

Is the PgMP® Credential Right For Me?

by

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Gareth, Gary, Jeff, and Brian are PgMP (Program Management Professional)® credentialed through the Project Management Institute (PMI)®. (In fact, that's how we met, became good friends and collaborators on articles.) We know from personal experience what it takes to obtain. Additionally, in early 2010, Jeff and Brian did a study and presentation on the overall results and benefits of having the PgMP credential, based on a survey of 225 PgMPs, over half of the PgMPs credentialed at the time. Their benefits study was one of the focus topics at the 2010 PMI North America Congress in Washington, DC.

As we weigh the value of the credential, let's first consider the PgMP credential itself. Per PMI, the PgMP credential is intended to "recognize advanced experience, skill and performance in the oversight of multiple related projects and their resources, aligned with an organizational objective." We won't be going into the formal details and process steps to obtain the credential; that information is readily available through the PMI. However, the PgMP credential process can be broken down to three main areas or steps:

1. Pre-PgMP (includes the application and the preparation phase)
2. Intermediate phase (Audit and Exam)
3. MRA (Multi-rater assessment)

It is important to keep in mind that you must have four years of Program Management experience (not just managing related projects; the projects have to be organized as a program) and four years of Project Management experience. Then you must take a comprehensive exam and have at least 12 professional references attest that you are a competent program management practitioner in order to obtain the PgMP credential. Assuming that you have the relevant experience, one still must ask "Is the PgMP Credential Right for Me?"

Before deciding if the credential is right for you, let's first take a look at an average profile of those who have obtained the credential. If you scan through the email signatures of PgMPs, it is clear that most PgMPs are in senior positions, boasting titles such as 'Senior - -', 'Director of - -', and 'VP of --' with several who are successfully managing their own companies and/or consulting firms. Humbly, it's an impressive group with the typical PgMP having the following attributes:

- an average of fifteen (15) years of project management experience
- an average of nine (9) years of program management experience
- most likely has a Bachelor's degree and may have a Master's
- salary ranges from \$131,000 - \$140,000 USD

Given the above statistics, you will probably agree that such people are mature individuals who had achieved some level of 'success' as a program/project manager even before the PgMP credential was available. This was a necessary prerequisite to applying for the credential. Those that have obtained the PgMP also invested, on average:

- \$2500 USD for the application (the exam) and study materials
- ~140 hours of personal study and/or classes
- ~5 months (or longer) to complete the process

At the time of this writing, there are just over 500 PgMPs globally - and that's after the credential has been available to obtain for 3 years. At current rates, approximately a dozen people become new PgMPs per month versus 3,500 – 5,000 new PMPs per month. In studies and analysis of program and project management credentials and certifications, the PgMP is in the upper 25% quartile of difficulty to obtain. Again, the above information provides a baseline regarding expectations and history of the credential, with some basic statistics as to the credential and who obtains it. Now that you have that information, we'll focus on the key question: Is the PgMP right for you?

Referring to the survey and other comments from the PgMP community, no one to whom we have spoken has regretted obtaining the PgMP credential. Some have benefited materially in new jobs, promotions, or salary increases and, given the state of the global economy, felt they kept their jobs as a result of achieving the PgMP. In their responses, nearly everyone stated that it has helped their professional networking activities. Consequently, the realistic benefits may be hard to gauge, but what has been indicated is that all are glad to have obtained it and feel more confident, both personally and professionally, for having done so. Further, most felt that they were in a better position for future opportunities, should they decide to make a career move.

Are you still wondering, “Is the PgMP credential right for me”? The answer to this question also depends on your career objectives to ensure that the investment made in time, capital and effort will reap the anticipated benefits. If you expect to be working as a program management practitioner for 5 or more years, then it is likely to be a good investment. If you plan to consult, author, or teach at some future date, it will definitely help towards such a second career. Regardless of the commercial/career reasons, you may also want to use the personal challenge to test yourself.

