



A Project Management Approach To Passing The Project Management Professional (PMP) Exam

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Overview

Passing the PMP exam is not easy, but the outcome does have to be grim. A friend of mine has failed the exam for the third time and has decided to focus on something 'simpler'. He was going to finish his research on the "relationship between the quantum concept of time with a black hole and its singularity"!

The PMP exam is probably one of the most difficult ones you will ever take covering a huge amount of information. A very common mistake candidates make is to prepare for the exam using just the PMBOK.

Audience

If you have gone through the trouble of locating this article, you probably qualify as the target audience for this topic. These details are directed to all the lost souls and terrified individuals trying to get organized for PMI's PMP exam.

Challenge

Topics such as “project selection methods”, “leadership and motivation theories”, “PMI code of conduct” and many others are not directly covered by the PMBOK but are all within the scope of the PMP exam.

Bottom line is, without a clear understanding of what the PMP exam is about and proper planning, most candidates will end up joining my friend and focusing on something else with a bitter taste of defeat.

So, why not apply project management methodology itself to the PMP exam?

Benefit

By applying Project Management methodologies to any project you will most likely have higher success in managing the project within schedule and under budget and ultimately higher customer satisfaction.

You can also look at applying this method to many other aspects of your life. Once you practice these techniques a few times you will have a project management approach to everything. You may want to start by applying this approach to help you successfully pass your PMP exam.

Solution

The PMBOK itself mentions that “effective project management requires that the project management team understand and use knowledge and skills from at least five areas of expertise”.

Initiating

You will be spending a reasonable amount of your resources on this project such as time and money. You may have to postpone other personal and professional goals for a while. So, before you start this project, make sure this is really what you want.

Try to answer the following questions:

Is this the strategic direction you want for your career?
Who are the main stakeholders besides you? Your company, your manager or employer?
Who is funding this endeavor? Is it yourself, your company?
When are you planning to become certified?

So, do we have a go?

Planning

The PMBOK mentions that “effective project management requires that the project management team understand and use knowledge and skills from at least five areas of expertise”. Find out exactly what is covered by the exam so that you can precisely define the scope of your preparation and how much time you expect you will need to cover the entire scope.

For average IQers like me, it takes about 3 months to get prepared to take the exam, unless you are planning to quit everything else to speed up the process (Crashing, Time Management).

It is very important to come up with a projected exam date (schedule) or you will end up falling in the endless preparation cycle trap.

What resources will you be using for the preparation besides the PMBOK itself? Be careful while buying books and exam simulators since many are incorrect.

As for study methodology, you will have to go through the material at least three times incrementally increasing your knowledge.

For quality matters, consider benchmarking or baselining yourself during the preparation to make sure you are going the right way and if necessary implement required changes.

And for the make or buy analysis a critical decision has to be made. Are you planning to get ready by yourself or register for a PMP exam preparation course?

Executing

You have made the decision to become PMP certified and you have a plan. You have a go from the sponsor. It is time to deliver.

According to the plan, you should be ready to take the exam in about three months.

Apply for the exam immediately. The PMP exam application procedure takes some time and if you are selected for auditing, it will take even longer. You will only be allowed to schedule the exam after your application has been accepted by the PMI.

It is very important that you time the exam date with the end of your preparation so that you don't start forgetting what you have learned!

As for the preparation itself, whatever is the methodology you choose, we recommend you go through the PMBOK twice plus an additional source once. You also have to make sure you have covered the additional topics not directly covered by the PMBOK but within the areas of expertise.

During the whole preparation process, you should be writing notes to improve retention. Writing notes is one of the key methods of increasing your retention.

Monitoring and Controlling

Your PMP exam is scheduled. You have a huge amount of material to cover and a short period of time.

As for schedule control and scope control, you have to make sure your learning is going according to schedule and that you will have enough time to cover each topic at least three times.

As for quality assurance and control, we strongly suggest the use of baselines to check the quality of learning. An initial baseline will let you know 'the state of the union' and will be used to compare with future baselines and make sure you are going in the right direction.

Make any changes necessary to make sure schedule, scope and quality are aligned with what you have planned.

Closing

At this point you are about to take the PMP exam, best case scenario, on the following day.

You have successfully completed your preparation; the baselines show you have gradually increased your knowledge of the PMBOK and you should be feeling prepared and confident.

Summary

By employing a simple strategy of setting a long term vision and short term goals you can tackle any major project or task. Project Management Institute has provided us with a common set of effective processes that can be tailored for any project. Overall goal would be to achieve the set goals as closely as possible to the plans that you set out at first.

Passing the PMP exam is not simple, but it does not have to be an impossible task either. Make a clear plan and stick to it and you will get there. We used a PMI approach to make this process more manageable. This approach will work for almost any project.

Please feel free to let us know how this plan worked for you at feedback@2dev.com.

GOOD LUCK.

About the authors

Marcos Cubric, PMP is an IT Project Manager and a Senior Consultant. Marcos has over 20 years experience in management and implementation of Information Technology and specializes in Oracle Server Technologies. His focused areas of expertise are Oracle Database, Oracle Application Server, Oracle WebLogic, Oracle Identity Management, Oracle Real Application Clusters, Oracle Data Guard, Server Security, SQL Tuning, Server Architecture & Design and Project Management.

As the senior partner in “GCM Sistemas and Consultoria”, he was responsible for leading and directing the technological visions of this Rio based Consulting firm. As a senior partner Marcos also racked up expertise on business development, marketing and human resource management.

Marcos has been in his current role since 2001 as a Project Manager and an Oracle Solutions Architect at DesTech, a highly regarded Professional Services firm in Toronto, Canada.

In the past 14 years, through GCM and DesTech, Marcos has taught many courses for Oracle University across North and South America with many citations and awards to his name.

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He managed his own start-up company in the mid 90’s and was responsible for directing the technology needs and modernizing processes in the manufacturing industry. He also worked as a freelance consultant, technical trainer and project manager for a number of small and midsize companies in the late 90’s.

Payam has been in his current role since 2000 as a Project Manager and an Oracle Solutions Architect at DesTech, a highly regarded Professional Services firm in Toronto, Canada.

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