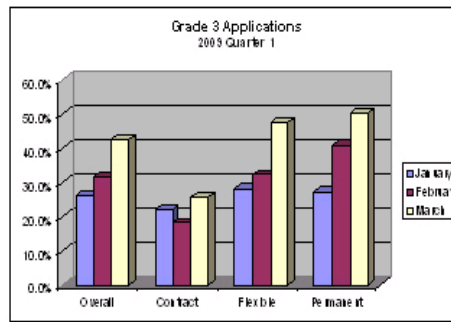
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opposed to a general High Street recruitment consultant. With that background becomes heightened credentials and knowledge of what the project management client is looking for. This professional knowledge is utilized when assessing CVs, and whilst we can make assumptions about people's abilities, equally we are able to identify where gaps are present.

In a competitive market such as the current one, only those that are able to properly demonstrate their skills, experience and value will be successful in the job market. This is reinforced by a recent survey by iProfile which found that:



"three quarters (73%) of recruiters have rejected candidates for interviews due to vague CVs with an absence of relevant achievements. And nearly a quarter (24%) said applicants could demand a pay increase of 15% if they sold their existing achievements on CVs more effectively".

This is a message we relay daily to rejected candidates. The good news seems to be that those sufficiently motivated to call are equally motivated to make the necessary changes and subsequently be accepted upon resubmission.

The grading process is conducted on all applications, not just those applying for registration. The trend here is very consistent, with a 44% acceptance-to-56% rejection ratio. Interestingly, for permanent registrations we do get a much higher proportion of rejections (average 66%), which is much closer to the figure quoted by the iProfile research.

The approach being taken is not designed to be exclusive or discriminatory; rather, we hope it serves as a wake up call for the project management profession. Working towards a database of candidates that meet minimum requirements, Arras People can be confident that they are only handling acceptable, project management-specific candidates; ensuring clients receive a prompt and professional service. Candidates equally benefit from the service; what can be worse than continually submitting a below-par performance and not knowing?

The benefit for the profession is a raised level of standards, where a common language is used and all expectations are managed.

Reference

iProfile, 2009, The Recession Survival Guide for Jobseekers and Jobkeepers, iProfile, February

Mick Hides is a Project Management Recruitment Consultant for Arras People. A veteran of the engineering, manufacturing, Higher Education and Third Sectors, Hides blogs for Arras People at [How to Manage a Camel](#) and offers a variety of [Careers Clinics](#).

Providing Something for Everyone - The Key to Successful Implementation of a Task-Tracking Solution

By Quentin Brody Cooper

At its simplest, project management can be thought of as an exercise in communication and control: what needs to be done by whom and when, and then, once activities have been assigned, monitoring their progress until completion and assigning new ones.



The problem is that such a straightforward undertaking rapidly becomes unmanageably complex when many different individuals with different line managers are working, possibly with different roles, on numerous projects, each of which might be run by a different project manager. Polling each participant within such a matrix-managed environment becomes unrealistic and impractical.

A task-tracking system can be the solution to this conundrum. However, and as with any ancillary system, its acceptance and successful implementation is going to depend largely on the benefits it confers on each of the parties. This article describes the features you might look for that would provide them.

When introducing any change in working practice, second only to senior-level support for that change is the satisfactory answering of the "What's in it for me?" question in determining the likelihood of success. So if you are considering the adoption of a task-tracking system to support the activities of an organisation you must be certain to select a system that provides positive benefits to each of the interested parties rather than one that is perceived to be an "overhead" that just gets in the way of getting things done.

For the Project Manager:

- Is the system one that can be configured to support whichever project management methodology the organisation has chosen to adopt, be it AGILE, DSDM, RUP, Waterfall or whatever? Indeed it may be appropriate to run different activities in different ways.
- Does the system handle delegated administration? Functionality that, with appropriate training, allows a PM to generate project-specific workflows, add custom fields and modify access control rules and roles to suit his/her purpose rather than having to rely on someone else.
- Are configurable templates for such things as work packages and test scripts supported?
- Does the system reflect the natural order of projects which is that tasks generally have sub-tasks and so on, potentially ad infinitum! In other words is a hierarchical task tree part of the package.
- Are different roles on different projects supported and can who can do what be configured so as to provide adequate controls around the task-management process?
- Does the system allow the preferred way of monitoring progress to be adopted?