In addition, you may question the demand or marketability of the PgMP. The PgMP credential is relatively new (it was released in October 2007) and just as the PMP or any credential or certification required, its job market value depends on the potential employer’s job description. We have noticed, particularly in the U.S.A., (check www.indeed.com) that the employment postings that stated, ‘PMP highly desired or required’ for project manager positions are now include, ‘PgMP highly desired or required’ for their program management positions. Of these, a large number of companies working with the U.S. Government are requiring the PgMP due to the requirement for positions on national program progress board using ‘stoplight’ indicators to measure progress.

Are there circumstance under which the PgMP is ‘not right’ for someone? Yes. If you don’t plan to become a program manager or to continue as a PM practitioner, it is unlikely to be worth the investment. If you do not have the relevant work experience or references for the MRA, then don’t apply. As the application is timed, if you are not in the position to make a firm commitment in terms of time and money, it’s best to postpone starting until you can. However, from our discussions and phone consultations with many people, there have only been a few who found that the timing or circumstance was just not right. Unfortunately, we know several people who have started and failed to successfully complete the PgMP process. Of those with whom we spoke, an average of 10% of unsuccessful candidates were unsuccessful due to a lack of experience, 70% failed the exam (some after 3 attempts), and 20%, believe it or not, did not score appropriately on the MRA.

There are two old sayings, “Knowledge is Power”, and “Knowledge is Freedom.” In these competitive times any advantage helps, even if it is intrinsic in ‘creating confidence’ within the person. For us personally, and others who have provided feedback, the PgMP will provide benefits. The bottom line? If you meet the requirements, can dedicate the time and accommodate the expense, then ‘Go for it!’ If we can help with advice, our contact information is below and we welcome you to connect with us on [LinkedIn](#).

Article Author Bios as of March 2011	
<p>About The Article Authors, Their Roles Their Plans, And Their Goals</p>	<p>Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, and Jeff Hodgkinson are experienced PMO, program, and project managers who developed a mutual friendship by realizing they shared a common passion to help others and share knowledge about PMO, portfolio, program and project management (collectively termed PM below). In February 2010 they decided to collaborate on a five (5) year goal to write 100 PM subject articles (pro bono) for publication in any/all PM subject websites, newsletters, and professional magazines / journals. They have been translated into Arabic, Czechoslovakian, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian and published on websites in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, India, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, Turkey, UK, and the USA. Their mission is to help expand good program and project management practices by promoting the PM profession, to be a positive influence to the PM Community, be known as eminent influencers of PM practices, and in earnest hope readers can gain benefit from the advice of their 60+ years of combined experience and expertise (and the expertise of co-authors who write with them on certain articles and subjects). Although all three are well credentialed, together they have the distinction in particular of being 3 of only 25 worldwide that hold the Project Management Institute’s PMP®, PgMP®, and PMI-RMP® Credentials. Gary and Jeff have all five (5) of the PMI ‘Family of Credentials’. As of December 31st, 2010, PMI confirmed we were the only two individuals with that achievement.</p> <p>Along with writing articles, each also champions a role in the overall writing program collaboration process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Gareth manages all requests for additional guest author collaborations → Gary manages the article development tracking and readership metrics

