

Content - May 2006

[Projects - Getting Started Late to Finish on Time](#)
[Projects Get Late One Day at a Time - Or Do They?](#)
[Last Minute Interview Preparations](#)
[Latest Vacancies and News](#)

Welcome...finally! In this issue of tipoffs we look at lateness or last minute which pretty much sums up what has been happening to tipoffs of late(!) We're back in the driving seat and looking forward to the summer, which sees some new things happening at Arras .. watch this space..

For any feedback or comments please get in touch at: tipoffs@projectmanagementnewsletter.co.uk

Get the previous editions at: [Project Management Tip-Offs](#) [Click Here](#)

Get Started Late To Finish On Time

by John Gough of Diabolo Journeys

It was interesting to listen to an FA spokesman abdicating any responsibility for the Wembley Stadium debacle. The Aussie builder blamed late delivery on the Football Association's changes in specification. "We just asked for seats, toilets and a pitch", the FA official responded in exasperation.

IMAGE
LINK
NOW
OBSOLETE!



When projects run over, it's an old favourite with project providers to blame scope creep; projects are late because the client gets it wrong, and asks for more and different stuff. The client on the other hand, acts the innocent bystander, we just wanted a simple: Criminal Justice System, Tax Credit System, or National ID Card. For many clients, once the project provider has been appointed that's the job done, they can leave the difficult bits to them and resume the day job, and anyway who has time to talk to those geeks in the systems department?

The project then has barely started, and already there is little understanding on both sides, so if you are the Project Manager stuck in the middle, for goodness sake do something, because your project is late before it has begun, and it doesn't stop there!

As most IT projects progress, it is often just a few key business users that have the knowledge and the clout to make the important decisions that will pivot the project between success and failure, and as Project Manager it is essential that you keep these influential users fully informed, by circulating lots of project documentation: Project Initiation Documents, Requirement Spec's, Change Logs and the rest. These people however have a business to run, and their first priority is business as usual, so how much time do they have for your emails and attachments?

To paraphrase Tony Blair, getting projects right is all about: Communication, Communication, Communication.

PRINCE2, MSP and other methodologies encourage the production of lots of documents, but too often we confuse documentation with communication, we circulate but don't communicate, we email but don't empathise. The maxim has to be:

- If you send me a document I may read it.
- If you discuss the document with me, I may understand it.
- If you let me create it with you, it's mine.

At Diabolo we are big advocates of co-creating solutions in project workshops, but more importantly combining workshops with technology. Today with display portals, document management and collaboration technology, the workshop does not have to be a talking shop that ends in a pile of flip charts that nobody reads:

- Try using wall size graphic templates to enable everyone at the workshop to participate and get involved. The design of the graphics should ensure that all outcomes are captured in a structured format.
- Transfer the graphics to an online display portal, where all the workshop participants can view the templates, comment, discuss, edit and continue the workshop online.
- Invite other stakeholders to the site and get their views and input.
- Let the project team collaborate, coordinate and sign off actions online.
- Collate the agreed output, download, and only then create the project documents. Some tools even automatically populate standard PRINCE2 reports, so with some brief editing the job is finished.

Benefits Realisation Corner

Benefits realisation seems to be the hot topic at the moment - both in project management and project office. Get up to speed with recent articles and information

> [PPSO \(Programme and Project Support Office\) last seminar in March covered BR](#)

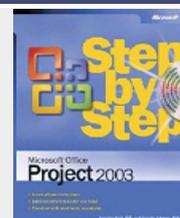
> [Jan de Snoo's article from IT Week "Know the benefits before you begin"](#)

> [What is Benefits Realisation? Short article from Project Smart](#)

> From the IT Adviser journal - "Managing your IT investment" talks about investment approval and benefits realisation

> Short publication from the PM group "Benefits Management" (PDF)

Bookshop - Books to assist with lateness



Back to basics! This is really an introduction to

Workshops may be time consuming, but developing a close understanding between the project provider and the client has to be time well spent, and although workshops at the beginning may mean the project starting late, they really can ensure the project will finish on time.

John Gough is a director of Diabolo Journeys. Diabolo Journeys innovative change products and services can be found at: www.diabolojourneys.com

[| top |](#)

Projects Get Late One Day at a Time - Or Do They?

by Ian McKenzie, Arras People

As you may have gathered the theme for this edition of Tip Offs is lateness. We were prompted by the fact that this edition was supposed to happen by the end of March - the next thing we know its Easter and now it is past Easter in fact it is now past May Day and was it May 13th the FA Cup Final was due to be played at Wembley? The interesting fact is that we are in much esteemed company - just think about all the organisations that have hit the headlines recently.



