The Benefits of
PROJECT MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION
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Introduction

A study performed by KPMG Information Technology—a professional services company based in Toronto—found that “of the projects that fail, 87 [percent] went more than 50 [percent] over budget, 45 [percent] failed to produce the expected benefits, and 86–92 [percent] went over schedule…[Eighty-five percent] of all projects fail to meet all of their critical measures of success[.]”

While the Bureau of Labor Statistics doesn’t list project management as an occupation, the Project Management Institute (PMI)—the largest association for project managers in the country—has more than quadrupled its memberships in six years. The PMI now boasts more than half a million members from over 170 countries.

Although it will be discussed in further detail later in this paper, project managers should be highly efficient, good communicators both orally and in writing, skilled in interpersonal relationships, and have some knowledge of systems integrations.

Donna Reed, a consultant for Fortune 100 companies for over twenty years and a specialist in program and product management, has discovered six trends in project management that she believes will come to fruition in 2010. The first is that companies will continue to improve efficiencies. “Companies will continue to look for ways to become more efficient and save money in both the short and long run…Enterprises will be in search of [project managers] that have a broad range of technology and process improvement experience.”

The second trend Reed points out is that agile and lean processes are taking over. “With the need to do more with less, the demand by executives for ‘predictability’ in
projects and customers needing valuable deliverables produced quicker – Agile and Lean processes will become much more the norm rather than the exception in projects during 2010.”v

Third on the list is that more project managers will become independent consultants.

Project Management jobs are starting to open up as we slowly move out of this economic recession. Companies have been trying to cut expenses and save money, so new projects have been rather sparse in 2009...We will see more and more [project managers] venture out on their own to become independent contractors. The larger companies seem to be especially interested in...hiring them for the length of a specific project or to complete projects started by previous staff that were let go in 2009. vi

“Instead of companies maintaining all the skills internally or in one location—they are leveraging skills needed for projects wherever the skills reside. And more and more companies are going green—allowing their staff and independent contractors to work from home.”vii Reed’s prediction for the fourth trend in Project Management is that virtual and independent teams will be more prevalent.

Reed also foresees social media as becoming more common.

Communication is a critical element to the success of every project. And with the increase of virtual/distributed teams comes the need for better communication and collaboration mechanisms. Even teams that are in the same location are considered virtual if you have to get up from your desk to go talk to them. The traditional tool of Email is not fulfilling this need. We see collaboration tools such as IM-ing, web conferencing, Wikis, Sharepoint, and other tools being used to help bridge the communication gap. Especially with mobile and virtual teams growing. viii
The final trend Reed sees emerging in the year 2010 is project manager roles and business analyst roles will be merged. “The need for efficiencies and doing more with less is also driving the convergence of project management and business analyst roles…The need for project managers to be more of a product owner that owns the definition and delivery of the solution will continue to emerge.”

Project management is critical to the success of projects, whether it is done by someone already working within the company or someone who is hired from outside. And the trend of becoming certified seems to be growing.

**The history of project management**

There are several men who helped shape project management as we know it today. In the late 1800s, F. W. Taylor created the “Principles of Scientific Management” and believed in five basic principles for managing projects: “1. Study and determine the single best way to complete a project. 2. You need to hire the right person for the job at hand. 3. Train them in how best to go about it. 4. You need to keep this person working to best practices through offering incentives. 5. Make managers manage, workers work.”

Taylor’s associate, Henry Gantt, created the Gantt chart, which is still frequently used in projects today. Frank Gilbreth studied time and motion and worked to make sure individuals reached a certain level of efficiency. Donaldson Brown was an accountant who “popularized the principles of financial forecasting and return on investment. He worked at DuPont in the 1920s, and enabled them to become world famous for their effective management of ongoing projects.”
W. Edwards Deming worked in Japan to see that factory production techniques improved. “He developed his fourteen principles of management during this time, and expanded upon them in his hugely influential book ‘Out of Crisis’ from 1986.” Finally, “Joseph Juran was a key figure in the promotion and adoption of Quality Management principles throughout Japan in the 1950s. The key to Quality Management was focusing on training from the top down—i.e., managers first—which had proved unpopular in the United States, but enabled Japan to become world leaders in production of quality goods from the 1970s onward.”

The formation of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) in 1969 was the final step in making the project management industry the force it is today. As their web site states:

> PMI is the world’s leading not-for-profit membership association for the project management profession, with more than half a million members and credential holders in 185 countries. Our worldwide advocacy for project management is supported by our globally-recognized standards and credentials, our extensive research program, and our professional development opportunities. These products and services are the basis of greater recognition and acceptance of project management’s successful role in governments, organizations, academia and industries.

