

06.05.19

PMP Certification Exam – Experience

1. Philosophy – Unlearn, re-learn

Over the course of managing project work across the different organization I have worked with, some work practices developed within myself which were not good practices but they were the prevalent way of doing work. It was essential to unlearn such practices and understand, inculcate the best practices of PMI.

2. Strategy – Plan Do Check Act

Reading and reading and reading, doesn't help, at least not in my case. The grasp of knowledge can be assessed by testing ourselves, keeping that in mind, I planned and prioritized topics, spent time understanding the concept, checked my knowledge by practice questions, analyzed results and acted accordingly.

3. Preparation Material

Not all guides cover everything or all concepts, For Eg. – One guide I read was missing the concept of padding and question did come up in real exam where one of the incorrect options has covertly mentioned padding. Also, it is not advisable to read all authors as there are plenty of authors available and we have a time constraint in day to day life. It is better to stick with one guide and PMBOK 6. The advantage of starting with a good guide creates a sound base and makes the study easier.

For me, Rita Mulcahy helped in exam preparations. However, an individual must go with what they feel comfortable with and good for them.

Reading PMBOK 6 is essential as that forms the actual structure and one should be aligned with PMBOK definitions and terms.

4. Mock Tests & Simulators

There are plenty of free and paid mock test and simulators are available and it is not possible to buy each of them. Attempting the right ones is essential and effective, attempting wrong or irrelevant ones decreases morale and wastes time. However, the real exam has questions which are far more complex than any of the simulators I used.

Below mentioned are few sources which I practiced with-

Description	Referenced to PMBOK Edition	Level	Number of Questions	Free/Paid
Daniel Ryan https://www.pmexamcoach.com/products/free-pmp-mock-exam-200-q-v6	PMBOK 6	Tough	200	Free
PM Prepcast https://www.project-management-prepcast.com/pmp-practice-exam-questions-sample-test	PMBOK 6	Good	120	Free
https://www.passtheprojectexam.com/pmp-prep-exam/	PMBOK 4	Easy	900	Free
GreyCampus(Fab marks) https://www.greycampus.com/opencampus/project-management-professional/practise-exams		Easy, irrelevant	200	Free
Andy Crowe Book (at end of each chapter)	PMBOK 5	Easy	235	Within Book
Andy Crowe Main Test (at end of book)	PMBOK 5	Easy	200	Within Book
Rita Mulcahy Book	PMBOK 6	Good	425	Within Book
Testudaan Mock Simulator https://www.testudaan.com/	PMBOK 6	Good	1500	Paid
Christopher Scordo https://www.pmtraining.com/pmp/practice-exams?usource=lc&lctid=33351	PMBOK 6	Good	1000	Paid
Rita Mulcahy - https://store.rmoproject.com/pmp-cloud	PMBOK 6	Good	1000	Paid
Total			6180	

Go through - <http://www.pmbypm.com/best-pmp-exam-simulator/#.XM0P0-gzY2w>

I did a mistake of attempting questions based on the older version and the results made me understood the path forward.

5. Reading Vs Attempting Mock Questions

The strategy required aligning with the goal and attempting questions was essential to keep a check, selecting the right guide and prioritizing on topics to focus helps a lot in preparations.

6. Investing in Paid Simulators & Questionnaires'

Getting PMP certification is a project and apart from formal training, exam fees, we need to invest some amount for ensuring quality in attempting the exam.

Please refer table below indicating cost of essential and desirable activities to achieve PMP certification.

			Category
1	1.1	Formal Training (35PDU)*	Essential
	1.2	PMI Membership	Essential
	1.3	Exam Fee	Essential
2	2.1	Cost of Quality (prevention + appraisal)*	Desirable
3	3.1	Cost of Non-conformance (Re-examination)	Undesirable

Lucky Few get through the PMP Certification process using option 1 only, and as per statistics 40-50% first time test takers fail, this implies their total cost goes to option (1+3). However, a better route will be option (1+2), this increases the chances of success and an aspirant can plan their way in the manner ---- 1.1 >> 2.1 >> 1.2 >> 1.3. In this way, aspirant takes formal training on PMP, prepares for exam, evaluates themselves by using paid and free simulators. When the aspirant statistically observes their performance to be good enough then they can book the test slot and appear for the exam, this will ensure maximum chances of success and less chances of wasting 1.2, 1.3 and consequentially 3.1.

Option A (1 only)
Option B (1+2)
Option (1+3)

A quick glance at the table on right should be good enough for aspiring PMs to understand the significance of investing a bit more towards achieving PMP.

**The actual figures for 1.1 & 2.1 vary depending on country and choice of simulator.*

7. Memorizing Vs Understanding

There should be no need to mention it, but still, I am including it – Memorizing the topics/concepts is a waste of time. Some books emphasize too much on ITTO (inputs, tools & techniques, outputs), it is better to stay away from such books. I rather focused on a book which helps in understanding the concept and underlying methodology within a process. The real test will have questions which will not give any hint about the process, it demands to understand the knowledge area, process group and then answer accordingly.

8. Scheduling the Exam –

This may sound eerie, Most experts advise candidates to schedule the date with exam vendor so as to pressurize themselves with date pressure and put themselves on preparation path extensively. However, I did something different. I booked the exam on one day notice i.e. 24 hours before I took the exam. I had planned it in a manner that I will be booking exam slot once my performance becomes consistent and in the range of 75-80% for over 600-800 questions.

9. It demands time, daily 2 hours, at least – either in the morning or at night, more at weekends – It took me around 4 months and 202 hours, 80 hours of which were dedicated towards mock questions.

10.Engaging with Right Group –

It really helps a lot to connect with persons who have similar interest. I am thankful that I joined whatsapp group of Mr Mudassir Iqbal which brought me in touch with lot many candidates having same goal.

11.Last but not the least, **Getting PMP Certification is a project in itself**, handling it in PMI suggested way can help achieve the certification.

Best Regards

Azam Suleman – sulemanazam86@gmail.com