Pathways to Project Success

MARCH 2009

Tips for Certification Review Board Interviews

By: Peter J. O'Konski
Director, Facilities Management and Professional Development, OECM

Candidates for Level III or IV certification are required to interview with the Certification Review Board (CRB or Board). A CRB interview clarifies experience and demonstrates "soft skills" such as communication and political savvy. Most interviews are by telephone but may be in person or video teleconference. Prior to the interview, the candidate is e-mailed the Board's questions. During the interview, the Board asks the candidate to give a short biographical overview. The candidate then addresses the questions provided and follow-up questions from the Board. Tips for a successful interview include:

- *Speak to your accomplishments*. The CRB is interested in you. If you led the team, say something like "I was in charge of the team that designed the new laboratory building…" or "I was responsible for tracking the project performance." The CRB recognizes successful projects are the result of teams of people, but they must understand how you contributed to the project.
- *Focus on outcomes*. When discussing projects, speak to what was accomplished with particular attention to how the project performed under the "triple constraints" of cost, scope and schedule.
- *Tell a story*. The CRB questions are intentionally open-ended. Provide a short answer and a real-life project experience that demonstrates your point. If you indicate your "strength as a Project Manager is the ability to anticipate risks to cost and schedule" provide a meaningful example of how you applied this to a real project and the result.
- *Share lessons learned*. The Board expects Project Managers to be accountable. Sharing a lesson learned on a project demonstrates you are serious about improvement and accountability.
- *Be concise*. The Board expects Project Managers to speak clearly and directly. Keep answers crisp and to the point. If additional clarification is necessary, the Board will prompt you.

2009 Annual Department of Energy **Project Management Workshop**
March 31 – April 1, 2009 | Hilton Alexandria Mark Center

Change — the only constant.

Registering for the Project Management Workshop (March 31-April 1, 2009)
General Registration for the Project Management Workshop is now open. To register, and to see the draft agenda, please visit: http://www.2009doeworkshop.com/index.asp.

In conjunction with the workshop, a special delivery of "Planning for Safety in Project Management" will be offered. The course will take place March 30, April 2 and April 3 at the Mark Center Hilton in Alexandria, VA, from 7am-5pm. Please register via CHRIS; the course code is 001035.

Project Red-Yellow-Green Status

By: Brian Huizenga
General Engineer, OECM

How does the Office of Engineering and Construction Management (OECM) evaluates project status?

OECM uses Earned Value Management System (EVMS) data from the Project Assessment and Reporting System (PARS) to assess project health. However, it is an oversimplification of a complex analysis to rely only on the cumulative cost performance index (CPI) and schedule performance index (SPI) and then apply some simple criteria (e.g., 0.90-1.0 = Green, 0.85-0.89 = Yellow and <0.85 = Red). A review of project EVMS data and actual baseline change proposals (BCPs) shows a more realistic analytical approach is necessary.

If cumulative SPI and CPI are calculated from project inception, the sunk costs of concept development and preliminary design mask performance anomalies that occur during final design and construction. It is therefore difficult, if not nearly impossible, to accurately assess a project's capability to meet its approved baseline following Critical Decision (CD)-2 when EVMS data is reported in PARS. Unfortunately, this approach has resulted in projects being reported Green to DOE's senior leaders while these projects were actually initiating BCPs. This is not good in the context of DOE's project management credibility!

To more accurately reflect project performance during execution, OECM assesses monthly trends in the EVMS data and now calculates cumulative SPI and CPI from one of two key milestones: approval of CD-2 or a BCP. These are not "tell all" indicators but simply a hint of troubled waters on the rise. OECM analysts also gain insight from contractor monthly reports, discussions with the project team, site visits and reviews of budget funding profiles. Let's not forget EVMS certification status, since a certified system should be an indicator of reliable data.

From this multitude of project performance data, an informed assessment is made, such as the project is on track to meet its baseline (Green), will breach it (Red), or requires a closer watch (Yellow). Yellow assessments do not imply certain failure with the next assessment Red. Rather, Yellow prudently identifies challenges requiring increased attention to implement corrections to bring the project back to Green.

A Note on PMCDP Course Attendance Policy

A reminder to all PMCDP participants: All PMCDP classes require participants to attend a minimum of ninety-percent of training and have a minimum of seventy-percent pass rate for successful completion of the course and PMCDP credit. OECM does not permit enrollment in multiple courses running concurrently. Each course requires the full attention of the participant. Enrollment in simultaneous classes will jeopardize the successful completion of all classes.

Certified Federal Project Director (FPD) Corner

Congratulations to the FPDs who have recently attained new levels of certification!

Level 1
Pamela Logan, ORP
Ellen B. Dagan, RL
Randall S. Dins, Golden, CO
Kevin C. O'Neill, ID
John P. Sands, RL

Level 2
Thomas A. Cantey, SR
Charles E. Miller, NETL

What are the Requirements for the Project Management Professional Certification?

By: Steven H. Rossi, P.E., PMP
OECM

As mentioned in last month's PMCDP Newsletter, to get a Level 1 PMCDP certification, one must take seven PMCDP core training courses. However, if you are a Project Management Professional (PMP), that certification is accepted as a waiver for three of the seven core courses. Also, PMPs are considered to have met all the PMCDP Level 1 work experience requirements.

So, how can I get certified as a PMP? Although the process may not appear to be simple,

our hope is, after reading this article, you will know exactly what to do to obtain this credential.

