

A New Role for the Seasoned Project Manager – Advocate for Project Management Ready Youth

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James R. Snyder, PMI founder, and lifelong innovator has long prophesied that the future of the universe requires a “generation of project-oriented people capable of solving project-oriented problems” to deal with the multitude of pressing global issues [Ginevri & Trilling, pg. vii]. This lofty yet realistic goal requires the integration of project management skills into the K-13 education system. The PMI Educational Foundation and an army of committed PMI volunteers have made great strides in providing project management awareness and training programs for youth, K-13 educators, and non-profit organizations. However, awareness is not enough for young people to enter the workforce; solid education programs for students with verifiable knowledge attainment are essential for project management-ready youth.

PMI Project Management Ready Youth Certification Program

PMI’s Project Management Ready Youth Certification™ program fits the bill. PMI’s complete Certification package consists of a 4-module curriculum, practice tests, and certification exam. In Summer 2020, a team of four PMI volunteer subject matter experts worked with Certiport curriculum specialists on each of the 4 modules crafting 8-session courses that could be tailored by the teacher to fit their instruction needs. The course materials and practice tests are sufficient for a teacher to adequately prepare their students for the certification exam.

If the reader is not already aware of PMI’s Project Ready Youth Certification™ program, check out the *Out of the Box* video entitled “Students Can Jump into Project Management Now with PMI Project Management Ready™” (<https://www.pmi.org/certifications/pmi-project-management-ready>) This cutting-edge certification program was developed following sound project management practices by the PMI Certification Department. *Surprised?* [Incidentally, the writer served as one of the four PM-SME volunteers, assisting on the Traditional Plan-Based Methodologies module.]

Dr. Bill’s “PM Ready Youth” Initiative Attempts – Trials & Tribulations

A comical look at the phases of any project is excitement and euphoria, disillusionment, crisis, search for the guilty, punishment of the innocent, and accolades for the non-involved. Not that the writer’s efforts track in lockstep with these project phases, the implementation initiative has been a challenge.

The writer’s volunteering experience in the certification program planning and design work was quite elegant. However, my efforts in helping to implement the Project Management Ready Youth program have been quite a rocky road due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finding Traction. In November 2021, Certiport invited me to participate in the annual conference of the Michigan Business Educators Association [MBEA]. The attendees for this business educator event are Career & Technical Education [CTE] Teachers of Business in high schools and community colleges - the appropriate target for potential champions of the PMI Project Management Ready Youth Certification program.

It is common practice for CTE teachers to couple their courses with companion professional certifications. This makes their graduates very attractive to businesses and industry for entry-level jobs. At the MBEA event, Certiport representatives solicited CTE teachers of business and information technology to determine how their various certification programs (including the PMI Project Management Ready Youth) could augment and blend with the teachers' current course offerings. Better to start with a receptive audience [CTE teachers] than to attempt to sell a foreign product [project management] to a skeptical market [high school administrators].

Looking Ahead. The writer's efforts continue with several concurrent activities planned for 2022. Planning is underway for a 1/2 to 1 day "Project Management for Educators" [PM4EDU] workshop at the MBEA Fall 2022 Conference. The book *Project Management for Educators-The Bridge to 21st Century Learning* (Trilling and Ginevri, 2017) published by PMI Educational Foundation will be part of the workshop materials.

Interest in the PM4EDU workshop for CTE teachers [potential PM course instructors] will help gauge acceptance and cultivate commitment to the PMI Project Management Ready Youth Certification program. Thereafter, connecting with the students of the workshop attendees will help cultivate future project managers. Presentations on "Careers in PM" and conducting "PM101 Skills for Life" training workshops will help raise the students' awareness (and their parent's) about project management as a profession.

We shall see.

Lessons Learned Thus Far.

The subject implementation initiative has not followed a linear path. Rather, the pandemic-induced havoc has caused changes to the traditional project management 'plan the work / work the plan' planning and execution mantra. Some critical learning lessons have been gleaned from the bleeding edge. The working list of Lessons Learned includes:

Use an Agile versus a Traditional Approach. Be nimble to function within the variances of uncertainty [unknown unknowns], which the initiative and stakeholders have no control over.

Engage the Right Stakeholders. As the biblical parable extols "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 20:16), cultivating champions for the cause is an arduous task. The lesson learned is to partner with CTE-Teachers of Business and Information Technology to blend the PMI Project Management Ready Youth Certification program into their existing education courses.

Utilize PMI Volunteers in the Right Way. The PMI volunteer best serves the CTE educator as their "guide on the side" providing technical advice about project management, as opposed to acting as the "sage on the stage" preaching to high school students about the virtues of PM. To best leverage their project management expertise and enthusiasm, let PMI Volunteers exhibit their stuff by conducting "PM101 Skills for Life" training workshops.

Sponsoring PM for Education [PM4ED] Requires the PM's Solid Commitment. In a bacon and eggs breakfast, what's the difference between the chicken and the pig? The chicken is involved, but the pig is *COMMITTED*. Becoming an advocate for project management for education [PM4EDU] broadly, and specifically being a zealot for the PMI Project Management Ready Youth Certification Program, requires the interested project management professional to exhibit the commitment of the pig bringing the bacon to the farm breakfast party.

Conclusion

Becoming an Advocate for the PMI Project Management Ready Youth Certification program is not for the casual project management volunteer nor the faint of heart.

In addition, spread the word to other project managers about how professionally rewarding and personally uplifting it is to be a mentor to youth (Ginervi & Trilling, 2017). Helping to create the next generation of project managers will be the best long-term project you will ever work on.

As always, your questions, comments, and criticisms are welcome. Feel free to contact me in care of email: William.moylan@emich.edu

Best regards,

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Reference

Ginevri, W & Trilling, B [2017] *Project Management for Education – The Bridge to 21st Century Learning*.
Project Management Institute Educational Foundation (Newtown Square, PA).