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Welcome

Welcome to Issue 20 of Project Management Tipoffs, the newsletter from Arras People which concentrates on project management and careers. In this issue we take a closer look at project managers - what makes a good project manager? Specifically what kind of softer skills should a good project manager have? We'd also like to know your view, has a project manager which soft skills do you rate highly? Take part in our 2 minute survey at the end of the article and be in the draw to receive a new book entitled "Designing Your PPM COE - A Strategic Guide"

As ever, feedback, comments and opinions are welcome and if you're interested in submitting an article for future editions please contact us. Next month we'll be looking at Project Management Styles - the softer skills in project management.

The Soft Skills of Project Management



The purpose of this article is to examine the soft skills of project management. From our experience of managing projects and latterly recruiting project managers we feel there are 7 core attributes which are utilised to varying degrees through the soft skills.

The core attributes are those fundamental elements, which some people would say,

cannot be taught and are intrinsically you. In alphabetical order these are:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Attitude | A complex mental state involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways. Here at Arras our motto is " <i>Attitude is contagious; is yours worth catching</i> " |
| Competence | The quality of being adequately or well qualified physically and intellectually |
| Confidence | Assurance: freedom from doubt; belief in yourself and your abilities |
| Intuition | That sense of faculty in the human mind by which man knows (or may know) facts of which he would otherwise not be cognizant, facts which might not be apparent to him through process of reason or so-called scientific proof. |
| Life experience | Is the experience a person accumulates through interacting within the prevailing social environment |
| Pragmatism | The doctrine that practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge and meaning and value |
| Social skills | Skills a social animal uses to interact and communicate with others to assist status in the social structure and other motivations |

The soft skills come from formal and informal learning and help us to be effective Project Managers. We feel these can best be listed as:

- Communicating
- Consistency
- Decisive

Tools, Techniques and Approaches - PPSOSIG



The Next PPSOSIG conference - 27th - 28th September

The PPSOSIG (Programme and Project Support Office Specialist Interest Group) announced its next conference for September 2007 focusing on "Tools, Techniques & Approaches Why Bother?"

Over the last four years, the PPSOSIG has been at the forefront of new programme and project office theories, processes and procedures, inviting PMO professionals to come together to share knowledge in their specialist area of programme and project management. Topics covered in the past have included benefits realisation, portfolio management, building a PMO for your organisation, PPSO audits and more recently the **soft skills** needed in a PMO professional

In the next event, after feedback from delegates the PPSOSIG takes a more hands on approach to the work the PPSO's carry out - topics include planning - the art of MS Project, Excel - the PPSO's friend or foe and programme & project accounting. The two day conference also includes facilitation skills - an often overlooked skill that many PPSO professionals use every day.

Feedback from previous delegates have shown that the mix of presentations, workshops and the opportunity to learn about other organisations approaches to programme and project offices has been invaluable to their roles.

For Further Information:

- > [PPSOSIG](#)
- > [The Next Event](#)

- Interfacing
- Relationship Builder
- Structuring
- Understanding

Tell us your opinions - < [2 minute survey](#) >

Communicating

And we don't mean spin! At the end of the day, the success of a project is down to the perception of all stakeholders.

Clear communication of the 5W's & 1H* across the piece at all levels i.e. to everyone including those you do not know about is necessary from the outset.

*5Ws - Who - What - Where - When - Why 1H - How

Are you asking the right questions and supplying the answers with clarity and integrity? Testing that communication is happening by being seen and actively participating in the project at the sharp end - floor walking, buying the beer, making the coffee or ordering the pizza is essential to being in contact and ensuring both good news and bad news is not being filtered or spun. Your internal skill and experience is to do this without putting anyone's nose out of joint - it must not be seen as checking up. A good project manager is a people person who earns respect and achieves the most out of the team.

Reporting with succinctness, can you **précis** what the tech guy said, the database manager or the structural engineer and translate effectively the impact on the project meaningfully to all involved giving them confidence that we know what is going on. Again, it is the ability to be big picture whilst holding an eye for the detail knowing how to communicate using the 5W approach and the use one last formula the 3C's!

Communication Communication Communication!

