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The Added Value of Professional Development
by Rami Kaibni
Advisory Article

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Rami Kaibni

Over the past few years, I've heard so many different opinions, been through countless constructive debates and read so many different articles about what people think of professional development and certifications. Many do not see any added value in certifications while others have a totally different point of view, of which I am one of them.

The benefit is not in the certificate itself, but the journey to achieve the certificate and that, for me, is called *Professional Development*. We live in a rapidly evolving world where new information, methodologies, frameworks, ideas are spreading like fire in a wild bush so in my opinion, professional development, with or without a certificate, should be part of our commitment to the profession. It will help the individual grow on professional and personal levels; it will help that individual give back to the profession and help others grow as well.

A good example to relate to how the project management profession is evolving is looking at Medicine. Fifteen or Twenty years ago, most General Practitioners (GP's) would diagnose and treat you for most cases without the need to refer you to a specialist unless it is really needed; but nowadays, you will find that the demand for specialists significantly increased with the complexity of diseases, changes in the human cells, changes in the environment and many other factors. The same goes for the Management field. In earlier days, there was no high demand for a portfolio or program manager, and a project manager could handle programs and portfolios. I am not saying that these days they can't; of course they can, but with the increase in complexity and size of the portfolios, programs and projects, the demand for those specialities is increasing and in parallel the demand in other areas as well like stakeholder management and change management.

Some would argue that experience is what matters, but I beg to differ. Experience is important but knowledge is essential as well and the best recipe for success is a combination of both experience and knowledge. Knowledge can help you be creative, and experience can help you apply this creativity in real life.

Now that we've established the importance of Professional Development, let us think how to approach professional development from an **Agile Mindset** where practically, the candidate is the Agile Team (Customer, Scrum Master and Development Team all in one). As a customer or product owner, you're looking at:

Step (1) - Value Maximizing, but what does this mean in this context? This simply means that the candidate has to inspect how and what type of professional development they can do in order to maximize and capitalize on their experience and portfolio within this competitive market. Yes, the Project Management world is a very competitive one.

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What are the next steps?

Step (2) Release Planning: Establish a goal for yourself and work towards achieving it:

- Define User Stories, Plan & Prioritize your Backlog:
    - Take a Course
    - Gather Resources
    - Complete Application
    - Apply for the Exam
    - Pay Exam Fees
    - Book for the Exam
    - Take the Exam

- Set the Release Goal: "As a Project Management Professional, I want to pursue X-Certification in order to enhance my knowledge in Y-Domain"

- Estimate the time & cost then prepare your roadmap.

Step (3) Iteration Planning: Decompose the User Stories into tasks (If necessary) and define an iteration goal. For example, for the user story of "Take a Course":

- Iteration Goal: Complete a Course within 2 weeks.
- Iteration Tasks: Find a Course, Register & Pay, Take Course.

During each iteration, you inspect and adapt to ensure you are on the right path by frequently reviewing your progress, checking if any improvements are needed for your approach or plan until you reach your last iteration which is taking the exam. Going through this whole process of inspection and adaption will help professionals assess if there is real added value from the professional development they are undertaking. In some cases, after taking a course, one might discover that the added value of going through the whole process does not outweigh the costs and in this case, they might decide to look at something else and vice versa.

Certifications are not about adding letters after your name but more about knowledge and genuine development, so always use what I call the "Six Wills" Checklist to evaluate a certification or professional development course – Ask yourself:

- Will it be relevant and add value to what you currently do?
- Will it add to or cover a gap in your Knowledge?
- Will it pave the way for a more distinguished career path?
- Will it make you stand out in competitive and tight job markets?
- Will it help you speak common language among others in your field?
- Will it assure your commitment to the profession?

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If four out of those six items check then you're headed in the right direction. It is also worth mentioning that nowadays, there are lots of education and courses providers, so candidates need to do their proper due diligence to chose reliable resources and service providers.

Project Management is one of the most competitive jobs worldwide so do not aim at reaching the top and stop because what is more important than reaching the top is staying there.

About the Author

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Rami Kaibni is a Career Coach, Agile Trainer and a certified Senior Portfolio and Project Management Professional holding a bachelor's degree in Structural Engineering and over 15 years of professional experience in Professional Development / Career Coaching, Portfolio/Program/Project Management, Construction Management, and Business Development.

Besides holding multiple certifications in Project Management (PfMP®, PMP®, PMI-RMP®, PMI-ACP®, PMI-SP®, PgMD Pro®, AgilePM®, GPM-b™, PSM II, LSSBB) and Business (PMI-PBA®, CBAP®), Rami is also a member of many global organizations of which some are: Project Management Institute (PMI) and Green Project Management (GPM) in the United States, International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA) in Canada, PMO Global Alliance, Agile Business Consortium in the UK, and the International Association of Project Managers (IAPM) in Germany as their Senior Official for Vancouver/Canada and Jordan areas.

Over the course of his career, he worked with highly reputable organizations and clients both nationally and internationally and have been deployed on high profile projects across Asia including the Gulf Region, Middle East, Shanghai/China and currently in Vancouver, Canada.

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