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Welcome

Welcome to Issue 17 of Project Management Tipoffs, the newsletter from Arras People which concentrates on project management and careers. We've been away from regular newsletter writing for 3 months, concentrating on our survey (issued in July, read on for more details if you've missed it) and exploring new ways of communicating with people interested in project management careers.

In this issue we look at some of the outcomes of the survey and what's been happening since the survey results were launched. We also look at the practicality of the Age Discrimination Regulation and what it means to you.

As ever, feedback, comments and opinions are welcome - maybe you would like to try one of the new ways of communicating with us. Read on for more information about project management information in the 21st Century

Highly Competitive Project Management Job Market



We conducted a survey of over 1000 current practitioners working in the field of project management, a growing sector in UK employment. The results show how the market has changed since 2000, and the key drivers in the sector today.

Once upon a time job security and status meant a senior position with a major company, underpinned by several years' solid service. You could look forward to promotion, a decent pension, and lots of goodies, like cars, away days, courses and conferences. Not any more.

Key points from the survey:

- * Project Managers who shun the "security" of permanent employment can reap big rewards as contractors.
- * A significant shift from permanent to contract/interim employment in project management in the UK.
- * The market is highly competitive, with consequent downward pressures on rates in some sectors, and so there are winners and losers.
- * Project management pay is generally rising, or is it? A significant minority disagrees.
- * "Title" inflation (where everyone calls themselves "a director" is rampant, but titles don't affect take home pay!
- * Employers are demanding professional accreditation, and the majority of respondents believe that accreditation will increase their earning power, though many question the validity or benefits of this requirement.
- * A growing number of people are working in the public sector.
- * Benefits for permanent employees have been stable if not slightly reduced since 2000 though people are anticipating a growth in 2006.

The survey is now available to all subscribers to download at < [Survey](#) > (PDF)

Following the release of the survey and the consequent interest and feedback from various of organisations and individuals Arras will be launching the new survey in October, giving you the opportunity to not only take part but also obtain detailed information about your role, your sector and your skillset etc etc

Age Discrimination



Are you ready for the 1st October changes?

The new Age Discrimination Regulations come into force on the 1st October 2006 and Arras People has been conducting a short survey to understand the impact of the changes. Taking part in the survey will only take 1 minute < [Survey](#) >

Early results have unearthed some startling statistics. The full report will be available in a special Tipoffs on the 29/09/06

For Further Information:

- > [Age Positive](#)
- > [Direct Gov](#)
- > [ACAS](#)

Top Ten Tips for Successfully Arranging and Facilitating Meetings



1. **Prepare Well** - make sure the information is distributed before the meeting in plenty of time for people to prepare adequately
2. **Invite the Right People** - minimise frustration and disruption

The Dawn of the Age of the Pen

New Tools for a New Age



When novelist Edward Lytton declared the pen mightier than the sword in 1839, the keyboard was a long way into the future, but in the 21st century it is the keyboard that is has replaced the pen. The keyboard may be now be mightier than both the sword and the pen, but

give pen and paper some bright new technology and the fight is back on, and believe it or not it is being driven in part by diversity legislation.

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations are due to be enacted on the 1st October, and this and other diversity legislation has meant that organisations have had to review their processes to ensure that when interviewing, appraising and reviewing their staff, it can be proved that their procedures follow a strictly competency based approach.

Handwriting is still the best way to capture information face to face in interviews and meetings, but typing up and filing those handwritten notes is a burdensome and expensive administrative overhead, but necessary to ensure that decisions can be auditable. This is where digital pen and paper is providing an innovative solution. Digital pens look like chunky ballpoint pens, they write like a ballpoint, but include a camera that tracks movement across special paper that has a background of tiny dots, invisible to the naked eye, but sufficient to map the movement of the pen. When docked with a PC via a USB port or mobile / Bluetooth, a facsimile of the page with the written notes is created as a pdf, and the handwriting converted to text in Word or any other application. Handwriting is transferred from pen to PC in one mighty step.

Digital pen and paper is being used in the medical profession for patient records, in Local Authorities to capture social worker reports and in the financial world for a whole raft of mortgage and insurance forms. There are a wide range uses, but for capturing interaction with people the digital pen is a natural, which fits with most organisation's face to face people processes. It is interesting that new age diversity legislation is driving new processes, which are demanding new technology, to enable us to work in a way that came naturally in a different age.

John Gough, Director Diabolo Journeys.

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The One Must-Do Critical Project Management Practice That Can Hands-Down Determine Your Project's Success or Failure

Year-in and year-out there are Project Managers working on projects that have experienced one or more of the following situations: budget over-runs, missed deadlines, scope creep, unhappy stakeholders, unhappy management, overall considered failures. Any and all of these situations could have been handled more successfully and possibly prevented with appropriate and effective use of project risk management. Basically, any time that you have experienced project delays or failures you can bet that they because of a lack of effective project risk management.

Did the project run over-budget because you had to hire more contractors to get the job done?

Your project analyst warned you about half-way through the project, but you did nothing about it at the time...failure to manage that risk.

Did one of your key resources leave the company, leaving the project in a lurch?