Project management has come a long way and it seems it has only really begun to prove how useful a tool it can really be.
What is project management exactly?

Dictionary.com defines project management as “The process of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling the production of a system. Software tools are available to help with this, e.g., PERT chart editors.” A project manager sees to it that all the pieces of a project’s puzzle come together in a timely and financially responsible fashion. If someone on the team is not pulling his or her weight, it is the project manager’s job to make sure the situation changes.

Project management “makes it possible to focus on priorities, track and measure performance, overcome challenges and problems, become flexible enough to adapt to change, and achieve higher performance and a higher probability of success in each project.” The absence of project management can result in “missed deadlines, cost overruns, poor workmanship, conflicts among team members, redoing work to correct errors, unclear directions for the project, continuous changes in project scope, forgotten key tasks, poor morale of team, duplication of efforts,” and more.

One of the major responsibilities of a project manager is to set project schedules. To do this, a project manager “has to figure out what the tasks are, how long they will take, what resources they require, and in what order they should be done...The difficulty in managing a project schedule is that there are seldom enough resources and enough time to complete the tasks sequentially. Therefore, tasks have to be overlapped so several happen at the same time.” As you can see, the ability to multitask is absolutely essential to a project manager.

To even be eligible to apply for the Project Management Professional (PMP®) exam, the applicant must meet certain criteria. If the applicant has a high school diploma
(or equivalent), he or she must have at least five years’ experience, 7,500 hours spent leading and directing project tasks, and thirty-five hours of project management education. For those who have a four-year degree (bachelor’s or equivalent), they must have three years’ project management experience with 4,500 hours spent leading and directing project tasks and thirty-five hours of project management education. Once this criterion has been met, the candidate must complete the application process and take a four-hour multiple-choice exam that consists of 200 questions. Beyond these requirements, applicants must pay fees ($405–$555) to maintain their certification and credentials, which run on a three-year cycle. During those three years, certified PMPs must complete sixty professional development units (PDUs). Typically, one PDU is earned for one hour (sixty minutes) spent in a planned, structured professional development activity.

In terms of where project managers are needed, project management is used in a variety of industries, including construction, IT, engineering, architecture, banking, software development, and more.

**The benefits of becoming certified in project management**

Not only can an individual benefit from becoming certified in project management, but the company he or she works for—or a company who hires an outside project manager—will also benefit from that certification as well.

Individuals who go through the rigorous process of becoming certified in project management show a serious dedication to their profession and their industry. As shown
above, it is a long process to become certified and those who take the time to take the steps show future employers that they stand a head above the rest.

The PMI web site lists ten reasons why it is beneficial to become certified:xxi

1. **PMI credentials show your commitment to the project management profession.** When you earn a PMI credential, you show peers, supervisors, and clients your commitment to the profession; PMI’s code of ethics; and your ability to perform the functions of a project management practitioner to a certain level.

2. **PMI credentials recognize your knowledge, skills, and abilities.** PMI serves as an unbiased endorsement of your project management knowledge and professional experience on a global level.

3. **PMI credentials reflect achievement.** Our credentials show that you have demonstrated excellence in the field by meeting standard requirements established by global project management practitioners.

4. **PMI credentials can lead to greater earnings.** Many credential holders experience salary increases because of their certification status.

5. **PMI credentials can lead to career opportunities and advancement.** Our family of credentials identifies you as a practitioner who has demonstrated competency in project management processes or in knowledge and experience in specialty areas of practice based on industry standards.
6. **PMI credentials prepare you for greater job responsibilities.** Our credentials indicate your willingness to invest in professional development. This enables credential holders an awareness of changing processes and terminology in the field.

7. **PMI credentials improve skills and knowledge.** Preparation for a PMI credential requires study and review of current project management processes. Earning a credential highlights your knowledge and competence and proficiency in your practice.

8. **PMI credentials build self-confidence.** With a PMI credential, you define yourself beyond a job title while gaining a sense of personal satisfaction.

9. **PMI credentials allow for greater recognition from peers.** PMI credential holders gain increased recognition from peers for taking the extra step in professional development.

10. **PMI credentials enhance the profession.** PMI’s certification program promotes practitioners and supports ongoing professional development.