Consistency

Project Managers have and welcome the responsibility of managing projects and delivering change to a business or community. This responsibility goes far beyond meeting or exceeding stakeholders' expectations in terms of cost, quality and time. **Your every move as a leader is being monitored and how this is perceived will set the tone for the rest of the project team's behaviour. Consistency is all about portraying the same attitude for each of your decisions and actions. If you are constantly using a different set of values or standards for your decision making how can you possibly hope to set an example. What about the interaction with project members, stakeholders, suppliers or senior management? Do you treat each differently? Do you act in a different way? Be warned that unless you are consistent you are sending confused messages to your team and they in turn will adopt the same inconsistent behaviour. If you feel your morals, values and standards are not being truly perceived by your colleagues then perhaps it is time for a change in your approach and actions**

Decisive

Make that decision, be able to defend that decision, explain that decision and be cognisant; the impact it will have not just in the outcome of the project but also the people involved in the project. **You as Project Manager are accountable for a decision and should be able to play rapid what-ifs around the scenarios that are open to you.**

Most decisions will be tactical and often will be made based on gut feel. However do not be so proud as to not be able to reverse or change a **decision** - it is paramount to do what is right for the project while retaining the respect and commitment of the people involved in your project, taking them with you.

Interfacing

Once a relationship is established, you as a project manager, use that relationship to extract the information you need, not only the information that is initially disclosed but the underlying date and situation that may be hard for someone tell you because its bad news.

Books Worth Reading



The Jelly Effect: How to Make Your Communications Stick by Andy Bounds

Just like the reviews from [numerous readers](#) The Jelly Effect is a good book if you're looking for a quick read on how to improve your business communications skills. It's refreshing, vibrant and an easy read. The Jelly Effect is explained "the way many people communicate is like filling a bucket with jelly, flinging it at the audience, and hoping some of it sticks. The book covers the main business communication areas - networking, presentations, referrals and the ultimate - how to sell more. The scene setter for the book is interesting - just why Andy Bounds is the kind of man you'd want to take advice from in communication techniques. Whether you're the kind of person to look at business books or not, I would recommend this book over the others for the sheer fact its such an easy read - well written - to the point - easily accessible (which surely is one of the main factors for picking a book up like this)

Reviewed by Lindsay Scott

Career Tools from RYCV

A CV Writing Specialist that carries career related articles, one of particular interest - an article exposing the recruitment industry's

Through networking you will find out more about a project, how your project is perceived, who are the players, a little Schmoozing goes a long way and if you are quite adept at the game, you can light fires that will influence decisions and how things are done

Good Project Managers use valuable interfacing time to gain assistance and help deliver their project whether it be around the lunch table in a weekly update meeting or tripping over the Bosses Boss in the car park, "What? You have never heard of my project?"

Relationship Builder

To ensure things get done it is important that as a project manager you can influence people to think about what they are doing and get them to do what you want, both tactically and strategically. Interfacing with people and gaining their trust is probably the most essential part of getting things done and being empowered by the stakeholders to be entrusted with their money and deliverables.

Trust is also important in successful negotiation; establishing common ground, defining differences and working on the barriers to gain agreement and understanding. Someone once said (and I can't remember who) "understand to be understood".

In building relationships, it is important to have a balance in business and personal conversations and to understand that business is not personal.

People buy from People!

Structuring

This affects everything, ability to structure or breakdown is a core inner skill, your approach is highly visible both internally and externally to the project

Pull that team together, what team to do what? When you have a clear understanding or breakdown of what needs doing or even not so clear you need to start surrounding yourself with experts, balancing the needs of the project with the existing skills, identifying strengths and weaknesses and creating a well-adjusted approach to delivery that is suitable for the organisations involved, and their environment and culture

At first, you need to define and structure your deliverables and the alternatives or choices you have in your approach to delivery. This requires the right skills and experience and is not to be tackled alone. Regardless of project size, a sounding board at least is required. You need to look for someone you already know who has a track record and is trusted by you, the plan from here drives the project and likelihood of successful delivery whilst ensuring you hold a big picture view as well as the detailed view of the overall project and objectives.

As project manager the project you structure will represent the values and ethos that as leader and manager you hold, if your gut feels uneasy it is probably the wrong step!