For the Line Manager:

- Can Line Managers be notified whenever a subordinate is assigned to undertake a task and can the system be configured to allow them to approve that assignment?
- Is a single view available that will display the task list and state of all the tasks being undertaken by each of the subordinates irrespective of the project?
- Can reports be generated and received on a periodic basis?

For the Task Executor:

- Is it possible to use the system for keeping track of a personal task list?
- Does it provide an instant overview of the tasks that have been assigned to them irrespective of the project with which the tasks are associated?
- Can it be configured to allow users to create their own filters?
- Does an integrated "time-spent-on-task" capture mechanism that means that a separate time reporting mechanism is not needed?
- Can it be set up to allow team members to raise their own issues/tasks during a project?

For the business as a whole:

- Is the system OS and database agnostic and will it, if desired, run in an open source environment? Is the price point one at which you will get a return on your investment within 12 to 18 months?
- Can the same task-tracking system be used for many different purposes within the organisation (thereby saving on training costs and administrative overheads)?
- Is the licensing model such that it doesn't cost you more if unexpectedly you want to provide for additional users of the system?
- Can users interact with the system through the use of e-mail rather than via the interface?
- Is the access control system sufficiently granular to allow users to see only what they are allowed to see right down to the field level (thus allowing the system to be made available to 3rd parties and/or customers)?
- Does the application scale and will the underlying architecture mean that performance will not degrade with an increase in the number of users and/or tasks?
- Are integration and extension capabilities available through SOAP and/or an API?

For the Senior Executives:

- Can the system be configured so as to provide a dash-board type summary of the state of different projects?
- Are there a sufficient number of different report types to allow all reporting requirements to be met?

One final issue that is worth careful consideration is whether attempting to adopt an integrated project-planning and task-tracking solution is good idea. Some would argue that the two practices serve somewhat different purposes; the former providing a higher level of abstraction suitable for presentation to clients or senior management whilst the latter gives those at the coal face a clear and detailed picture of exactly what needs to be done.

Another thing to appreciate is that, unless you have a team well versed in updating task progress within a planning environment, you can get some unexpected results and consequently keeping the two functions separate is often, at least in the first instance, to be recommended.

*Quentin Brodie Cooper is a consultant who advises on the selection and deployment of **task-tracking systems**. You can contact Quentin at quentin.brodiecooper@trackstudio.com.*

Dear PM Bartender... 

Dispensing the Finest in Ales and PM Advice Since 2009!

QUESTION: Should I complete the PRINCE2 course if I don't have any project management experience?

PM BARTENDER: Thanks for your email. We get asked this question a lot, along with "If I have my PRINCE2 accreditation will it help me get a job even though I have no experience in project management?"

The quickest way to answer these questions is this: If you don't have any experience in project management, doing the PRINCE2 exams will not give any guarantees to gaining employment or indeed place you high up in the competitive ranks against someone with practical experience in project management and no accreditation.

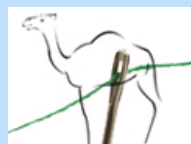
Simply put, gaining the PRINCE2 accreditation and having no practical experience is not a great selling point and could be a costly decision that brings you little benefit.

You need to ask yourself why you think the PRINCE2 accreditation would benefit you other than a tick in the box on your CV. If you want to gain further information and knowledge about project management, it's much cheaper to buy some of the good books that are out there – [Arras People Bookshop](#) – before making any commitments to expensive training courses. If you still want to attend training courses in project management, look for the courses that cover the principles and capabilities of project management not just the method i.e., PRINCE2.

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

Eye of the Needle

We introduce a new feature for Tipoffs/PM News this month: The



Eye of the Camel Needle, a brief glimpse at a selected blog post from our blog, How to Manage a Camel. This month's post comes from Lindsay Scott's post, 'Update to the "Understanding the PMO"'.

