

Should Project Managers be Professionally Licensed or Chartered?

By Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, and Jeff Hodgkinson

One of our goals when writing articles is to create awareness about the thinking within the global project management community. One subject in particular that we have been considering for a while (since July 2010) is the case and discussion in the community for being ‘professionally licensed’ as a project manager. In this article, we present our research and perspectives on the subject. The formal licensing of project managers is perhaps a contentious subject; however, we hope that our readers will appreciate the information we present and will think objectively about the subject.

Three factors led to our agreeing on this topic:

- The current state of project management
- The licensing requirements in other professions (e.g., architecture, medicine, accounting)
- The recent discussions and increase in opinions being voiced on this topic in online forums and other media

Let’s look at two perspectives or views:

It is generally agreed today that project management practitioners do not require a formal license to hold a job and/or work as a ‘project manager’. By ‘formal’ we are referring to a Government or Chartered Body recognized standard, although we are well aware that some companies have made provision for excellent internal project management training and minimum standards for seniority in project management, reflecting the scope difficulty of work that can be performed by their practitioners. As an example of project management in the wider community, some PM’s are registered engineers (e.g., chartered civil engineers) and perform project management tasks as part of their work. Others are officially recognized within their organizations as senior PMs by virtue of their internal training and qualifications.

There are numerous project management credentials and certifications available. One scenario in which this is significant is a company training or personal development program that may require PM’s to obtain one or more certifications or credentials at a mandated interval. One of us recalls seeing a recent PMI® presentation that estimated that twenty million project managers (people with that job title) carried out project management work around the world. Given the approximations from global project management supporting organizations (PMI, IPMA, APM, AIPM etc.), perhaps one million or approximately 5% of those practicing project management have at least one formal PM credential or certification. *Editor’s Note: Plus APM Group’s 700,000+.*

This means that roughly 95% are performing or practicing project management type work without some form of globally or regionally recognized credential or certification (although this in no way suggests they do not have the required skills, experience or the right level of internal training in project management to get the job done). As a generic comparison of licensing, in the USA alone, there are 260 million licensed drivers and, although we could not find the data, we can assume there are several hundred million licensed drivers worldwide.

Numerous professions require ‘licensing’ that is issued by government or representative authority (e.g., a chartered body), and the person practicing that profession is (de facto) assumed to have the relevant training and

experience by virtue of having obtained that license and then gaining experience as they grow their careers. They are also ethically accountable and responsible, legally defensible and often insured (since they can be sued if they are found not to be proficient or professionally negligent), and they need to maintain continued training and demonstrate proficiency to meet the licensing/chartered renewal requirements.

Doctors and most medical professionals, truck drivers, lawyers, Chartered Professional Accountants, pest control technicians, architects and engineers (professional), and, as another example, even cosmetologists cutting hair and filing nails need a license to practice their work. In fact, in most if not all parts of the world, contractors, electricians, plumbers and others that a PM may be managing are required to be licensed, while the PM is not required to hold any license. The need for licensing / chartered qualifications exists for a reason.

For example:

- A doctor needs to demonstrate knowledge and training.
- A truck driver needs to demonstrate prowess at road handling and perhaps hazardous materials handling if they are hauling chemicals or the like.
- An engineer needs to have the necessary qualifications to design buildings so that they are structurally stable.
- A cosmetologist can give you a bad haircut (something Jeff doesn't have to worry about), but if they don't manicure your nails correctly, you can develop an infection.

In these examples, the professionals described are legally accountable and defensible. Although the PM's circumstances are different, we wonder about the impact on people that manage \$M of people resources, equipment and materials if they were required to demonstrate and have a license. If a PM mismanages a project, there are certainly consequences that can have a ripple effect on the project – be it in terms of cost, time, scope (or all three) and other elements such as lost business opportunities, reputation, et al.

Let's Look at the Pros and Cons of Licensing Project Managers

On the positives –

- Licensing PM's could bring the PM profession more into the 'public eye'.
- 'Project Manager' could be considered a standardized profession and licensing standards could highlight the true capabilities needed by project managers.
- Standards requirements would ensure a minimum level of competency based on education, experience, knowledge and demonstrated proficiency.
- Professionally licensed PM's may be able to command higher salaries.
- Training requirements could generate business opportunities for training companies, therefore creating jobs.
- Licensing revenues could generate taxes.
- 'LPM' or 'CPM' (our suggested terms for Licensed or Chartered Project Manager) could be a PM's professional acronym following their name (much like accountants use CPA and architects in the UK use RIBA).