Project management certification also benefits the company that an individual works for or a company that is considering hiring a project manager. PMI.org also compiled a list of reasons that PMP certification can help a company. By supporting PMI credentials:
1. **Your workforce will understand processes and terminology.** To obtain a credential, individuals must pass a multiple-choice exam and other evaluations based on the current body of knowledge and tasks related to the job role.

2. **Your workforce will be more disciplined.** Credential holders are not only tested on their knowledge of project management terminology and processes, but also on their competence to perform in their role.

3. **Your workforce will know what to look for before they start a project.** By understanding the common processes and terminology, your project team knows the steps to initiating, executing, and closing a project, thereby making success more likely.

4. **Your workforce will value team work.** Certified project management practitioners tend to have good communication and human resources management skills and are able to take advantage of diverse expertise through collaborative efforts.

5. **Your clients will have increased confidence because your project team uses baseline terminology and practices.** This shows that your project team operates in harmony with one another, creates more efficient and fluent workflow, and leads to better results. Client can trust that projects will be handled in a better way.

6. **Your clients will have increased confidence because your credentialed project team has an ethical code.** PMI credential holders must adhere to
the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, which shows clients that your project team operates with integrity.

7. **Your clients will have increased confidence because your project team has knowledge of the most up-to-date global practices.** PMI credential holders must participate in the Continued Certification Requirements (CCR) program to maintain an active certification status. The CCR program requires credential holders to partake in professional development activities throughout the year.

8. **Your will have repeatable processes and improved project results.** This prevents you and your project teams from having to start from scratch every time you begin a new project because disciplined project management calls for lessons learned and shared process assets.

9. **You will retain employees by investing in their professional development.** When you invest in your employees’ professional development, you show your commitment to them and in turn, they will be more committed to the organization. You will be able to retain employees and attract new talent.

10. **You will help grow the profession of project management.** By endorsing PMI credentials, you provide long-term career paths in project management for your workforce.

PMP certification takes a lot of time and dedication, but the benefits are there and are being recognized by major industries and companies.
The disadvantages of becoming certified in project management

As with just about anything, disadvantages are present along with advantages, and project management certification is no different. Those interested in becoming certified should not overlook the fact that certification is not a guarantee of anything—including a job or additional money. PMP certification gives the candidate a better chance of having his or her résumé reviewed, but no guarantee.

Individuals who believe they can rely solely on their certification do not realize that the certification alone does not mean they have enough hands-on experience to work on any project or that they are certified to do the job.

As mentioned before, PMP certification is expensive and very time-consuming. If interested individuals do not have the time or money to spend on adequately putting the attention necessary to do well in the pre-planning, testing, or the day-to-day work that it takes to be a successful project manager, they should not waste their time on the certification.

Finally, this particular certification lasts a lifetime. Business tactics—project management included—are changing daily thanks to new ideas and advancements in technology. The PMP exam is updated by the PMI when necessary, but since those who are already certified do not need to retake the exam, they lose out on this new information. If an individual is not good about keeping up with current trends, his or her certification could become outdated over a period of time.

These disadvantages might be few in number, but they still should be taken into consideration before dedicating time, money, and other resources to PMP certification.
What makes a good project manager?

Education and hands-on experience are two critical ingredients for a successful project manager. But what about personality and work traits? Are there any in particular that someone interested in project management typically has? Or should work on?

According to the experts, yes, there are. Deborah Bigelow Crawford, PMP, is the executive vice president of PM Solutions and president of PM College. She has more than twenty years of experience in business management.

In her article “What Makes a Good Project Manager,” Crawford talks about some of the common traits she sees in project managers:

- Love of their work…and embracing the challenges
- Clear vision…and communicating this vision
- Strong team building skills…and setting positive tones
- Structure and alignment…and setting positive tones
- Strong interpersonal skills…and leading their teams
- Discipline…and completing each phase of the project properly
- Communication skills…and knowing when and to whom to communicate

Some of these traits can be learned, but most of them are ingrained from years of good work ethic or simply genetically acquired personality traits. Ray White, founder and chief executive officer of Scoutwest, Inc., the developers of Standard Time® Project Management Software, had an interesting answer when asked if successful project managers exert a certain attribute(s). “I’d say they do! They have a passion for details, and an unhealthy obsession with time management. They’ll wear a calculator watch, and
look at it far too often. Maybe they don’t wear white tape on their glasses, but they’re
definitely the geeks of projects, tasks, and managing time. They love it too much to be
“normal” human beings! That’s the kind of guy I want on my team.” xxiv

There is stereotyping for every existing job and industry on the planet, but White
makes a good point: project managers have specific traits that he recognizes as being
useful in a successful leader.