NHS and Systems

One of the largest employers in the world has had £billions poured into programmes and projects - and still does not have what it wants, to the point that one supplier has had to take a charge on their balance sheet for over £200m due to failure to deliver. A lesson to be learnt here - many I am sure, perhaps expectations were set too high? In looking to secure the budget i.e. win the sale, required functionality was probably overstated for what could actually be delivered for the price the business was won at. That old rouse of bid low to win the business and make your money on the changes! In any project something has to give, be it money, time or deliverable, usually more money, more time and less quality of deliverable!

If you want to read in detail about the big one see: "...[The nine projects at the heart of NHS IT - Public Sector](#). We reveal which projects are on target - and which are running late..." By Steve Ranger - Silicon.com Published: Thursday 19 January 2006

The Projects are so famous they have merited a book to be written - a classic The NHS IT Project by Sean Brennan



Also see "[Down at the EPR Arms](#)" articles - enjoy 6 years of observations, comments and frustration.

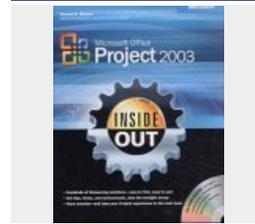
With the NHS, how does that bode for us in the UK with the 2012 London Olympics - not that far away really in terms of the scale of construction and required business and IT systems? A number of commentators scoffed at the Greeks - however they made it, as I am sure we Brits will also - however that brings me on to Wembley.

I draw your attention to a BBC article "...[Lessons for the Olympics...](#)" Simon Austin draws some excellent comment in reviewing the Wembley and BAA Terminal 5 project an excellent read and as a taster on the content and comment in reference to Wembley "...They also didn't seem to know exactly what they wanted..." and as Simon states "...They don't come much bigger than the Olympics..."

Amongst other famous organisations that have generated headlines for lateness is Microsoft due to what we understand are Quality issues.

The next release of Microsoft's operating system has been delayed allegedly due to quality issues. I expect again like many SW engineering projects testing and rework has taken far longer than originally planned. What is worrying is Microsoft should be the experts. In my opinion the difference between Apple and Microsoft operating systems and applications - is that one is written from the view of the user i.e. intuitive to use and the other for technical folk - i.e. it works - now figure it out user! To write intuitive systems takes longer in the planning and research, my understanding is the new Microsoft systems are much more user friendly, potentially intuitive in their user approach. We have come a long way since 1980 DOS systems and we have learnt a lot about SW projects but maybe not enough, my favourite saying "9 women can't have a baby in one month", there are always dependencies.

MS Project - advanced users should look at the books below.



And for people wanting the more advanced approach - check that your PC is able to use the enclosed disk

Jobseekers Tipoff

Useful resources in the UK jobmarket



> [Guide to First Time Contracting \(pdf\) from Contractors UK](#)

> The Guardians Saturday supplement has some great articles and advice - [here's the online version](#)

> Research companies yourself before approaching them:

[Applegate Kellysearch Sunday Times Top 100](#)

Project Challenge Seminar Outputs

Presentations are available following the Project Challenge show in March 2006. Presentations include

Cricket Club Update

In publications past I have referred to the antics of the cricket club to which I have the dubious honour of being treasurer. We now have an amalgamation, a change!

In the last 6 months we have formed a new club based on two villages Pavenham and Felmersham. The naming process took nearly a year, you would-be amazed the number of stake holders and how easy it is to upset people by not hearing their opinion or inadvertently ignoring them. The change process planned was beautiful - any programme manager would have been proud! Even so, we still have not finished the process and the first game for this season is imminent as I write and I thought it would take a couple of weeks. Guess what the name is after 2 AGMs and a postal ballot - of course Pavenham and Felmersham Cricket club. What appears straight forward never is and that means time delays - or being late.

Finally lateness in Warship Building and the Ministry of Defence

We like this quote "... a published a report saying that Ministry of Defence slippage of £3 billion and nine months on major defence projects during a single year was a poor performance..." Read on at this link for [House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts](#).

Talk about understatement!

Type in late projects to Google - see the list! And think about all the different ways a project can be late and the impact that they have; embarrassment on a world stage through to a little cost overrun. One day a time, one million at a time, a knock on effect of billions and in convenience don't even mention it

What chance have we got of meeting the Olympics - and people dared poke fun at the Greeks! However it would appear BAA has got it right with Terminal 5 at Heathrow. Write to us with your thoughts

[| top |](#)

Last Minute Interview Preparations

by Lindsay Scott, Arras People Consultant

A step often overlooked in the finding-a-new-job process is making sure you're fully prepared for your interview. All the hard work you've put into the search so far is about to pay off and if you're lucky you might have a few days to prepare before the big event. If, like a lot of people, you find that the prospective employer would like to see you the next day or in a few hours time, here are five steps you should take to ensure you maximise the opportunity