On the potential risks to consider –

- Implementing the process as to establishing the standard requirements for a PM. Variations in power and responsibilities of PMs across all industries would have to be standardized.
- Impact on current PM type credentials and certifications as to their inclusion and/or requirements in licensing.
- Overcoming the current state of PM's working without a license, i.e., "if we needed to do it, we'd have done it years ago."

- Crossover of various industries as a PM is not identified with any one industry (however, keep in mind that CPA’s, for example, aren’t specific to any industry either).
- What would be the licensing body for PM? One of the current global entities? Would these be merged? Should they be merged? Should the bodies be governmental instead?
- Government regulation could make it easy, standard, and uniform or very difficult, pending the final result; states, as well as various counties/regions, could set their own requirements (like a driver’s license). Were that the case, multiple licenses might be required for some PMs that work across various borders.
- Could Unions get involved and could PM’s become unionized? Would that help or hurt PM’s as a whole? PM’s would probably have to assume the costs of licenses/chartered status, liability insurance, and renewal training requirements.
- PM’s could be considered ‘experts’ and might be more easily sued for mal-conformance or negligence.

What could be done?

It is important to recognize that regional certification or chartered status is a topic under debate in several countries.

We think it is worthwhile to keep it simple. For example, as a simple conceptual model for consideration, could there be three global classifications as follows, with specialized areas of focus (such as LPM or CPM – Information Technology, LPM/CPM – Construction). The table below uses LPM as the example acronym:

Acro-nym:	Name:	Type:	Train-ing:	Experience:	Testing:	Other:	Renewal:
LPMT	Trainee Licens-ed Pro-ject Manag-er	Issued to any-one working in project management while working to meet the requirements of the LPM	None Requir-ed	None	Pass 50 question multiple choice exam	Meet require-ments of a background check	None
LPM	Licen-sed Project Manag-er	Issued to any-one working in project management meeting minimum licens-ing standards	None Requir-ed – but recom-ended	Documented 10,000 hours (5 years). Certification & credential re-quirements can count along with employment verifi-cation	Pass 150 question multiple choice exam	Meet require-ments of a background check Recommendation by em-ployer (nota-rized)	Every 5 years Can be re-voled by Judge or Court if found in-competent
MLPM	Master Licens-ed Pro-ject Manag-er	Issued to any-one working in project management meeting minimum ‘master’ licens-ing standards	None Requir-ed – but recom-ended	Documented 30,000 hours (15+ years). Certification & credential re-quirements can count along with employment verifi-cation	Pass oral board re-view and be recom-mend-ed	Meet require-ments of a background check No pending litigation Recommendation by em-ployer (nota-rized)	None – good for life except if re-voled by Judge or Court for incompe-tence

Perhaps regional certification is also advisable. We know that some organizations are considering such measures.

In conclusion, we believe that the ‘LPM’ (Licensed Project Manager) or ‘CPM’ (Chartered Project Manager) could be a worthwhile path for the project management profession to follow, assuming the issuing entity is agreed upon and standardized. In doing so, project managers would be given both a professional ‘identity’ and the recognition enjoyed by many other professions (examples of which we have stated above). As with all change, there are positives and risks to consider, but the benefits may outweigh the negatives. We would welcome people’s thoughts on this subject.

