

Four Tides Converge to Advance PM Competence and Performance

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Abstract

The tides are turning. At two prior UTD PM Symposia¹, we presented the case for improved pm² performance; we have also done so at other major conferences around the World. In all cases, our message has resonated with pm professionals, as they seek a path of increased differentiation, and improved performance. These professionals especially resonate with our *advanced pm practitioner* themes. For example: While exam-oriented certifications are a great start; a major segment of practitioners demand something more to recognize deep expertise, achievement, *and demonstrated project results*.

These turning tides separate those who demonstrate end-to-end competence in projects and programs from those who focus on preparing for an exam. They distinguish those who demonstrate strong interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and savvy grasp of the workings of the permanent organization, from those who only know the technical aspects of pm. They showcase the abilities of those who can provide evidence to professional assessors that they demonstrate competence, and they can provide testimony of their successes. There are multiple strong tides at work here. Today, organization Executives and project stakeholders are demanding increasingly clear results from their project teams. And, Executives have now weighed in about what they really demand in their project managers—it is not basic pm knowledge, but the skills, behaviors, competences and results that only come from performing project and program managers.

The tides are not new, but they are increasing in their strength. Professional associations such as IPMA-USA (USA), and IPMA^{®3} (worldwide), and others, already offer differentiating Advanced PM certifications. And now, Project Management Institute (PMI^{®4}) is embracing many of the same factors for its project management certification. Those factors include increased emphasis on behavioral skills and role prerequisites, and moving from knowledge towards competence. Why? In our opinion, it is an astute move to address Four Converging Tides.

Four Converging Tides

- Experienced PM practitioners seek to differentiate from newcomers.
- Stakeholders demand business results from project initiatives.
- Executives weigh in about the most-important PM skills and competences.
- Government Agencies see the need for demonstrated PM performance.



These four tides, and the forces behind them, appear to be contributing factors to the reshaping of the PMP[®] exam as of August 31, 2011. Especially important is the realization by organizations beyond IPMA of the importance of Leadership and Interpersonal skills, plus Enterprise Savvy and Strategic Alignment. The changes reflect new (for some) requirements for all PM learning and development, and for all those involved with it, as a provider or learner. The outcome, for those who surf these waves, will advance the cause of PM competence and demonstrated performance—while helping to increase project and organization success.

Introduction: At the Beach, Watching the Tides

Sitting at the beach on a nice day, it is interesting to watch the waves, as the tides surge in and slink out. A passive, relaxing activity, what we see on the surface often belies the turbulence below. Similarly, the surface of project management certifications appears relatively calm, but the activity beneath the waves portends a tsunami of change, for individuals, project teams, and organizations. Are you aware of, or soon to be a victim of the next “monster sneaker wave?” For today’s experienced pm practitioner or professional, this is a good time to watch your shoreline, and develop your risk management strategy. Otherwise, you may find yourself swept away with the tides.

1. Experienced PM practitioners seek to differentiate from newcomers.

At its inception, the PMP was an entry-level certification. Despite the assertions of some enterprising test-preparation training companies, and despite the strengthening of its prerequisites, and improvements in the exam’s validity over the last 15 years, it remains a basic certification. This to the chagrin of several groups: Those daring early-adopters who earned it pre-1995, and those since who have considered its value and renewed at least once.

Today, when we speak of the strengths of Advanced PM Certifications, our message resonates with most pm practitioners, including many with PMPs. Some voice concern that the certification has inundated what was formerly a relatively exclusive market. They are concerned about the ease with which newcomers gain the certification by taking preparation courses, while perhaps not always demonstrating effective project management. Many are chagrined by cert preparation courses that coach, “*forget all you know about pm, just remember to answer the questions the right way.*” And meanwhile, the numbers of PMPs continues to grow.

