Using Project and Program Management Groups on LinkedIn
by Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, and Jeff Hodgkinson

We plan our articles a year or so in advance and research our topics to ensure that they will be of interest to our readership (we hope this one will be of interest to you). In conducting the research for this particular article about 12 months ago, we saw that there were over 700 Program Management and 1,200 Project Management subject groups on LinkedIn.

Recently, we revisited this research and found it had grown to over 2,000 Program Management and nearly 3,600 Project Management subject groups on LinkedIn, a 3-fold increase in the number of groups in just 12 months. In the same timeframe, membership of LinkedIn has expanded, but to a lesser degree, so the interest in and/or the demographic of program/project management with members must be increasing at a faster rate than general membership in LinkedIn. Why, then, has the proportion of groups focused on Project and/or Program management, outpaced general membership?

To understand this, let's first discuss LinkedIn (www.LinkedIn.com). Unlike Facebook, it is a business networking tool rather than a social networking tool. It helps professionals to keep in touch with current and past contacts and make new professional connections. Many recruiters and employers use LinkedIn nowadays to find viable job candidates, and employers often post job advertisements as well.

What are the basics of running and using LinkedIn groups? A beneficial feature of LinkedIn is that any member can create a group, tailored to a particular subject interest. Each group can have categories for discussions and comments, job postings, member information, and other attributes that provide a medium for information exchange in the subject area, all free of charge. As of mid-2011, there were 957,000 groups and sub-groups registered on LinkedIn. Members can join or be invited to discussion groups and comments can be shared within the group with the intention of providing information beneficial to all the members.

The largest group has over 440,000 members. Each group can have branches of up to 20 'special interest' sub-groups, and individuals can join up to 50 groups and 50 subgroups. Some groups have restricted membership with members having to meet certain criteria, while others are 'open membership', meaning anyone can join. As many of you know, Jeff is founder of the 'PgMP® Credentialed Networking Group' which now has over 3,100 members and twelve related sub-groups that exist primarily to support the PMI's® PgMP (Program Management Professional) applicants.

Are some PM organisations particularly active in LinkedIn? We believe that the answer is 'Yes'. For example, in performing some LinkedIn searches we found the results at the top of the following page. Note: We are not trying to advertise or emphasize one group or interest over another but attempting to provide an overview of what is available on LinkedIn for the program and project professional. Keep in mind that there is an overlap with some groups, but this will provide some perspective.

Search	Project Management	Program Management	Portfolio Management
Total # of groups	3,604	2,040	485
PMI subject	841	30	20
PMI Chapters	188	9	2
Agile Specific	75	11	5
PRINCE2® groups	209	14	10
IPMA groups	79	2	1
PMO	80	31	30
Six Sigma	33	5	3
ITIL®	35	4	3
PM careers	40	11	7
PM Jobs	135	43	14
Membership	PMI Central has 26,000	PM Link has 84,000	PM Link has 84,000

Note: PgMP Credentialed Networking Group comes in a respectable 18th with 3200+ members in the Program Management category

A 'passive feature' of LinkedIn group membership is an email sent periodically to members, announcing new discussions and/or jobs posted. We are often asked for tips on networking by program and project managers, and we advise them to join and be an active participant in as many LinkedIn groups and subgroups as possible – but to make sure they are relevant to you. This ensures you can receive information from members of the groups and, in turn, they get visibility to you. Many vendors and trainers offer discounts for their products and services through LinkedIn groups. We are also aware of several 'success stories' of people finding jobs, obtaining a new credential, or making good business connections who owe at least part of their success to their group membership.

Now that we have hopefully informed and motivated you about LinkedIn PM groups, and you're planning to search and join various groups, let us give you some precautions, pre-work, and tips. Before you put yourself 'out there', ensure your own LinkedIn profile is current. In other words, it should read like your resume, with your professional information (positions, educational experience, etc.) all accurately listed. Make sure that you have a professional profile photo and basic contact information. Remember, people will only know you through what you post on your profile, so if it's not current and proportional in relation to your life and career accomplishments, take the time to update it.

As mentioned earlier, you are limited in the number of groups you can join (50). So you should be sure to check out the group description and 'mission' before joining (you can leave groups if you choose). On the 'join group' page, you can see all members to whom you are connected so you can (if you choose), check with them as to the quality and benefits of joining the group. The group owner and group manager (which can be the same person or two different people) are also shown for each group, and you can contact them for specifics. Remember, some groups have limited access so check before applying as you may be declined membership in certain ones. Lastly, keep in mind that you can't join a sub-group without first becoming a member of the main group. You can also increase your LinkedIn connections by contacting others within the group.

In conclusion, there are over 5,600 program and project management subject groups on LinkedIn. All career-minded PM's should first ensure that their LinkedIn profile is commensurate with their professional experience and education, then seek out, join and actively participate in appropriate PM subject groups. The benefits to you will be receiving new information and making new professional contacts. You should choose your groups with care; ensure you follow any guidelines your employer may have. LinkedIn allows anyone to join 50 groups and 50 sub-groups so there are plenty from which to choose.

Article Author Bios

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<td>About
The
Article
Authors,
Their Roles
Their Plans,
And Their Goals</td>
<td>Gareth Byatt, Gary Hamilton, and Jeff Hodgkinson are experienced PMO, program, and project managers who developed a mutual friendship by realising they shared a common passion to help others and share knowledge about PMO, portfolio, program and project management (collectively termed PM below). In February 2010 they 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. So far 35 have been written, published, and translated into Arabic, Czechoslovakian, French, German, Indonesia, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian and published on websites in 26 countries including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, India, Jamaica, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Turkey, UK, Ukraine and the USA. Their mission is to help expand good 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 best PM practices, and in earnest hope readers can gain benefit from the advice of their 60+ years of combined experience and expertise and include the expertise of co-authors who write with them on certain articles and subjects. Along with writing articles, each also champions a role in the overall writing program collaboration process:
→   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
Each can be contacted for advice, coaching, collaboration, and speaking individually as noted in their bios or as a team at: Contactus@pmoracles.com   This month we are thrilled to have Duke Oakes as an additional co-author on this article.</td>
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<td>Gareth Byatt has 15+ 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 currently a Director of the PMI Sydney Chapter, he is 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. Email Gareth: gareth.byatt@gmail.com</td>
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<td>Gary Hamilton has 16+ years of project and program management experience in IT, finance, and human resources and volunteers as the VP of Professional Development 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 was the first person globally to obtain the five credentials PgMP®, PMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-SP® , 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), and Six Sigma GB professional certifications.   Email Gary: Gary@PMOracles.com or contact him through LinkedIn.</td>
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<td>Jeff Hodgkinson is a 32 year veteran of Intel Corporation, where he continues on a progressive career as a program/project manager. Jeff is an IT@Intel Expert 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. 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 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 570+ recommendations, and is ranked 55th most networked LinkedIn person. He gladly accepts all connection invite requests from PM practitioners at: www.linkedin.com/in/jeffhodgkinson. 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. He enjoys sharing his experiences with audiences around the globe as a keynote speaker at various PM events. Email Jeff: jghmesa@gmail.com</td>
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