

To PMP® or to Not PMP® – That is the Question

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning, and Kristen Medina, CAPM®, Co-Author

Should I get it now, or should I wait until I have more time to study? What if I study and I don't pass, and wasted all that time for nothing? Will having it actually impact my career, or will there be no change?

These are the questions that run through one's mind when deciding to become PMP certified or not. They are normal. And they are very good questions.

At first, I wanted to write this month's Know How Network article on why you should get your PMP (because I believe that in most cases, it can only help you in your career and in your life). But isn't that so typical? Me, the CEO of a training company that profits from people earning their PMPs, writing an advocacy article about how great the PMP is? How authentic is that?

So instead, I want to focus on arguments that I have seen out there lately about why having your PMP does not matter, and why taking an exam prep class is a bad idea, and address those. Here we go!

Reasons Why You Should Not Earn Your PMP

Reason: Maintaining Your PMP is time consuming to keep active.

Rebuttal: When you earn your PMP credential, you do not just join a Fraternity or Sorority in which all that is required is an initial energy dump and then you are a member for life.

The PMP credential signifies that you are a member of an elite and professional organization that is characterized by each member's dedication to Project Management and their commitment to continue learning and growing in their profession. This is why to continue being a PMP, you are required to earn 60 hours of professional development over three years. (there are all types of ways to earn these 60 hours of professional development)

The more effort required from you to maintain your PMP credential, the more emphasis and goodwill is placed on having your PMP. And it is the people who hold the PMP credential the longest who are the highest PM earners in their respective industries.

Reason: Getting your PMP is expensive.

Rebuttal: Not earning your PMP is expensive. The cost to of the PMP exam is \$405 if you're a PMI member and \$555 for nonmembers. PMPs typically earn \$10,000 more a year than their non-PMP counterparts. This means that in just one month you

more than paid for the cost of the exam due to your increase in salary. Also as mentioned above, the longer you keep your PMP, the more your salary increases.

Not having a PMP can also be expensive in the lost opportunity costs associated with not being considered for a job or promotions simply because you do not have your PMP. Those are immeasurable, but we have heard it time and time again (read this short story for just one example - <http://blog.cheetahlearning.com/?p=665>): having the PMP credential helps people get in the door so that they have a chance at the job of their dreams.

Reason: Just because you earn your PMP doesn't mean you are a good PM.

Rebuttal: Just because you have your license doesn't mean you are a good driver. But if you don't have your license, you can't drive – period.

More and more jobs are not even considering someone who is not PMP certified. Why? Because the reasons to earn your PMP far outweigh any excuse you may have to not earn your PMP. So when a prospective employer looks at your resume, and sees the potential for a PMP but not the actual credential, this will raise a red flag as to why you didn't go that extra mile to show dedication to your profession.

The bottom line is that while the PMP can only say so much about your PM skill level – it says a whole lot about your character and your dedication to your personal and professional growth, which does matter when you are looking to change jobs or move up in your organization.

Reasons Why You Should Not Take a PMP Exam Prep Course

Reason: Exam Prep courses focus on memorization.

Rebuttal: To pass any exam, memorization is required. As students in school, we know this. We had to memorize all the chemicals on the table of elements to create it later on an exam. We had to memorize all the capitals and states, and where they were located on a map. And what did we get from all this information? While not a perfect memory, I am guessing that most adults today could tell me the capital of Virginia if I asked them, or would know that Cu abbreviated Copper on the table of elements. And we can thank memorization for this.

Memorization is an important part of learning. The fact that you are memorizing does not mean that you are not learning – it is a deeper form of learning that is ingraining the information in your brain so that you can reference it later, and is absolutely crucial to passing the PMP exam.

Reason: Exam prep courses just focus on passing the exam.

Rebuttal: It is called an Exam Prep course for a reason. If you wanted to learn how to make your own home-style Italian meatballs – go to an Italian meatball cooking

class. If you want to learn how to pass a specific exam and don't want to spend months and months preparing, go to an exam prep class that is focused on that one thing only: passing the exam.

While I know this may sound harsh, the reality is that time is a scarce resource. Most exam prep institutions (ah hem, Cheetah Learning!) value learning beyond obtaining your PMP credential, which is why we offer many PDU courses that are geared toward extensive Project Management learning. But by providing a direct service of allowing you to learn what you need to know to pass the exam, we are providing a way to take less of your scarce resources (time and money) and giving you what you need (PMP credential).

So while you read over these and wonder if the PMP credential is right for you, make the right decision for you based on facts rather than emotional responses and go from there. Best of luck.

About the Author:



Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, is an entrepreneurial powerhouse with a penchant for making success easy, fun, and fast. She is the founder of [Cheetah Learning](#), the [author](#) of the [Cheetah Success Series](#), and a prolific [blogger](#) whose mission is to bring Project Management to the masses.

Cheetah Learning is a virtual company with 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. To date, more than 50,000 people have become “Cheetahs” using Cheetah Learning’s innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

Recently honored by the Project Management Institute (PMI®), Cheetah Learning was named Professional Development Provider of the Year at the 2008 PMI® Global Congress. A dynamic keynote speaker and industry thought leader, Michelle was previously recognized by PMI as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the world.

Michelle's articles have appeared in more than 100 publications and websites around the world. Her monthly column, the [Know How Network](#), is carried by over 400 publications.

She is a graduate of the Harvard Business School's Owner/President Management (OPM) program and holds engineering degrees from Syracuse University and the University of Dayton.