



Certification Corner: Project Management Certifications

- Project Management Professional®
- Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM™)

By Shawn Conaway

OVERVIEW

'Project Manager' is a generic title that is not tied to any specific industry or discipline. Even within an industry, the Project Manager title implies responsibility for a project while remaining ambiguous with respect to the actual extent of the responsibility. For instance, a Software Engineer has unique professional responsibilities that are distinctly different from those of a Network Architect or Information Security Manager. At the same time, each has the same responsibility as a project manager to deliver a specific service within a specific timeline and for a specific price.

Project managers are not confined to a specific type of work or size of company. Construction Managers, Cost Estimators, and Computer and Information Systems Managers are among the occupation groups identified as Project Managers by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS). The Bureau recognizes project managers in IT as a subset of the 'Computer and Information Systems (CIS) Managers' occupational group. According to the Bureau, "*Project managers [in IT] develop requirements, budgets, and schedules for their firm's information technology projects. They coordinate such projects from development through implementation, working with internal and external clients, vendors, consultants, and computer specialists.*"

BLS reports that the median annual earnings for CIS managers in 2005 was \$92,537. The middle 50 percent earned between \$ 69,641 and \$ 119,362 (all figures inflation adjusted from 2002). A bachelor's degree is usually required for a project manager position. Individuals with a master's degree in management information systems (MIS) or a master's of business administration (MBA) degree will be most successful.

Project Manager Skills and Responsibilities

A project manager is responsible for success or failure of one or more projects. The key word is *responsible*. The project manager's reputation, and possibly his job, is on the line. The project manager is the scapegoat for a failed project and the hero in a successful project.

Further complicating matters, project managers are often in the unique situation where they direct and review work of individuals over whom they have no direct managerial responsibility.

A project manager's objectives

- ▼ Develop detailed project plans that have clearly defined objectives, resource requirements, and cost estimates.
- ▼ Identify the scope of a project to include kickoff, milestones, deliverables, and timeline.
- ▼ Manage project scope to meet the objectives of the project.
- ▼ Stay on budget and on time while providing the project deliverables.
- ▼ Build and lead project teams and resources, including staff, vendors, and contractors.
- ▼ Work closely with project teams, ensuring that each team member fulfills his responsibilities.
- ▼ Facilitate meetings.
- ▼ Maintain project documentation including proposals, project plans, quotes for hardware and software, consulting proposals, test plans, pilot and production plans, and deployment plans.
- ▼ Communicate project status to people involved with the project, including risk to project completion.
- ▼ Review deliverables for accuracy.

Skills

- ▼ Effective interpersonal, verbal, and written communication skills.
- ▼ Ability to communicate complex technical concepts clearly to project teams and to all levels of management.
- ▼ Effective leadership skills.
- ▼ Ability to influence colleges, consultants, vendors, and other indirect reports to achieve the goals of a project.
- ▼ Ability to manage group projects and collaborative efforts directly.

- ▼ Ability to give up direct control of processes and people when they do not require direct management.

GETTING CERTIFIED

The Project Management Institute (PMI) offers two project management certifications: The Project Management Professional (PMP®) and the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM™).

The PMP is a premier certification for highly experienced and qualified project managers with a solid foundation of project management knowledge. The PMI established the specifics for the PMP certification exam after completing a job analysis study in 1997. According to the PMI, the resulting exam “measures the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques that are utilized in the practice of project management.” The CAPM is an intermediate certification geared for project managers with moderate project management experience. Both certifications were designed to objectively assess and measure professional project management knowledge.

Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)

The PMBOK is the PMI’s standard reference guide for basic project management knowledge. The PMBOK also includes detailed information about the five project management process groups and nine knowledge areas. The PMP and CAPM exams focus on the five project management processes groups and the nine knowledge areas specified in the PMBOK.

The six processes are:

Project Initiation: Committing to start a project

Planning Processes: Devising a plan to meet the objectives of the project

Executing Processes: Coordinating people and resources

Project Control: Monitoring a project to ensure the project objectives are met

Project Closing: Formalizing the end of a project

Professional Responsibility: Following the PMP Code of Professional Conduct

The nine knowledge areas are:

Project Integration Management

Project Scope Management

Project Time Management

Project Cost Management

Project Quality Management

Project Human Resource Management

Project Communications Management

Project Risk Management

Project Procurement Management

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Candidates for the PMP or CAPM exam are required to meet certain eligibility requirements before they can sit for the exam. Candidates must complete and submit the experience verification forms found in the Credential Handbook. A Credential Handbook is available online for both the PMP and the CAPM.

Once a candidate proves his eligibility, he will receive a letter in the mail with details about scheduling the exam. The eligibility letter is

required prior to taking the exam. The eligibility letter expires after one year.

Certification Paths—The PMI has defined two categories for the PMP certification.