Much of that growth is now occurring in the rest of the World, as the North American market (at least for those who are currently interested) nears saturation. For example, go to any PMI® chapter meeting, and ask the question: “Who has your PMP?” And the raised hands range from the majority to nearly unanimous. Of course, worldwide we see a huge pool of candidates: In the mid-1990s, PMI stated that there were perhaps 250K project managers in the World. Your author countered that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the World’s population were project managers; they just didn’t consider themselves one—yet. We still hold that viewpoint. And yet, for those of us raising our hands, are all our projects consistently successful? If so, why? If not, then why not?

We witnessed a major market shift in pm development interests in the mid-90s when the content of phone calls with potential PM Training clients changed. After a brief discussion, we often found ourselves having to ask, “*Are you trying to improve PM Performance, or to merely get people certified?*” Sadly, the two paths were **always mutually exclusive**, with different curricula, different learning methods, different coaching, and completely different measures of success.

Experienced, competent and performing project managers who are also PMPs actively seek added ways to differentiate from the hordes of others who are certified. Many tout their experience and accomplishments. Some embrace the PRINCE2 certification. Others are adding certificates from Universities; still others are paying for “mail-order certifications.” Anything to stand out from the crowd, is the rule!

Advanced PM Certifications

Opportunities exist for those who have the range of experience, interpersonal skills and success, to move beyond entry-level certifications. These special practitioners become **role-certified** in a range of advanced pm certifications. Both PMI and IPMA offer advanced role-specific certifications; PgMP®, Program Management Professional, is one option. It applies a performance competence approach, using a knowledge-based exam, and a peer assessment of program performance.

While PgMP may appear to be having a slow start, it is actually growing faster than did the PMP in its early years. One concern that contributes to the apparently slow uptake is the significantly-greater rigor of this certification, compared to the PMP—a lament at chapter meetings.

IPMA-USA offers IPMA’s role-targeted Advanced Certification suite (see Figure 1 below, from a 2009 blog post by the author). The suite begins with an entry-level, exam-based certification, IPMA Level-D®, Project Associate. This is great for team members, and for practitioners of project-related professions. Next are the advanced, role-based credentials: IPMA Level-C® certifies Project Managers; IPMA Level-B® certifies Senior Project Managers of complex projects, and Program Managers. IPMA Level-A® assesses and certifies Program Managers of complex programs, and Projects Directors in project-oriented organizations.