But before we get to the inaugural post, we'd like to alert both our PM News and PM Tipoffs readers of another first-come, first-served opportunity. Just as we did in February, Arras People will give away free copies of the

[Portfolio, Programme and Project Offices \(P3O\) Pocketbook](#),

authored by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC), to the first 14 respondents who get our trivia question right.

Yes, there will be 14 fortunate winners of the Pocketbook in all - seven lucky recipients will come from our Tipoffs readers, and seven more will come from our PM News club, so act fast and [email us](#) with the correct answer. Why seven each? It falls in conjunction with Arras People's [month-long celebration of seven years](#) as the leader in project management recruitment. When we have the birthday, you get the rewards!

Expanding upon our celebratory mood, the first recipient to answer the bonus question correctly will get their name featured in next month's issues of PM tipoffs and PM News.

Without further ado, the trivia question:

What generally indoor sport featuring two goals serves as a place you are most likely to hear the word 'tipoff'?

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 the project control and task management, so we felt it appropriate to point you to three books and three web sites that can address the issues surrounding the topic.

TIPOFFS' BOOKS OF THE MONTH



[The Project Management Scorecard: Measuring the Success of Project Management Solutions \(Improving Human Performance\)](#)

Jack J. Phillips, Ph.D.; Timothy W. Bothell, Ph.D.; G. Lynne Snead

Review: "With this new publication, Jack, Tim and Lynne provide the answers to critical questions about project management measurement. Using six types of data, including the actual ROI, this book simplifies the measurement process and provides credible data needed for the senior management team. It should be a valuable reference for every project manager." - Dr. Stephen R. Covey

Available at [amazon.co.uk](#)



[Project Management Survival: A Practical Guide to Leading, Managing & Delivering Challenging Projects:](#)
Richard Jones

Review: "What's useful about this book is that it assumes that most projects have already gone wrong before they're off the ground and that resources and times are not just limited, but inadequate – welcome to real world project management." - CNBC European Business

Available at [amazon.co.uk](#)



[Project Planning, Scheduling and Control](#)
James P. Lewis

Product Description:
"Unique among project management books, Project

BONUS QUESTION: Based on winning percentage this season, what team in the top flight professional league is currently the best in the sport mentioned above?

When we launched our [Project Management Benchmark Report](#) back in February 2009 we included a section in our findings about the role PMOs play in our respondent's organisations. We especially wanted to include this section because of the launch of [P3O](#) (the Portfolio, Programme and Project Office guidance) in November last year.

The findings from our own survey showed that 60% of respondents were working in organisations where PMO functions were deployed. The latest edition of PM Today, also carries a PMO based survey with similar findings from ESI. Although the ESI survey is only based on 60 respondents (the Arras benchmark is based on 1200) they too found that 66% of respondents worked within organisations with PMOs. 47% of ESI surveyed PMOs reported into a senior level, Arras surveyed PMOs 41%. This is interesting stuff because of course two surveys reporting the same responses adds much more weight to the outcomes and conclusions.

Read more from this post [here](#).

Planning, Scheduling & Control is renowned for its applications-oriented, non-theoretical understanding of the flexibility required in day-to-day management situations. New material in this long-awaited third edition includes easy-to-follow guidelines for managing multiple projects, effective risk management strategies, an innovative blueprint for developing a workable project methodology, and more."

Available at amazon.co.uk

TASKS AND CONTROL ON THE WEB

[Research paper - Laurie S. Kirsch](#) -

1997 paper from a University of Pittsburgh graduate student gives research into the function of control in project management.

[Henry Gantt, the Gantt Chart](#) - The

'Father of Project Control', a look at Gantt, the American engineer and management consultant behind the revolutionary Gantt Chart that changed project management.

[SLAC on Project Planning:](#)

[Resources](#) - Renowned National Accelerator Laboratory affiliated with Stanford University, this page gives a glimpse at project management control systems, complete with scientific links and project management terminology.