Understanding

Placing a project into the context of a business and appreciating the resource and commercial implications is one of the first steps for any project manager. The ability to step back from a problem/issue and examine all the pieces of the project puzzle enables a project manager to begin to formulate a way forward. Only once a project manager has a clear understanding of what is required will he begin to ask questions. I once heard a lawyer on a TV show advise a colleague to "never ask a question where he did not already know the answer" and in many ways this is what good project managers do. So why ask the question? The simple answer is to help our colleagues see what we as project managers have already worked out. It is also useful to get the confirmation and possible clarification of issues that better identify potential risks to the project.

We're interested in your thoughts - which soft skill would you deem to be the most important? < [2 minute survey](#) >

abbreviated terms that are applied to job seekers! Not something we've ever seen before or used!

> [RYCV](#)

> [A Guide to Abbreviation Terms Used By Recruitment Consultants](#)



[Visit the Job Board for further vacancies](#)

[Programme Manager - Scientific Attractions](#)

Central London £42K

[IT Project Manager - 18mth contract - Not for Profit](#)

- Reading £34K

[Construction Programme Manager - Materials Recycling](#) -

Oxfordshire £50-55K

[Programme Office Manager](#) -

£40-44k - Leeds - Fixed Term

[Project Manager - Policy Delivery](#)

Up to £325 per day (possibly more if London based) for 6 months

[Business Analyst/Process Engineer - Supply Chain](#)

from £25k + corporate package

[Project Manager - Systems Integration and Support](#)

£39K - £46K - Hampshire

[Project Manager - Test, Validation and Certification](#) -

£28k-£33k + benefits London

[Project Administrator - Construction Public/Private Sector](#)

up to £30k + Package



Participants will be added to a draw to receive a copy of the new book *Designing Your Programme Project Management Centre Of Excellence - A Strategic Guide*

Michael Hides and Ian McKenzie, Project Management Consultants, Arras

[Team Leader - Software Research](#) £30k-£37K, Essex

[Project Manager- Transport Initiatives](#) - £40k + bonus + benefits

Is Project Management a science, an art, both, or something else altogether?

Certainly there is a lot of material out there that describes in great detail how to implement Project Management processes. And there is no shortage of tools that are available to help with the job of Project Management. Some of the books out there look like Physics text books, with graphs, equations, charts, process flows and more. Based on these types of materials you would think that Project Management is a science unto itself.



I tend to think that there is a lot of science to Project Management. And you can apply tools and equations and processes to help you succeed on the job. Certainly without these items the job of managing risks, quality, schedules and other facets of a project would be more difficult, and you would basically have to re-invent the wheel to create tools and processes to perform these functions.

I am not so sure if it's science or more like the approach a technician uses...basically applying known and established tools and processes to perform a function. The tools and processes have been created and established by a more scientific approach. The degree and complexity to which these tools and processes are recommended is going to depend on who you are reading. For example, if you pick up a book that was written by college professors, guess what...lots of equations, not many examples, lots of theory and stuff that makes your head spin. Does that make it useless? Not really, but if you are going to read this type of material you need to be able to filter through it and formulate it into real world applications.

Ok, so on the other end of the spectrum you have the Old Curmudgeon. The type of person that's been around for years and scoffs at process and tools, that somehow seems to get the job done without all the formality. This person uses their talents and the "art" of project management to be successful at what they do. These individuals correctly are able to realize and take advantage of the fact that much of what a Project Manager does has to do with relating to and communicating with people.

How can this dichotomy exist? How can both methods work? Do both methods work?

Yes I have seen both methods work. And I have seen both methods fail too. The people that go with one extreme or the other and make it work are either very talented or very lucky.

You can probably guess what I am going to say next...in my opinion you need to have a balance between the science and art of Project Management. Use the tools, the processes, even the equations if you can really see and use the application of them. But don't forget that you are dealing with and need to work with people. And no amount of equations and tools in the world will help you with that reality. It's an art and a feel and empathy and communicating and more.

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

That's what I love about Project Management...the job carries with it such a variety of things to do and work with

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.

Arras Welcomes Two New Consultants

New Project Management Consultants Zoe Jones and Nicola Thorp joined the Arras team in June 2007.

Nicola Thorp joins from an automotive product project management organisation and Zoe Jones has previous experience within the telecommunications industry in project management.