

# Career Transitions

## **A Very Important Project, Career Transition by Janet Smietana, PMP**

Equal parts serendipity and destiny created an alliance between Mark Cummuta and April M. Williams, which generated an idea to use PMBOK principles for a most important project, i.e. a "job transition". Mark is a CIO strategic consultant and writer for CIO magazine; April, an information technology professional and PMP, had just entered her own "job transition period". Together they sensed a value of developing a structured approach to a job search. The pair partnered to create the "Using Project Management to Land Your Next Job" program for job seekers to do just that. Williams talked about the program with this reporter.

The job market is increasingly fluid and in this new paradigm, many or most workers will experience at least one transition period in their professional history with the current average tenure at a job being just 3 years. Indeed, the subject of the February President's Message in this very newsletter was [Career Risk Management](#). Essentially, President Kroupa prescribed a career risk response plan, which when regularly updated during employment is immediately ready to execute when needed. Williams and Cummuta offer a strategy to carry out the risk response plan when a job search becomes your primary occupation; the strategy becomes a project to manage your transition. As Williams explained, the objective is to optimize efforts by "...managing your transition, and to not allow your search efforts to flounder. A targeted approach helps you to continually evaluate, make adjustments and continuously move forward toward your goal".

Williams talked about the essence of the **Using Project Management to Land Your Next Job** program which is subtitled "Applying Your Project Planning Skills To Improve Your Job Search Success In A Recession". In its development, she thought about the concepts she incorporated in managing projects and her professional life including defining requirements, objectives and deliverables and the PMBOK process groups.

### **Initiating and Planning**

Williams advises that an effective job search starts with a considered Planning process. (Initiating, of course, is ongoing even during gainful employment; remember "Career Risk Management").

The program Initiation starts with a thoughtful assessment of your needs and aspirations. The obvious objective of this project is a viable job offer. Planning will give structure and direction to the whole project. Dedicate time to formulate the requirements that determine viability and deciding how interim deliverables (network contacts, interviews) will be measured. This exercise will most likely be iterated with other Planning activities - tweaking your resume, formulating a marketing plan, compiling a list of potential references and a working list of SAR's (Situation, Action, Response success stories and examples used by job seekers to market themselves).

The program regards communication planning and stakeholder identification as essential to a job search as to any project. Williams' examples of stakeholders are: spouse or significant other, dependents, extended family who have an emotional stake in your well being and/or may seek your financial assistance, mentors, members of your transition accountability group, your references, others.

Planning also means identifying resources including computers, internet access, company research resources, networking opportunities, and identifying contacts.

## **Executing and Controlling**

Williams emphasizes the value of monitoring and controlling as you execute your plan. The essence of the program may very well be the control process; the job seeker manages his/her own transition as preferable to a directionless search that is vulnerable to external control. Status reports, measurements (the program acknowledges financial realities and includes budget monitoring here) and resulting adjustments impart a continuous improvement aspect to the project, increasing the effectiveness of the job search iteratively. The program offers resources for Executing and Controlling, such as best practices documentation, sample status reports, and links to sites with quality guidance for job seekers.

As in the Planning process, Executing values the role of stakeholders and promotes ongoing (and positive) communication with stakeholders to manage expectations, gain emotional support, procure advice and maintain a life balance; all contributors to an effective job search.

## **Closing**

Celebrate your new position as you Close your project! Take time to consider lessons learned and remember to continue to practice career risk management.

## **Benefits**

The resources available to job seekers are remarkable, including church affiliated support groups, not-for-profit groups, organized networking opportunities, outplacement services, etc. The conventional wisdom is to network, network, network, to target your desired position(s) and organizations, and to seek support. Williams, a.k.a. the "Networking Goddess" understands this and maintains a significant personal network. The **Using Project Management to Land Your Next Job** program is comprehensive and unifies the components of an effective job search and provides specific actionable steps toward the goals of landing your next job.

The program was piloted by two "in transition accountability" groups and Women In Technology International Chicago (WITI). These sessions are now available through [CyberLife Tutors](#).

See Williams [LinkedIn profile](#)

Access [Cummuta's blog](#)

See Cummuta's [LinkedIn profile](#)