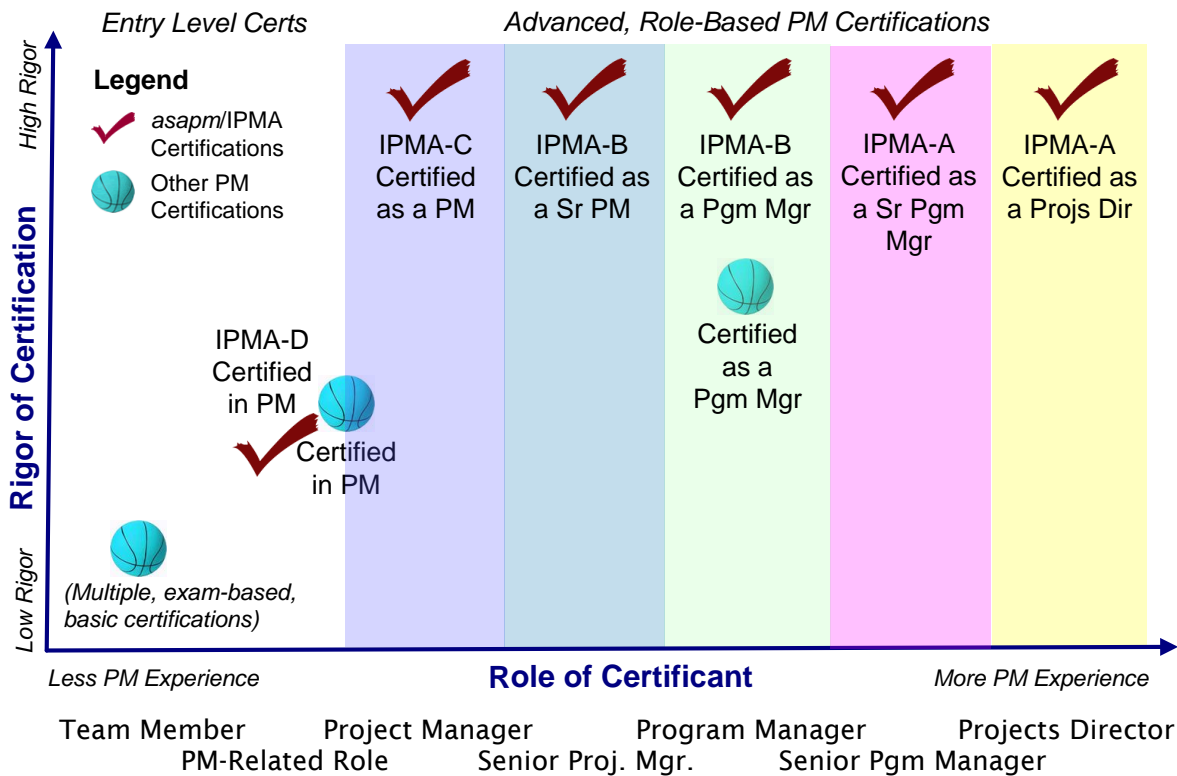


Figure 1: Role and Rigor in PM Certifications

And so, back to the question mentioned earlier: *Are you trying to improve PM Performance, or to merely get people certified?* If you really intend to improve pm performance, you need advanced PM certifications. They stand out from entry-level certifications in these ways:

- They are Role-based, not generic;
- You cannot cram for them: they measure experience and performance;
- Their higher rigor offers differentiation;
- They cover a broader range of competence elements;
- They verify competence, and attest to demonstrated performance.

The advanced role-based certifications’ rigor includes a requirement of end-to-end experience across the initiative’s life cycle, and against the entire range of performance competence criteria. They engage professional assessors, who verify that each certificant demonstrates the type of experience, competence and performance that stakeholders and executives demand in their project and program managers.

One objection to advanced certifications is their cost. It does cost more to engage professional assessors than to assess using an exam. On the other hand, many exam participants for other certifications take “prep courses;” so for them, the total cost of an exam-based certification can be more than that of the advanced certifications. Note that IPMA-USA certifications depend more on common sense and experience than exam prep. **Your bottom line:** Depending on the level of differentiation you desire, and the project and program manager roles you competently perform, those who wish to stand out from the crowd now have that option.

2. Stakeholders demand business results from project initiatives.

Value of Project Management

While individuals have concerns about a market flooded with others having the same certification, many stakeholders have questioned the value proposition of it all. With hundreds of thousands of practitioners certified in project management knowledge, many organizations’ managers, disappointed in project results, wonder if they are receiving any return on investment. Contributing to the concern is the billions of dollars spent worldwide in cert-prep training, with no apparent increase in levels of project success.

Being pro-active and market sensitive, PMI funded a study that resulted in a very useful book: *Researching the Value of Project Management*, by Janice Thomas, PhD, and Mark Mullaly, PMP. \$1.6M later, and published in 2008, the book and study results present the case for pm value in specific instances, and overall. Predictably, the value was difficult to measure, in part because of organizations’ reluctance to quantify value in classic measures such as return on investment. The book discusses *intangible benefits*; and a range of complicating factors, such as organizational maturity, national cultures, and more. An excellent effort, we recommend the book to anyone who desires to understand the difficulties in measuring the value of pm.

The Missing Ingredients in PM Performance

PM Performance begins with individuals who know their job responsibilities, and who perform them well. Project Managers aren’t the only ones who can improve pm performance. Team Members, Sponsors, Resource Managers and PMO consultants all have a hand in project success. Thus, one question to ask in improving business results is, *where do the greatest improvement opportunities exist?* We in IPMA-USA use a *PM Competence Model* to identify and assess the criteria (against 48 Elements of the USA National Competence Baseline, USA-NCB) that each of the above roles must fulfill, at the level of achievement they must demonstrate. An organization or team gains very little benefit by further improving the performance of those who are already 95% competent, while ignoring those who are only 10% so.

