

My (Other) Designation: Project Management Professional

Corporate business and financial consultant Kurt Hanoomansingh, CGA, on his PMP designation

I have a passion for projects. There is something exhilarating about achieving clear, planned objectives, and the dynamic of short-term timelines can be far more rewarding than the routine of conventional work. Also, project work typically extends beyond the confines of fundamental accounting. It requires a strong operational understanding and an ability to be a good negotiator with both internal and external organizations.

As a corporate business and financial consultant, I had considered pursuing the project management professional (PMP) designation for several years, but the continuous business travel of consulting made it difficult to satisfy the classroom requirement. That changed in August 2007, when a new consulting assignment in Toronto gave me considerable flexibility; I decided to pursue the PMP designation in order to formalize a discipline that I had informally performed from early on in my career.

The PMP Program

The PMP program is administered by the Project Management Institute (PMI). Founded in 1969 and headquartered in Pennsylvania, the PMI has more than 260,000 members in more than 171 countries, served by regional service centres, member chapters and specific interest groups. "The leading membership association for the project management profession," the PMI promotes career and professional development and offers certification, networking and community involvement opportunities, as well as serving as an advocate for the profession.

To be eligible for the PMP credential, you must meet specific guidelines that objectively measure experience, education and professional knowledge. Applicants must have 35 hours of specific project management education combined with an experience standard as determined on the basis of a bachelor's degree or global equivalent. You must also agree to adhere to the PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and pass a rigorous, multiple-choice examination that assesses your abilities in project management. The PMI website at www.pmi.org provides comprehensive eligibility and exam details.

The Advantages

Although I had prior project management experience, I felt I had to pursue the PMP designation in order to remain competitive in my consulting career. Yet there are general advantages to achieving the PMP designation that apply to every candidate regardless of profession or position. There are also specific advantages that apply to accounting and finance professionals.

PMPs benefit from an acquired fluency in the standardized industry terminology—as outlined in the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)—that can be used among peers in the profession. As a PMP I have a body of reference for a proven

methodology as well as standardized concepts and terms used within the industry.

PMPs carry the status and credibility implicit in the accreditation of the PMP designation by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The PMI is the first professional project management association in the world to achieve this designation.

PMPs also know that our designation is globally recognized. Our designation transcends borders. PMP status bolsters one's professional image and expands one's skill set or services, thereby increasing earning potential. It's no surprise then that many companies now require the PMP designation for employment or career advancement.

Accounting and finance professionals tend to be reactive in their approach to deadlines. Inherent in our schedules is the expectation of long, intense days during the close of financial cycles. An anecdote from early in my own career is typical: I was the manager of accounting at the Canadian office of a large U.S. computer manufacturer when we were asked to reduce an already exhaustive financial close cycle of 10 days to just three. Thanks to prior controller experience, I was proactive in developing a logical framework to assist in appropriate scheduling to meet our three day objective. Today, being proactive is part of the fundamental methodology of my project management training; it's an advantage that daily leverages my potential as a corporate business and financial consultant.

What's In It for Me?

I achieved my PMP designation in December 2007. In my current position as a consultant with the multinational engineering services firm AMEC—where I am spearheading the financial closure of 90 inactive global companies—my PMP informs my daily decisions. The PMP designation has defined me as a strategist who helps globally focused corporations manage financial risk, who steers organizations through complex business transitions, and who blends an entrepreneurial focus with an astute attention to bottom-line results.

My (other) designation represents a natural evolution in my career, but I recommend the PMP to all certified general accountants. *CGA*

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Do you have a designation that you would like to publicize for the benefit of your fellow CGAs? Write to editor@cga-ontario.org.