



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Look at the Value of PMP® Certification

The Project Management Institute is the pre-eminent project management organization in the world today. They sponsor a professional certification, the Project Management Professional (PMP), that is the de-facto, recognized standard for project managers. The perception and the value of a PMP certification have changed over the past few years. Ten years ago, you could look for a job and not notice any openings that required PMP certification. You might have noticed a few project management positions that included a PMP certification as a nice-to-have, but there were very few positions where it was a requirement.

The Market Has Changed

A few years ago, however, this began to change. A sizable number of companies started to request or require the PMP credentials. For sure, the majority of companies still do not require the PMP certification for prospective employees, but a sizable number do. In fact, in some companies, your own positions are less secure if you are not a PMP. The fear of being left behind is a powerful motivating influence for many of the people.

Ultimately, you may find and accept a position where you do not need PMP certification, but the marketplace is certainly headed in that direction. Even if you do not require a PMP for your current position, you might find that it will be required when the time comes for you to look for a new position again. You need to be careful that the requirements of the project management marketplace do not move ahead of your resume and experience.

PMP Requirements

Some people find the PMP requirements and preparation to be rigorous. For sure, it is not as rigorous or as time-consuming as the CPA certification. However, some people who received PMP certification in the past will tell you that the prerequisites and the exam are not nearly as burdensome as they once were.

The prerequisites today are different based on whether you have a college degree or not. If you have a college degree you must document 4500 hours of project management experience over the past six years. If you do not have a degree, the requirements are even greater. You must document this experience by completing a fairly lengthy set of job experience templates.

After filling out the required paperwork showing your experience, you can participate in a series of preparation classes sponsored by your local PMI chapter. If you prefer, you can also study on your own if you find that more effective. There are also a number of websites that provide information on passing the exam. If you take preparation classes, you will find that many of the students are being sponsored by their current employers, many of whom are now requiring their project managers to be certified.



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Finally, when you are ready, there is the actual exam. There are 200 multiple choice questions. Usually there are two answers that are obviously wrong, and two that could be right under the right circumstances. You need to understand the context of the question and give the best answer. You have four hours to take the exam, and you must get at least 140 correct (70%).

The Value of the PMP

Many people believe PMP certification is important to distinguish them from other project management candidates, even if your current company does not require it. In fact, a PMP certification is becoming more and more popular as a screening tool for companies looking for project management candidates. Over time, it may become as important as having a college degree is today. Certainly it will not be a requirement for every project management position, but it would be more unusual for a company not to require the PMP certification that it would be for one to require it.

Of course, no one is saying that the PMP certification proves that you are a better project manager than someone without the certification. However, it may show your prospective employer that you have some degree of seriousness in the profession, and that you were motivated enough to invest the time to pass the exam. It also gives some indication that you have knowledge of the methodology of project management, rather than just relying on hard work and organization skills.

From a very materialistic standpoint, it has been shown that employers are willing to pay more money to a PMP certified professional than for one without. This stems from the belief that, although there are never any guarantees, a PMP certified person probably has a background and skill level that is higher than his non-certified peers.

Summary

So, the bottom line is that, if you have the proper prerequisite experience level, you should consider a PMP certification. If you decided today that this was your goal, it might still take you four to six months (or longer) to fulfill the prerequisites, take a study class, prep diligently for the test, and then take and pass the exam. However, as you can imagine, there will be a tremendous relief and sense of accomplishment once you pass. And, assuming you keep up the ongoing personal development criteria, the certification is something that you will always have as you progress in your career.