Each category has differing education, work experience, and project management requirements. Category 1 requires the applicant to have a bachelor’s degree, at least 4,500 hours of project management, 36 months of project management experience within the last six years, and 35 contact hours of project management training. Category 2 provides a certification path for high school graduates and for college graduates with an associate degree. Applicants choosing Category 2 are required to have 3,000 more hours and two more years of experience. Both categories lead to the same PMP certification. The essential difference is that Category 1 allows college graduates to substitute academic training for some work experience.

The CAPM certification paths are configured similarly. CAPM candidates with a bachelor’s degree are required to have 1,500 hours of project management experience, 24 months of project management experience in the last two years, and 23 contact hours of project management training. CAPM candidates with a high school diploma or associate degree are required to have 1,000 more hours of project management experience than four-year college graduates.

Education—The PMI requires that the applicant have a Baccalaureate degree for Category 1 or a high school diploma for Category 2. Since the PMI is an international organization, they also accept credentials from equivalent universities and secondary schools.

Experience—In addition to educational credentials, the PMI sets a baseline for recent project management experience. For instance, PMP candidates in Category 1 must complete an experience verification form that details at least 4,500 hours of project management experience from within the five process management process groups (Initiating Processes, Planning Processes, Executing Processes, Controlling Processes, Closing Processes). The PMP candidates must also provide proof of 36 months of unique, non-overlapping project management experience.

Non-overlapping experience means that each month is only counted once. A project manager who worked on three simultaneous (overlapping) projects during one month can count the experience as only one month towards the experience requirement.

Training—PMP candidates must receive at least 35 contact hours of project management training. The specific training must cover project quality, scope, time, cost, human resources, communications, risk, procurement, and integration management. Contact hours include training received at a university or college, through a training company or consultant, through a company-sponsored program, or through other means. Contact hours implies interaction with another person, and therefore does not include self-study by simply reading project management books. Distance learning courses that are not followed by a tutorial segment are also excluded.

TAKING THE EXAM

An exam can be scheduled once the candidate receives an eligibility letter. Tests are scheduled via Thomson Prometric’s portal at <http://www.2test.com>.

Candidates taking the PMP exam have a maximum of four hours to complete the 200 multiple-choice questions. A passing score is 137 (68.5%) correctly answered questions.

The CAPM exam is three hours long and consists of 150 multiple-choice questions. A passing score is 86 (~57%) correctly answered questions.

Testers are notified at the end of the exam if they passed or failed. The PMP or CAPM credential can be used immediately after passing the test. The CAPM credential expires after 5 years. No professional development units (PDUs) are required to maintain the CAPM credential for the full 5-year term. The PMP credential does not expire. However, individuals holding the PMP credential have to comply with the Continuing Certification Requirements (CCR) Program.

CONTINUING CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS (CCR) PROGRAM

Each PMP must complete at least 60 professional development units (PDUs) during each renewal cycle in order to maintain the PMP credential. The initial CCR cycle begins the day the PMP test is passed and ends three full calendar years later on December 31st. Each subsequent CCR cycle is three years long. A renewal fee of \$60 for PMI members and \$150 for nonmembers is assessed once per CCR cycle.

PDUs can be earned through a variety of means such as:

- ▼ Formal education. A typical 15-week semester degree credit class earns 15 PDUs.
- ▼ Professional activities. Publishing a project management article is worth 30 PDUs.
- ▼ Attending an education program offered by a PMI Registered Education Provider (REP) such as a PMI Chapter.
- ▼ Attending an education program by a provider not registered with PMI. One contact hour of training equals one PDU.
- ▼ Volunteer Service to a professional or community organization. Serving as an officer for a project management organization for one year counts for 10 PDUs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)
ISBN: 193069945X\$49.95
PMP® Exam Practice Test and Study Guide
ISBN: 1890367354\$39.95

NOTE: The PMI is updating the PMP exam on September 30th, 2005. The 2004 version of the PMP exam will be unavailable starting September 25th. Candidates who wish to take the 2004 exam must submit an application to take the test by August 29th. The new 2005 version of the PMP exam will be available after September 30th. At that time, only candidates that failed the 2004 exam can take it. Candidates that failed the 2004 exam have one year from the last attempt to pass the test.

Related Job Titles

Project manager, program manager, manager of information systems, technical architect, systems engineer, software engineer, network architect, information security manager, consultant.

Related Certifications

Six Sigma Blackbelt—<http://www.asq.org/cert/types/sixsigma>
Stanford Certified Project Manager (SCPM)—<http://apm.stanford.edu/certProgram.html>
CompTIA Project+—<http://www.comptia.org/certification/project/default.aspx>

Additional Information

Bureau of Labor Statistics—<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos258.htm>



NaSPA member Shawn Conaway is a Systems Administrator for a Fortune 100 retailer. He currently holds the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer, Citrix Certified Administrator, and A+ certifications. Send questions or comments to s.conaway@naspa.com.