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GUIDE TO **TOP** PROJECT MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATIONS

Becoming a project manager offers advantages you won't find in IT, and the right certs can ensure you succeed. **BY NEAL WEINBERG**

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Guide to top project management certifications

Becoming a **project manager can be a lifechanging career move for an IT manager** who wants to step out of the technology trenches and **move into a high-profile position** that can make a difference in the overall success of the company. **BY NEAL WEINBERG**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT ISN'T FOR EVERYONE. There's pressure. There's stress. A successful project manager should have a wide range of technical, interpersonal, and organizational skills. You should be able to lead, motivate, manage com-

plexity, have excellent communication skills, be able to bring business and IT teams together, be detail and process oriented, and be adaptable and unflappable when things go wrong.

On the plus side, project management can be rewarding, especially when you deliver a project on time

and under budget that provides a significant business boost to the organization.

Project management is also one of those fields with long-term growth potential. According to the Project Management Institute's (PMI) Job Growth and Talent Gap report, employers will need 87.7 million people working in project management roles by 2027, indicating a steady increase in the need for skilled and experienced project and program managers.

Why project management is important

There might have been a time when a company could have shrugged off a failed software update or lived with a project that came down with a bad case of scope creep. But no more. Companies are launching time-sensitive digital transformation projects in which the very survival of the company is at stake. That's why the historically high failure rates for IT projects are no longer acceptable, and why project management has become so critical.

"As companies pursue digital transformation, IT departments must collaborate with more areas of the business than ever before," according to the Robert Half 2019 Technology Salary Guide. "This trend is driven by a desire to create new products and services, enhance the customer experience and generate revenue. Shifts like these are creating challenges for technology leaders, including increased project volume and a critical shortage of technology workers to address it."

And the very definition of a successful project is changing in light of these heightened business pres-

tures. The classic project management failure scenario is a project that hits all the metrics of time and budget and scope, but flops in the end because the end users reject the new app. So, today, the bar for project management has been raised to go beyond simply getting the train into the station on time. A successful project also has to be well received by all stakeholders and deliver measurable business benefit.

No wonder that salaries for certified project managers are going

top 25 percent of survey respondents report base salaries of at least \$139,000. Depending on such factors as complexity and size of projects, location, fields of expertise, and experience, salaries for some PMP credential holders can be much higher still.

Robert Half's 2019 Technology Salary Guide lists project management as a hot certification, with salaries varying slightly by technology area. Robert Half cites a salary range of \$93,000 to \$157,500 for project managers in application development environments. Project managers engaged in consulting and system integration roles can

project, and they are transferable from one company to another.

There are a fairly limited number of organizations that offer project management certifications: Project Management Institute, American Society for Quality, Global Association for Quality Management, American Academy of Project Management, COMP-TIA, International Association of Project Management, EC Council and PRINCE2.

There is also a popular certification specific to the world of DevOps; it's called certified scrum master (CSM) and denotes that the individual is trained in the management of agile software development projects.

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ROBERT HALF, 2019 TECHNOLOGY SALARY GUIDE

through the roof. For example, in Global Knowledge's list of 15 top paying certifications for 2019, Google Cloud Certified Professional Cloud Architect is tops at \$139,529, followed closely by Project Management Professional (PMP) at \$135,798 and Certified ScrumMaster (also a project management position) at \$135,441.

According to the PMI's latest salary survey, IT professionals who hold a PMP certification report median base annual salaries in the U.S. of almost \$116,000. The

expect to earn \$96,250 to \$163,500 nationwide.

The certification ecosystem

When it comes to project management certifications, the good news is that project management is not a technology; it's a methodology, a discipline, a set of processes that can be applied to any project. So, it doesn't matter what specific operating systems, productivity apps or management tools your organization is using at the time. Project management skills can be applied to any

The other thing to keep in mind is that while there are some entry level certifications, most project management certifications are targeted at mid-career professionals and, in many cases, require years of experience as a prerequisite to even taking the certification course. In addition, there are a number of colleges and universities that offer project management certifications and degrees.

Here is a list of project management certifications, broken down by the organization offering the certification:



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Description: The Certified Associate in Project Management is the entry-level precursor to the PMP certification. It's designed for IT professionals who don't have a college degree, have only rudimentary project management experience, or who want to achieve their PMP certification in two steps rather than one.

Requirements: High-school diploma, associate's degree or equivalent and at least 1,500 hours of project management experience or 23 hours of project management education. To recertify, CAPM holders must retake the exam once every five years.

Price: \$225 for PMI members; \$300 non-members

CERTIFICATION

Project Management Professional (PMP)

Description: Project Management Professional (PMP) is the gold standard for project management certifications: Candidates must pass a rigorous test that covers everything you need to prove your knowledge and skill in managing projects:

Requirements: Four-year college degree plus three years of project management experience, 4,500 hours leading and directing projects, and 35 hours project management education; or a high-school diploma, five years of project management experience, 7,500 hours leading and directing projects, and 35 hours of project management education.