Tides are Rising: Organizational Assessments

Demands of project stakeholders affect the rising tides. Our consulting firm has used organizational PM assessments since 1982 to determine the best use of organization funds in pursuit of increased project and program performance. And when the Information Technology-based Maturity Models became popular in the late-1980s, we used them for our IT assessments.

However, most of these models neglect one major area of pm performance: How people manage the interpersonal aspects of their initiatives. We had observed from our earliest consulting engagements that the hard-to-measure soft factors of behavioral styles, motivation, cultural sensitivity, leadership and effective communication had much more to do with project success than all other factors put together. Most of our greatest successes came from helping engineers and IT staff to demonstrate more of those behavioral skills in projects.



OPM3®, PMI's organizational maturity model, has, in its current generation, "matured" into a scalable, effective organizational assessment. And, when we did a bit of research several years ago, we found literally hundreds of similar "maturity" models, all with relative advantages and disadvantages. See our paper from last year's 4th Annual UTD Symposium for comparisons, including mention of PRO (Performance Rated Organization⁵) and IPMA Delta, two unique organizational assessments. One reason for their uniqueness: Each certifies an organization as performing, or mature at a certain level.

You cannot improve performance just by training your project managers in project management. Project Stakeholders who are searching for improved performance will benefit from organizational assessments that evaluate every role—every part of your organization must support every one of your projects, and an organizational assessment is the best way to help assure that you achieve that status. In fact, a frequent finding in such assessments is that you waste your resources if you continue to merely retrain your PMs: The best use of funds for training and coaching in most organizations *is often 2-4 levels up from the team.*

3. Executives weigh in about the most important PM skills and competences.

Juried Research Reveals Executive Expectations About PM Qualifications

In a brave move that demonstrates clear leadership, PMI published a remarkable paper in the February, 2011 issue of the *PM Journal: PMP Certification as a Core Competency: Necessary But Not Sufficient*, by Jo Ann Starkweather and Deborah H. Stevenson (both PhDs at Northeastern State University, in Oklahoma). Although focused on Information Technology (IT), the results are relatively transferable to other areas. They compared what IT PM recruiters look for with what IT Executives really want. The essence of their findings: The recruiters tend to look at education and a PMP. IT Executives, on the other hand, seek behavioral skills, communication skills and relevant experience.

We have coached Executives in the prerequisites to PM performance for years, and this published research now exposes our secret truth for all practitioners, recruiters and executives: Entry level certifications are good for establishing a common taxonomy for learning, plus some common terminology; and they are not sufficient for project or program performance. ***Darn! Our secret is now out!*** In fact, it is out in two publications: The team also published their research in the *IPMA Journal of Project Management* in the 7/2010 edition. The IPMA paper highlighted additional factors of interest to the audiences of the IPMA Journal.

IPMA and IPMA-USA assess the factors that are essential to pm performance; this is why we emphasize Behavioral and Contextual competence elements in certifying project and program managers. But the study implications include several more key insights that signal the shifting tides:

- Recruiters appear to be out of touch with their market needs. Either that, or they are merely recruiting based on factors that are easy to measure, rather than what their customers seek.
- Savvy IT Executives know what they want in their project managers, and understand the dimensions that tend to increase project success, and those that have little impact.
- By publishing this revealing paper, PMI not only understands the situation, but is moving to help its audience to do so—so we will all embrace the needed changes—as they are arriving.
- Despite the lament of those who proclaim the PgMP "Is too difficult," the path forward for the PMP, we think, includes more rigor, and more elements to be assessed—especially the most important ones in achieving project success.

Distinguishing Project Success and Organization Success

Executive interest in factors that increase project success is not new, but the number of Execs demanding them is rapidly increasing. We wrote an article in 2006, *Let's Cure "The Dumbing Down of Project Management"*, in which we lamented the competence shortfall of many project practitioners.

We cited Executives' growing disdain for the practice of pm. We are now seeing a sea change: Instead of blaming the practice, they are more carefully selecting their talent, *seeking those who will perform*. Those who will benefit from this sea change are you who can demonstrate the factors Executives prioritized in the two Journal articles. Or, you who achieve advanced pm certifications that emphasize those traits.