Article Author Bios as of June 2012	
<p>About The Article Authors, Their Roles Their Plans, And Their Goals</p>	<p>Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, and Jeff Hodgkinson are experienced PMO, program, and project managers who developed a mutual friendship by realising we shared a common passion to help others and share knowledge about PMO, portfolio, program and project management (collectively termed PM below). In February 2010 we decided to collaborate on a three (3) year goal to write 50 PM subject articles for publication in any/all PM subject websites, newsletters, and professional magazines / journals.</p> <p>Readership of the articles is continuously increasing and we are fortunate to have assistance from people around the world who have taken the time to translate our articles into Arabic, Czechoslovakian, French, German, Indonesia, Italian, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian for their readers. Our articles are published on websites in 30 countries including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Turkey, UK, Ukraine and the USA.</p> <p>Our mission with these articles is to help expand good PMO, program, and project management practices by promoting the PM profession, to be a positive influence to the PM Community, be known as eminent influencers of good PM practices, and in earnest hope readers can gain benefit from the advice of their 66+ years of combined experience plus the expertise of co-authors who kindly write with us on particular subjects. As of May, 2012, we have been published over 600 times! Along with writing articles, each also champions a role in the over-all writing program collaboration process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Gareth manages all requests for additional guest author collaborations → Gary manages the article development tracking and readership metrics → Jeff manages the article distribution and new readership demographics <p>Each of us can be contacted for advice, coaching, collaboration, and speaking individually as noted in their bios or as a team at: Contactus@pmoracles.com</p>
	<p>Gareth Byatt has 16+ years of experience in project, program and PMO management in IT and construction for Lend Lease. Gareth has worked in several countries and lives in Sydney, Australia. He can be contacted through LinkedIn. Gareth holds numerous degrees, certifications, and credentials in program and project management as follows: an MBA from one of the world’s leading education establishments, a 1st-class undergraduate management degree, and the PMP®, PgMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP® & PRINCE2 professional certifications. Gareth is a past Director of the PMI Sydney Chapter, he is currently the APAC Region Director for the PMI’s PMO Community of Practice and he chairs several peer networking groups. He has presented on PMOs, portfolio and program and project management at international conferences in the UK, Australia, & Asia including PMI APAC in 2010.</p> <p>Email Gareth: gareth.byatt@gmail.com</p>



[Gary Hamilton](#) has 17+ years of project and program management experience in IT, finance, and human resources and volunteers as the VP of Programs for the PMI East Tennessee chapter. Gary is a 2009 & 2010 Presidents' Volunteer Award recipient for his charitable work with local fire services and professional groups. He has won several internal awards for results achieved from projects and programs he managed as well as being named one of the [Business Journal's Top 40 Professionals](#) in 2007.

Gary is the 5th person globally to obtain the six PMI credentials PgMP[®], PMP[®], PMI-RMP[®], PMI-SP[®], PMI-ACP[®], and CAPM[®]. In addition to these, Gary holds numerous other degrees and certifications in IT, management, and project management and they include: an advanced MBA degree in finance, Project+, PRINCE2, MSP, ITIL-F, MCTS (SharePoint), MCITP (Project), CSM (Certified Scrum Master), and Six Sigma GB professional certifications.

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[Jeff Hodgkinson](#) is a 33+ year veteran of [Intel Corporation](#), where he continues on a progressive career as a senior program/project manager. Jeff is an IT@Intel SME and blogs on [Intel's Community for IT Professionals](#) for Program/Project Management subjects and interests. He is also the Intel IT PMO PMI Credential Mentor supporting colleagues in pursuit of a new credential. In 2012, he earned an IAA (Intel Achievement Award), Intel's highest recognition, with the team for work in implementing an industry-leading private cloud solution.

Jeff received the [2010 PMI \(Project Management Institute\) Distinguished Contribution Award](#) for his support of the Project Management profession from the [Project Management Institute](#). Jeff was the 2nd place finalist for the [2011 Kerzner Award](#) and was also the 2nd place finalist for the 2009 [Kerzner International Project Manager of the Year Award](#)[™]. He also received the [2011 GPM[™] Sustainability Award](#). He lives in Mesa, Arizona, USA and is a member of [Phoenix PMI Chapter](#). Because of his contributions to helping people achieve their goals, he is the third (3rd) most recommended person on [LinkedIn](#) with 590+ recommendations, and is ranked 33rd most networked [LinkedIn](#) person.

Jeff holds numerous certifications and credentials in program and project management, which are as follows: CAPM[®], CCS, CDT, CPC[™], CIPM[™], CPPM–Level 10, CDRP, CSM[™], CSQE, GPM[™], IPMA-B[®], ITIL-F, MPM[™], PME[™], PMOC, PMP[®], PgMP[®], PMI-RMP[®], PMI-SP[®], PMW, and SSGB. Jeff is an expert at program and project management principles and best practices. Jeff is currently focusing on gaining additional expertise in energy efficiency and home energy savings alternatives.

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