Price: Computer based exams are \$405 for PMI members; \$555 for nonmembers. Paper-based exams are \$250 for PMI members; \$400 for non-members.

1 ORGANIZATION

Project Management Institute (PMI)

The Project Management Institute (PMI) offers two highly popular certifications: the entry level Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) and the more advanced Project Management Professional (PMP). CAPM is considered a stepping stone to PMP, but it not a pre-requisite. Much depends on your experience level.

CERTIFICATION

Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)

2 ORGANIZATION Scrum Alliance

Description: The nonprofit Scrum Alliance, as part of its mission to encourage adoption of Scrum and Agile application development practices, offers a dizzying array of certifications including Certified Scrum Master, Advanced Certified Scrum Master, Certified Scrum Professional – Scrum Master, Certified Scrum Product Owner, Advanced Certified Scrum Product Owner, Certified Scrum Professional – Product Owner, two more certs on a developer track and three elevated credentials such as Certified Scrum Trainer. By all accounts, Certified ScrumMaster is the place to start.

CERTIFICATION
Certified ScrumMaster

Requirements: General familiarity with Scrum. Completion of a two-day CSM training course.

Cost: Price varies by training provider; candidates can expect to pay \$920 to \$1,295.

3 ORGANIZATION CompTIA

Data Science Council of America (DASCA): Data Scientist Certifications

Description: CompTIA offers an entry-level certification that is roughly on par with PMI’s CAPM credential,

though the requirements are less stringent. CompTIA describes the certification this way: “CompTIA Project+ is ideal for professionals who need to manage smaller, less complex projects as part of their other job duties, but still have foundational project management skills. Project+ is more versatile than other certifications because it covers essential project management concepts beyond the scope of just one methodology or framework.”

CERTIFICATION
CompTIA Project+

Requirements: One year of experience managing, directing or participating in small-to medium-sized projects is recommended.

Price: \$285

4 ORGANIZATION Projects in Controlled Environments (PRINCE2)

Description: PRINCE2 is a certification originally created by the British government and is now administered by AXELOS, a joint venture spinoff that was created to spread the word. While PMI’s certifications are considered the gold standard in the U.S., PRINCE2 is popular in the UK and Europe. There are two primary certifications, PRINCE2 Foundation and PRINCE2 Practitioner. The Foundation certification is an entry-level credential that tests basic project management termi-

nology and methodology, while the Practitioner certification tests advanced project managers who have already achieved PRINCE2 Foundation. In addition, two new certifications related to Agile development have just been released: PRINCE2 Agile Foundation confirms the holder has sufficient knowledge and understanding of the PRINCE2 method and agile way of working and how Agile can be combined to PRINCE2. And PRINCE2 Agile Practitioner confirms the holder is able to apply the project management principles of PRINCE2 while combining Agile concepts such as Scrum and Kanba.

CERTIFICATION
PRINCE2 Foundation

Requirements: PRINCE2 Foundation requires a PRINCE2 Foundation course and confirms the holder has sufficient knowledge and understanding of the PRINCE2 method to be able to work in a project management team working with this method.

Price: \$200

CERTIFICATION
PRINCE2 Practitioner

Requirements: PRINCE2 Practitioner requires one of the following: PRINCE2 Foundation; Project Management Professional (PMP); Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM); or an IPMA certification.

Price: \$340



5 ORGANIZATION International Council of Electronic Commerce Consultants (EC-Council)

Description: The EC-Council is primarily focused on cybersecurity, but it does offer two certifications related to project management – Certified Project Management Practitioner (CPMP) and Project Management in IT Security (PMITS). The Certified Project Management Practitioner course is for project managers who want to benchmark their skills through hands-on experience across various management techniques

and tools necessary to successfully manage complex projects efficiently. PMITS explores the complexities of managing an IT security project. The certification helps candidates reinforce their

existing project management skills while tailoring them to the unique requirements of implementing and managing IT security within their organizations.

CERTIFICATION

Certified Project Management Practitioner (CPMP)

Requirements: No prerequisites, but it is recommended that candidates attend a three-day preparation course.

Price: \$199 for exam voucher

CERTIFICATION

Project Management in IT Security (PMITS)

Requirements: At least two years of experience in information security and an educational background that shows a focus on security (bachelor's degree or higher preferred). Candidates may also opt to attend an EC-council training program before attempting an exam.

Price: \$250

6 ORGANIZATION Global Association for Quality Management (GAQM)

The Global Association for Quality Management (GAQM) is a global, not-for-profit certification body that offers credentials across a variety of IT specialties, including three certifications in project management. The GAQM's project management certifications are focused on a broad knowledge base and emphasize effective resource allocation, clear direction, adaptability to change, effective communication and assurance of quality deliverables at minimal risk.

CERTIFICATION

Associate in Project Management (APM)

Description: The Associate in Project Management (APM) certification is designed for the entry-level

project manager or for those who want to start a career in the field.
Requirements: GAQM body of knowledge study and e-course; no formal education or experience requirements.