	<p>→ Jeff manages the article distribution and new readership demographics</p> <p>Each can be contacted for advice, coaching, collaboration, and speaking individually as noted in their bios or as a team at: Contactus@pmoracles.com</p>
	<p>Brian Grafsgaard, PgMP & PMP, is a senior consultant and Director of Professional Services at Quality Business Solutions (QBS), a Minnetonka, Minn. based consulting firm. Brian has been a practicing PMP® since 1998 (#12027) and has over 25 years of experience leading the development and integration of complex, enterprise-class solutions as a program and project manager. In June 2007, Brian became the first person in the world to attain PMI's Program Management Professional (PgMP)® credential and has been actively involved with PMI at the local and national levels. He is one of thirteen people initially selected by PMI Global in North America to help author the new PgMP exam and is also a charter member of PMI's PgMP Panel Review Committee (PRC). Brian was also recently appointed to the core team for the Standard for Program Management – Third Edition Update effort. Email Brian: Brian.Grafsgaard@earthlink.net</p>
	<p>Gareth Byatt is Head of the Group IT Portfolio Management Office for Lend Lease Corporation. Gareth has worked in several countries and lives in Sydney, Australia. Gareth has 14+ years of project, program, and portfolio management experience in IT and construction. He can be contacted through LinkedIn.</p> <p>Gareth holds numerous degrees, certifications, and credentials in program and project management as follows: an MBA from one of the world's leading education establishments, a 1st-class undergraduate management degree, and the PMP®, PgMP®, PMI-RMP®, & PRINCE2 professional certifications. Gareth is also the APAC Region Director for the PMI's PMO Community of Practice and chairs several peer networking groups. He is a Director of the PMI Sydney Chapter for 2011.</p> <p>He has presented on PMOs and program and project management at international conferences in the UK, Australia, & Asia including PMI APAC in 2010. Email Gareth: gareth.byatt@gmail.com</p>
	<p>Gary Hamilton is a Sr. Change Manager, within HR with Bank of America's Learning and Leadership Development organization. Gary lives in Bristol, Tennessee, USA and works out of Charlotte, North Carolina. He has 15+ years of project and program management experience in IT, finance, and human resources. Gary volunteers as the VP of Professional Development for the PMI East Tennessee chapter.</p> <p>Gary is a 2009 & 2010 Presidents' Volunteer Award recipient for his charitable work with local fire services and professional groups. He has won several internal awards for results achieved from projects and programs he managed as well as being named one of the Business Journal's Top 40 Professionals in 2007.</p> <p>Gary holds numerous degrees and certifications in IT, management, and project management and they include: an advanced MBA degree in finance, and has the PgMP®, PMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP®, CAPM®, Project+, PRINCE2, ITIL-F, MCTS, MCITP, and SSGB professional certifications. Email Gary: Gary@PMOracles.com or contact him through LinkedIn.</p>
 	<p>Jeff Hodgkinson is a 31 year veteran of Intel Corporation, where he continues on a progressive career as a program/project manager. Jeff is an IT@Intel Expert and blogs on Intel's Community for IT Professionals for Program/Project Management subjects and interests. He is the most experienced Intel MAPP (Make A Project Plan) Day Facilitator at Intel with over 150 facilitation events to his credit. Jeff received the 2010 PMI (Project Management Institute) Distinguished Contribution Award for his support of the Project Management profession from the Project Management Institute. Jeff was also the 2nd place finalist for the 2009 Kerzner International Project Manager of the Year Award™. He lives in Mesa, Arizona, USA and volunteers as the Associate Vice President for Credentials & Certifications and the Agile CER (Chapter Engagement Representative) for the Phoenix PMI Chapter. Because of his contributions to helping people achieve their goals, he is the third (3rd) most recommended person on LinkedIn with 530+ recommendations, and is ranked in the Top 60 (currently 51st) most networked LinkedIn person. He gladly accepts all connection invite requests from PM practitioners at: www.linkedin.com/in/jeffhodgkinson. Jeff holds numerous certifications and credentials in program and project management, which are as follows: CCS, CDT, CPC™, CIPM™, CPPM–Level 10, CDRP, CSQE, IPMA-B®, ITIL-F, MPM™, PME™, PMOC, PMP®, PgMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP®, CAPM®, PMW, and SSGB (Six Sigma Green Belt). Jeff is an expert at program and project management principles and best practices. He enjoys sharing his experiences with audiences around the globe as a keynote speaker at various PM events. Email Jeff: jghmesa@gmail.com or at: phxpmicredentials@yahoo.com</p>