That was a risk that you probably suspected when you heard him complain about the company a few times and then watched him make

in meetings and invite only the people who are key to actions and decision making

3. **Design your Meeting and Workshop –**

Choosing the formula (informal / formal), environment (coffee on a separate table so people move), tools and techniques (brainstorming, SWOT) in advance to ensure you are just as well prepared as you expect your attendees to be

4. **Expand your Agenda Items –**

being clear about what you intend to cover at the meeting and what outcome you're expecting will make it easier for attendees to see that progress is being made throughout the meeting. Expanded agenda items for e.g., "Discussion and make decisions about the planned office move – phase 1" instead of "Office Move – Phase 1"

5. **Think about your Attendees Time –**

try scheduling meetings to start at ten minutes past the hour allowing time for people with back-to-back meetings to get there and feel refreshed and still have time for a quick banter with colleagues

6. **Use Simple Rules and Regulations –**

and get your attendees to set them. The usual items about mobile phone/laptop etiquette, talking over people etc, Use "Parking Lots" to capture good ideas generated from discussions that may threatening to take you off-agenda.

7. **Write the Minutes Before the Meeting –**

generally you know what the outcome of the meeting will be and what decisions are likely to be made. Write the minutes beforehand and just tweak as you progress through the meeting or shortly afterwards

8. **Timekeeping –**

the discussions and debates may be going well but if you're running out of time and there's a banging on

several secret phone calls outside of the building during work hours, but you didn't take control and manage the situation.

Did one of the key project stakeholders and main customers reject the deliverable because it did not meet their expectations?

Guess what...another risk that you could have managed and avoided the negative impact.

The examples can go on and on. Just think of any time you have experienced any kind of disappointment during the course of a project and it will point you in a direction of a risk that was not managed properly or not managed at all.

Most Project Managers have heard about or studied project risk management, but the existing material on the subject and the available tools make it seem like an academic exercise that has little or no grounding in every day project management practice. Consequently most Project Managers don't even attempt to practice risk management in any kind of formal or organized sense. This results in incremental failures throughout the life of the project, or it could be one or two major risks that go un-managed and occur and crash the entire project. In order to avoid these failures, what Project Managers need is an approach to risk management that is both practical and effective.

Below is a suggested practical and effective process for managing project risks...

1. Identify your project risks - whether using brain-storming meetings, anonymous submissions, or casual hallway conversations, you need to be open to any and all suggestions about potential risks to your project.
2. Document the risks - capture the information accurately and completely. Don't scatter the information among a variety of documents, spreadsheets and e-mails. The information needs to be stored in a central and easy to access project location.
3. Rate and rank the risks - develop probability and impact rankings and then rate each risk accordingly.
4. Develop mitigation and contingency plans for the risks - this is where you plan on how to prevent the risk or what you are going to do if the risk actually occurs.
5. Focus on and monitor your highest priority risks - spend the majority of your time on the higher ranked risks - they should get your full attention.
6. Execute the mitigation plans for your highest priority risks - just do it...do what you planned. If you planned well enough then you should be able to prevent these risks from occurring or lessen their impact.
7. Execute the contingency plans as needed - if the risk occurs, then do what you outlined in the contingency plan. If you planned well enough you will lower the impact of the risk.

Each step in the process, taken by itself, is pretty simple. It's important that you set up formal meetings with your project team and go through the entire process and follow through on each activity. You should spend at least a few hours each week on this process for each of your projects. This is time well spent and it will definitely save you time and help prevent many problems in the long run. If done consistently and effectively, risk management could become your most important tool for ensuring the success of your projects.

Domenick Ginex, PMP and creator of PM Risk Manager

Pro project risk management software, has developed and fine-tuned a practical and effective method of managing project risks in the course of his 16 years of experience in IT Project Management and Leadership. His web site, at <http://PMRiskManagerPro.com>, provides essential and helpful information and tools to help Project Managers plan for and manage project risks. Make sure you stop by his web site and sign up for the free newsletter, or send an e-mail to pmp1@aweber.com.

the door for the next occupants you could end up without the crucial decisions and actions to meet the objectives of the meeting in the first place. Make sure you keep five minutes at the end for a wrap up and run through of the key decisions made to ensure you have the buy-in and agreement from all attendees

9. Remember that a Good Meeting is about the Generation of Good Discussion, Debate and Exchange of Information and Ideas – without good

management, co-ordination or direction it quickly becomes disorganised chaos

10. A Good Facilitator Needs a Range of Skills and Attributes –

to ensure the meeting runs smoothly think about what makes you a good facilitator;

Confidence – to take control and relinquish it with a varied audience
Articulate – to keep the meeting focused and clear

Counsellor – to ensure everyone has a part to play – even the quiet attendees

Questioning – to probe and dig deeper when needed and to move seamlessly on when the points have been made

Organised – to keep the meeting flowing within the constraints and ensure minuting is happening
Listen – to encourage

further debate, noting actions and decisions and listening to what has not been said

Enthusiasm – to stop meeting fatigue, to press on and reinvigorate the attendees even if it is the third meeting of the day on a Friday afternoon.

Ideas on meetings taken from the PPSOSIG conference held on the 20/21st September. More information in the next issue of Tipoffs

[Visit the Job Board](#)

Project Management Blog



How to Manage a Camel

We set up this blog to share with you what we at Arras and you are thinking, reading and hearing.

We will post reviews and comments for you to consider and have your 2 penny worth to share with the Arras Community