Price: \$300

CERTIFICATION

Professional in Project Management (PPM)

Description: The Professional in Project Management (PPM) is the mid-tier project management credential from the GAQM. The PPM is targeted towards intermediate to experienced project managers who are involved in risk and crisis management, and who are involved in the day-to-day management of projects.


Requirements: GAQM body of knowledge study and e-course; no formal education or experience requirements, but candidates should have at least some project management experience in order to pass the exam.

Price: \$300

CERTIFICATION

Certified Project Director

Description: The GAQM's Certified Project Director certification is the credentialing body's highest-level project management certification. This designation is for experienced project managers who are involved in directing multiple, complex projects and programs. The program focuses on managing, budgeting and determining scope for multiple projects, multiple project teams, and assessing and mitigating interde-



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pendent risks to deliver projects successfully. The CPD program is only for those who have significant project management experience.

Requirements: GAQM body of knowledge study and e-course; candidates must be familiar with principles and methodologies of project management and pass the PPM or equivalent exam.

Price: \$300

7 ORGANIZATION American Academy of Project Management (AAPM)

Description: The American Academy of Project Management (AAPM) has modeled the Master Project Manager (MPM) certification after the professional licensure model that many professions like pilots, engineers, doctors and lawyers follow. The AAPM focuses on professional project managers, but also includes professionals with business and technical management responsibilities.

CERTIFICATION
**Master Project Manager
(MPM)**

Requirements: Three years of project management experience and training. Waivers are available for professionals holding a master's degree, with other qualified training and experience, the military or project management instructors.

Price: \$300 for application, review, processing, review, initiation and certification.

8 ORGANIZATION International Association of Project Managers (IAPM)

Description: The International Association of Project Managers (IAPM) is a global professional association and certification body focused on the project management profession. The IAPM's purpose is to promote research, development and practical applications of project management, develop standards and guidelines for both beginner and advanced project management training, and review and approve project management competencies within the profession. There are four levels of certification within the IAPM, split into two disciplines, traditional project management and Agile project management. The certifications are: Certified Junior Project Manager and Certified Junior Agile Project Manager; Certified Project Manager and Certified Agile Project Manager; Certified Senior Project Manager and Certified Senior Agile Project Manager; and Certified International Project Manager. A good place for a mid-career IT professional to start would be Certified Project Manager.

CERTIFICATION
Certified Project Manager

Description: The Certified Project

Manager certification is for candidates with a foundational knowledge of project management, including the basics of planning, organization and implementation of various projects. The exam covers both the hard and soft aspects of project management.

Requirements: There are no prerequisites, but IAPM offers workshops through global training partners and there is recommended literature for self-study. Once a candidate has completed the workshop or feels adequately prepared, they can take a self-test to benchmark their knowledge.

Price: The certification and examination fee depends on a candidate's nationality; pricing is gauged based on country-of-origin's GDP to ensure that any candidate can afford the training and testing. In the U.S., the certification and exam cost is \$650, with a 20 percent discount for students, job seekers and active aid organization personnel.

9 ORGANIZATION American Society for Quality (ASQ)

Description: The globally recognized American Society for Quality (ASQ) offers 18 credentials in total, three in project management. ASQ uses the karate metaphor, so the certifications are: Certified Six Sigma Black Belt (CSSBB) (expert level), the Six Sigma Green Belt (CSSGB) (professional level) and



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PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE'S (PMI)
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the Six Sigma Yellow Belt (CSSYB) (entry level). As the name also implies, candidates must be familiar with Six Sigma methodologies, tools, systems and philosophies.

CERTIFICATION

Certified Six Sigma Black Belt

Requirements: In addition to passing a comprehensive exam, candidates must complete two projects that employ Six Sigma tools and processes, resulting in project improvement and a positive financial project impact. An affidavit is also required to attest to the successful completion of the project. Alternatively, candidates with at least three years of experience in one or more of the Six Sigma Body of Knowledge areas need only complete one Black Belt project. CSSBB candidates are expected to demonstrate mastery of the ASQ Black Belt Body of Knowledge. The CSSBB is valid for three years. To recertify, candidates must earn 18 recertification units or retake the exam.

Price: \$438 for members, \$538 for nonmembers.

CERTIFICATION

Certified Six Sigma Green Belt (CSSGB)

Requirements: At least three years

experience working with Six Sigma processes, systems and tools. Work performed must have been in at least one of the Six Sigma Green Belt Body of Knowledge competency areas.

Price: Members, \$294, non-members, \$394.

CERTIFICATION

Certified Six Sigma Yellow Belt

Requirements: Certified Six Sigma Yellow Belt has no experience or education requirements. The CSSYB is aimed at candidates who have a small role in project management or need to develop foundational knowledge.

Price: Members, \$294, non-members, \$394.

Neal Weinberg is a freelance technology writer and editor based in Massachusetts.