

## Three Ways to Stand Out as a Project Manager in Today's Economy

With the economy in the shape it is today, I am finding more and more people scared of losing their jobs or desperately searching for work. Just like it's a seller's market, it also seems to be an employer's market. For those that are hiring, they are able to be extremely selective in who they choose. That's why smart project managers plan today for tomorrow's "what if". We need to be smart about managing our own career "risks" and have a mitigation plan firmly in place now. There are three simple, cheap, and super smart things you can start doing now to avoid any unneeded worry and panic if you do, in fact, find yourself looking for other career opportunities.

### #1 Invest in yourself

First, you need to make sure you take time to invest in yourself. If you do not currently have your PMP certification, now is the time. You don't have to spend a ton of money. You can take inexpensive training (webinars, etc.) and obtain the necessary educational requirements to sit for the exam. An exam prep course can range anywhere from about \$800 (for a PMI chapter sponsored course) upwards of \$3,000. All told, you are looking at spending a few thousand dollar investment; however, the rewards are endless (better pay, more visibility as a job candidate). Further, if your company pays for training, you have no excuse. Nothing in life is a guarantee and that includes the job you have today. Make sure and take the time to invest in your career now, so you do not end up in the situation I see lots of other project managers today.

If you have PMP certification, look into some advanced training that is complimentary to project management. There are a number

of topics that employers are looking for (i.e. Business Analysis, Six Sigma, ITIL, CMMI, etc.). Employers are doing more with less these days and are looking for employees that can help them improve how they run as a business. Set yourself apart by being a project manager that understands the world outside of just managing projects.

If nothing else, read – white papers, articles, blogs, whatever. Stay informed about hot trends, things that are positively or negatively affecting your industry or the overall project management profession. The project manager that does not understand the world outside of their job will not be positioned well in weeks, months, years to come. Become familiar with the work of experts in your field, join a professional organization, etc. Get involved in your profession or get left behind! The project manager that stays the same and doesn't continually learn will be the one passed over in the jobs of tomorrow. Not one of us is safe any longer. These are uncertain times, and we need to each be owners of our careers and futures. No more excuses, no more waiting...

### #2 Create a buzz

Now is the time to start to make a name for yourself. Instead of beating down the doors of companies that do not have any idea who you are, start planning ways now that you can start positioning yourself as the expert and promoting yourself as an expert in your field. Some easy and practically free ways you can start to create a buzz are to write articles on what you know. You can do this a number of ways. First, try submitting articles to your local chapter of PMI ([www.pmi.org](http://www.pmi.org)) or another local professional organization. Groups like this are always looking for new content and will be more than happy to publish your work. Another way to get your ideas out there is to start a blog. Wordpress offers free blogs that

take less than five minutes to set up. You can write as often or as little as you like. Write what you are passionate about, and you will find that not only will your writing improve, but you may get some readers as well. Try speaking wherever you can. This will provide you with credibility in your industry and you will undoubtedly become a better speaker as a result. Communication skills, whether they be written or verbal, are a great way to make you a better project manager and get the word out there that you are an expert in your field. Start building your resume by putting your thoughts and ideas out there. You will be surprised by the response that you get.

### #3 Make a difference

If you are busy making a positive difference in this world, you will be rewarded. One way you can do this is by volunteering your time. If you are not doing so already, get involved as a volunteer, either in your local PMI chapter or another non-profit organization in your area. By giving of your time and talents, you will find the following things happen. First, you will get tremendous satisfaction in mentoring others around you. Second, you will strengthen your own skills and pick up a few new ones. Third, you will meet amazing individuals in your area. I have met numerous people that have found great new jobs as a result of becoming a volunteer. Make a difference in the lives of others, and your life will positively benefit as well.

Take an interest in these three areas, and you will undoubtedly have an amazing year, both in your personal and professional life...regardless of the ups and downs of our economy.

Erika Flora, PMP, ITIL Expert  
Principal, Beyond20  
[erika.flora@Beyond20.com](mailto:erika.flora@Beyond20.com)



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