Key among those traits is the ability not just to manage “triple constraints,” but to assure organization benefits from projects. Benefit realization has always been central in our own training, coaching and pm methodology topics. Newly discovered by others, this competence resonates like the roar of the ocean. And while customer satisfaction was once thought to be a myth of the quality movements of the 1980s, it is now the marching order of most project sponsors. Project team empowerment, said by many to be a hallucination, is a fact of life for high-performing project teams. Lastly, although Return on Investment was cited in the *Value of PM* study as difficult to prove, it has seen a tidal wave of demand. Among other business measures, of course. All in the process of moving project management forward.

4. Government Agencies see the need for demonstrated PM performance.

This increased interest in getting measurable results from projects and programs is not limited to businesses. Government agencies at all levels see the need, and are acting to improve their pm performance. This is especially important in the current economy where the majority of new jobs seem to be in government, and few of the recent “stimulus” projects are truly “shovel ready.” In many cases the entire “first half” of the project has not yet been done. Add the fact that only a small minority of practicing project managers truly understand how to manage the “fuzzy front end” of a project—the part that can be most important in assuring both project and organization success. Starting projects efficiently and effectively is a treasured competence for agencies that wish to avoid project performance undertow. Demands for performance extends to Managers.

In all levels of government, city, county, state and federal, Managers are truly learning to “do more with less.” We see many stellar examples where they are, for example, carefully looking at pm learning, not just training (see our article, *Closing the Gap Between PM Training and PM Performance*⁶). They are re-evaluating their processes and methods, discarding those that do not scale or work well. They are using organizational pm assessments to invest in the opportunities that will do the most good for the least cost. Interestingly, they are also taking more control over gigantic projects that were formerly turned over to consultancies and contractors—and failed.

Performance Competence Standards—Made in the USA

While performance has always been an important topic in Government, most people don't know that Performance Competence was conceived and established by the US Army. It was further developed by the nations of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, when legislators realized it was a key to developing their countries' economies, and harnessing their vast amount of talent. Australia worked with IPMA Member Association AIPM, Australia Institute of Project Management, to establish a Performance Competence Assessment baseline and assessment process for project managers. Today, practitioners in all professions and disciplines (including project managers) in those countries must demonstrate their performance competence against a range of elements and criteria—to professional assessors.

GAPPS evolved from the successes of this program, spreading the pm performance approach, and standardizing it. The Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards,⁷ of which IPMA is a member, IPMA-USA is a founding member, and PMI was initially a member, consists of not-for-profit national professional PM associations, corporations, government agencies, and universities. To date, GAPPS has established global standards for the performance competence assessment of Project Managers, Senior Project Managers, Program Managers and Senior Program Managers. Next, they will work on a standard for Project Sponsors. IPMA-USA uses this global standard, together with the ICB® IPMA Competence Baseline, to assess and

certify the range of roles in our advanced pm certification suite. And here is another way Performance Competence Standards are made in the USA: The USA's William Duncan, the primary author of the original PMBOK® Guide, is also a primary contributor to the GAPPS set of standards.

IPMA-USA Publishes a Research Report on FAC-P/PM Competency

Over the last two years, an IPMA-USA team worked with USA Federal government officials across multiple agencies to explore the strengths and opportunities in one federal certification for Program and Project Management, FAC-P/PM. Among the purposes of the FAC-P/PM program is to overcome a common situation, faced by many organizations in the USA today. Peter R. Orszag, in an OMB Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, said on June 28, 2010: "*Federal Information Technology (IT) projects too often cost more than they should, take longer than necessary to deploy, and deliver solutions that do not meet our business needs.*"

The IPMA-USA team's report, "...researched and written by Dr. Brent Hansen, Dr. Morgan Henrie, Timothy Jaques, and Michael O'Brochta, offers US Government Officials a roadmap to improve this situation. We think the US Government is already far ahead of many other organizations, including many enterprises: With this program they have embraced a competence-based approach that goes beyond exam-based testing of pm knowledge. Further, the FAC-P/PM program targets levels of competence at specific roles, as has IPMA and IPMA-USA." The ***Moving Government Forward*** report is available for download at the IPMA-USA website.⁸ The report recognizes the progress made in program and project management in the US Government; it cites findings and recommendations for acceleration of the program, and improvement of results.

