

ON THE BLOG

MY LEAP FROM THE MILITARY TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A Blog by Matthew Banks, SRMC (Q) AfCGI LCGI

Part two

What the RAF Taught Me About Project Management

At first glance, the world of the Royal Air Force and the world of project management appear to be miles apart. One belongs to the arena of uniform, discipline, and operations, while the other is rooted in plans, spreadsheets, and delivery milestones. But when you peel back the layers, the similarities are hard to ignore.

The first similarity is clarity. In the military, an “O group” briefing is designed to make sure everyone knows the objectives, the purpose, and the part they play in the bigger picture. In project management, the principle is the same. A project plan, however detailed, is worthless unless the team understands why the work matters and what success looks like.

The second is adaptability. I learned very early on that no plan survives first contact with the enemy. The same holds true in a corporate setting; no matter how well thought through a programme is, a client request, an unforeseen obstacle, or a shifting priority will test the structure of the plan. Success lies in how quickly and effectively the team adapts, not in the illusion of a perfect plan.

Then there is leadership under pressure. Whether it's in the chaos of conflict or in the middle of a tense office meeting, people look for steady guidance. They need someone who can keep a clear head, weigh up the options, and make decisions that keep momentum moving forward. Calm leadership, I found, is not a luxury in either world, it is a necessity.

And finally, there is teamwork. Trust and collaboration are the universal currencies that get the job done. In uniform, you relied on the person next to you with your life. In project management, you rely on your colleagues with your reputation and your results. Different stakes, perhaps, but the same bond of accountability and shared responsibility.

The uniform may be stored away, but the lessons remain. Every day, they remind me that the core principles of leadership, clarity, adaptability, and teamwork do not belong to one world alone, they are transferable, timeless, and central to every challenge I take on.

Advice for Others Making the Leap

For anyone preparing to leave the military and step into civvy life, especially into project management—there are a few lessons I've picked up along the way that might help.

The first is to talk to people. It can feel natural to keep your guard up, but conversations open doors. Do not hold any entitlement just because you were military, it's what you bring as an individual that counts. By dropping the walls and engaging, you find opportunities and build relationships that shape the next chapter of your career. It's also important not to underestimate yourself. In uniform, you might have been responsible for missions, logistics, equipment, or people. At the time, it feels like just part of the job, but those are the very foundations of project management. You already know more than you realise.

That said, be prepared to learn a new language. Corporate jargon might sound strange at first, but you'll adapt more quickly than you think. Before long, those terms that once made little sense will become second nature, just as military acronyms once did. Don't allow others to gate keep their areas of expertise just by confusing you with fancy acronyms.





Finding your people is another crucial step. Whether it’s colleagues, mentors, or other veterans making the same transition, having people around you who understand and support you makes the journey less daunting. At the same time, keep hold of your old network. The connections you built in service still matter and can be a source of strength and opportunity. Make sure you reach out and work to keep those relationships in place.

Approach each role with humility but also with confidence. Ask questions, learn as much as you can, and acknowledge that being ex-military doesn’t entitle you to anything. At the same time, don’t diminish your experiences because they are valuable, and they bring perspective others may not have.

Perhaps most importantly, remember why you left. Keep your eyes forward and focus on the life you’re building. Your past shaped you, but it doesn’t need to define your future.

Finally, own your path. Don’t feel confined by the stereotypes of what veterans “should” do once they leave. Translate your skills into the language of the role you want and carve out your own direction. The career that follows is yours to shape, not one to be dictated by expectation or pipelines dictated by career transition groups or recruiters just trying to hit a quota.

Looking Ahead

Do I miss the RAF? Absolutely. The camaraderie, the sense of mission and the unpredictability is not something you walk away from easily. Be proud of what you achieved and share your experiences with your colleagues, they aren’t anywhere near as bad as the military paints civvies to be!

But here’s what I’ve learned: the values of teamwork, resilience, purpose and profession don’t belong to the military alone. Put the right people together with a shared goal, and you can build that same unity anywhere. At Ubique, I’ve found that again. The missions are different, the risks are different, but the essence is the same: deliver together, when it matters most.

The RAF gave me resilience. Project management has given me a new stage to apply it. My past isn’t my value—it’s the foundation. The next chapter is being written now, and I feel fortunate to be right where I am.

Why Ubique

What makes Ubique Risk Management stand out is not just the projects we deliver, but the way we deliver them. We combine the precision and discipline you’d expect from our backgrounds with a flexibility that allows us to adapt to the needs of every client and every challenge. It’s not about ticking boxes or producing paperwork for no reason, it’s about building trust, solving problems, and creating outcomes that last.

One of the key components to air power is ubiquity, the ability of air power to operate effectively across various environments and locations. The same principle is in place here, although I’m sure Richard will be tearing out his hair out over my hijacking of the Ubique term due to it originally coming from his Royal Engineers background meaning “everywhere.”

For me, Ubique has become more than a place to work. It’s a team where experience from different walks of life blends into a shared purpose. We understand high-stakes environments, but we also understand people, and that balance is what allows us to deliver with both professionalism and humanity.

If you’re looking for a partner who values clarity, resilience, and teamwork as much as you do, then Ubique is exactly where those values live. It’s where lessons learned in the toughest conditions are applied to real-world challenges and where every project is approached with the same focus: to get it right, and to get it done together.