

# Executive Project Management Recruiting

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Happy New Year Edition

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Mike

Over the holidays I have been helping my son look for a pick-up truck, a vehicle buying project. He has a limited budget (\$2500) so we are in the 15 year-old range. After a little shopping and a few field trips he has been underwhelmed by his choices. I have been (patiently I hope) explaining that he has three choices: raise his budget, lower his requirements, or keep looking and hoping. He has now accepted that he can not get as much as he wanted, so we have reduced the requirement, maintained the budget, and extended the schedule. We are now looking for a diamond in the rough - a truck with potential!

When I start a search project for a client I often encounter the same situation. The company has been frustrated in their own efforts to find the right candidate. The frustration can be caused by a number of reasons, but a primary problem is a mis-alignment of the triple constraints. As with any project if the budget, scope, and time elements are out of sync failure is guaranteed.

All companies have salary budgets. Every hiring manager must find talent at a specific price. So the first constraint that is established is a salary budget for a given position. This is a fine starting point. The beginning scope requirements for the position may be based on a framework provided by the Human Resources Department. Ok so far, but then the hiring manager starts adding to it; years of specific experience, added skills, types of environments, certification, education, and nice-to-haves. Trying to get the most for the least is natural, but have we identified the most important skills that we **must** have to succeed? Has the scope defined exactly what the customer **needs**? This is where it typically goes wrong. No one is empowered to challenge the requirements. Basically the Hiring Manager is looking for a 2006 Mercedes for \$2500 and no one is able to change the search. This is already a dubious project and the third constraint has not been considered; time. Do

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## Thinking Strategically



Strategic thinking focuses on finding and developing unique opportunities to create value by enabling a provocative and creative dialogue among people who can affect a company's direction. It is the input to strategic planning-good strategic thinking uncovers potential opportunities for creating value and challenges assumptions about a company's value proposition, so that when the plan is created, it targets these opportunities. Strategic thinking is a way of understanding the fundamental drivers of a business and rigorously challenging conventional thinking about them. This is a collaborative process and

you need this resource quickly? If the answer is "yes" then the project has become impossible.

The double whammy now is what HR departments *are* empowered to do - screen candidates out if they don't match the specification. I have seen excellent project managers blocked from interviews because they didn't have nice-to-haves. This means no rough diamonds are getting through to the hiring manager. Even if he wants to consider a lesser candidate they never get to see the resumes.

The solution is to empower the HR Project Manager to challenge the hiring manager on requirements. Unfortunately most HR professionals do not have the background to ask the right questions so they are not given the authority to adjust the specifications. I believe this is where most companies hiring process breaks down and open job requisitions linger, costing millions in failed projects and collateral damage from under-staffed projects.

Please let me know if Practical Solutions can help you in your hiring process. I have experience in project management, engineering, and information technology, as well as recruiting. I would be happy to advise on your triple constraints.

Sincerely,  
Mike Stallfus

## Opportunities

### PROJECT CONSULTANT

**Permanent position, salary at 60-70k in Atlanta**

Under the supervision of the Engagement Manager, the Project Consultant provides a broad range of administrative, managerial, and technical support functions for consulting projects. This individual is responsible for providing project control tools including meeting minutes, action item lists, and project schedules. This individual is also responsible for the day-to-day administration and management of assigned consulting, design, construction and/or non-construction projects.



#### Typical Duties:

- Develops and maintains budgetary and schedule controls for each project in order to effectively monitor progress and budget
- Develops qualitative and quantitative analysis and prepares related reports.
- Diagnoses problems accurately and in a timely manner, evaluates and develops alternative courses of action
- Prepares and/or reviews clear and concise scopes of work,

you must have people around you that are able to bring out your best.

The challenge in strategic hiring is to find individuals that can push your status quo and help define the future while supporting your vision.

**The mission of Practical Solutions is to be the Pre-eminent Influence for the successful placement of Project Management Professionals.**

### Is Hiring a Beauty Contest?



A new study finds that the attractiveness of interviewees can significantly bias outcome in hiring practices, showing a clear distinction between the attractive and average looking interviewees in terms of high and low status job packages offered.

"When someone is viewed as attractive, they are often assumed to have a number of positive social traits and greater intelligence," say Carl Senior and Michael J.R. Butler, authors of the study. "This is known as the 'halo effect' and it has previously been shown to

- contracts, change orders and related project administration documents
- Responsible for developing and/or reviewing documentation related to project administration, vendor payments, project inspections, quality controls, and overall contract compliance

You'll typically work on two to three projects at a time which can last anywhere from 4 months for minor software changes to 12+ months for complex new product initiatives.

#### **Qualifications:**

- Working knowledge of generally accepted accounting and budgeting practices
- Expert knowledge of project/contract administration means and methods
- Working knowledge of management theories and practices
- Skills [observable competence to execute job functions]:
- Excellent written and oral communication skills; extremely attentive to detail and accuracy and capable of creating and delivering persuasive business communications; proofreads and edits the work of others
- Highly proficient with computer applications, including word processing, financial management systems and project scheduling software (e.g. Microsoft® Word, Excel, Project, PowerPoint, Access, Visio)
- Highly proficient in project scheduling and updating
- Coordinates, develops and administers projects
- Works effectively independently and with a team
- Develops positive working relationships with clients, co-workers and executive management and communicates effectively in person and using appropriate communication technologies

#### **Education:**

A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with a major in Architecture, Engineering, Industrial & Systems Engineering, or Building Construction.