Summary: Taking appropriate actions.

We have described the four tides; they began small, but are now converging; they may form a riptide:

- 1) Today's pm practitioner's need for differentiation in a tough market;
- 2) Stakeholders' demands for business results from projects and programs;
- 3) Executives' insistence on project managers with needed skills and competences; and
- 4) Government agency actions to improve pm performance to continue serving their populace.

This is a challenging time, and both our profession and our practitioners must synch (get with the program) or swim. Treading water will not help; wave after wave of changing demands will overcome the strongest holdout. **The good news** is that most pm practitioners who have been working in a variety of projects for at least 3-5 years are, in fact, competent and performing, at some level. **The bad news:** You just can't easily prove it. But how else can you differentiate yourself from the other 500,000+ people who have a certification in project management? Especially when an ever-increasing number of your peers are earning advanced certifications as a Project Manager, as a Senior Project Manager, as a Program Manager or as a Senior Program Manager? Sorry, but the process *is* more rigorous than an exam-based certification.

Re-Positioning of the PMP Exam

While these four tides are increasing in intensity, we observe PMI leadership taking appropriate actions. We applaud them for their actions. Continuously improving the quality and validity of the PMP exam since the mid-90s, they also began tightening the prerequisites in the early 2000s', added new wording, requiring that the prerequisite experience involved "leading and managing project tasks." In most people's interpretation, this could be done by a team member who was responsible for work packages. And now, in the latest round of changes, as shown in at least one of the two guiding documents, as of Fall 2010, your experience must explicitly include leading and managing ***projects***. The is increasing, and that is good. Another positioning change is more far-reaching: Adding behavioral skills questions to the exam, as of August 31, 2011.

This action may have its roots in a Cooperative Agreement between PMI and IPMA in 2003; the organizations shared information about their certification programs. The sharing included IPMA’s professionally-assessed, competence-based certification system, and its assessment of Behavioral and Contextual competences, in addition to technical ones. Soon after, PMI initiated the project to produce the *Project Manager Competency Development Framework, 2nd Edition* (the author also participated in and contributed to that project). This useful work established a performance competence baseline targeted to PMPs. Its introduction cites the need for ongoing competence development by those who have passed the PMP exam. The framework includes an equal number of behavioral performance criteria as it does technical criteria, a major change in thinking. Is this a foundation for a new, advanced version of a PMP? Who knows! Nevertheless, this is a useful document for any practitioner who wishes to improve your pm performance.

Figure 2 below, from our presentation (not in the Symposium paper), shows our observation of the key events in the progression of the PMP exam since its origin in the early 1980s. Explanation of the key steps, which appear at the top of the chart, and roughly relate to the timeline at the chart bottom, was part of our presentation, and is another paper all by itself. And indeed, there are many other events that are noteworthy in the upward progression; we have just noted those that relate to the responsiveness of PMI to the rising tides. Of greatest importance is the rise in rigor over time; in our opinion, the rate of rise is increasing. This presents another key insight for all those currently holding this certification in project management: It is increasingly easier to keep it (through renewals) than to earn it. We’d call that a very smart business strategy!