The PMP was initiated in 1984 to recognize an individual's demonstrated understanding of the knowledge and skills to lead and direct project teams and deliver results. Candidates for the PMP credential ensure that all of the aspects of the project plan are executed and progress and variances are properly addressed and communicated.

To be eligible to take the PMP exam, which is a 200-question (multiple-choice), four-hour exam,

you are required to have a certain educational background as well as project management experience and education. If you hold a bachelor's degree, you need at least three years of project management experience during which at least 4,500 hours were spent leading and directing project tasks. You also need 35 hours of formal project management training.

You can apply for the PMP credential by visiting https://www.pmi.org/certapp/Default.aspx. Once your PMP application has been reviewed and accepted, you will be notified by e-mail that

you're eligible to take the exam. It must be taken within one year from the time of notification. The exam cost is $555.

Once you have attained the PMP credential, you must maintain an active certification status. The PMP certification cycle lasts three years from the date you pass the examination. During the cycle you must attain at least 60 professional development units to maintain certification.

Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Corner:

Application of PDRI and TRA to Project Front-End Planning

By: Ruben Sanchez, P.E., PMP
OECM

The DOE Root Cause Analysis Corrective Action Plan for Contract and Project Management (July 2008) identified among other findings that DOE programs often do not complete front-end planning to an appropriate level before establishing project performance baselines (Critical Decision 2). There are two industry and Government proven models that can assist in identifying incomplete project scope definition and inadequate technology readiness before

establishing project baselines.

The Project Definition Rating Index (PDRI) model developed by the Construction Industry Institute allows a project planning team to quantify, rate and assess the level of project scope development prior to authorization for detailed design or construction. A significant feature of the PDRI model is it can be used to fit the needs of almost any individual project. Both the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the Office of Environmental Management (EM) have developed

model prototypes for testing adequacy for DOE projects. Both NNSA and EM support further development by OECM into a DOE-wide tool for measuring scope definition as projects progress through the Critical Decision process.

The Technology Readiness Assessment (TRA) model evaluates technology maturity using the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) scale pioneered by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the 1980s and adopted by the Department of Defense (DoD) in 2001 for evaluating new major

technology programs. In 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended DOE adopt the NASA/DoD methodology for evaluating technology maturity in projects before establishing performance baselines.

OECM will soon develop two new DOE PDRI and TRA Guides using the lessons learned from implementing the NNSA and EM prototype models. The new Guides will further integrate the PDRI and TRA processes within the Critical Decision Process.

Upcoming PMCDP Courses

March

2-6 Cost and Schedule Estimation and Analysis (L2), Los Alamos

2-6 Project Management Simulation (L2), NETL

3-April 16 (Blended Learning) Project Management Systems and Practices (L1), DC

3-5 Contract Administration for Technical Reps (L1), Savannah River

3-5 Earned Value Management System (EVMS) (L1), New Orleans

9-12 Planning for Safety in Project Management (L1), Las Vegas

9-13 Cost and Schedule Estimation and Analysis (L2), Idaho Falls

9-11 Contract Administration for Technical Reps (L1), Albuquerque

10-11 Planning for PBMC (L1), Los Alamos

12-13 Planning for PBMC (L1), Albuquerque

17-19 Systems Engineering (L3), DC

24-26 Executive Communications (L4), Oak Ridge

24-26 Leadership/Supervision (L2), DC

30–April 2 Planning for Safety in Project Management (L1), Alexandria, VA

April

6-9 Planning for Safety in Project Management (L1), Berkeley, CA

7-9 Contract Administration for Technical Reps (L1), Richland

7-9 Environmental Laws (L2), Albuquerque

7-9 Project Execution and Operational Readiness Reviews (L3), DC

13-16 The Federal Budgeting Process (L2), Oak Ridge

21-24 Project Risk Analysis and Management (L2), Idaho Falls

27-30 Planning for Safety in Project Management (L1), Cincinnati

28-May 9 (Blended Learning) Advanced Concepts in Project Management (L2), Idaho Falls

29-May 1 Earned Value Management (L1), Golden, CO

29-May 1 Executive Communications (L4), Chicago

May

5-8 Planning for Safety in Project Management (L1), Cincinnati

11-14 Planning for Safety in Project Management (L1), New Orleans

12-14 Advanced Risk Management (L4), Chicago Operations Office

12-14 Contract Administration for Technical Representatives (L1), Savannah River

12-14 Acquisition Strategy and Planning (L1), Las Vegas

19-21 Project Leadership and Supervision (L2), Richland

19-21 Facilitation Techniques and Conflict Resolution (L3), Oak Ridge

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**Please be aware course dates and locations sometimes change.
For the most up-to-date course schedule, please visit:
http://colleagueconsulting.com/content/view/51 and click on "Current Training Schedule"**

Question of the Month

Question: I was certified before the electronic profile in the Employee Self Service (ESS) System was implemented. I am coming back for higher-level certification. Do I have to enter the data from my old paper profile into ESS for the levels to which I was already certified?
Answer: No. You only have to enter into ESS the information for the current level to which you are requesting certification. Documentation of experience claimed for this higher-level certification must also be provided.

Questions or Comments?

General questions and comments about the newsletter should be directed to: PMCDP.Administration@hq.doe.gov. Or visit our website at http://management.energy.gov/pm_certification.htm. For further information about the OECM PMCDP or Program Management Career Development Curriculum contact:

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