### **LEAD TECHNICAL PROJECT MANAGER**

#### **Atlanta area, permanent to 110K, full benefits**

The Lead Technical Project Manager (TPM) Level III will be expected to go through the standard phases of initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing, while using Project Management Methodology. The role will have autonomy to run projects with very little oversight and guidance, but will be expected to follow standards and to keep the team and executives informed of status, issues, and risks.

#### **ESSENTIAL DUTIES:**

- Mentor other technical project managers and be known as a key subject matter expert in the field of project management
- Define and manage resources, budget, project plans, scope, issues, risks and hit key milestones for multiple projects
- Work directly with stakeholders to drive success on all

affect the outcome of job interviews."

Female interviewers were found to allocate attractive looking male interviewees more high status job packages than the average looking men. Female interviewers also gave more high status job packages to attractive men than to attractive women. Average looking men also received more low status job packages than average looking women. Male interviewers did not differ in the number of high or low status job packages that were given to attractive looking interviewees of either sex, though the male interviewers gave out more low status job packages overall, irrespective of the sex of the interviewee.

However, the male interviewers were not entirely without bias. The electrodermal response (EDR), a psycho-physiological response measured when emotions are used to make a preferential decision, of the interviewers was measured. When emotions are used to make a preferential decision, it is thought that the anticipatory EDR level increases.

There was a highly significant increase in the anticipatory EDR when the male interviewers assigned the low status job packages to the attractive female candidates. The fact that this difference only occurred when assigning low status job packages ensures that the effect could not have been driven by interpersonal

- pertinent aspects of the project
- Capture and manage project requirements and scope; create project plans and business requirement documents
- Document meeting takaways and facilitate critical internal communication during a project lifecycle
- Create a team environment and act as point person for the overall project team and upper management
- Provide internal and external reporting of progress on all project milestones
- Communicates with Sales and Marketing regarding re-engagements, additional team staff, potential new opportunities, and successful projects

#### QUALIFICATIONS:

- Ability to hold project teams accountable within a matrix organization
- Ability to lead a project team comprised of diverse technical and business resources
- Proficient in MS Office, Project and Visio
- Excellent communication and negotiation skills, (both written and verbal)
- Ability to manage multiple vendors and contractors
- Strong analytical skills, attention to detail, problem solver
- Business Analyst skills
- Demonstrated ability to establish rapport and work effectively with clients, IT management and creative staff

#### EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

BS/BA degree in related field required, unless there is relevant, significant work experience

PMP certification preferred

#### EXPERIENCE:

Minimum 5 - 7 years Project Management and Business Analyst experience a must

Minimum 7 years technical experience, with experience in at least three (3) of the following core areas:

- Networking
- Software Development
- Data Warehousing and Database Administration
- Web Development
- Business Intelligence
- Working understanding of the Software Development Lifecycle (SDLC) and other related methodologies

## Practical Solutions, LLC

Practical Solutions is an Executive Project Management search firm that specializes in identifying high potential individuals and matching



attraction, but rather by emotion. Female interviewers did not exhibit any significant EDR differences, suggesting their bias occurs on a cognitive level.

This study is the first application of EDR to examine the influential role of beauty, status and sex during job negotiations. "From a business point-of-view, there is a need for leaders/managers to be aware of their assumptions in decision-making processes, be they strategic or operational, and that they may be prone to emotion and bias," say the authors.

This study, entitled "Interviewing strategies in the face of beauty: A psychophysiological investigation into the job negotiation process," is published in volume 1118 of the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: The Social Cognitive Neuroscience of Corporate Thinking.

If your company's interview process includes interviewers unprepared for the Halo effect please let them see this article. Most technical managers are not trained in interviewing in general so making some of these mistakes when hiring would not be surprising.

Please contact me if you would like more information on this issue.

**Practical Solutions is dedicated to finding the right employee for your needs, one at a**

them with opportunities that best allows success for ALL parties. Through individual attention to detail and needs PSS can find perfect fits with less time from both parties. Our commitment is quality, not quantify of placements.



time.

Mike Stallfus is a recruiting professional with five years of experience in the Executive, IT, Project Management, and Engineering arenas. He has worked in both the public and private sectors as an engineer, programmer, designer, integrator, supervisor, project manager, department manager, and division director. He possess the knowledge and background to find talent with the critical skills you need in all technical venues

Personal background includes a Psychology and Electrical Engineering degree from the University of Toledo, and PMP from PMI. His professional career spans more than twenty years as a software/hardware engineer in robotics and embedded systems, system integrator for factory and warehouse systems, project manager on IT infrastructure and system integrations, functional manager for electrical control systems, and division director of IT development company. He has three kids, a wife of 35 years, and lives in Suwanee GA.. He volunteers as the VP of Certification and Education at PMI Atlanta, and loves playing guitar..

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