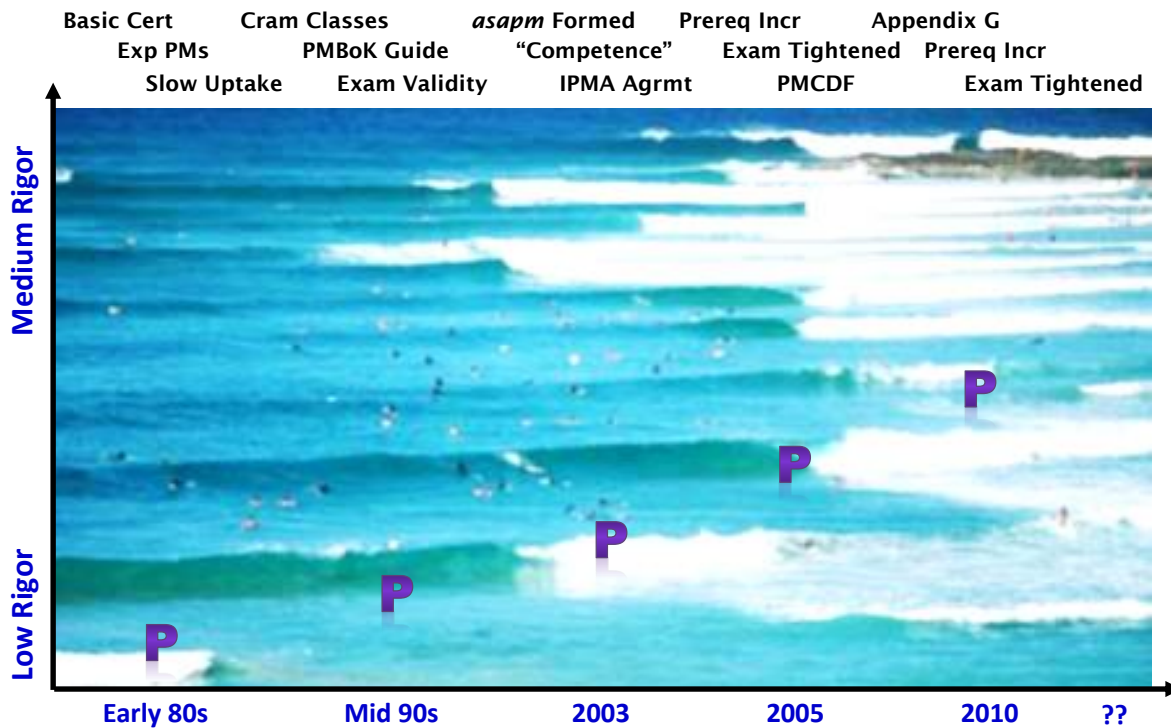


Figure 2: PMP rigor progression with key events

The left scale of the chart extends only to Medium Rigor. The Advanced Certifications, discussed earlier, *begin* with Medium Rigor, and move upward from there. See the chart on page 3 of this paper for the full perspective. But many in the market, for now, seem to be somewhat happy with low-to-medium rigor PM certification. We believe this will change over time, because, as we have reported, individuals, stakeholders, executives and government agencies are demanding more than knowledge, and more than exam-taking from their PMs: They are demanding interpersonal skills, differentiating performance, and results.

Risks and Rewards of Tide Surfing

There are risks with the bold new PMP requirements. As usually happens when a new exam is introduced, many people try to “beat the deadline,” getting certified before the new, tougher exam goes live. Both Enterprises and training organizations probably remember the last major exam change, when the frenzy to take the old exam before the new one emerged “sucked all the oxygen out of the room,” and drained training budgets for the following year. But such are the challenges of beneficial change.

And this will not be the last tide: We suspect that the outcome of the *Value of PM* study will prompt further changes, both in rigor of prerequisites and in more effective assessment, beyond exams. We think the universal minimum for all project and program management stakeholders will grow from a pm body of knowledge into a baseline of competence, and then to a framework for performance. At that time, the certification processes and foundations will be much different than today. And then, when PMI spends another \$1.6M on a fresh study of the value of pm, we will have the proof that executives, project stakeholders and practitioners demand today.

About the Author

STACY A. GOFF, *the PM Performance Coach*, has coached and inspired tens of thousands of project and program managers, and hundreds of organizations, on five continents, for over forty years. A Project Management practitioner since 1970 and consultant since 1982, he has also been a strong contributor to professional organizations such as IPMA® and PMI® since 1983.