1. Work your agent

The agent will have a lot of information about the client and the role you're going to be interviewed for - after all it is their client! When you've found out about the interview (the when, where etc) make sure you keep the agent on the line and pick their brains about what they know. Questions like; do you have the original job description from the client, who's going to be interviewing me - what do you know about them, what kind of personality would you say they are? Do they have a web address - which department will this role be situated in? Where would you advise I research the company? Do you know what kind of interview they normally conduct - competency based for example? Any ideas about past questions asked of other candidates? Make sure your agent tells you everything no matter how small the snippet of information it is

2. Research quickly

Taking ten or twenty minutes to research the organisation will pay off in the interview, how many times have you had the question - what do you know about us? Researching using their website is the first and most obvious place to start, but what kind of information should be storing in the back of your mind? Make sure you get a good understanding of what it is the organisation does but don't dwell too much on the facts and figures and what they do in the far flung corners of the world. You'll need to be aware of any new or recent newsworthy developments (check the press area of the site) Check sites other than their own to gain industry related news (on their competitors for example). Use online newspapers, journals and PR sites to get a rounded view on the organisation - check out some of the links below.

3. Read your CV again

Benefits Realisation, Implementing PRINCE2, the Manchester Method

[> Visit Project Challenge](#)

Project Management Training Courses

Latest Special Offers from Focus Project Management



[> Visit Focus PM](#)

Interview Preparation Resources

Some good sources for researching:

[For government related press releases relating to individual departments](#)

[Financial Times](#)

[BBC News](#)

[Times Online](#)

[Independent](#)

[Reuters](#)

[Ananova](#)

[New York Times](#)

[The Engineer](#)

[Contract Journal](#)

[Management Consultancy](#)

[NewsNow](#)

Too old and too late?

As most people are aware, Age Discrimination legislation will come in as from 1 October 2006. Solicitors are already thinking that this will be bonanza time for them

The time to be planning is now. Review all your policies and procedures (which could have an age bias in them—e.g. recruitment and

Many people arrive at interviews without so much as a copy of their CV, never mind even re-reading it to make sure its fresh in your mind. For each of the roles you've performed over the years you need to make sure you've got your good experiences and war stories ready for recall as relevant examples, when the interviewer asks a question about leadership you're ready to fire away with a good example which covers the tasks you performed and what you did to contribute to the successful outcome. Having three or four good examples means you'll be ready whatever question is fired at you because for each example there will be different angles you can use.

4. Arrive early

Use the half an hour waiting time to review your CV again, make notes, re-read through the job description and generally start to feel relax rather than worrying about the train turning up on time or getting stuck in traffic

5. The first ten minutes of the interview

This is generally the time where you'll find out about the job and company from the interviewer, so make sure you ask questions to help clarify your understanding and learn more about what the interviewer is expecting from you - the potential candidate for the job and what they will be expecting from the person who will be doing the job. With this new information and the preparation done before the interview you've given yourself the best advantage so it's time to relax, make sure you listen to the questions and enjoy yourself.

Some good sources for researching:

- [For government related press releases relating to individual departments](#)
- [Financial Times](#)
- [BBC News](#)
- [Times Online](#)
- [Independent](#)
- [Reuters](#)
- [Ananova](#)
- [New York Times](#)
- [The Engineer](#)
- [Contract Journal](#)
- [Management Consultancy](#)
- [NewsNow](#)

[| top |](#)

New Roles from Arras People

For all our current live vacancies see the website at:
www.arraspeople.co.uk/jobs.php

[| top |](#)

About Arras People:

The much awaited project management benchmark report from Arras will be ready in a few weeks - more details to follow.

Arras also welcomes two new members of staff to the team - Tracey King (working on project support and junior project manager roles) and Mozaffer Ali (working behind the scenes to make sure our service levels continue to remain high)

www.arraspeople.co.uk

Tel: 01706-366444 (Head Office) north@arraspeople.co.uk

Tel: 01234-823532 (Bedfordshire) south@arraspeople.co.uk

Tel: 0208-772-7770 (London) london@arraspeople.co.uk

selection, training, promotion, compensation, performance pay, redundancy, retirement).
Age discrimination is not just the older worker or potential worker it applies to young workers as well

Retirement —if you will be 65 on or after 1 October you should have already received a letter to remind you that they have the right to request that you want to work beyond the age of 65. The employer then has a duty to consider any such request

It is the Government's aim that all workers continue working beyond 65 as it will have less of a state pension liability and it will collect more taxes, but some employees are not up to the task at over age 65

In such cases where a request for an employee to work beyond age 65 is received, your employer should evaluate the request properly. If the employer feels that you cannot continue the employment the suggestion is that the rejection should be kept to one of the eight statutory reasons that can be used in any request for flexible working.

Article provided by John Stamford of [John Stamford Associates](#)

> [See more information from the Age Partnership Group](#)

