Paper
Seeking project management employment
By R. Max Wideman

Introduction

Last January I wrote a Musings for the benefit of corporate recruiters-of-staff looking for those with project management talent.[1] Note that I have used the word talent rather than experience. That's because I believe that we are now moving into a different world.

It is a world no longer consumed by the need to fight off the constraints imposed by governments arising from the Covid pandemic. Instead, we see part of the Western world engaged in horrifically destructive fighting resulting in extensive destruction of essential civil infrastructure. Who knows where all that will lead?

Whichever way you look at it, there is a looming need for widespread capability in project management performance expertise. Last January's Musings dealt with advice from the recruiter's point of view, that is to say, the client's perspective. Now, what about the other side of the problem, the Job-Applicant's side? How do you land a very satisfying position in the world of project management? Where do you start?

Obviously, your first step is to get a handle on the type of work you would be most interested in – as well as actively enjoy. This is a challenge because the field is wide open and may range anywhere between administrative work like keeping records and tracking project progress to contributing to the actual project work. And here again, if you are invited to work on an actual project, your work may be primarily "tangible" as in working on a construction site, or it may be "intellectual" as in software development or similarly associated brain work.

The scope of opportunities

No doubt this range of opportunities can be overwhelming, but for the best outcome you must first do your homework! That means getting a clear understanding of what project management is all about, how best to apply it, and understanding many of the recommended policies, procedures and practices it can involve. Studying the offerings on this web sight can go a long way to get you started.[2]

Then try and find someone who is directly involved in the project management of any one of the several areas that you are considering, such as Construction, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Information Technology, or even Hi-Technology. Where do you find such people? Look for your nearest local project management chapter and attend one of their meetings, or at least, talk to the chapter's president to get directions.

Even though you may be complete strangers, I guarantee that any of these people will be pleased to talk to you about what they do by way of project management. So, don't be shy!

All of this, i.e. meeting people and discussing project management work, can be an indirect way of advertising that you are looking for employment, and especially the type of work you are interested in. If you find something that really looks good, be direct and ask who to contact. In response you could be referred to someone who will just ask to see your resume. So be ready with that. Want help? Go to the

Home page of this web site[3], select *Search My Site*, and enter "Resume" – you will get loads of links to look at.

Lack of response

OK, you've done all of that and even submitted your resume to a number of potential employers, but you are not getting any actual responses. Why is that? Well, it could be that your resume did more harm than good! Some time ago, Ashraf Chaudhry wrote a good article on "Why Job Applicants Don't Get Interview Calls". Here is what he said.[4]

> Many people complain that they have applied everywhere but nobody called them for interviews. They concluded that for job hunting they need stronger or better references. But in fact, that is not the case.
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> Against any one advertised position, organizations may receive hundreds of resumes (known as "CV"s). So, the challenge for the recruiter/selector is in short-listing the right group of potential candidates. I recruit people for my clients regularly and short-listing the right candidates for interview is a challenging task. What does a recruiter do? Here is what happens in the "first pass".
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> - A CV that looks cluttered, shabby, or just disorganized is deleted in 3-4 seconds.
> - A CV that has more than 2-3 common grammatical/typo errors (like carrier instead of career) is deleted in 3-4 seconds.
> - A CV that is irrelevant is deleted in less than 5 seconds.
> - Obvious "Job-hoppering" CVs are deleted in less than 15 seconds. If you have 4 jobs in 5 years, and latest job is hardly 2 months old, you are out.
> - Applicants applying from far off places are not invited for interviews. For example: if the job is Toronto based, and two people of more or less the same education and experience apply, but one is from Toronto and the other is from (say) London, then obviously the Toronto candidate will be preferred.
> - A CV that looks like a circular (i.e., is not customized) is on a fast track to the recycle bin.
> - A CV that looks definitely shallow but the position is strategic and the company is really looking for a thought leader, no chance of interview will result.
> - Finally, putting a photo that looks like a sign of pessimism on a CV will increase the chances of it to going directly to the recycle bin.
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> Think of it this way, in the recruitment process, your CV/resume is your personal brochure. **It is your most important document.**

Conclusion

If you feel that you cannot write your CV yourself, then get it written by a professional. Many people say a CV is not a reflection of competence. That may be true, but a recruiter cannot call 100 people to be interviewed to find out. He or she is probably limited to only about five people, and that will only include those who take the greatest care in constructing their CV. Indeed, you should therefore customize your CV to capture each specific opportunity.

Believe me, I have done all of this both applying and selecting at some time in my career. You might think it is fun, like shuffling a deck of cards. It isn't. Making the wrong call is not only putting some poor individual's career at stake. It could also be influencing yours.

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[1] See **5 Steps to Hiring the Right Staff** [Create link to January Musing]

[2] For example, take a look at our cartoon series **PM 101** [link: http://www.maxwideman.com/pm_101/intro.htm]

[3] See Home Page: http://www.maxwideman.com

[4] The following content was published several years ago. It has been updated to reflect current conditions. The author may be reached at: http://ashrafchaudhry.com/our-team.html or by email at: ashraf@ashrafchaudhry.com