He is a co-founder and past-president of IPMA-USA, and 2011-2014 Vice President of Marketing & Events for IPMA, the International Project Management Association. In September, 2015, he was named an IPMA Honorary Fellow.

Goff’s interest in project competence and performance began with establishing a PM Competency Center for a nuclear power plant in the early 1980s. It continued with international engagements during the 1980s and 90s as he helped organizations assess and improve their project and program performance. Today, he coaches, speaks and performs keynote speeches at major project-related events. And, he continues to pursue his interest in individual, project team, organization, and national and international PM performance.

Mr. Goff brings a results-oriented approach to Project Management coaching, consulting, and training. His insight for the needed PM Competences, and his delivery of effective training translate to improved project performance. In his working life, he combines his Project experience with sensitivity for the interpersonal skills areas—the human aspects of projects.

In his papers, presentations, workshops or in consulting, he combines his project experience with strategic linkage for all projects and programs. His insights and experience have provided competitive advantage for his clients for over 40 years. His business result: measurably increased **PM Performance**.

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About IPMA

IPMA, International Project Management Association, is the World's first project management association, founded in Switzerland in 1965. Our original name was INTERNET, long before we relinquished the name for the World Wide Web. Rather than a centralized corporation, IPMA is a Federation of independent national organizations, currently with over 50 member nations.

In this way, we can serve local needs, while collaborating and improving the practice of project and program management globally. IPMA was the first to offer an advanced, 4-level, competence-based PM certification system. IPMA continues to maintain cooperative relationships with Project Management Institute, and other industry associations. IPMA's World Congress is a key event for those who are serious about the rising waves for PM Competence and Performance. See more about IPMA at www.ipma.ch.

About IPMA-USA

Founded in the USA in 2001 by a handful of the PM practitioners who for over 30 years have helped make project management the World standard for effective enterprise and societal change, IPMA-USA is the USA Member Association of IPMA. A member-driven, volunteer-staffed not-for-profit organization, IPMA-USA's differentiator is its emphasis upon "Demonstrating the PM Performance Difference."

IPMA-USA leads the USA's advancement in PM Performance with a PM Certification program that combines the IPMA 4-Level-Certification approach with the GAPPS performance competence assessment criteria. This approach offers the USA's full suite of professionally-assessed, role-based certifications of Performance Competence of Senior Program Managers, Program Managers, Senior Project Managers, and Project Managers. IPMA-USA's website is rich with blog postings, and with over a hundred insightful articles from thought and practice leaders in Program and Project Management. See more about at www.IPMA-USA.org.

Footnotes

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- ¹ This paper was initially presented at the 5th Annual UTD PM Symposium, a great PM Conference hosted by University of Texas at Dallas, PMForum (the world's first PM Discussion and News site), and the PMI Dallas chapter.
 - ² When we cite "pm" we are referring to project and program management; the disciplines, taxonomy and profession.
 - ³ IPMA, IPMA Level-D, IPMA Level-C, IPMA Level-B, and IPMA Level-A are registered trademarks of IPMA, International Project Management Association, in the USA and other countries.
 - ⁴ PMP, PgMP, PMI, OPM3 and PMBOK are registered trademarks or certification marks of Project Management Institute in the USA and other countries.
 - ⁵ PRO is an adopted and published USA Standard for organizational assessment and certification in pm. Relatively unique among pm assessments, it is based on performance, or results, rather than inputs and processes. And, it is open and free for download, in addition to being offered by leading Recognized Assessors. See <http://www.ipma-usa.org/standards/introducing-pro>.
 - ⁶ *Closing the Gap Between PM Training and PM Performance*, an article by the author, was published in 2009 and is available at Stacy's website.
 - ⁷ See GAPPS background and standards at www.globalpmstandards.org/. Of special interest is the way Complexity is handled, a key factor in determining the credential for which a candidate is eligible. This process is more rigorous than most pm practitioners are accustomed to; the added rigor helps to assure greater connection between certification and success.
 - ⁸ See the Government FAC/P/PM press release and report at: <http://www.IPMA-USA.org/contact-to-request-special-report>.