In her article, Crawford also mentions a study of The Top 500 Project
Management Benchmarking Forum that identified traits xxv of a best practice project
manager. According to the study, the best project managers:

- Are recognized by stakeholders as the single most important factor in
  project goal achievement
- Are truthful in all dealings and relationships
- Exhibit eagerness to organize and lead groups
- Exhibit evidence of a strong desire for goal achievement
- Are even-tempered
- Have faith that the future will have a positive outcome
- Have confidence their personal performance will result in a positive
  outcome

In addition to all the things a project manager should be, there are things that PMs
should not be as well. Tom Mochal, certified in PMP and president of TenStep, Inc., a
company focused on methodology development, training, and consulting, devised a list of
good indicators xxvi that a person should not become a project manager:
1. **You are a poor communicator.** If studies are correct, more than 50 percent of a project manager’s time is spent in some aspect of communication, with verbal and written communication taking up 80 percent of the job.

2. **You don’t work well with people.** If you prefer to stay in your office and focus on your work, you probably don’t have the collaborative skills to be a PM.

3. **You prefer the details.** When you’re a project manager, you must rise above the details and become more of a delegator and coordinator. The details should be left to someone else.

4. **You don’t like to manage people.** Some project managers say they could do a better job if they didn’t have to work with people. If this is the case for you, project management probably isn’t for you.

5. **You don’t like to follow processes.** You need good processes to be effective as your projects get larger.

6. **You don’t like to document things.** Many aspects of project management require some documentation.

7. **You like to execute and not plan.** If you don’t want to spend the appropriate amount of time to make sure you understand what you’re doing, you’re probably not going to enjoy project management.

8. **You prefer to be an order taker.** Project managers need to provide value on a project, including pushing back when the client is asking for things that aren’t right.
9. **You aren’t organized.** If you’re going to manage multiple people over a period of time, you need to be well organized to make sure that everyone is doing what’s necessary as efficiently as possible.

10. **You think project management is “overhead.”** Good [project managers] understand the value of their work, and they understand their work will result in a project coming in on time and on budget with a good experience for the client and the project team.

This list is not inclusive, but it should give those interested in project management a good idea of whether it sounds like a job that they might enjoy. There are hundreds of lists that have been compiled listing traits and habits that project managers should and should not have. When it comes down to it, only the individual can decide if it’s right for him or her.

**Researching project management certification schools/programs**

There are many quality schools and online programs that offer certificate programs in project management. Often these courses last anywhere from six weeks to twelve months to complete.

The most important thing to remember when choosing where to earn a certificate is that the school is accredited by PMI or is on their Registered Educational Providers list. The schools and programs on this list have been pre-approved by PMI. This means their program satisfies the organization’s eligibility requirements for project management certification.
Any school or program chosen should also teach skills that a project manager needs to be successful, such as time management, leadership, and organization.

As for the actual certification, the applicant will need to go through the Project Management Institute, Inc. to apply for and receive his or her certificate. In terms of making a résumé look as professional as possible, Ray White has some advice for that as well. “Getting a PMP® certificate from [PMI®] is tops. That’s the best thing you can do. Push it for all it’s worth. That shows everyone you are very serious about project management. I’d also list the tools you’re proficient with. That helps because it sets the framework for the employer who is reading it. They know you’ve used industry standard tools.”xxvii

Conclusion

Taking the step to become certified in project management is not something that should be taken lightly. This paper has laid out clear benefits and compelling reasons for why someone interested in project management should earn his or her certification. But the work to get there and to become successful is not for everyone.

If people find themselves interested in project management, then whether they should become certified isn’t even a question. It is a matter of how soon they can sign up.
About The College Network, Inc.

The College Network partners with established universities to offer associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degree programs as well as professional certificates entirely through distance learning. Since 1992, we’ve helped hundreds of thousands of busy adults advance their education and training while maintaining a good work/life balance.

The College Network and Boston University Corporate Education Center work together to offer project management certificates based on the “Project Management Body of Knowledge 4th Edition.” These certificates can be completed entirely online and provide project managers with skills ranging from foundations of project management to PMP® Exam Prep.

The College Network strives to provide high-quality education that can be completed conveniently and at an affordable price. Call us at 1-866-249-2131 or visit us at www.collegenetwork.com for more information about the programs available.
Sources


7 Ibid. June 2, 2010.


“Maintain Your Credential”.


